

KHRUSHCHEV AND HIS FOREIGN POLICY

MICHAL REIMAN

Documents of the Soviet leadership deposited in the Czech State Archive reveal important aspects of Soviet foreign policy in the years during which Nikita S. Khrushchev stood at its head. These documents were brought to Czechoslovakia for the information of its leadership, which was to acquaint itself from the authentic documentation with the Soviet foreign agenda. The selection of documents reaching Czechoslovakia and other countries of the Soviet block was made by the Soviet authorities, and their criteria remain unknown. Comparison of the Prague documents with the holdings in the various Russian archives is not yet possible, as they have no so far been released. Nevertheless the Prague collection is sufficiently extensive and complex to offer a picture of Soviet policy, its evaluation of the international situation and the policies of the western powers (the United States, Great Britain and France) in those years. The present study is an expanded version of the introduction to a collection of these documents, published in Brno in 2000.¹³¹

¹³¹ Michal REIMAN, Petr LUŇÁK, *Studená válka 1954–1964: sovětské dokumenty v českých archivech*. Brno, Doplněk 2000. 444 pp.

Soviet Postwar Policy

Khrushchev was one of the generation of Soviet politicians who built their careers amid the mass repression and purges of the 1930's. He began as a Communist functionary in the Donets Basin and was sent to study at the prestigious Industrial Academy in Moscow, where as the school's Party secretary he was known for his hard attitude toward "rightists" and "Trotskyites". By February 1935 he had risen to the post of Secretary of the Moscow Regional Committee of the Party (VKS_(b)), replacing his one-time patron Lazar M. Kaganovich. His rise was part of maneuvering within the leadership leading to purges and the preparation of fabricated evidence against dismissed Communist leaders. Khrushchev took an active part in the purges, and as a "workers' functionary" he was able to create a strong position for himself in Moscow. When in 1938 Stalin decided to deliver the final blow against the Ukrainian leadership he sent Khrushchev to Kiev to become the new First Secretary, which won him a place on the Politburo. Khrushchev worked in Kiev for the next twelve years.¹³²

Khrushchev returned to Moscow only at the end of 1949, with the fall of the Moscow Party Secretary G. M. Popov in Stalin's postwar purges.¹³³ Khrushchev's arrival in Moscow was the signal for fresh changes in the Soviet leadership as Stalin prepared to eliminate members of the older generation such as Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Andreyev and Kaganovich. Khrushchev joined with Malenkov and Beria, who had long worked in Moscow and had maintained close contacts since before the war. Beria, a vice premier

¹³² In later years Khrushchev maintained that during his years in Moscow and Kiev the excesses were carried out by others, including the security forces. But his responsibility for the repression and purges is demonstrated by looking at the chronology of the functions he carried out. In recent years documentation showing his part in the repression has been published in Russian and Ukrainian studies.

¹³³ In the "Leningrad case" a large group of high Communist functionaries originally from Leningrad were arrested. The most prominent were the deputy premier of the Soviet government Nikolaj A. Voznyesensky and the secretary of the Moscow region Alexei A. Kuznyetsov. Stalin, who once declared them his successors, had them liquidated in 1950. G. M. Popov was not arrested but relieved of his post, which Khrushchev ascribed to his own intervention with Stalin.

in the Government, was its most agile member, while from 1948 Malenkov was acting deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and the Party's executive secretary for the Moscow region, which that he was at Stalin's right hand, participating in one way or another in all repressive acts against leading functionaries. His own attitude toward Stalin appears to have been critical. He shared with Beria differing views on a number of points of domestic and foreign policy, but he lacked the courage openly to oppose Stalin, and he was utterly without personal charisma. Stalin thus attempted to undermine Beria's position, ease him out of leading positions and bind Malenkov closer to himself. With the same aim, he appears to have encouraged animosity among Malenkov, Beria and Khrushchev.¹³⁴

The relationships within the Soviet leadership are important because they influenced Khrushchev's later policies. Soviet postwar foreign policy as originally conceived by Stalin counted on long-term cooperation between the USSR and its western Allies Britain and the United States, the three of them sharing influence in the postwar world. The Soviet union attempted to assure for itself the strongest territorial power in Europe which could benefit from conflicts of economic and political interest between Britain and the United States. The USSR and Britain would then act as a counterweight to growing American power. As far as the Far East was concerned, this concept also counted on the Soviet Union maintaining good relations with Chaing Kai Shek's China.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ In earlier years Malenkov was employed in Stalin's secretariat, before being entrusted with personnel policy. He achieved an independent political position only through his wartime activities. In addition to lacking charisma, he was viewed as lacking independence and initiative. Beria, on the other hand, was full of initiative and not afraid to take independent decisions. This was apparently the reason why Stalin attempted to undermine his position. Khrushchev was the underestimated member of the trio, since having been away from Moscow he was without contacts in the central institutions and lacked a grasp of many policy areas, and though endowed with energy and drive, he lacked education, so that he seemed ill-equipped to aspire to leadership.

¹³⁵ G. P. Kynin, J. Laufer, eds., *SSSR i germansky vopros: Dokumenty iz archiva vnyeshney politiki Rossiiskoy Federacii*, Moscow 1996, 338, 358–360. (I. Maisky to V. M. Molotov, 11 January 1944).

Stalin's concept soon proved ephemeral. The western allies were of course unable to accept Soviet domination of the European continent. In view of the fundamental differences in social and political system they could not achieve the necessary harmony of views and interests with the Soviets, the foundation for long-term mutual trust. The Soviet presence in postwar central and southeastern Europe and the Soviet military dominance on the European continent amounted to dangerous changes in the balance of forces to the detriment of the western powers, which were exacerbated by the significant participation of Communists in the governments of France and Italy. This enabled Great Britain and the United States to overcome their differences and strengthened their opposition to Soviet ambitions. Conflicts between the USSR and the western powers increased, and in 1947-48 led to the de facto dissolution of the anti-Hitler coalition. With this Stalin's policy suffered a severe blow, and the USSR had to give up the ambition of influencing the fate of the world through a great-power "troika". Germany divided into two enemy states, and contrary to Soviet expectations the Americans did not withdraw their troops from Europe, remaining instead as a counterweight to Soviet military power. After 1949 the western countries under aegis of the United States built their defense organization, NATO, which permanently changed the situation in Europe. Soviet influence remained limited to the countries of East Central and Southeastern Europe, which, under pressure from the Soviet Union, kept their relation with the west to a minimum.

The new situation deprived Soviet policy of its long-term prospects. It was clear that the political and military strength of the western community, which included the most advanced countries in the world, was bound to increase. Soviet policy was especially troubled by the American lead in military technology and especially in atomic weaponry. While the USSR succeeded in developing its own atomic weapons relatively soon after the war (1949), the gap remained. Moreover, competition with the United States in the military sphere placed a great burden on the Soviet economy already weakened by war, retarded its development and reduced still further

the low standard of living of the populace. It appears that Stalin toyed with the idea of making a decisive move in Europe, making use of the decisive Soviet numerical superiority before the West could bring to bear the necessary military potential and create an atomic arsenal.¹³⁶ A feasibility test of sorts was provided in the Far East by the Korean War, which broke out in 1950 and led first to great success for the Communist North, which occupied a large part of the South. But the western countries, especially the United States, which won a mandate from the United States, became involved. The North Korean front was pushed back to the 38th parallel after the entry of Chinese “volunteers”.

These events prompted the western powers to conclude a peace treaty with Japan over Soviet objections. All this limited Soviet ability to act in the Far East and Pacific regions. Nor was the basic situation changed by the victory of the Communist revolution in China in 1949, which remained very weak. In any case, the emergence of a Communist China as a “second Socialist power” complicated Soviet policy because it now had to take account of Chinese interests.

Events in Korea impressed upon the Soviet leadership the dangers of armed conflict. In his last public address in October 1952 Stalin signaled a retreat from a policy of confrontation when he declared his view that war between the “imperialist powers” would eventually be more likely than a war conducted by them against the Soviet Union. Feelers put out by Stalin in March 1952 for an agreement with the west over Germany ended in failure. They were conceived as an attempt to complicate the integration of West Germany into the

¹³⁶ The Kremlin meeting in 1951 is described by K. Kaplan on the basis of testimony of one of the participants, the Czechoslovak minister of defense A. Čepička: See Kaplan’s memoirs, *Mocní a bezmocní* (The Powerful and the Powerless), Toronto 1989, 201–202. Minutes of the meeting have also been preserved by the Rumanian defense minister Bodnaras. The latter differs from Čepička’s version chiefly in that it speaks of countering an attack from the west. The content of Stalin’s argumentation, however, as presented by Bodnaras, supports the notion of aggressive intent. It has been published in English translation by V. Mastný: “Did NATO Win the Cold War? Documentary Supplement”, *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 3, 1999, document no. 11.

western community and weaken the position of the United States in Europe.¹³⁷ Stalin strengthened this impression after the failure of his initiative by instituting a campaign of “accelerated” building of socialism in East Germany, which in fact meant giving up on German unification and also brought about destabilization resulting from a mass flight of East Germans to the West. Soviet foreign policy was removed from the hands of Molotov, whom Stalin thereby saddled with responsibility for his own mistakes, and entrusted to Malenkov.¹³⁸ Soviet foreign policy found itself in a blind alley.

