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Leaders, Society, and Intellectuals During the Thaw

> Decades of political and cultural isolation, the sickness of living in a permanently surrounded "besieged fortress," left their mark. But there began a psychological and ideological liberation from this legacy [and] we started to see the other world not as an inevitable future conquest . . . but as an integral part of our own culture.
>
> —Elena Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy*

> It is difficult to imagine how hard it is to crawl out from under the pile of communist dogmas in which you have believed and that have long guided your actions. —Petro Grigorienko, *Memoirs*

The decade following Stalin's death in 1953—popularly known as the "thaw" era—was a critical turning point in Soviet history. The period of Nikita Khrushchev's rule, through 1964, saw the country's first major liberalizing change in more than 30 years. The long nightmare ended, society's rejuvenation began, and efforts were launched to mitigate Stalin's legacies both at home and abroad.

The defining moment of Khrushchev's leadership was his "secret speech" to the 20th Party Congress in 1956. While the terror had been halted and some positive initial steps taken, Khrushchev's sweeping denunciation of Stalin's crimes now knocked the tyrant from the pedestal he had occupied for an entire generation and paved the way for a more searching reappraisal of his politics. In domestic affairs, this led to freedom and rehabilitation for millions, economic changes to benefit society instead of the militarized state, a cultural rebirth, and considerable truth-telling about Soviet history, politics, and the world.

The 20th congress was also a turning point in foreign policy. Although they had ended the Korean War, managed a tenuous rapprochement with Yugoslavia, and begun diplomatic engagement with the West, Stalin's heirs had not yet permitted any serious reappraisal of the hostile-isolationist "old thinking." But at the congress, Khrushchev took an important step in that direction by formally rejecting the Stalinist thesis of an inevitable, apocalyptic clash with capitalism and embracing instead a philosophy of "peaceful coexistence." In one sense, this was simply a concession to the fact that, in the nuclear era, major war would be so destructive that there could be no victors. But even if born of necessity, peaceful coexistence soon led to a broader engagement with the West that saw significant progress: a climate of real détente, the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963, and cuts in the Soviet armed forces. Still, the boldest changes would come only after the nuclear lesson had been relearned—this time not in theory but practice—through the Berlin crisis of 1961 and a trip to the brink of Armageddon over Cuba in 1962.

Change was difficult for several reasons. Psychologically, for leaders raised in revolution and war, and long steeped in the "hostile capitalist encirclement," acceptance of a radically different worldview came only with great difficulty—if at all. Khrushchev's own rethinking was a slow and contradictory process, and he was the boldest of Stalin's successors. Politically, the military-industrial-bureaucratic interests vested in Stalinist policies were very strong. The West, too, was slow to respond to Khrushchev's changes in a way that could have strengthened him vis-à-vis these forces.[1] And doctrinally, peaceful coexistence was still only a first step away from old thinking. It did mean deflating grossly exaggerated threats and ending the extreme demonization of capitalist adversaries. But they remained adversaries, for peaceful coexistence did not touch the bedrock principle of a world divided into antagonistic camps. The rivals could no longer go directly to war, but the international class struggle would continue, and even *intensify*, as they competed and confronted each other diplomatically, economically, and even militarily, in old venues and new ones such as the third world.[2] Thus an important step was taken, but meaningful East-West rapprochement was stymied by the dis-

trust and fear that were so deeply rooted in the hostile-isolationist identity. And so Khrushchev's foreign-policy record was decidedly mixed, with progress toward détente darkened by such actions as the invasion of Hungary as well as the Berlin and Cuban crises.

But this era's importance for Soviet international relations cannot be measured exclusively or even primarily by specific foreign-policy steps. For it was in tandem with the liberalization of domestic life that Khrushchev made his most vital contributions to a broad rethinking of the hostile-isolationist outlook. Intellectual life was dramatically transformed by an awakening of critical thought, study, and debate, one aspect of which was a modest but extremely consequential new opening to the West.

Millions were engaged by the literary-cultural thaw, which encouraged reflection not only on Stalin's domestic abuses but also on the USSR's place in world civilization. Tens of thousands, from students and scholars to diplomats and journalists, were especially stimulated by new critical freedoms and access to diverse ideas and information. And hundreds of intellectuals—historians, writers, economists, scientists, and policy analysts of all stripes—benefited from burgeoning ties abroad and new or rejuvenated research centers at home that now permitted remarkably frank examination of most domestic and foreign issues. In these "elite congregations," encouraged by the broader climate of reform, began the systematic study of international affairs, something that had simply not existed for nearly 30 years.

In the short time of the thaw, much progress was made in intellectual circles toward dismantling old beliefs and laying the foundation of a liberal, reformist orientation in foreign and domestic affairs. But the process was still in its infancy, and the academic-cultural hierarchy was still dominated by an older, conservative generation. These conservatives would soon triumph with the overthrow of the thaw and subsequent partial re-Stalinization of political-intellectual life. But they could not halt the emergence of a diverse and critically minded new elite—"redolent of the classical Russian intelligentsia"[3]—one important segment of which was now embarked on the path of a revived "Westernism."

Stalin's Successors Face the World: Change and Continuity

Analyses of the Soviet 1950s offer a number of explanations for the "secret speech" and launching of de-Stalinization. These include a leadership struggle, fear of the terror's repetition, a desire to exonerate Party innocents, the need to stimulate a moribund economy, and genuine moral revulsion at past horrors. Just what measure of these factors moved Khrushchev is difficult to determine; however, the main impetus clearly lay in domestic problems and was not primarily driven by rejection of Stalin's legacy in foreign affairs. His successors mostly lacked Stalin's near-pathological drive toward confrontation with "enemies," and they were worried by the simmering conflicts and unsettled disputes that ringed their borders. Also, the imperative to get the country moving economically and the dangers of the nuclear era engendered some important changes. But the post-Stalin leaders still largely retained the Manichaean outlook of a world sharply divided into mutually hostile camps of socialism and capitalism-imperialism.

The duality of their approach to Stalin's international legacy was seen in his successors' first major actions. In June 1953, riots in East Germany were crushed by Soviet tanks; in July, secret police chief Lavrenty Beria—who had advocated permitting German reunification—was removed from the leadership and later shot on Stalinesque charges that he had been an imperialist agent guilty of economic sabotage and seeking to restore capitalism in Russia. That same month, however, Soviet pressure on the Chinese produced an armistice that ended the Korean War.

To see the sources and limits of change in the first post-Stalin decade, it is important to understand the political-psychological context in which the new leadership entered the international arena. The postwar order they had anticipated was not one of long-term cooperation with erstwhile capitalist allies. Instead, Khrushchev noted a widespread belief that Western Europe would, on its own, turn socialist; first, "Germany would stage a revolution and follow the path of creating a proletarian state. . . . All of us thought it would happen . . . we thought the war had created the most favorable conditions [and] had the same hopes for France and Italy."[4] This did not happen because the United States, having grown rich

on the war, suppressed the tide of socialism. Instead, the imperialist powers launched an anti-Soviet cold war that threatened to turn hot; at Stalin's death, "we believed that America would invade the Soviet Union and we would go to war."[5]

These views are striking not only for their exaggerated expectations of socialist revolution and fears of U.S. aggression, but also for the particular historical patterns in which they reasoned. Postwar foreign relations were seen as evolving in a repetition of events earlier in the century. Recalled Khrushchev, "Just as Russia came out of World War I, made the revolution, and established Soviet power, so after the catastrophe of World War II, Europe too might become Soviet."[6] But like the entente in 1918–20, the United States in 1945–50 was seen charging about Europe to crush Communist gains, raising a blockade against the USSR, and poising to intervene.

These fears made sense, given Stalin's successors' ignorance of life abroad, their worldview built around a distorted understanding of Western aggression during and after the civil war, and a grotesque fantasy of capitalism's hostility from the 1930s on. A Politburo member since 1939, Khrushchev came to power in the 1950s with virtually no worldly exposure; his only "foreign" experience—aside from youthful toil in factories and mines built or owned by Western capitalists—were postwar visits to Soviet-occupied Poland and Austria.[7] Instead of firsthand knowledge, he had the usual background of one of the *vydvizhentsy*: War Communist militancy, political education in the aggressive spirit of *The ABC* and The *Short Course*, and a rapid career rise in Stalin's "hostile capitalist encirclement." During the terror, Khrushchev was "looking everywhere for enemies—in sporting groups, in the Komsomol, among specialists at the Moscow City Council . . . in all this Khrushchev comes off looking very, very bad. [But] at that time he was young, really fired up, and he sincerely believed that there were enemies all around."[8] Khrushchev's wife, who taught *politgramota* to semi-literate workers, echoed millions of *vydvizhentsy* in recalling the 1930s as the best and "most active" years of political and social life.[9]

Since foreign policy was terra incognita for Khrushchev in the early 1950s, he initially deferred to those of his colleagues with greater international experience. Andrei Vyshinsky, the jurist-cum-foreign-minister who built his career on the theory of forced confessions and the practice of exposing imperialist plots as Stalin's

show-trial prosecutor, was quickly replaced by Vyacheslav Molotov.[10] That this was a "relative improvement" suggests how far the new leaders had to travel to de-Stalinize their outlook.[11] Molotov, whose second term as minister lasted through 1955, "lived in a Stalinist world, where war was expected to break out at any moment."[12] Molotov himself later recalled that his main task as Stalin's minister had been "to extend the frontiers of our Fatherland as far as possible." Viewing East-West confrontation as normal, the very term *cold war* baffled him: "The cold war—I don't like that expression. . . . Just what does 'cold war' mean? Strained relations? It was really their doing, although we were on the offensive. Of course they were furious at us, but we had to consolidate our conquests [and] drive out capitalism. So that's the 'cold war.' "[13] Molotov also judged antiwar efforts "very dangerous. We have to think about preparations for new wars. It will come to that. And we've got to be ready." In fact, he looked forward to a third world war—one that would "finish off imperialism for good."[14]

Khrushchev recalled his initial respect for Molotov's knowledge and experience—that theirs was a "good, trusting relationship."[15] Beyond Khrushchev's inexperience, this trust is explained by the fact that he still shared Molotov's harsh Stalinist worldview:

> We persisted in believing the delusion perpetrated by Stalin that we were surrounded by enemies, that we had to do battle against them. . . . You must realize that for many, many years it was drilled into us that we should not make the slightest concession to the West. . . . We looked at things a bit suspiciously . . . we continued to see the world through [Stalin's] eyes and do things according to his style and way of thinking.[16]

The first sign of change in this outlook came from Georgy Malenkov, not Khrushchev. In March 1954, he argued for better East-West ties because nuclear war would mean "the destruction of world civilization" and also sought a shift in economic priorities from heavy industry to consumer goods.[17] Though Malenkov was forced to recant, Soviet policy soon turned in an encouraging direction, and 1954–55 saw such progress as territorial settlements or peace treaties with Finland, Turkey, and Austria.

Equally important, this diplomacy drew Stalin's successors out onto the world stage. Recollections of early visits to Vienna,

Geneva, and London offer revealing, even touching, accounts of the fear, confusion, and ideological orthodoxy with which they found their way in the international arena.[18] There was the anxiety of a self-confessed "country bumpkin" whose "European debut" was among leaders educated at Oxford and the Sorbonne.[19] But Khrushchev and his colleagues were also deeply suspicious of Western intentions and haunted by fears that they would be "intimidated" or "get confused," that "the first time we came into contact with the outside world our enemies would smash us into pieces."[20] Stalin's warning still rang in their ears: "When I'm gone, the imperialistic powers will wring your necks like chickens." So this early summitry, while producing few concrete gains, at least helped ease the terrors: "We were encouraged, realizing that our enemies feared us as much as we feared them."[21]

At the 20th Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev embraced a position like Malenkov's of two years earlier: that war was no longer inevitable and the new priority must be "peaceful competition" with capitalism.[22] A concession to nuclear reality, this also invited a broader rethinking of East-West relations by discarding the axiom of a violent clash between social systems. Still, coexistence was defined as "a specific form of class struggle," and antagonism was enshrined as "the defining characteristic" of the modern era. Khrushchev's doctrinal changes left intact the core of the hostile-isolationist identity—a divided world—and with the struggle between social systems now "intensifying," emphasis remained on confrontation rather than cooperation.[23]

In any case, these doctrinal changes competed with events such as turmoil in Eastern Europe in shaping the leadership's post-Stalin outlook. Although the 1956 invasion of Hungary can be seen as a simple act of "imperial preservation," it is vital to understand that Khrushchev and his colleagues viewed the crisis through the ideological lens of old thinking—as something instigated by the West and so proof of capitalism's hostility to socialism. Adzhubei recalled the leaders' horror at the specter of "a NATO bridgehead" deep in the socialist camp. High-level analyses echoed Stalin in arguing that the uprising was the work of "enemies, not only internal, but external ones too."[24] In private remarks, Khrushchev declared that "anti-Soviet elements have taken up arms against the [socialist] camp and the Soviet Union . . . the West is seeking a revision of the results of

World War II, and has started in Hungary, and will then go on to crush each socialist state in Europe one by one."[25] Khrushchev's own memoirs describe the Hungarian revolt as "export of counter-revolution." Fear of Western attack was strong enough to prompt troop deployments in a "covering action" so as to block an anticipated NATO thrust through neutral Austria.[26]

Post-1956 events showed change and continuity in the Soviet leaders' outlook.[27] In 1959, Khrushchev visited the United States for "a firsthand look at our number one capitalist enemy." Respect for U.S. strength coexisted with old images: "We'd read Gorky's description of capitalist America in *The Yellow Devil*, as well as Ilf and Petrov's *One-Storied America*, and we knew all about its perversions."[28] The impact of his visit was mixed. On the one hand, as his son Sergei recalled, America's wealth and dynamism so impressed Khrushchev that "he paid careful heed to its experience and even measured our own against it." At the same time, he found much to confirm America's "perversions"—its social weakness and political aggressiveness—and so for very long was "unable . . . to rid himself of the 'image of the enemy.' "[29]

This image was also reflected in several domestic episodes. In 1958, Boris Pasternak received the Nobel Prize for literature after *Dr. Zhivago*, which had been rejected at home, was published in the West. For Khrushchev, the matter was obvious: "They gave Pasternak the Nobel Prize? Then they clearly did it to spite our country, to spite [me] personally."[30] In 1963, he was enraged by a *Mosfilm* production about U.S. bomber pilots who defied a command to strike the USSR: "How can this be, showing our potential adversaries as chivalrous knights, humanitarians, refusing an order to bomb Russia! What sort of ideological message does this film send? Did Soviet filmmakers do this, or was the production paid for by the Americans?"[31] While allowing much liberalization, Khrushchev remained suspicious of intellectuals and deeply distrustful of the West. And despite considerable progress, he "could not fully break down the Stalinist precept of mistrust of things foreign. The iron curtain was raised but some very vigilant comrades were standing nearby."[32]

Post–20th congress events must also be seen in the broader context of renewed faith in Soviet economic prospects. However pathetic, in hindsight, was the campaign to "catch up and surpass

America," confidence at the time ran high. The drive to cultivate "virgin lands," begun in the mid 1950s, saw great enthusiasm and encouraging early results. In 1957, Khrushchev pledged to overtake the United States in production of meat, milk, and butter, and later that year the first sputnik prompted an enormous burst of pride and faith in the evident superiority of Soviet science. In 1961, the year of Yuri Gagarin's historic space flight, a new Party program promised that the current generation of Soviet people would live under Communism (that is, by the 1980s). While in a narrow sense faithful to the idea of peaceful competition, such hubris served also to reinforce the split between rival "camps" by justifying continued isolation from the world economy and by trumpeting socialism's impending triumph over a declining capitalist West.