Stalin’s Death and Changes in the Soviet Political Concept

It was only with Stalin’s death in March 1953 that further movement was possible. Malenkov and Beria took the initiative by occupying the key political functions whose importance had been heightened during the war.¹³⁹ State power then emerged as the representative of the “all-national” war effort.¹⁴⁰ It was encouraged by

¹³⁷ Stalin’s well-known notes offered unification of Germany and renewal of German sovereignty within the Potsdam borders. In exchange Germany was to become neutral. Discussion of Stalin’s proposals would have brought major conflicts among western countries and compromised German integration in western Europe. Therefore they did not enter negotiations. The episode, however, became the subject of intensive political discussion in Germany and in the west generally: did the notes merely reflect propaganda motives or did they represent a real chance for German unification by the end of the 1950’s?

¹³⁸ Molotov was responsible for foreign policy in the Politburo of the Moscow Party Organization VKS_(b), but his influence had been on the wane since 1949 when Vyshinsky, formerly Stalin’s prosecutor, became foreign minister. A. Mikoyan, responsible for foreign commercial relations, was also weakened. Stalin argued that both made excessive concessions to the West, inferred from episodes in the immediate aftermath of the war. See A. I. MIKOYAN, *Tak bylo: Razmysbleniya o minuvshem*, Moscow 1999, 573-575.

¹³⁹ Malenkov became premier (until 1955), and was for a short time secretary of the Central Committee and until the autumn of 1954 head of the presidium of the Soviet Communist Party. Beria became first deputy prime minister and interior minister, which put him in charge of state security.

¹⁴⁰ “All-national” in the multi-national Soviet Union was mediated by the concept of a “Soviet People”.

specific requirements of foreign policy, which adapted itself to the role of the Soviet Union as a world power. After the war Stalin never returned to the earlier model of relations between Party and state, but continued to strengthen the role of the government and state administration. As Stalin's designated successor, Malenkov did not lay claim to the post of Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which he had occupied many years, but rather to that of prime minister. The secretary's post was left to Khrushchev.

Soon after Stalin's death it was clear that the new ruling group did not identify itself with Stalinist policies. The notion of a "personality cult" appeared in the press, and Party functionaries were given to understand that the changes were not merely an attempt to elevate a "collective leadership". The process of rehabilitation was begun for the most egregious cases of postwar repression, and the amnesty proposed by Beria meant the release of nearly one million of the two and a half million Soviet prisoners. It was expected that the situation of political prisoners would be eased. The practice of filling key posts in the non-Russian Soviet republics with ethnic Russians was discontinued. In April 1953 it was reported in the press that state security was henceforth to concentrate on its prime targets, "external enemies" and that its employees had extracted false confessions.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ The rehabilitation extended to the recent case of the "Jewish doctors", accused in 1952 of plotting to kill members of the Soviet leadership who were their patients. The first step was to reopen the case of the "Jewish anti-Fascist Committee", a large group of Soviet Jewish intellectuals originating during the war, who were sentenced to death in 1952 and, with one exception, executed. Beria informed the government of the circumstances surrounding the death of the leading Jewish actor S. Michoels, who was murdered in the spring of 1948 at Stalin's orders. Also reopened was the case of a leading Soviet diplomat, deputy of the foreign minister Maisky, accused of espionage. Prominent figures in the aircraft industry were rehabilitated along with air force commanders accused in 1946 of damaging Soviet interests. The case of intelligence agents accused of complicity in the "Jewish plot" was reviewed, and the famous "Leningrad case" of 1949 was reopened. All this was at the initiative of Beria, who as interior minister had access to the documentation. See R. G. PICHAYA, *SSSR: Istoriya vlasti. 1945-1991*, Moscow 1998, 102-108. V. P. NAUMOV, "Byl li zagovor Berii? Novye dokumenty o sobytiyach 1953 g.", in: *Novaya i novyeyschaya istoriya* (NNI) 5/1998, 20-22.

The changes aroused the Stalinists, as their own activities were being called into question. The conflict intensified when foreign policy came up for consideration. This was made necessary as foreign relations appeared to reach a turning point and diplomatic feelers were launched by the western powers.¹⁴² The need to solve pressing domestic problems also played its role. Malenkov and Beria were aware of the necessity of reorienting the national economy to limit the development of heavy industry in favor of consumer production and housing, and slowing precipitous socialization in the countries of the Soviet bloc.¹⁴³ A requirement for this was progress in rocket technology and thermonuclear weaponry, where the USSR was ahead of the United States. Malenkov and Beria apparently wished to eliminate dangerous international flashpoints and reopen dialogue with their one-time partners in the anti-Hitler coalition, the United States, Britain and France. The favorable signs included disunity prevailing among the three western powers in their view of world problems and especially European security, the attempts by Great Britain and France to maintain their great power status, the continuing fears concerning Germany and its integration into the western defense structure. In the countries of the Soviet bloc, meanwhile, Malenkov and Beria tried to get rid of the worst creatures of Stalin – Rákósy in Hungary and Ulbricht in East Germany. Relations were renewed with Yugoslavia, and Beria prepared to test the wind for a possible Soviet-Yugoslav “rapprochement”.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Eisenhower’s speech “Give Peace a Chance” of April 1953 and a similar speech by Churchill. In discussions of the western offers in the Party presidium differences arose setting Malenkov and Beria against the other members, especially the foreign minister V. M. Molotov. V. ZUBOK, C. PLESHAKOV, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge, Mass. 1956, 157.

¹⁴³ This idea was proposed by Malenkov at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet in August 1953 after the arrest of Beria. Beria’s view may be judged from his attitude toward the “hastened building of socialism” in East Germany and Hungary. See U. V. AKSYUTIN, A. V. PYZHNIKOV, *Postalin’skoye obshchestvo: problema liderstva i transformacia vlasti*, Moscow 1999, 30–32, 34 ff, 43–46.

¹⁴⁴ The rise of Imre Nagy, as well as the “intrigues” against Ulbricht, were later ascribed to Beria. Beria’s efforts to renew personal contacts with Yugoslav political leaders was even described as “treason”. But it may be assumed that he could not have undertaken such initiatives without the knowledge of Malenkov. Otherwise they would have been not merely dangerous but senseless. See Aksyutin, Pazhikov, 30-34.

These initiatives, however, did not attract the necessary support from the Soviet leadership – especially when in 1953 Malenkov and Beria reacted to the growing social and political crisis in East Germany with a proposal to abandon the policy of “building Socialism”. Behind this lay their attempt to revive Stalin’s proposal of 1952 and bring about change in European relations at the cost of creating a united “bourgeois democratic” Germany.¹⁴⁵ Molotov, who after Stalin’s death resumed control of the foreign ministry, rebelled against their willingness to strive for a reduction in international tensions at the cost of compromising Soviet foreign-policy interests. He embodied the continuity of a hard-line great-power concept of Soviet policy and enjoyed considerable personal authority among the Soviet leadership. Molotov was supported by defense minister Bulganin and by Khrushchev, who was also interested in getting rid of Beria as a dangerous competitor in the ongoing power struggle and in weakening Malenkov as head of the government. Beria was arrested, tried at the end of 1953 and sentenced to death.¹⁴⁶ Khrushchev thereby significantly strengthened his position. The Soviet leadership returned to the thesis of the “leading role of the Party”, which meant the subordinate role of the Government, i.e. Malenkov. In the autumn of 1954 Malenkov was deprived of the chairmanship of the Party presidium and shortly thereafter of the premiership, which was taken over by Bulganin.

The Formulation of Khrushchev’s Foreign Policy

Molotov exacted a price for his alliance with Khrushchev. Soviet foreign policy remained under his control for the next two years and new elements made themselves felt only gradually. The rejection of

¹⁴⁵ See M. REIMAN, “Malenkov und die deutsche Einheit. Ergänzungen zur Diskussion über die sowjetische Deutschland. Note vom März 1952”, *Deutschland Archiv*, no. 3, 1999, 456–460.

¹⁴⁶ Zubok, Pleshakov, 160-162. Pichoya, 109–111. The charges lodged against Beria did not include (contrary to Khrushchev’s later version) responsibility for the repression and terror during the Stalin era.