These hopes were also fed by events in the third world, a region that Stalin had largely ignored. But Khrushchev, viewing a surge of anticolonial struggle, saw allies in the global contest with capitalism. He courted new Asian and African leaders and fairly rejoiced in the revolutionary spirit that brought back "the old days of the Comintern" and seemed capable of "bringing imperialism to its knees."[33] But it was revolution in Latin America, specifically Cuba, where this ideological romance and rejuvenation of faith in global triumph over capitalism was most clearly seen. Khrushchev's admiration for young Fidel and Che—true revolutionaries, not inheritors of a once revolutionary but now ossified state—was great. Similar enthusiasm was seen in the normally staid Anastas Mikoyan, who, upon visiting Cuba, was "boiling over" with excitement: "Yes, this is a real revolution. . . . I feel as if I've returned to my youth."[34] These were the emotions that, together with obvious geopolitical aims, fed the disastrous 1962 decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba.

It was also in the late 1950s that a rift in the socialist camp grew. Chinese objections to rapprochement with Tito and to de-Stalinization, especially after Hungary, were followed by criticism of moves to improve ties with the United States. Mao Zedong's militant "anti-imperialism" was an ideological challenge that Soviet leaders took very seriously: "At every stage in relations with the United States, he [Khrushchev] looked constantly over his shoulder to check the expression on the face of the Chinese sphinx."[35] Central Committee and Foreign Ministry staffers recall their bosses' obses-

sion with Mao's attacks.[36] Until 1961, when the rift opened wide, attempts to contain it and guard Soviet "ideological flanks" retarded progress on ties with the West. At every step, "Khrushchev felt the icy breath of the Maoist revolution at his back,"[37] and Chinese criticism hung "like a sword of Damocles" over U.S.-Soviet relations.[38] "The thesis that peaceful coexistence is a form of class struggle emerged as an attempt to bring our positions closer to Maoism: the idea that you could have both peaceful coexistence *and* class struggle."[39]

For much of the thaw era, Mao's "Stalinist critique" of their policies, and his challenge to their leadership of world socialism, had a malevolent impact on insecure Soviet leaders. For all their private scorn, Mao was arguably the world's greatest living revolutionary. One diplomat recalled, "Now [they] had to compete with the Chinese . . . and the result was a resuscitated militancy in . . . foreign policy."[40]

> It was incredibly hard to renounce the old dogmas and preconceptions . . . having taken a few brave steps forward in practice and theory, [our leaders] then fell ill with what I would call the syndrome of "revolutionary inadequacy." This showed up when almost immediately we began looking for a way to "compensate" in our revolutionary "theology" for those steps that had been taken toward realism in theory and practice.[41]

Still, Khrushchev's final two years in power saw a real turn in thinking about East-West relations, at least on the part of Khrushchev himself. Catalyzed by the danger of the Cuban crisis, motivated by a sharp economic slump, and freed from fears of Mao's criticism by an increasingly open rift with China, he now took bolder steps.[42] These included deep, unilateral troop cuts and a drive for improved ties with the West that produced the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty, the first major nuclear accord. But by this time, Khrushchev's days in office were numbered. And while his ouster resulted mainly from a backlash of threatened domestic interests, neither did Khrushchev's successors—those same "vigilant comrades"—share his evolution toward East-West rapprochement. Some sought at least a partial re-Stalinization of Soviet foreign relations.

Immediately after Khrushchev's removal in October 1964, hawks in the Soviet leadership sought a turn away from peaceful

coexistence and renewed emphasis on military might and the solidarity of a militant socialist camp. At the November 7 reception for foreign Communist leaders in Moscow, Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky "made a vicious anti-American toast . . . and then told Zhou Enlai 'Let's drink to Soviet-Chinese friendship; we've gotten rid of our Nikita Sergeyevich, you do the same with Mao Zedong, and our relations will be splendid."[43] Malinovsky's sentiments—as defense minister in a time of troop cuts—were not surprising. More so were the views of others whose positions were not so closely tied to military-industrial interests. For example, in 1965 Alexander Shelepin drafted a speech for the new general secretary, Leonid Brezhnev, that was "nothing less than a demand in the spirit of open neo-Stalinism for a complete reconsideration of all policy under Khrushchev." In foreign affairs, this meant

> returning to the party line on world revolution and renouncing peaceful coexistence . . . restoring friendly relations with Mao Zedong by unequivocally accepting his [praise of Stalin] and his common strategy for the communist movement; to restore the previous characterization of . . . Yugoslavia as a "hotbed of revisionism and reformism" . . . and much else in the same spirit.[44]

Perhaps more surprising were the views Alexei Kosygin, the Kremlin's strongest economic reformer, who sought to restore "friendship and alliance with China which, he understood, would lead to a definite, sharp deterioration in our relations with the West." Just after Khrushchev's fall, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko criticized a pro-détente speech prepared for Kosygin by young Central Committee staffers:

> What've you slipped into this speech—peaceful coexistence with the West, the 20th Congress, criticism of Stalin? It's got to be redone in the spirit of our new policy—the harsh struggle against American imperialism, which is trying to smother the Vietnamese revolution—and to say warm things about our unshakable friendship with the Chinese people.[45]

In fact, that friendship proved very shakable, in part due to such indiscretions as Malinovsky's, but mainly because Mao's price for reconciliation was too high. His demand for coequal status as a leader of world Communism and his eagerness to risk war were too

much for Soviet pride and common sense to swallow. In the later 1960s, the impact on Soviet policy of Chinese militancy was reversed as Mao's extremism "restrained our own 'Maoists' and to some extent slowed the shift toward neo-Stalinism."[46]

There is no doubt that Khrushchev's singular leadership was mainly responsible for de-Stalinization and the thaw-era progress in Soviet-Western relations. As seen, the differences between him and most others in the post-Stalin leadership were great. All the same, in de-Stalinizing foreign relations, Khrushchev, too, was hampered by the dictator's political and psychological legacies. As Khrushchev himself once observed, "There's a Stalinist in each of you, there's even some Stalinist in me."[47]

Society, De-Stalinization, and Cracks in the Iron Curtain

If Stalin's successors could not break decisively with the hostile-isolationist outlook, they could and did create the conditions for the rise of a different identity in a post-Stalin generation. Some of these changes came immediately, such as the end of the terror. Others came gradually, flowing from the liberalization that unfolded, in fits and starts, over the entire thaw era. Critical in fostering radically new beliefs and values was a tentative opening to the outside world that began dismantling the legacies of an entire generation's aberrant existence as "inhabitants of an eternally surrounded, besieged fortress."[48]

This process began with a reduction in the anti-Western propaganda that had pervaded the Stalinist epoch, and reached a hysterical climax in the postwar years. The curbing of xenophobic images flowed from the decision to end the terror and, in particular, to halt the new repressions that Stalin had planned in the so-called Doctors' Plot, which, by familiar script, was tied to imperialist agents and their Soviet hirelings. With the most negative images of the West in abeyance, the stage was set for more positive ones that came with the easing of diplomatic isolation in 1954–55. As their leaders traveled to summits in Belgrade, Vienna, and London—and as foreign leaders visited Moscow—the psychology of encirclement began to break down, and people started to see their country not as a "besieged fortress" but as a normal participant in international relations. An early milestone in this process was the 1955 Geneva

summit, where Soviet leaders attended a gathering of major world powers for the first time since Postdam, a full decade earlier.

Of even greater impact on the popular outlook were changes that offered more intimate exposure to life beyond Soviet borders. World literature, hitherto extremely limited, now became widely available. The journal *Inostrannaia Literatura* (Foreign Literature) was launched in 1955 and soon became one of the most widely read publications.[49] Western authors appeared in other journals, too, as well as in ever-larger Russian editions. These books sold rapidly while many Soviet authors gathered dust on the shelves, a preference that was also reflected in library borrowing. The great interest in foreign life was also seen in the immediate popularity of *Za Rubezhom* (Abroad), a weekly digest of articles from the foreign-press that was begun in 1960.[50] An *Inostrannaia Literatura* editor recalled that publishing foreign authors meant

> opening up that world by whose light those dull-witted chauvinistic concepts of exclusiveness had to fade. "Only in our country . . . " No, as it turns out, it's not only in our country. Then it began to appear that there was not even as much in our country as we had thought.[51]

This world was further opened via knowledge of foreign languages. Already by 1957, some 65 percent of students in higher education were studying English. In 1961, foreign-language study in secondary education was expanded and the creation of a large network of special foreign-language schools was begun.[52]

In the immediate post–20th congress years, the USSR reached cultural exchange agreements with many Western countries; for example, with Belgium and Norway in 1957 and with France in 1958. Later that year, terms of an exchange were also reached with the United States. Covering a wide range of scientific, educational, sport, and tourist activities, most of these fruits were restricted to the Soviet elite. At the same time, others reached much further. Part of the U.S.-Soviet exchange was agreement on more-or-less annual visits of U.S. exhibitions. Extremely popular, their displays, discussions, and distribution of books, journals, and pamphlets drew millions of visitors during the Khrushchev years alone.[53]

Foreign culture now became a strong presence in Soviet intellectual life. Western theater and movies, museum and art exchanges, all

grew increasingly accessible and wildly popular. The USSR became a true member of the world "cultural circuit," sending delegations to fairs and exhibitions abroad and hosting such gatherings as the International Youth Festival of 1957 and the semi-annual Moscow International Film Festival, begun in 1959. Tourism's growth was important as well. Though only a few thousand Soviets went abroad annually—mostly to Eastern Europe—just a few years before there had been almost no such travel. Moreover, Western visitors now flooded Soviet cities. From the U.S. alone, from a mere 43 tourists in 1953, some 2,000 visited in 1956; within a decade, the number had risen to more than 20,000 per year.[54] The roughly *two million* foreigners who visited annually by the mid-to-late 1960s became a real presence in Soviet urban (chiefly, Moscow and Leningrad) life.[55] So, too, were the increasing numbers of foreign students.

The impact of all these changes was tremendous. Just a few years after Stalin's death, Moscow was transformed from a stagnant, isolated "big village" into an increasingly vibrant international capital alive with exotic sights and sounds and pulsating with new ideas and lively discussions.[56] As one Muscovite recalled, an atmosphere of "springtime, hope and expectation" now grew:

> There was the World Youth Festival in Moscow in 1957, then the American exhibition in 1958 [*sic*]—the first swallows from the West in our entire Soviet history. All this talk of "putrefying capitalism" became ridiculous. . . . Then [came] foreign tourists and [consumer] goods imported from the West. Moscow was transformed [from a] crime-ridden slum [into] a city whose inhabitants thronged the bookshops, crowded into halls where poets gave public readings and packed the *Sovremennik* Theater. The music drifting through the windows on summer evenings was no longer . . . ersatz pop, but jazz and rock 'n' roll.[57]

Such changes were most keenly felt in major cities, where, it should be noted, a growing percentage of the Soviet population now lived; internal migration saw the USSR become a predominantly urban society by the mid 1960s.[58] At the same time, many aspects of the thaw reached well into the provinces. Readers of central newspapers nationwide devoured expanding coverage of foreign life that now balanced monochromatic political reporting with cultural, economic, and human-interest stories offering subtler and

increasingly positive images of the West.[59] Across the country—not only in Moscow or Leningrad—subscribers to "thick" journals could now sample Western literature, diaries of foreign travel, and criticism of cultural and economic isolation in many new or newly enlivened publications.[60]

Moreover, advances in communications now contributed to the opening and diversification of Soviet life.[61] A huge expansion in postal and telephone service, as well as increased domestic travel, brought the country closer together. Records, tape recorders, and other audio technologies appeared, further spreading Western music and words. Especially great was the impact of radio and television. Expansion of the latter was particularly rapid; from just over two million sets nationwide in 1958, there were 16 million by the mid 1960s and 30 million by the end of the decade.[62] Easing the isolation so conducive to xenophobia, television beamed unprecedented views of foreign cities, leaders, and people.

Foreign radio broadcasts, too, blanketed the country. The BBC's Russian Service had started in 1946; then came Voice of America in 1947, to be followed by other U.S., Swedish, and German programs in the 1950s.[63] Private ownership of shortwave radios, and so access to foreign news and commentary, grew swiftly during the thaw era, and, by some estimates, millions were regular listeners by the mid 1960s.[64] Jamming was pursued, but even in large cities—where these efforts were focused—its success was limited; much of the country received foreign broadcasts freely. By all accounts, their impact was tremendous, becoming a major source of news on domestic as well as foreign events: "Is it possible to speak of absence of freedom of information in a country where tens of millions of people listen to Western radio?"[65]

Altogether, the pace and breadth of the USSR's post-Stalin opening to the world—after a generation of strict isolation and harsh xenophobia—were remarkable. Still, this influence must not be viewed in solely one-dimensional terms; the impact of foreign exposure was closely tied to domestic changes—a parallel opening to the truth about the country's own political, social, and economic life, past and present.

The link between openness at home and abroad was seen in the rethinking that followed the end of the terror and subsequent revelations about Stalin's crimes. Even without the cascade of infor-

mation about the West that would follow, the exposure of the terror system and the lies that had fueled it challenged a linchpin of the Stalinist outlook by "automatically destroying belief in the infamous show trials of 1937–1938."[66] If millions had been falsely accused of involvement in fascist or imperialist conspiracies, then had there really existed any such conspiracies at all? And if the West had not been weaving endless aggressive plots against the Soviet state, then was the "imperialist threat" really so great?

Beyond such questions, there indeed followed a cascade of information about the outside world. But even before the country's opening, such information began spreading from internal sources—the multitudes who had glimpsed foreign life during the war and postwar occupations. As already noted, Stalin acted decisively and cruelly to contain such ideas. But with the terror's end, these witnesses began to talk. And with the emptying of the camps, many more returned to society with their own stories and images of life abroad.[67]

The link between revelations in domestic and foreign issues was also seen in more explicit discussion of the economy. During the war, Allied aid had meant that images of Western prosperity (ranging from tasty sausages to modern Studebakers) could not be avoided, but propaganda had countered that such bounty was enjoyed only by a very few. America was indeed the land of the super-rich, but also of huge disparities, with the masses living in poverty, sickness, and insecurity; by many accounts, a majority believed that, on the whole, the lot of the Soviet worker was better than that of his Western counterpart.[68] Similarly, propaganda and the terror concealed the true condition of the Russian countryside and successfully created an image of rural progress for many city dwellers.[69]

This myth was one of the first exposed in the thaw. The continuing rural disaster that was the legacy of Stalin's brutal collectivization of agriculture was revealed in some of the first post-Stalin exposés. Popular and professional literature soon featured fairly honest comparisons of the Soviet and Western economies, including data on growth and labor productivity.[70] Khrushchev's decision to publicize such bitter truths stemmed from a belief that the airing of problems, and a halt to Stalinist abuses, would free socialism's potential to leap past capitalism. For specialists, the proliferation of data opened the door to a deeper critique of the Soviet economy

and a reexamination of Western experience. For others, admission of such failures twenty years after the construction of socialism had been declared "essentially complete" was a crushing blow. Even for the faithful, Khrushchev's revelation of such backwardness (though coupled with a pledge to close the gap quickly) set the stage for even greater disillusion when the economy faltered less than a decade later.