Malenkov's and Beria's proposals on the German question meant that the Soviet Union lost the chance to attempt a long-term reduction of tension in Europe and foster a divergence in American and European security interests. Molotov's idea of conflict between the USSR and the West, as well as his view of the German question, remained strongly marked by the Stalin era. Criticism of Stalin disappeared from Soviet policy, and even the policy of rehabilitation underwent some revision. A new round was begun only in 1955-1956, while in the interval new political trials took place in Rumania and Czechoslovakia.¹⁴⁷ The causes of the conflicts within the Soviet leadership were far from clear, while at the beginning of the Eisenhower era the United States was preoccupied by threats to Western unity. This was important since it affected the West's concept of security, the role of the "nuclear deterrent", and the method of integrating West Germany into the western defense system.¹⁴⁸ The Soviet initiative, aiming for a shift in international relations, was launched only in the late spring of 1955 at a time when the international situation had changed markedly. In 1954 it had been definitively decided to integrate West Germany into NATO, and the USSR replied in the spring of 1955 with the formation of its East European counterpart the Warsaw Pact. The division of Europe thus took on firm lineaments.

Khrushchev's policy, as it crystallized in 1955 and 1956, betrayed a number of inconsistencies. On the one hand it incorporated points from Malenkov's and Beria's proposals (to which Khrushchev had made a contribution): it placed emphasis on consumer production, housing and agriculture, on reducing international tensions and normalizing relations with the western countries; in domestic affairs, after the elimination of Beria it turned against the state security system, replacing it with a new structure, the KGB under

¹⁴⁷ In Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1954 the Slánský trial was followed by those of Švermová, Husák, Smrkovský and others, while in Rumania there was the trial of the leading postwar Communist functionary L. Patrascanu.

¹⁴⁸ See Petr LUŇÁK, *Západ: Spojené státy a západní Evropa ve studené válce* (The West: the United States and Western Europe in the Cold War), Prague 1997, 159-164.

Khrushchev's control. From this arose his return to the rehabilitation process, which also looked toward the "socialist countries", where it was to encourage removal of that portion of the leadership which had originally supported the ideas of Malenkov and Beria. In the USSR itself the process turned against Malenkov and those leaders who had contested Khrushchev's political leadership.¹⁴⁹ This, however, undermined the second aspect of Khrushchev's policy, his effort to distance himself from the concepts of Malenkov and Beria. Thus he emphatically appealed to traditional Communist dogma and attempted to insert it into current policy. While Malenkov and Beria were aware that the serious economic and social difficulties of the USSR and its allies demanded "retreat", Khrushchev attempted an "offensive". Moreover, in the struggle against his opponents he sought support from the army. Thus in the spring of 1954 he clearly distanced himself from Malenkov, who declared the inadmissibility of war in the nuclear age,¹⁵⁰ and also attacked Molotov when he joined Malenkov in declaring that only the "foundations of socialism" had been built in the USSR.¹⁵¹ He encouraged the Soviet bloc countries to follow the latest Soviet solution, by which he revised Malenkov's references to the legacy of NEP. The socializing process which had been halted in 1953 received Khrushchev's blessing.

Khrushchev appeared on the international stage in the spring of 1955, shortly after Malenkov was removed as premier. The Western powers were not expecting a significant change in Soviet policy. The situation at the end of 1954 was dominated by the integration of West Germany into NATO and the emergence of the Warsaw Pact.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ In the Soviet Block these were chiefly individuals who carried out Malenkov's policy – Nagy in Hungary or Zápotočký in Czechoslovakia. In East Germany Khrushchev supported the newly reconsolidated Ulbricht, who had been threatened by the policies of Malenkov and Beria and by the events of June 1953. In the USSR Khrushchev attempted to get rid of Molotov and members of the older political generation along with Malenkov.

¹⁵⁰ Zubok, Pleshakov, 166–168.

¹⁵¹ "Sto sorok besed s Molotovym", in: *Dnevnik F. Chuyeva* (hereafter Chuyev), Moscow 1991, 347–349.

¹⁵² Adam B. ULAM, *The Rivals: America and Russia Since World War II*, New York 1971, 217–225.

Nevertheless, once his position was consolidated, Khrushchev took the initiative. In May there was the agreement restoring Austrian sovereignty and securing its neutrality. With the troops of the great powers withdrawn from Austria, the door was open, from the Soviet viewpoint, for negotiations concerning Germany. Through French mediation the Soviet government opened talks with West Germany which led to a visit by Chancellor Adenauer to Moscow in September 1955 and the establishment of diplomatic relations.¹⁵³ Also important was the visit by Khrushchev and Bulganin to Yugoslavia in June 1955 at which Khrushchev admitted Stalin's responsibility for the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict of 1948.¹⁵⁴ He thereby eliminated a conflict which had burdened Soviet policy in the Balkans and Mediterranean.

These steps were followed by Soviet disarmament proposals which took account of Western wishes expressed earlier, and a proposal for a European agreement on collective security which framed Soviet views on peace in Europe and on a resolution of the German question. These proposals attempted to make use of the divergence in the position of the Western powers,¹⁵⁵ but they did not consider sufficiently developments in Western defense thinking since the beginning of the Eisenhower administration. On Germany, they were based on the existence of two German states, in contrast to the original plans of Malenkov and Beria. A German peace treaty would end the state of war with Germany and should be separated from the question of German unification, which should be decided by an agreement between both

¹⁵³ A. HILLGRUBER, *Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1986: die "deutsche Frage" in der Welt-politik*, 8th edition, Stuttgart Berlin Cologne Kohlhammer 1995, 63 ff. The visit has been regarded as setting the seal on the division of Germany, since it took place even though the USSR rejected the claim of West Germany to represent all of Germany. The establishment of diplomatic relations between West Germany and the Soviet Union was an important factor in the international situation.

¹⁵⁴ The visit was prepared by a secret correspondence between the Soviet and Yugoslav leadership, initiated with a letter from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party dated 22 June 1954, in which the Yugoslavs were offered normalization of relations between the two countries and also between the two "parties". See "Sovietsko-yugoslavskiye otnosheniya: Iz dokumentov yul'skovo plenuma CK KPSS 1955 g" in, *Istorichesky archiv* 1999, no. 2, 3-63 (introductory note and Khrushchev's report).

¹⁵⁵ ULAM, 232 ff.

German states. The Allies should withdraw from Germany. Khrushchev's proposals turned against West Germany, against its incorporation into NATO, and thus against the current Western concept of security based on the primacy of conflict between the USSR and the West. Moreover, they torpedoed West Germany's claim to exclusive representation of all Germany and implied a recognition of East Germany by the western countries. Therefore they were unacceptable to the West, even though they represented a step forward, in that they permitted a renewal of the earlier anti-Hitler coalition among the great powers.

When after an interval of ten years the leaders of all the great powers (the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France) gathered at Geneva, there was a marked change in the atmosphere. The USSR visibly attempted to renew the friendly ties that had marked the earlier alliance and had been broken under Stalin and Truman. One of the members of the Soviet delegation was Marshal G. K. Zhukov, who engaged in personal diplomacy by meeting Eisenhower, who had led the allied forces on the Western Front. Zhukov was apparently marked down for a prominent role in future Soviet foreign policy. The positions remained far apart, but there began a period in which both sides renewed intensive contacts and defined the problems and attitudes which in the coming years would determine the themes of their talks: a solution to the German question, security problems, and disarmament, especially the containment or elimination of the nuclear threat. Aside from their propaganda value, the Soviet proposals would reduce the economic burden of military spending. At the same time they aimed to equalize the mutual threats that could be brought to bear by the United States and the USSR and neutralize the scientific and technological superiority of the West. Thus arms controls depended on substantial reductions, and later total disarmament, since in Khrushchev's view controls without an agreement on total disarmament were no more than espionage, which would give the West an advantage.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ See Luňák, 214–216. For the official Soviet assessment, V. G. Trukhanovsky, ed, *Istoria mezhdunarodnikh otnosheny i vneshney politiki SSSR*, vol. 3 (1945–1967) ed. I. A. Kirilin (hereafter Trukhanovsky), Moscow 1967, 224–227.

During this period relations between the USSR and the West came increasingly to be influenced by the situation in Asia, in north and central Africa, and then also in Latin America, where the consequences of the disintegration of the colonial empires of the western countries – Great Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands – made themselves felt. The revolution in Egypt at the beginning of the 1950's and the rise of the nationalist Nasser regime brought tensions with Britain and France over control of the Suez Canal and a deepening of the conflict between Israel and the Arab states. To this was added the complicated situation in the Indian subcontinent. The new national states, meanwhile, attempted to distance themselves from the conflict between East and West, which limited their space for maneuver and the pursuit of their own interests. They joined in an association of “nonaligned” countries in which, along with India and Egypt, Yugoslavia played a prominent role. This group opposed colonialism and issued resolutions that often had an anti-Western tenor.