For the moment, such questions lay mainly in the future. In the early thaw years, reappraisal of Soviet socialism and its relations with the West was just beginning. Khrushchev's faith in economic miracles was widely shared.[71] The Hungarian revolt stirred no broad concern, and explanations of the West's perfidy were generally believed.[72] Most also shared their leaders' outrage over Pasternak's "betrayal" for publishing abroad.[73] Enthusiasm for the Cuban Revolution was enormous.[74] The image of a divided world and hostile West was deeply ingrained in the popular psyche, and the process of its rethinking had only begun. "People suddenly had to think independently," which was "an unimaginable task, completely at odds with the kind of life to which we'd become accustomed."[75] Still, the seeds of change had been planted: "One tear after another appeared in the iron curtain. It split and started to slide apart. Truthful information gave birth to questions. . . . Society was undergoing a . . . tumultuous reassessment of values."[76]

Intellectuals, De-Stalinization, and the Revival of Critical Thought

For one particular group in Soviet society—intellectuals—this "tumultuous reassessment of values" prompted by the country's early opening was felt especially keenly. It is natural that writers, historians, economists, scientists, and political analysts of all types—those whose professions were most directly affected by the country's stance toward the outside world—would be most vitally concerned with such issues. The next chapter will examine in detail these specialists' rethinking of the West during the thaw decade and for several years beyond.

But first it is necessary to see the broader context in which this rethinking took place, for intellectuals' conditions of life and work

probably changed more radically during the thaw than those of any other group in society.[77] Intellectuals had hardly been isolated from the complex impact of the war—the surge of patriotism and apparent vindication of Stalin's prewar policies, followed by new questions and expectations.[78] Nor had the terror, and now its cessation, left them unaffected, for the educated elites had been struck even harder than society at large. But what came next was equally critical: a huge growth in access to ideas and information, much broader exposure to the world and the West in particular, and greatly liberalized conditions of inquiry and debate. These transformed the intellectual milieu radically; from being one of the most dogmatically regimented and terrorized segments of society, Soviet intellectuals were given real freedom to think and question for the first time in an entire generation.

For them, the signals of change began immediately after Stalin's death. Exposure of the phony "Doctors' Plot," an ebb in antiforeign propaganda, and an abrupt halt to "moaning and groaning" over the departed leader hinted at change.[79] Beria's removal was seen as a positive step, even as he was unmasked as another "agent of imperialism."[80] Then the months passed with no new "campaigns" in science or ideology. Colleagues no longer vanished from universities and institutes, and there began instead a few rehabilitations and the return of those most recently arrested.

The waning of fear and anticipation of change prompted a "spiritual emancipation."[81] An atmosphere of tentative freedom and renewed hope emerged in which questions—some new, others long-dormant—were posed with increasing boldness. Everywhere, "groups of like-minded people came together."[82] In private homes and small meetings, from discussions "on Moscow streets" to "endless nocturnal conversations," Stalin's legacies began to be confronted.[83] Some spoke up at public lectures; others gathered in the basement of the Lenin Library to discuss the sensations now appearing in the press:

> I learned to recognize the faces of some of the men who spent their days in the smoking room . . . graduate students, scholars, journalists. Formal introductions were avoided. On Wednesdays, the days *Literaturnaya Gazeta* came out, the crowd grew larger. [When] *Novy Mir*, the daring monthly journal, hit the stands, the crowds grew larger still.[84]

As so often in the past, censorship meant that political issues were first broached via the surrogate of literature. In 1953, *Novy Mir* published Vladimir Pomerantsev's sensational "On Sincerity in Literature," a slashing attack on the prevalence of lies and hypocrisy in Soviet cultural—and, by extension, political—life.[85] In 1954, Ilya Ehrenburg's novella *The Thaw* foresaw even broader changes ahead.[86]

The intellectual awakening was particularly evident at centers of higher education, especially Moscow State University (MGU). Very quickly, "the protective shell of lethargy, silence and fear began to crack open."[87] Graduate students and young faculty challenged Stalinist dogmas in the philosophy department, while journalism students formed groups to reexamine the works of Lenin and Marx.[88] History students searched the past for alternatives to Stalin's militarized "barracks communism," while physicists looking to the future protested the orthodox presentation of such "bourgeois" theories as relativity and quantum mechanics.[89] With students whose outlook was marked less by terror than by the flush of victory and hopes for postwar change, and who now encountered everything from Western social thought to foreign classmates, the fact that the universities became centers of "radicalism, zeal and creativity" was no surprise.[90]

"We acquired a lifelong habit of self-education to make up for what was lacking in our university programs."[91] Some poured their energies into study groups; others privately devoured rare volumes of Russian and early Soviet history.[92] Many recall the impact of certain older professors, liberals of NEP or prerevolutionary vintage who had survived Stalin to provide a living link with the old intelligentsia.[93] While formal curricula were little changed in the first post-Stalin years, Stalinist dogmas were challenged by a bold new spirit of inquiry. In fact, the very resistance of old dogmas to this spirit provoked "a positive . . . energy of antagonism and dispute."[94] At MGU, the clash of old and new created a "general atmosphere of dialogue and discourse [which generated] sparks of inspiration, enlightenment and creativity."[95]

The still-cautious awakening of the first post-Stalin years was given a powerful new impetus by Khrushchev's "secret speech" in February 1956. His sweeping exposure of Stalin's crimes caused an uproar in the thousands of Party organizations where the speech

was read. Debate centered first on the terror and Party members' guilt in having remained silent or joined in the denunciations that had fueled repression.[96] But discussion soon went beyond repentance, to question the very essence of the system.

> We heard about Bonifatsi Kedrov speaking out at the Institute of Philosophy. . . . We heard about the speech of the chess grandmaster Mikhail Botvinnik. About the speech of Yuri Orlov at the Institute of Theoretical Physics. About the speeches at the Institute of Eastern Studies. People talked about the social basis for "the cult of the personality," about the kind of system that was capable of producing this cult.[97]

The leadership, deeply divided over the wisdom of even Khrushchev's limited unmasking of Stalin, moved to halt the questions that inevitably flowed from their decidedly un-Marxist explanation that one evil individual bore all responsibility. Orlov and his colleagues at the Institute of Theoretical-Experimental Physics, having called for "total democratization," were expelled from the Party, fired from their jobs, and denounced by *Pravda* for "singing in Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik voices."[98] Such steps intimidated many, but did not halt the questions. Indeed, the leadership's reluctance to draw what many saw as the obvious conclusions of its own admissions, and its determination to limit discussion to a narrow and self-serving denunciation of Stalin's personal guilt, served instead to provoke a much wider debate.