Soviet policy, which followed an isolationist course under Stalin, did not react in time to exert significant influence on these developments. But the situation changed in 1955, when Khrushchev attempted to confront the construction of a western military alliance in Asia and searched for ways to offset western policy. China contributed on this score by intensifying relations with India, Indonesia and other countries, resulting in a conference of 29 nonaligned countries of Asia and Africa at Bandung in Indonesia. It opened in April 1955 and roundly condemned colonialism, and the Soviet Union benefited from the principle of peaceful co-existence which, under the Indian concept of “panchashila”, the conference adopted. Thus in the autumn of 1955 Khrushchev and Bulganin traveled to India, Burma and Afghanistan, then later to Indonesia and other countries. They significantly increased Soviet influence in Asia and enabled the USSR to develop closer contacts with the nonaligned movement.¹⁵⁷ This was

¹⁵⁷ Letter from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party to the Czechoslovak Party on the results of the journey by Khrushchev and Bulganin, 7 January 1956, in Reiman, Luňák, 47–53.

abetted by closer Soviet relations with Yugoslavia and Nasser's Egypt, engaged in an ever sharper conflict with Great Britain, France and Israel.¹⁵⁸ Thus a new prospect was opened up for fresh conflicts between the Soviet Union and the West, which quickly extinguished the "spirit of Geneva". But at the same time a fact not adequately appreciated by Khrushchev was that the disintegration of the colonial system undermined the status of Great Britain and France and increased their dependence on American support, which of course significantly limited the flexibility of Soviet policy.

The 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and Foreign Policy

The foreign policy enunciated by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956 was as contradictory as his earlier policies.¹⁵⁹ The meeting was well received by the public, especially in the USSR and the countries of the Soviet bloc, since it seemed to open the way to reforms and a lessening of repression. The principle of "collective decision making" was to prevail among the political leadership, and living standards were to be improved. This resolution was based on a harsh criticism of Stalin's repressive policies which Khrushchev delivered at a closed session of the congress. It was not entirely consistent: negative aspects of Soviet history were traced to Stalin's political and personal shortcomings, so that the rehabilitation process was in effect limited to conformist communists, was lengthened over a period of years and became one of the factors

¹⁵⁸ England and France defended the claims of the Suez Canal Company, which was to be nationalized, and were concerned over the strategically important connection to Asia. Israel had every reason to fear that Egyptian control of Suez would threaten its security, even its very existence.

¹⁵⁹ See *SS s'ezd Kommunisticheskoy partii Sovetskogo Soyuza 14–25 fevralya 1956 goda: stenografichesky otchet*, 2 volumes, Moscow 1956. Of special significance was Khrushchev's report to the Central Committee in volume 1, 9-120. His speech on the "cult of personality" and its consequences was only published for internal use in the USSR and was never made available in unabridged form abroad.

closing off the road towards a democratization of the system. At the time, however, the simple fact that Stalin had come in for criticism had a positive effect.

The political concept presented by Khrushchev was strongly influenced by the optimistic assessment of the state and the prospects of “socialism”. Khrushchev proceeded from the assumption that the Soviet economy could reach American levels within decades both in terms of total volume and per capita production.¹⁶⁰ This result was to be obtained through increased economic efficiency stemming from improved planning in the USSR and economic coordination among the Soviet bloc countries. Khrushchev’s plans were marked by an elemental, ideologically motivated imperialism, manifested in the global reach of his foreign policy aims. The economic and political efforts of the USSR and the Soviet bloc would lead to the “victory of socialism over capitalism throughout the world”.

Like his predecessor Malenkov, Khrushchev was aware of the ruinous consequences of war in the atomic age. He saw the danger in the policies of the United States and its allies, who regarded it as the last defense against “socialism”. This view implied a heightened attention to armaments. Khrushchev, however, spoke of averting war and stressed the peaceful coexistence of countries with “differing social systems”. His concept ascribed great significance to negotiation and agreement among the powers, while he hoped to assure Soviet successes through heightened tension. “Peaceful coexistence” did not imply a “reconciliation of ideologies”, nor did he intend to preserve the status quo between “capitalism” and “socialism”, resolving instead to erode the former from within through support of anti-government movements. He sought allies in third-world countries, where opposition to colonialism was weakening current regimes. Like Stalin during the war, he appealed to the “democratic” and “socialist” public, offering his support to a range of leftist organizations and personalities. Though this sort of cooperation was intended to assure

¹⁶⁰ The original target was the 1970’s; later, when this appeared unlikely, it was postponed to the 1980’s without comment.

“peaceful coexistence”, he spoke at the same time of “national roads to socialism”, meaning that Communists would respect their non-Communist partners and not resort to civil war. This was meant to quiet the fears of the Western public in the face of eventual Communist successes. The paradox was that its main effect was on the public and politics of the Soviet bloc countries, where a right to different “models” of socialism seemed to be implied. The congress appeared to endorse a loosening of relations among “socialist states” and cooperation on equal terms.

On the whole the foreign policy approved at the congress had a confrontational character. It grew out of the conditions of the atomic age and the dangers presented by armed conflict among the great powers. It also reflected the new political balance occasioned by the end of the colonial system and the rise of new independent states. At the same time it reflected the continuing antagonism between East and West and thus brought no promise of fundamental changes in relations.

The contradictions in Khrushchev’s concept surfaced soon after the congress. Criticism of the Stalinist regime roused the public to press for quick changes to the system, but Soviet policy had no ready answer to such appeals, which were a kind of revenge for Khrushchev’s efforts to minimize economic and social difficulties. In June 1956 serious disturbances by workers broke out in Poznan which led to changes in the Polish government and Communist Party. These events evoked similar demands in Hungary, where rioting escalated into a national revolution which was only quelled by Soviet military intervention.

Soviet foreign policy was severely inhibited. When in the autumn of 1956 the Suez conflict ended with a war by Britain, France and Israel against Egypt, the Soviet Union was in no position to intervene in any effective way. Therefore it limited itself to threats against the two Western powers, which again worsened East-West relations. Though the war heightened Soviet influence in Egypt and Syria, the initiative in the region was taken by the United States which achieved an end to the conflict and suggested measures which were to contain

the “Communist threat”. The situation in the Middle East was temporarily stabilized.¹⁶¹

The events of the autumn of 1956 showed that the chief problem of Soviet foreign policy was that its foundations remained unconsolidated. Events in Poland and Hungary impaired the stability of the Soviet bloc for a long time and also created opposition to the policies begun by the 20th Party Congress. This opposition was progressively joined by the greater part of the Party leadership, who for a variety of reasons endeavored to eject Khrushchev.¹⁶² The Chinese leadership distanced itself from Khrushchev. From 1953 to 1955 relations between Khrushchev and Mao had generally improved, as Khrushchev’s struggle against Malenkov suited Mao’s program of rapid socialization which was meeting opposition from the Chinese leadership. After the 20th Party Congress relations began to deteriorate as Mao reacted coldly to the criticism of Stalin and failed to endorse the foreign policy resolutions of the Congress. The Chinese, confronted with the existence of the nationalist government in Taiwan recognized by the United Nations as the legitimate representative of China, reserved the right to impose its authority on the island, while Khrushchev’s notion of “peaceful coexistence” tied their hands. These pressures evoked a “consolidating” tendency in Communist policy which resulted in a worsening of relations with Yugoslavia.

The situation began to change only in mid-1957, when Khrushchev succeeded in thwarting a move by the opposition to unseat him as First Secretary of the Party, then eliminated his

¹⁶¹ ULAM, 254–264. See also Information from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party on talks between Gromyko and Dulles, in Reiman, Luňák, 55–69. The document also reflects the weakened international standing of Britain and France flowing from the Suez crisis.

¹⁶² The core of the opposition was an influential group of politicians including Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, supported by the current “president” Voroshilov and eventually by politicians from the Khrushchev camp – the premier Bulganin, Khrushchev’s onetime foreign minister Shepilov, and others. At one point the opposition gained the upper hand in the Party presidium. See A. B. BEZBORODOV, *Istoria Rossii, noveyshye vremya 1945–1999* (hereafter Bezborodov), Moscow 1999, 88 ff.

opponents within the leadership.¹⁶³ In the autumn Khrushchev concentrated in his hands the functions of premier, recently vacated, and first secretary of the Party.¹⁶⁴ He thereby gained full control of the agencies of political power and hence a clear mandate to direct foreign policy and participate in international negotiations. At an international meeting of Communist parties in Moscow in November 1957 Khrushchev, in exchange for concessions in the interpretation of resolutions of the 20th Congress, won confirmation of the “leading role” of the USSR in setting the policies of the Communist Parties. But unity proved elusive because of the conflicts between the Soviet and Chinese Parties continued to deepen even though they were temporarily muffled. In any case, the stage was set for Khrushchev to launch a broad foreign policy offensive.¹⁶⁵

Soviet Policy and the Diplomatic Offensive 1958-1960

The Soviet foreign policy offensive of 1958-1960, which ended amid the events leading to the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis the following year, represented a not entirely realistic effort to put into practice the ideas adopted at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. It was not a “defensive” policy: after the turbulence of 1956-1957, Khrushchev needed to demonstrate his ability to carry out an “offensive” policy.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ See Pichoya, 171-186.

¹⁶⁴ With the resignation of Bulganin the leading candidate, Marshal G. K. Zhukov was eliminated by Khrushchev in the autumn of 1957 from the Party leadership for supposedly attempting to remove the army from Party control. As premier Zhukov would have been a personality domestically as well as internationally, as political and military leaders of the war years continued to occupy top positions in the Western countries (Eisenhower, de Gaulle, Macmillan).