In October 1956, a Writers' Union meeting to discuss an anti-Stalin novel drew an overflow crowd that enthusiastically cheered a call to "sweep away" Stalinist functionaries and "fight this battle to the end." Even some workers and soldiers were stirred: "Official speakers were heckled at factory meetings and unauthorized wall newspapers appeared in the naval barracks at Kronstadt and Vladivostock."[99] "Semi-legal" university groups now proliferated, and an initiative to unite students in Moscow and Leningrad was launched.[100] Official student bulletins grew increasingly critical, while new, unsanctioned journals also appeared. And the *Komsomol* soon split between a dogmatic-careerist group and another that openly called for further glasnost and democratization.[101]

Foreign issues, too, now rose in prominence; the rapprochement with Tito sparked interest in Yugoslav reforms and many were

especially concerned by events in Hungary. While public opinion generally supported the crackdown, many students and young intellectuals did not.[102] Committees were formed, "solidarity" meetings held, and leaflets distributed in support of the Hungarians.[103] "During the very same days and hours [that we were struggling with Stalinism], in Budapest they toppled the cast-iron statue of Stalin and rallied by a memorial to the Polish General Bem who had fought for Hungary's freedom in 1848. That's where the popular revolution began."[104]

Some of this activity even spilled out into Moscow's streets. A statue of Mayakovsky became the site where "young people, mainly students, assembled almost every evening to read the poems of forgotten or repressed writers." These gatherings turned into an "open-air club" for literary-political discussions.[105] Most often, such debates went on in private *kompanii*, groups which served as "publishing houses, speakers bureaus . . . seminars in literature, history, philosophy, linguistics, economics, genetics, physics, music and art," wrote one participant. "Just about every evening, I would walk through the dark corridor of some communal flat and open the door of a crowded, smoky room. . . . Old *politzeki* [political prisoners] would be shouting something at young philologists, middle-aged physicists would be locked in hot debates with young poets."[106]

Much the same was under way at many scientific centers. Igor Tamm, director of the Physics Institute's weapons-research program, briefed his staff on foreign radio broadcasts and "passionately" denounced chauvinism: "Science is universal. It is a vital part of the world's cultural heritage."[107] Peter Kapitsa, the Cambridge-trained physicist who refused military work, criticized academic isolation; judging Soviet social sciences "scholastic and dogmatic" in comparison with Western studies, he also pushed for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy.[108] Kapitsa opened his doors to informal seminars and speakers on wide-ranging topics.[109] Humanities institutes, too, now awakened:

> The Institute of History had Nekrich while we [at the Institute of Philosophy] had Grigory Pomerantz on the personality cult, Merab Mamardashvili on European social and political thought, Zinoviev . . . and many others in seminars on questions of ideology

and politics. The debates between younger scholars and old Stalinists were tremendous.[110]

A number of research institutes soon became centers where social and political issues could be discussed in relative freedom. Economists, historians, poets, and musicians too bold for public audiences were invited to present their work. Seminars and conferences, "regardless of their designated subjects, became arenas for the discussion of political issues."[111]

Intellectual "Oases" and Study of the World

After 1956, much of this discussion was conducted at various new research centers where foreign affairs were precisely the "designated subjects" of inquiry. As Khrushchev's "secret speech" unmasked Stalin, Mikoyan's 20th congress address began to do the same for Stalinism in academic life. "Comprehensive evaluation" and "deep study" came second to propaganda, Mikoyan found, with the result that "we seriously lag" in analyzing both capitalist and non-capitalist development."[112] Soon the Institute of World Economy and World Politics, closed by Stalin in 1949 due to Varga's too-positive views of capitalism's prospects, was revived as the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). Varga returned as senior member of a staff comprised largely of young, newly graduated economists and historians. Over the next decade, a number of other foreign affairs institutes were established under the aegis of the Academy of Sciences: the Institute of the Economy of the World Socialist System (IEMSS); the Institute of the International Workers' Movement (IMRD); Institutes of Africa, Latin America, and the Far East; and the Institute of the USA.[113]

Several other centers dedicated to international political or economic issues were also created at this time. The journal *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma* (Problems of Peace and Socialism), whose Prague-based editorial staff included European, American, and third-world Marxists, was established in 1958.[114] In 1961, the Central Committee's first international affairs consultant group began work, a staff comprised of young scholar-journalists from outside the Party apparatus.[115] The Institute of Economics and Industrial Organization (popularly known, for its location, as the Novosibirsk

Institute) was created in 1961; the Central Economic-Mathematical Institute (TsEMI) was established in 1963.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of these new institutes. For decades, there had barely existed any centers for serious research into world affairs. Most such work was seen as redundant, since national development was viewed in universal, class terms, and Lenin's *Imperialism* set the framework for study of international politics and economics. Under Lenin, even as academic study of international relations was growing and diversifying in the West, Soviet scholars suffered the gradual imposition of orthodoxy and loss of ties to foreign thought. Under Stalin, *Imperialism*—a doctrinaire but still serious work—was supplanted by the crude formulas of the *Short Course*, while most remaining pockets of critical foreign-affairs thought were crushed.[116] But now, in a postwar world of unanticipated complexity, some in the leadership felt hampered by their own ignorance.[117] Thus it was a need for fresh perspectives and talent that underlay the creation or rejuvenation of foreign-affairs research and advisory groups, "a need to employ intellectuals to assist . . . leaders who couldn't write, speak, or develop a political strategy."[118]

At the centers where young specialists gathered, vital "oases of creative thought" soon emerged.[119] The Prague journal *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma* became "a center of new ideas and free discussion of all socio-political issues . . . for many of us, it was where new thinking began."[120] In its heyday during the early 1960s, the staff variously included talented young liberals such as philosophers Ivan Frolov and Merab Mamardashvili, historian Yuri Karyakin, economist Oleg Bogomolov, and foreign-policy specialists Georgy Arbatov, Nikolai Inozemtsev, Vadim Zagladin, Georgy Shakhnazarov, and Anatoly Chernyaev.[121] One Prague veteran recalled that this "critical mass" and the "constant, freewheeling debates" it encouraged were as important as was the exposure to new ideas.[122] Another noted that "unlike us, the foreign communists had not been cut off from real Marxism, from social democratic traditions. . . . Our debates with the French and Italians were very important . . . the European socialists certainly influenced us much more than we influenced them."[123]

The influence of the Chinese was important too, but in a different way; their views were so dogmatic—"What's the problem, you don't even like the *word* revolution?"—that it helped push

Soviet staff members even further in the opposite direction.[124] Their growing identification with the "non-communist left, and especially with Western social democracy,"[125] was also facilitated by the liberal leadership of editor Alexei Rumyantsev. An Academy of Sciences official who had most recently aided in the reopening of Varga's old institute, Rumyantsev was a scholar-publicist of NEP-era vintage (and outlook) who encouraged an openness and diversity unheard of for a Soviet institution.[126]

And so Rumyantsev, who also carefully guarded his charges' freedoms and fended off the periodic attempts of "Central Committee inspectors" to rein in his liberal haven, was a strong reformist mentor.[127] "He gave us the impetus, and in return we gave him a constant stream of ideas and proposals."[128] The Prague setting was also important, a "cosmopolitan paradise compared to Moscow. Culturally it was far more interesting, it was *Europe* after all. . . . I had many friends and colleagues . . . and was usually speaking French, Italian and English."[129] Chernyaev, who would later serve as Gorbachev's chief foreign-policy aide during the perestroika years, summarized his experience at the journal:

> It was a totally non-Soviet environment. . . . We were exposed to a huge amount of information on the outside world. And from all that, the idea of imperialist aggression, that the West posed a real threat to the Soviet Union, it instantly disappeared. In Prague people simply found themselves in totally different surroundings, we could take off our ideological blinders. And we turned out to be normal people who could look at the world and our own country normally.[130]

Closely linked to *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma*, both through ideas and individuals, were the new Central Committee consultant groups. Much like postgraduate work for those who had studied in Prague, these groups were a pipeline into the Party apparatus, where such "aliens" had hitherto been unknown.[131] "Praguers" including Arbatov, Gerasimov, Chernyaev, Bogomolov, Shakhnazarov, and Zagladin—together with other original thinkers such as Bovin, Burlatsky, Yakovlev, Lev Delusin, Nikolai Shishlin, and Yuri Krasin—worked in one of the two Central Committee "international" departments or, somewhat later, in those for ideology, propaganda, and culture. Burlatsky, who was recruited by Yuri

Andropov to head the first consultant team (in Andropov's Department for Liaison with Ruling Communist and Workers' Parties—i.e., with Eastern Europe and China), recalled that its members "stood out by virtue of their independent minds, unusual talents, and thirst for change."[132]

Although this "massive intellectual breakthrough into the centers of power" had little impact on policy, its impact on the staffers themselves was great. As Arbatov recalled,

> We wrote documents (drafts of Central Committee decisions; memoranda for our leaders; the leaders' speeches, and so on). At the closing stages of a major product, everyone involved would gather in Andropov's office, and an interesting and productive workshop would begin. Lively discussions developed, turning these sessions into stimulating theoretical and political seminars. . . . Andropov [had] the following rule . . . "In this room you can come clean and speak absolutely openly—don't hide your opinions."[133]

Bovin recalled this experience as "the best school of my life—dealing with large political issues, arguing with my colleagues, working with politicians, reading all kinds of scholarly and Western literature."[134]

These recollections highlight two factors above all others that made the Prague journal and the Central Committee groups so important: a "critical mass" of talented minds free to debate critically; and broad access to ideas and information, that is, the tools to do so. The latter was as vital as the former since new analytical centers alone were not enough to remedy ideological paralysis. The weight of ignorance noted in the case of Yugoslavia was no less problematic in other efforts to de-Stalinize foreign policy, such as the first steps toward serious arms control. As recalled by a young Foreign Ministry staffer, "Facts . . . were ignored in favor of simplistic propaganda appeals. Soviet diplomats needed . . . basic documents on disarmament, a record of proposals and negotiations over the years, material that was easy to obtain in the West but had not been collected in Moscow."[135]

In diplomacy, de-Stalinization gradually eased the twin legacies that had long stymied an objective view of the West: crippling ideological strictures and extreme secrecy. Here Khrushchev's opening had a reciprocal effect as quantitative growth in the country's for-

eign relations combined with qualitative change in their conduct.[136] No longer confined to terrorized embassy ghettos, diplomats now engaged in broad contacts with foreign political, cultural, and business figures. They began seeing the West "with new eyes" and, cautiously, reported back to Moscow what they learned.[137]

Staffers of the new Central Committee groups were among the beneficiaries of this diversification of information, but so—to a somewhat lesser extent—were those who stood just outside the apparat. A parallel "opening" was under way throughout the system of foreign-policy analysis, such as at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, where future diplomats, journalists, and scholars were trained.

> My second education was conducted in the special section of the library where Western newspapers, magazines, and books were kept. . . . What I read there began to give me a better understanding of the world [and raised] doubt about the validity of many things I had been taught. . . . My understanding of recent history took a quantum leap.[138]

A virtual information explosion occurred over the thaw years, as the data and sources available to researchers grew exponentially. Economists and area specialists, experts in diplomacy, trade, and international law, reveled in a wholesale opening to Western science and scholarship. Subscriptions to foreign journals soared, institutes set up translation bureaus for pertinent foreign literature, and summary-abstracts of contemporary Western studies reached an ever-broader circle of Soviet academic and policy specialists. Foreign media, almanacs, statistical yearbooks, and other reference works appeared in more and more libraries of research and higher-education institutions.[139] Specialists' access to domestic sources expanded greatly too, as once-closed archives were opened and voluminous diplomatic, demographic, economic, and other data became more widely available.[140] This broke the "hypercentralized" control of information and challenged the "one-dimensional" analyses that had persisted after 1953, practices that had continued "nourishing the Stalinist mentality" even after the tyrant's death.[141]

This opening was buttressed by the renewal of contacts abroad. Pursuant to the new agreements noted earlier, Soviet scholars began attending foreign conferences and participating in academic

exchanges. Their numbers were small at the outset—only about 500 Soviets visited the United States on such exchanges in 1958—but less than a decade later more than ten times as many would travel annually to the United States and other Western countries for research, study, seminars, and conferences.[142] The vehicles were many: exchanges of graduate students and senior scholars, UNESCO fora, delegations to regular gatherings such as the Pugwash and Dartmouth meetings on international security, and attendance at academic conventions in political science, sociology, and other fields.[143]

It is difficult to overstate the devastating impact that firsthand exposure to the West had on old beliefs and stereotypes. The correlation between participants in thaw-era exchanges and those who later emerged as prominent "Westernizing" reformers is strong.[144] The experiences of most of them—whether political, cultural, or scientific figures—echo the following recollection of a writer's first trip abroad (to the 1962 Youth Festival in Finland):

> We'd been repeatedly warned about CIA treachery and the many agents who were descending on Helsinki . . . but nothing happened. We reveled in the strolling, multilingual crowds, traded badges and other souvenirs . . . it was so pleasant to make friends, to hear all about their lives. . . . I didn't see any reason for secrecy. . . . These trips astonished me. In many ways, whatever I am was formed then—in these new associations, in understanding new values and new people.[145]

In describing this initial stage in the evolution of new thinking, it would be premature to speak of "transnational communities" of Soviet and Western professionals; such associations, and other constructive changes, would emerge somewhat later. For the moment, direct exposure to the West had a more "destructive" impact, at least insofar as the old beliefs and values were concerned:

> By the 1960s we'd come a long way, but there was still far to go. We still didn't know the world. I remember my first trip to the U.S., and how quickly I realized that 90, maybe 99 percent of all that I had written was wrong. I'd read everything, we had facts and information, but we didn't yet *understand*.[146]

Though travel to the West was predominantly a privilege of reliable senior specialists, Soviet delegations were now increasingly

penetrated by younger, better-educated, reform-minded analysts. Many more visited Eastern Europe, but here, too, the contrasts with Soviet life and exposure to Western ideas were great. There was, as already noted, the "cosmopolitan paradise" of Prague, but other young analysts went to Hungary and Yugoslavia and found them of even greater interest.

> I was deeply impressed by Yugoslavia's economic reforms, above all by decentralization, rejection of rigid planning, and by their firms' emphasis on the domestic market [with] free access to foreign markets. . . . Food shops resembled those in the West and their industrial products . . . were already approaching world standards. . . . The country's spirit was ruled by "modernism," a striving for everything contemporary and new.[147]

By the early 1960s, exposure to foreign diversity together with the intellectual liberties permitted within these new analytical groups began their transformation into nascent centers of new thinking. The Novosibirsk Institute, "gathering the best young scholars" in an atmosphere of creative freedom, quickly evolved into "the new school" of political economy.[148] The Central Economic-Mathematical Institute, originally a "grab-bag of poorly schooled, undereducated political economists, Marxist-Leninists, mathematicians, physicists, chemists and historians," began its rise to become the leading center of Western-oriented market reformism.[149] And a revived IMEMO, notwithstanding "serious mistakes [such as] euphoria for quickly overtaking the West . . . soon became the 'incubator' for a new generation of international economists . . . and foreign-policy experts."

> Dogmas about capitalist stagnation, total impoverishment of the Western working class, and others were rejected while new concepts came into political circulation [such as] European integration . . . multiple paths of third-world development . . . and so on. There emerged new research methods and an objective look at [the West].[150]

The Rebirth of the Russian Intelligentsia

The study of these and other "new concepts," and particularly the "objective look at the West," will be examined in detail over the

next two chapters. But here it is crucial to emphasize again the broader context in which these changes were occurring. And that context, as much of the above is meant to illustrate, was the birth of a new intelligentsia. To understand both the phenomenon—and its neglect in most Western analyses of post-Stalin change—it is important to clarify a definition.