¹⁶⁵ The limitations placed on Khrushchev's foreign policy are indicated in the way Gromyko conducted his talks with Dulles in the autumn of 1957, when the leadership changes came up for discussion. He vehemently protested against the suggestion that they would have a positive effect on Soviet policy. See Reiman-Luňák, 55-69.

¹⁶⁶ In the extensive literature on the German question from 1958 to 1962, which played a key role in Soviet activities, it is often discussed whether Khrushchev's concept

Khrushchev presented his plans to an extraordinary meeting of the Soviet Communist Party at the beginning of 1959. They were based ultimately on an illusory assessment of the prospects for the Soviet economy in the world. The volume of Soviet industrial production was estimated at half that of the United States, agricultural production 20 to 25 percent lower. According to the figures, however, Soviet industrial production exceeded that of Britain, France and West Germany combined. It was assumed, moreover, that growth would continue at 8 to 9 percent annually, while that of the United States and Western Europe remained at around 2 percent. Thus, the Soviet Union should overtake the United States in overall production as well as production per capita at the beginning of the 1970's. By this time the countries of the "world socialist system" should be contributing over half the world's industrial production.¹⁶⁷ These figures became the basis for a seven-year plan for economic development (1959–1965).

These plans were important for Soviet foreign policy in that they determined its tasks and suggested a time frame in which to accomplish them. The "spirit of Geneva" was completely dissolved in the events of 1956, while the distrust between East and West increased with new realities. The careful attempt by Dulles to interpret Khrushchev's victory over the opposition in the USSR as a return to "Geneva" was sharply rejected by Gromyko.¹⁶⁸ Khrushchev apparently did not trust the possibilities offered by normal negotiations and thus opted for a confrontational approach. He was partly influenced by the delicate state of Sino-Soviet relations. The Communist government, still denied great-power status and the right to represent China in the United Nations, had little interest in seeing

was "defensive" or "aggressive". Similar uncertainty surrounds the origins of his "peace offensive". The answer must be sought in the actions which created the real situation and the possibilities within which Soviet policy had to operate. Khrushchev's concept was "offensive" in so far as it aimed at changing European realities, although its goal was not violent change.

¹⁶⁷ *Vneocherednoy XXI s'ezd Kommunisticheskoy partii Sovetskogo Soyuza, 27 yanuarya – 5 fevralya 1959 g., Stenografichesky otchet*, vol. 1, Moscow 1959, 63–67.

¹⁶⁸ See n. 35 above.

improved relations between the Soviet Union and the West. This had an impact on the methods that Khrushchev selected in carrying out his policy, whose aims took little account of the complications inherent in international problems. Soviet diplomacy strove for quick and clear-cut results, and it often overestimated the means at its disposal. Thus it provoked a number of crises, which in the end proved counterproductive.

The general situation appeared favorable for the Soviet Union. In October 1957 the USSR sent the first satellite into space and confirmed its edge over the United States in rocket technology. For the first time since the war the United States felt itself vulnerable to the danger of atomic attack.¹⁶⁹ The Western countries found themselves caught off guard, which deepened the differences among NATO members as Europe found itself more exposed to atomic attack than the United States. A further source of contention was the continuing division between the “victors” and the “defeated” and the fear of an eventual re-emergence of Germany with the right to participate in atomic arms policy.¹⁷⁰

Relations with the West thus remained complicated. The special relationship between the United States and Great Britain remained from the Second World War. Britain developed its own atomic weapons at the beginning of the 1950's and after Sputnik pressed the United States for help in developing its atomic arsenal. This confirmed their special relationship within the western alliance, which was further deepened with the rise of de Gaulle's Fifth Republic when France attempted to strengthen its position and develop its own security. As these were based on closer ties with West Germany (in itself problematic, as fears of a strong Germany remained intact), France's relations with Britain and the United States suffered.

¹⁶⁹ Luňák, 162 ff. Later research has called into doubt the extent of the Soviet advantage, though at the time the West was convinced.

¹⁷⁰ The effort by West Germany to become an atomic power, expressed in a resolution of the Bundestag in the spring of 1958, became a prime subject of Soviet diplomacy, used to justify Soviet proposals on the German questions. See ALBRECHT, et al., *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik: Beiträge*, Cologne 1980, 274 ff.

Thus Soviet policy was presented with opportunities for developing its own initiatives, which received approval at the conference of Communist parties in Moscow in November 1957. In February 1958 President Eisenhower spoke in favor of Soviet proposals for talks at the highest level.¹⁷¹ Western hopes for a change in Soviet policy after the strengthening of Khrushchev's position appear to have persisted. The Soviet government prepared a list of problems tabled during the Geneva talks, whose ventilation could "improve the international situation", of which the German question took first place. Conceptual themes were discussed at meetings of the Comecon countries and the Warsaw Pact at the end of May 1958.¹⁷² In August 1958, amid the heightened tensions caused by Chinese military activity in the Straits of Taiwan, the Soviet Union proposed the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany, which thereafter should become a "disarmament zone" between East and West. The Western powers would withdraw their forces behind their own borders, while the USSR would withdraw its troops from Poland and Hungary as well as Germany.¹⁷³ At the same time the USSR promised agreement with Polish plans to create a "nuclear free zone" in Central Europe and with proposals for a substantial reduction of conventional armed forces. West Berlin was to become a free city whose existence

¹⁷¹ Reiman, Luňák 71–76 for reports of conversations between the Soviet ambassador and Eisenhower.

¹⁷² Reiman, Luňák, 77–80: information on Political Advisory Committee of the Warsaw Pact, 24 May 1958, presented to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party by the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister V. David. On the occasion of the parallel Comecon meeting Walter Ulbricht presented a request for economic help from the other socialist countries to assure the stability of East Germany. Czech translation of the letter is in the State Central Archive, Prague. Other documents there do not suggest that Ulbricht exerted influence on the basic concept of Khrushchev's policy on Germany. Rather they suggest concessions to the views of the Polish foreign minister Rapacki, who did not favor sharpening tensions with the West. Ulbricht hoped to use the crisis to improve the position of East Germany within the Soviet bloc and win massive amounts of aid. The documents also suggest the active participation by the SED leadership in measures designed to implement Soviet proposals regarding transit links with West Berlin.

¹⁷³ Khrushchev used these formulations at the 21st Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. The withdrawal was meant to underline the seriousness of Soviet aims, in view of the still fresh events of 1956.

would be guaranteed by international agreement. The German peace treaty would be concluded by both German states or by common institutions created by them for the purpose. Unification itself should not be a subject of the treaty but would be left to future agreement between the sovereign German states.

From a long-term perspective these proposals presented no real threat to the West. A weak East Germany, deprived of the daily presence and support of Soviet troops, would be fully occupied with its own problems. Soviet military withdrawal from Poland and Hungary would heighten the pressure for independence. But at the given moment these proposals were unacceptable to the West for a number of reasons: they conflicted with the current trend of Western defense and security policy, which posited a (perhaps unrealistically) strong Soviet Union; would lead to recognition de facto and perhaps de jure of East Germany and drive a wedge between themselves and West Germany. Moreover, withdrawal of western troops from West Germany would not only disturb the defense system but also call into question the American military presence in Europe and undermine confidence in American guarantees.¹⁷⁴ Changes in the status of West Berlin would violate the spirit and letter of the Potsdam Agreement, which evoked reservations on the Soviet side as well.¹⁷⁵

The Soviet proposals as a whole did not form a suitable basis for agreement. The Soviet leadership appears to have misjudged the situation, exaggerating the differences of opinion among the Western countries and its own ability to exert pressure.¹⁷⁶ The tactic chosen at

¹⁷⁴ Hillgruber, 67–69. The attitude of the West German government was significant for that of the West as a whole, and it was openly negative, a source of additional irritation for the Soviet side.

¹⁷⁵ A. I. MIKOYAN, *Tak bylo: Razmysblenya o minuvshem*, Moscow 1999, 604 ff. The Potsdam agreement treated Berlin as a whole, not merely West Berlin. The USSR could not unilaterally change the conditions for Western military presence in Berlin.

¹⁷⁶ See Information on conversations between Khrushchev and Prime Minister Macmillan during his visit to the USSR, 21 February–3 March 1959, especially the Soviet proposal for the German peace treaty. See also minutes of talks between Czechoslovak premier Široký and other Czechoslovak leaders and Soviet foreign minister Gromyko concerning the Geneva conference of foreign ministers, 6 August 1959. Both in Reiman, Luňák, 81–89, 105–110.

the end of 1958 provoked a dangerous worsening of the international situation. In two notes, dated 27 November 1958 and 10 January 1959, the Soviet leadership set a six-month term for the West to agree to a German peace treaty. After that time the USSR and its allies would conclude a separate peace with East Germany. This treaty would terminate claims by the Western powers in Berlin and control of road access to the city would revert to the German Democratic Republic. Should the Western powers fail to respect East German sovereignty by forcing access to Berlin, the Soviet Union reserved the right to act in accordance with its treaty obligations toward the German Democratic Republic, i.e. to use armed force.¹⁷⁷

The Soviet notes, together with declarations by Khrushchev and other leaders led to sharply heightened tensions, and the eventuality of using military force was given consideration. But this in turn encouraged a more sober assessment. In January 1959 A. Mikoyan travelled to Washington to explain to Eisenhower and Dulles the aims of the Soviet leaders and express hopes for a peaceful resolution. The visit was not a success, but neither side wished for war, looking instead for avenues for honorable withdrawal. At the end of February 1959 prime minister Macmillan began a ten-day visit to Moscow at his own initiative. After a difficult start, the talks showed that both sides sought compromise. The Soviets softened their demands, while Macmillan suggested regular meetings at the highest level.¹⁷⁸ Amid reduced tensions a meeting of the foreign ministers of the four great powers opened in Geneva, where both sides presented suggestions for resolving disputes. Prospects for greatly improved relations improved beyond expectation, and several prominent American figures followed the British visits to Moscow.¹⁷⁹ In July 1959 Khrushchev was invited to visit the United States, where a number of contentious

¹⁷⁷ Hillgruber, 67–70. Also contains an interpretation of West German policy regarding the Soviet notes.

¹⁷⁸ Reiman, Luňák, 81–89.

¹⁷⁹ The West German government opposed negotiations, but remained isolated in the Western camp, a position abetted by Dulles's resignation in April 1959. See Hillgruber, 67–72. Reiman, Luňák, 105–110.

issues would come up for discussion: in addition to the German question, disarmament, controls, a halt to nuclear testing, development of economic and cultural relations.

A Thaw in Relations

Khrushchev left for his two-week visit to the United States in the middle of September, which was to set the seal on the improved atmosphere and prepare further high-level meetings.¹⁸⁰ Both sides sought a *modus vivendi* and showed understanding for the differences of outlook. A significant factor was the personal understanding established between Eisenhower and Khrushchev at the presidential retreat at Camp David. Their respective positions drew no closer, but it was clear that relations could develop favorably based on the status quo and its gradual evolution. Even now Khrushchev did not abandon his tendency to apply pressure, as when before the United Nations he submitted his surprise proposals for complete and immediate disarmament and an end to colonialism. A new feature of the situation was of course the fact that Khrushchev emphasized the significance of the continuing disarmament negotiations. Though his proposals complicated these negotiations, they also relieved the pressure for a prompt solution to the German problem. Thus Khrushchev acceded to Eisenhower's request that he refrains from relying on ultimatums.¹⁸¹

Of special significance were the agreements for new high-level meetings favored by the USSR. At first Soviet diplomats thought in terms of heads of governments of a larger number of countries, which could turn the meetings into a propaganda tribune without

¹⁸⁰ The visit was preceded by an exchange of notes between the two leaders. Its course was reported to Soviet allies, and in October 1959 Gromyko provided detailed information for Soviet bloc ambassadors. Reiman, Luňák, 111–117, 129–134.

¹⁸¹ This conclusion is confirmed in the memoirs of Khrushchev's son: Sergei KHRUSHCHEV, *Nikita Khrushchev: krizisy i rakety: vzglyad iznutri*, Moscow 1994, 466. He asserts that the Berlin crisis was de facto terminated at Camp David, though he kept the Berlin problem alive for future use in his dealings with the West.

hope of real results. After Macmillan's visit to Moscow, the model adopted was that of the four-power Geneva conference. It appeared that these meetings could be institutionalized as an instrument for negotiation between the two camps, a corrective to the prevailing polarization.¹⁸² The stress on the primacy of the victorious powers strengthened the position of Britain and France, while France, the object of policy in this context, remained outside the system. The chances for success appeared to be heightened by the fact that China, which belonged to the original "big five", remained on the side-lines.¹⁸³ The USSR appeared to have gained the opportunity to represent Chinese interests at the summit meetings and thereby exert influence over Chinese attitudes. It was significant that Eisenhower asked Khrushchev to pass along American wishes to China. The new construct also had the support of France, which saw in it another chance to secure its great-power status.

With Khrushchev's visit better East-West relations seem to have been secured. Diplomats worked on agendas, while Eisenhower planned a visit to the Soviet Union. These preparations, however, were not free from serious problems. The Soviet side continued to press for its proposals for a German peace agreement and expected that an acceptable compromise could be achieved.¹⁸⁴ In talks aimed at reaching a consensus on disarmament, Khrushchev continued to link measures against nuclear armament to an agreement on general disarmament. In the spring of 1960 Khrushchev rejected plans to

¹⁸² See notes of the Soviet government to those of the United States, Great Britain and France concerning the German question and on high-level conferences, Reiman, Luňák, 97–104. The possibility of institutionalizing the meetings was expressed by Macmillan in Moscow in March 1959, but it was not discussed between Khrushchev and Eisenhower.

¹⁸³ This advantage was illusory, since China, because of its continuing problems with Taiwan and representation in the United Nations eventually torpedoed the plan with its opposition.

¹⁸⁴ See minutes of a meeting of Khrushchev with Czechoslovak Party leaders at Smolenice near Bratislava, 1 June 1960, Reiman, Luňák, 193–209.

¹⁸⁵ See correspondence between Khrushchev and Eisenhower on nuclear arms limitations, 3–21 March 1960, Reiman, Luňák, 147–149.

create a joint American-European atomic force.¹⁸⁵ The serious differences between France and the USSR stemmed mainly from Soviet support for the Algerian National Liberation Front, and the two held incompatible views on the German question despite persistent French fears. Nevertheless, talks between de Gaulle and Khrushchev in Paris in March and April 1960 achieved a measure of compromise.¹⁸⁶ The Soviet side could therefore view the upcoming meeting as a serious step toward “reducing international tension” and “liquidating the cold war”.¹⁸⁷

In the middle of May 1960 the favorable trend in East-West relations was unexpectedly interrupted as the leaders were already gathering in Paris. The cause was the shooting down of the American U-2 spy plane on 1 May, which Khrushchev announced just before the opening of the conference. He demanded an apology from Eisenhower, making it a condition of his participation in the conference. Eisenhower took a conciliatory line but declined to offer an apology as the flight was part of American security strategy.¹⁸⁸ The conference was cancelled. Eisenhower’s presidency ended in January 1961, and relations Soviet-American relations remained frozen for the next six months.

The reasons behind Khrushchev’s obstruction have often been discussed, with both political and personal motivations brought to

¹⁸⁶ A significant narrowing of differences was achieved on the German question, disarmament initiatives, and policy toward colonial countries especially in Africa. Minutes of the meetings (23 and 24 March, 1 April 1960) are published in *Istoričesky archiv*, 1996, no. 1, 29–39; no. 2, 105–132. De Gaulle summarized the situation regarding Germany as follows: “Our positions are not identical, but I do not believe they are incompatible in principle, or that they will persist forever. The essential difference is whether we should sign a peace treaty with Germany now, or whether we should wait. In any case, on the eve of the summit meeting I believe that our governments have no irreconcilable differences concerning the German question.” Khrushchev replied: “The differences in our positions on this question are external in character. In their essence, they are quite close.” Khrushchev later stressed the rapprochement of views on a number of occasions.

¹⁸⁷ See Reiman, Luňák, 136.

¹⁸⁸ Eisenhower was willing to suspend flights for the duration of his administration, i.e. until January 1961.

bear.¹⁸⁹ Khrushchev's act was of course not the result of impulse but a considered political decision, even if the motives are unclear. Khrushchev appears to have lost interest in the meeting at the last moment.¹⁹⁰ The consequences for the USSR and the rest of the world were extremely adverse. One can only agree with Mikoyan that Khrushchev thereby ruined the chance to relax East-West tensions. Both sides were obliged to pay for the failure with huge outlays for arms.¹⁹¹ The significance of four-power relations had in fact been dissolved, and all Khrushchev's feverish activity from 1958 to 1960 had produced no tangible result.

J. F. Kennedy and the Failure of Khrushchev's Foreign Policy Concept

The next step in Soviet foreign policy came only with the inauguration of J. F. Kennedy in January 1961, by which time the world situation had begun fundamentally to change. Sino-Soviet

¹⁸⁹ Mikoyan, who was a member of the Soviet leadership, speaks of Khrushchev's "inadmissible hysteria". Mikoyan, 605. Nor is the situation clarified by the memoirs of Sergei N. Khrushchev (vol. 2, 7-37). It appears that Khrushchev's attitude in Paris was premeditated and that the U-2 incident could be used to strengthen his negotiating position. He is said to have changed his mind on the flight to Paris, when it became clear that no apology would be forthcoming from Eisenhower. To leave the incident without consequences, however, would be a demonstration of weakness. Khrushchev's behavior has also been ascribed to personal bitterness at being "betrayed" by Eisenhower after the rapport established at Camp David. Such feelings were also evident in Khrushchev's positions and moods during talks with J. F. Kennedy in Vienna in June 1961.