The intelligentsia, in historic terms, was a group in Russian society characterized by its vital interest in sociopolitical issues. It was outwardly heterogenous; with members drawn from the sons and daughters of the nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie, and peasantry, it crossed Marxist class boundaries as well as those of the traditional Russian estates. Its members also differed sharply on their prescriptions for Russia, as seen in chapter 1. What they had in common was what defined them as *intelligenty*: a deep concern about the country's social and political problems, a passionate interest in its history, culture, and place in world civilization, and a dedication to the reform of a stifling autocracy.

In speaking of an intelligentsia in the post-Stalin context, many analyses alter its traditional meaning in one of two ways. First are those that use it as synonymous for all those engaged in intellectual professions or even simply possessing higher education.[151] While the rapid growth in the latter that such statistics reveal was an important aspect of thaw-era social change, a quantitative definition overlooks the critical qualitative distinction between a minority of true intellectuals and the majority who, if not "militant ignoramuses," were at best "professionally useless people."[152]

Other definitions are too restrictive, either denying the status of *intelligent* to any but those who openly defied the regime, or dividing the intelligentsia into subgroups such as the *technical*, *creative*, or *Party* intelligentsias. But by emphasizing differences of occupation or official status, the unofficial interests and concerns shared by scientists, writers, economists, and historians—Party and non-Party alike—are obscured, if not lost altogether. And a view that recognizes only the boldest public dissidents as *intelligenty* ignores the significance of less-public or private dissidence, and so imposes an oversimplified heroes-conformists dichotomy on what in fact was a wide spectrum of reformist thought and activity.[153]

During the thaw, critically minded Soviets devoured new portrayals of foreign life and culture in such liberal journals as *Novy Mir*;

they pondered questions about the origins of Stalin's "besieged fortress" raised by such works as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Just as physicists Tamm and Kapitsa pronounced science a "universal" heritage and called for international cooperation, so did historian Mikhail Gefter criticize scholarly isolation and call for a "worldwide historical canvas."[154] Even as Party-sanctioned conferences resounded with calls to air the truth about the 1939 pact with Hitler and Stalin's wartime bungling, hundreds attended General Petro Grigorienko's unsanctioned lectures on the same issues at Moscow University.[155] For Arbatov, a future member of the Central Committee, just as for future dissident Raisa Orlova, early work as translator-reviewers of foreign literature was instrumental in shedding dogmas about the West.[156] The heated debates under way in numerous *kompanii* of students, nonconformist poets, and gulag survivors were echoed in the private "salons" of prominent journalists and writers, senior scholars of the Academy of Sciences, and young Party officials.[157] Meanwhile, Party and non-Party researchers alike pored over newly accessible literature on Russia and liberalism, revolution, and the West.[158] For all these and many other diverse thinkers, the thaw was, above all, a time of intellectual liberation:

> Freeing myself from the blinders of the Party, from severely two-dimensional criteria—"ours or alien, there is no middle course"—I was losing my fear of ideological taboos, my distrust of idealism and liberalism. . . . For the first time, I read Berdyaev . . . Semyon Frank, Vernadsky, Camus, Sartre, Schweitzer, Martin Luther King Jr., Robert Ardrey. My discoveries astonished me. Probably the students of Galileo experienced the same joy as they escaped the cramped, tightly locked universe of Ptolemy.[159]

For some, as seen, the path lay directly through new Western ties. For many others—not just those at the Prague journal *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma*—it went through Eastern Europe. Those who visited after the invasion of Hungary were shocked by the anger they encountered.[160] Others were moved by the *Hungarian Diary* of Polish journalist Wiktor Woroszylski, a "sincere and passionate outcry of the soul."[161] In all fields, Soviet scholars found their East European colleagues increasingly critical of Leninism as well as Stalinism. Many discovered the works of Lukacs, Gramsci, and Djilas analyzing not only the past tragedies of

Bolshevism, but also the continuing tragedy of Stalinism and its imperial-isolationist legacies.[162] Economists and political scientists envied the decentralization and opening of the Yugoslav system, while philosophers followed Belgrade's emerging Marxist-humanist currents. Historians enjoyed new access in Warsaw archives, and social scientists followed closely the growing diversity, greatly influenced by Western studies, in Polish scholarly literature.[163]

The vital intellectual background to all the experiences described above—whatever the field of study or the nature of its specialists' exposure to Western thought—was a broader cultural revival, one that engaged all circles of critically minded Soviets. From idealistic students to cynical veterans, a growing "cult of culture" heralded a new passion for the humanism of classical Russian and foreign literature, and thence to contemporary Western currents.[164] Dostoevsky and Yesenin led to Sartre, Camus, Hemingway, and Martin Luther King. "But King learned from Gandhi, and Gandhi from Tolstoy, whose ideas returned to Russia like a boomerang."[165] In another recollection, "After decades of cowering, a genuine humanitarian Russian culture was reborn . . . a culture represented not only by several dozen morally irreproachable dissident-heroes, but also by a whole generation of potential reformers."[166]

The fans of folksingers Bulat Okudzhava and Vladimir Vysotsky included not only students and artists, but also young Central Committee staffers. The latter not only patronized director Yuri Lyubimov's avant-garde *Taganka* theater, but also introduced him to their boss Andropov and helped defend him from conservative attacks.[167] The reformist apparatchiks were also avid consumers of the same samizdat that circulated widely among liberal intellectuals. They, too, read anti-Stalinist works from Solzhenitsyn to Orwell. They also read Gnedin on Stalin's decimation of the diplomatic corps and the end of Litvinov's policy of cooperation with the Western democracies in favor of the pact with Hitler.[168] It was the same "Party intellectuals" who pushed for publication of Roy Medvedev's anti-Stalinist classic *Let History Judge*, and, failing that, helped protect him from reprisals.[169] "People simply needed to hear the truth. Therefore they seized eagerly upon . . . Varga's works in the field of political economy, on the economic notes of Academician Agagebyan [*sic*], and on Djilas's essay. . . . I myself launched into circulation . . . Avtorkhanov's *Tekhnologiya Vlasti*."[170] The works noted

here illustrate well the interests and concerns shared by reform-minded individuals in Soviet officialdom and the wider circles of creative, scholarly, and "unofficial" intellectuals. The former were not only consumers of the ideas that were vital to the evolving outlook of so many liberal thinkers, they were themselves also producers: Novosibirsk Institute director Abel Aganbegyan, for example, in his above-mentioned critique of economic centralization and militarization; and Varga, in his controversial analysis of postwar capitalism.[171]

■

Now, alongside legions of the so-called *proletarian intelligentsia* (Stalin's terrorized pseudointellectual servitors), there arose a new, critically minded, anti-isolationist, increasingly Western-oriented current—an *intelligentsia* in the fullest sense of the term. They were "a social group . . . of great intellectual and practical strength . . . unorganized but numerous and fairly united in spirit."[172] And notwithstanding their diversity, the members of this new intelligentsia were increasingly aware of their identity as such. "Self-conscious about Russian history and the role of the intelligentsia in it,"[173] this meant many came to understand the efforts of their nineteenth-century predecessors as an important point of reference for themselves.[174]

Another historical reference point was the early twentieth century. This was, in the first place, because the goals of thaw-era reformers so resembled, and in many areas drew explicitly upon, the NEP model of a more liberal market socialism. But NEP's resonance was also broader, for the changes of the thaw had already returned Russian intellectual life to a situation not seen since the early 1920s. During the early NEP years, a diversity of opinion and tolerance of debate existed that in many ways was similar to that of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

There was, however, one crucial difference: the vectors of change were opposite. The brief cultural flowering of the 1920s, after the traumas of revolution and war, saw growing restrictions on intellectual life and increasing repression of liberal, Western-oriented thought. The later thaw, although it followed the even greater traumas of Stalinism, and notwithstanding many setbacks and reversals, brought ever-increasing diversity to intellectual life and so rapid growth in the integrationist, "Westernizing" outlook.