¹⁹⁰ His reaction was not purely impulsive. According to his own testimony, Khrushchev considered the violation of Soviet air space to be a provocation aimed against the summit meeting which he traced to the CIA while absolving Eisenhower. It is more probable, however, that Khrushchev had lowered his expectations of the gains to be realized from the summit. The Soviet side, however, was committed to the summit by a carefully prepared public campaign. At the same time there was a sharpening of the Sino-Soviet dispute, which later the same year became the subject of a special international meeting of Communist parties and quickly accelerated into an open quarrel. (Zubok/Pleshakov, 229-235). An unsatisfactory result in Paris could have appeared to Khrushchev as a source of difficulties at home.

¹⁹¹ Mikoyan, 605.

to be a two-edged sword, as Soviet support for movements of national liberation incurred financial obligations and the number of long-term trouble spots multiplied around the world – Korea, Indochina, the Middle East, Algeria, Ghana, the Belgian Congo, Cuba and so forth – which involved the Soviet Union in repeated confrontation with the West, especially the United States, and served to poison the atmosphere.¹⁹⁶ The real gains for Soviet policy were few. Many of the pro-Soviet national regimes continued to exist only with Soviet help, while the advantage to the USSR amounted to the appearance of a growing Soviet influence, together with an improved constituency for voting in the United Nations. Whenever the new regimes succeeded in consolidating their position and independence, Soviet influence waned.

These difficulties were important since by 1960 the negative effects of poor and unrealistic economic planning were beginning to appear within the Soviet Union. Economic growth slowed and was unable to cover the growing expenses of global policy, which in turn increased domestic political tensions. In October 1961 Khrushchev submitted a new Party program, which estimated that the country would overtake the United States in per capita production within twenty years – which, however, added a decade to the estimate delivered in 1959.

The reforms did not accomplish their aims, as Khrushchev came to rely on improvised changes in economic plans and ad hoc intervention in administrative matters. The situation also affected the highly sensitive military sphere, leading to a significant reduction in the numerical strength of the armed forces even as triumphs of military technology were exaggerated, which provoked great dissatisfaction in influential circles. After 1960 military expenditures

¹⁹⁶ This is confirmed by the preparations for the Khrushchev-Kennedy summit of June 1961, where the greatest attention was devoted to the conflicts in Laos, the Belgian Congo and to Cuba. See minutes of talks between Khrushchev and the American ambassador L. Thompson in Novosibirsk, 22 February 1961, and minutes of talks between J. F. Kennedy and Khrushchev at Vienna at the beginning of June 1961, Reiman, Luňák, 169–184, 210–261.

relations had become ever more acrimonious, as armed conflicts broke out between China and India over the Tibetan border. In view of its friendly relations with India, the Soviet Union preserved a neutral attitude, which the Chinese regarded as a violation of the "principle" of supporting fellow socialist states in international conflicts. The Chinese leadership were also vexed by their dependence on the USSR in international affairs as well as Soviet unwillingness to share atomic secrets with them. The dispute grew to such an extent that it was made the subject of an international meeting to Communist parties, which, however, did little to prevent further escalation.¹⁹² The quarrel prompted the Albanian leadership to break off military cooperation with the USSR, closing down Soviet bases on the Adriatic and initiating a period of steadily worsening relations.¹⁹³ Similar difficulties appeared in relations with Rumania, which was able to extract a measure of independence from the Sino-Soviet quarrel.¹⁹⁴ For the West all this signaled a significant weakening of Khrushchev's position within the "Socialist camp".

The rapid disintegration of the Western colonial empires was also a serious factor in the world situation. Khrushchev continued to regard it as a positive development, and frequent Soviet demands for the immediate elimination of colonialism won support at the United Nations and among third world countries.¹⁹⁵ But the process proved

¹⁹² The talks took place in Bucharest from 24 to 26 June 1960. Both sides presented extensive ideological arguments to support their respective positions. Documentation is in the A. Novotný Archive, State Central Archive, Prague. See Zubok/Pleshakov, 229–235.

¹⁹³ Minutes of talks between N. S. Khrushchev and Czechoslovak Party leaders at Smolenice near Bratislava 1 June 1961, Reiman, Luňák, 193–209 (Khrushchev's assessment of relations with Albania and China).

¹⁹⁴ The Bucharest conference provided the opportunity for closer contacts between the Rumanian and Chinese Parties. The conflict with the Soviets may be traced to Soviet efforts to remove the Rumanian dictator G. Gheorghiu-Dej, who was regarded as a Stalinist relic, aside from opposing Khrushchev's plans to form economic regions within the Soviet bloc without regard to national borders, which Rumania regarded as abrogation of its sovereignty.

¹⁹⁵ During his visit to the United States Khrushchev presented before the United Nations his "declaration of Independence for Colonial Lands and Nations". Bezborodov, 131.

rose significantly, which in turn slowed improvements in living standards and increased social tensions.¹⁹⁷

With the election of J. F. Kennedy a new generation, less influenced by the experience of the Second World War, appeared on the political scene. It took a pragmatic approach to international affairs and eschewed Khrushchev's ideological approach. In March Kennedy, through his ambassador in Moscow L. Thompson, suggested to Khrushchev that the achievement of "a degree of cooperation" between the United States and the Soviet Union would represent "a significant contribution to world security, where peace and order could prevail". He therefore proposed the creation of a means of contact which would permit a calm, unofficial consideration of disputed interests and help to overcome misunderstandings. In conversations with Gromyko the same month he urged the importance of an approach which would preserve the prestige of both powers and enable them to avoid steps which would complicate their relations and thereby threaten peace.¹⁹⁸

The change of administration in the United States prompted Khrushchev to proceed more cautiously. He was aware of the difficulties he faced in dealing with a younger American generation which he did not well understand,¹⁹⁹ but did not modify the essence of his proposals even when Kennedy clearly signaled unwillingness to consider any solution legitimizing the division of Germany and voiced doubts about the practicality of Soviet proposals for total disarmament.

¹⁹⁷ Bezborodov, 94.

¹⁹⁸ Reiman, Luňák, 185 ff, 187–193.

¹⁹⁹ Khrushchev's attitude toward Kennedy underwent a certain development. At first he believed the Democrat victory would promote better Soviet-American relations and formed a positive view of Kennedy, whom he had never met and whose background was unfamiliar to him. His assessment changed abruptly with the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, carried out by Cuban contras with Kennedy's blessing (Zubok/Pleshakov, 237–243), which led him to underestimate Kennedy's intelligence and speak slightly of his youth and inexperience, comparing him unfavorably to the former Secretary of State Dulles. See the minutes of Khrushchev's meeting with Czechoslovak leaders 1 June 1961, cited above, and minutes of the meeting between Khrushchev and Italian premier A. Fanfani in Moscow, 2 August 1961, Reiman, Luňák, 193, 199, 265–306 (especially 279 ff).

Khrushchev's attitude and ideologically conditioned approach foretold difficulties for his meeting with Kennedy in Vienna at the beginning of June 1961.²⁰⁰ On the one hand the Soviet leader underestimated the new president, and on the other he was unsure what reaction to expect to Soviet proposals or to Soviet negotiating methods. His main focus continued to be the German peace treaty and complete disarmament, which the Soviets tied firmly to the prohibition of nuclear tests. There was also the question of Laos, where both powers were involved in a civil war which promised few gains for either side.

From the beginning the talks progressed differently from those at the end of the Eisenhower era. Kennedy proved to be less pliant than Eisenhower. He refused to discuss Khrushchev's proposals for Germany because in his view they touched on the balance of forces in Europe and declared that their acceptance would call into question the reliability of the United States as the guarantor of its allies' security. He saw no need for a substantial change in the status quo in Germany and was unwilling to make concessions on the Western presence in Berlin.²⁰¹ The Kennedy administration made no secret of the key importance it attached to the West German alliance. American representatives had warned Khrushchev on various occasions that a Soviet ultimatum on the question of the Western presence in Berlin could provoke an armed conflict, and Kennedy reiterated this position in Vienna. He also refused to tie the prohibition of nuclear testing to the question of complete disarmament. It was clear that he preferred military means for assuring security and that his priority remained the creation of a control system to monitor the military measures taken by the other side.

In these circumstances the meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev could bring no significant breakthroughs, though they

²⁰⁰ Complete Soviet transcript, Reiman, Lunák, 210–262.

²⁰¹ Transcript of the Vienna meeting, Reiman, Luňák, 254–258, also in FRUS, 1961–1963, vol. V, Soviet Union, 173–230.

reached agreement on the secondary question of ending the war in Laos, on which Khrushchev had not counted at first.²⁰² The disarmament proposals were referred to the appropriate committees at the United Nations and thereby postponed indefinitely.²⁰³

The Vienna meeting made it clear that with the new administration in Washington any effort to resolve the "Berlin question" without regard to the Western powers raised the threat of armed conflict. The Soviet leadership was faced with the task of rethinking its basic stance and negotiating tactics, as the new situation left little room for a dramatic shift in international relations, which, it appeared, could be stabilized and gradually improved on the basis of the status quo. But Soviet policy, still in ideological and political thrall to its "peace offensive" as the means of achieving quick advantages, found it difficult to accept this view. Concessions on the original demands concerning Germany or the disarmament question would throw Khrushchev's political and ideological positions open to doubt. To abandon the course that had been set would bring a disastrous loss of prestige, so that he was obliged to stick with his original assumptions and try to bring about gradual changes without perceptibly softening his "offensive" rhetoric.

After Vienna, Khrushchev, still hoping for a "quick" solution to the German problem, offered a detailed outline of his policy to the Italian premier A. Fanfani, who visited Moscow in August 1961.²⁰⁴ He indicated willingness to negotiate with the Western powers but did not alter the basic content of his proposals. He spoke emotionally and urgently, clearly in an effort to influence the position of other European countries through Fanfani. In the autumn and winter, a similar message was carried to Western countries by Gromyko and other Soviet diplomats.²⁰⁵ It was more than mere rhetoric. At a

²⁰² See Khrushchev's meeting with Czechoslovak leaders at Smolenice, 1 June 1961, Reiman, Luňák, 200.

²⁰³ Soviet transcript of the Vienna meeting, Reiman, Luňák, 210–262.

²⁰⁴ Transcript of conversations between N. S. Khrushchev and Italian premier A. Fanfani, Moscow, 2 August 1961, Reiman, Luňák, 265–306.

²⁰⁵ Transcripts of Gromyko's meetings with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and L. Thompson. Reiman, Luňák, 314–327, 330–340, 341–350, 351–359.

meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders in July 1961 a plan was presented for securing a separate peace with East Germany, to be followed by a new policy for transit to West Berlin. The treaty was apparently envisioned by the beginning of 1962.²⁰⁶

At this point there was a decisive shift in Soviet policy which was to have great significance for the future. Negotiations on the "German question" initiated by the Soviet Union and fears for the fate of Berlin led to a new wave of emigrations from East Germany to the West. Soviet proposals on Germany destabilized East Germany and necessitated countermeasures. At the Warsaw Pact meeting in July, where Khrushchev spoke at length, Walter Ulbricht, surely with Soviet blessings, proposed restrictions on free movement into West Berlin.²⁰⁷ We know nothing of the discussion which presumably followed, though Ulbricht's suggestions were doubtless accepted. The Soviet leadership apparently concluded that the Western powers would leave open the question of free movement within Berlin and leave it up to the Soviets. This meant the construction of the notorious Wall, which began on 13 August 1961.²⁰⁸ It prompted the Western powers to a military alert, but it did provide grounds for armed conflict: the borders of west Berlin were respected, nor was traffic through checkpoints interrupted. Short of risking war, there was no alternative to accepting the fait accompli.

²⁰⁶ Reiman, Luňák, 308-313. Meeting of First Secretaries of the Communist Parties of the Warsaw Pact Countries, 3-5 August 1961. The excerpt from Ulbricht's speech is devoted to justifying measures to be taken on the border with West Germany.

²⁰⁷ Zubok/Pleshakov, 248-253. See Reiman, Luňák, 308-313, for the Ulbricht speech.

²⁰⁸ It is worth noting that the documents in the archive of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party do not make it clear that the Berlin Wall was discussed at the meeting. However, after 1987 the USSR (A. Yakovlev) denied responsibility for the original decision. Thus a thorough analysis of Khrushchev's conversations with Fanfani would be helpful on this score, since they took place on the same days as the Warsaw meetings. Khrushchev gave Fanfani a detailed explanation of the Soviet stance on the German peace treaty, but there is nothing concrete pointing to the later construction of the Wall. Since Khrushchev counted on Fanfani conveying his views to his Western colleagues, it is possible that the Wall was proposed by East Germany, which is in line with the fact that the concrete proposals at the meeting were delivered by Ulbricht.

It is now difficult to judge whether the Berlin Wall represented a shift in the Soviet approach to the German question or only a trial balloon to assess Western reaction in case of a separate peace treaty with East Germany. Soviet rhetoric over the next months continued to stress the necessity of a prompt treaty. But the reality within Germany had changed significantly. The Wall created conditions for the long-term stabilization of the East, as its existence was no longer called into question by mass emigrations. The Americans clearly suggested that they were willing to accept the new situation in Berlin and attempted to secure West Berlin through the road connections, which the Soviets could use as a means to apply pressure.²⁰⁹ At the same time it was clear that the long-term Soviet aims following the “German offensive”, the removal of allied forces from Germany and withdrawal of Germany from NATO, were unattainable. Meanwhile the accelerating pace of European integration altered the European context of the German question. A great obstacle for Soviet policy in Germany was the continuing Franco-German rapprochement and the agreement signed at the beginning of 1963 which created a new tandem in Europe which also included military cooperation.²¹⁰ The Soviets therefore gradually revised their earlier goals, ceasing to insist on a German peace treaty and the transformation of Berlin into a free city. When in the summer of 1962 Ulbricht attempted to resuscitate the demand for a treaty, he received no support from Khrushchev, who shortly afterward complained to the Czechoslovak president Novotný about Ulbricht’s stance, which threatened a new sharpening of the international situation, to be paid for by the USSR at the expense of the living standards of its people.²¹¹ No separate peace treaty was ever signed. It was replaced in June 1964 by an agreement

²⁰⁹ Conversations of Gromyko with Rusk, 21 September in New York, Reiman, Luňák, 314–327. Declaration of Gromyko to Ambassador Thompson, 12 January 1962, 330–340. Information on meetings between A. Gromyko and L. Thompson, 341–359.

²¹⁰ Letter from the Soviet Government to the West German Government outlining the Soviet position on Franco-German cooperation, 5 February 1963, Reiman, Luňák, 366–372.

²¹¹ Conversations of the Czechoslovak delegation with Khrushchev, Moscow, 7–8 June 1962, Reiman, Luňák 360–361.

by which the USSR guaranteed East German sovereignty and the integrity of its borders.

The expiration of Khrushchev's "peace offensive" was also manifested in the negotiations over Soviet disarmament proposals. In the autumn of 1961 the United States and the USSR reached a compromise enabling them to present a joint disarmament plan to the United Nations. Outwardly the situation appeared promising, but it proved impossible fully to reconcile their positions. The USSR was betting on conventional forces, in which they held the edge on the European continent, and the United States on the nuclear deterrent. While nuclear disarmament remained the priority for the Soviets, the Americans emphasized the importance of arms controls, as the Soviets countered that controls without disarmament amounted to mere "espionage". With no overall solution in sight, compromise was reached only on certain details.

The Soviet Union continued its considerable activities in developing countries and scored points with its demands for an end to colonialism. Nevertheless it encountered increasing difficulties as conflicts multiplied raising the possibility of direct confrontation between the superpowers: Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia in Indochina; Israel and the Arab countries in the Middle East; and Cuba, which influenced the situation in Latin America. The situation in these regions continued to demand huge outlays, but they had little impact on the balance of forces. It was in this no-win situation that Khrushchev decided in the autumn of 1962 to deploy Soviet rockets with nuclear warheads in Cuba.²¹² This was done secretly, so that the Americans were presented with a *fait accompli*. If allowed to stand, the move posed an immediate threat to American population centers, including the capital. The response was a naval blockade of Cuba directed against Soviet shipping and an acute threat of war. The situation was resolved only by the exchange of urgent missions

²¹² This is the subject of a vast literature in English and Russian. The Prague collection contains only one relevant document: a report by Mikoyan to Czechoslovak ambassador Růžek concerning his visit to Cuba and the United States, given at the Soviet embassy in Washington, 29 November 1962. Reiman, Luňák, 362-366.

between Kennedy and Khrushchev, who was obliged to back down and withdraw the rockets in exchange for vague American promises to refrain from invading Cuba. For Khrushchev this meant a grave loss of authority and prestige.

Nor did the situation elsewhere develop along more promising lines. In the Middle East – in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and the Palestinian organizations – Soviet influence was blocked not only by American diplomacy but also by the absolute Israeli military preponderance in the region. In Indochina the United States became increasingly involved in what proved to be a disastrous war, but the Soviets gained little from the American losses. China controlled access to the area, and the Vietnamese relationship with the USSR was not one of utter dependence. The Vietnamese leadership maintained a somewhat distant relationship with the Soviet advisers in the country.

It was becoming clear that the Soviets had invested great resources in projects that led to no substantial gains. The leadership found it increasingly difficult to come up with new initiatives. The balance of forces between the two camps remained unchanged, and little in the way of gains could be expected from diplomatic efforts. In the long term, this situation favored the West, with its far more developed economic, technological and scientific foundations.

Khrushchev's "Peace Offensive" and the Countries of the "Socialist Camp"

The theme of Khrushchev's "peace offensive" is intimately bound up with relations between the Soviet Union and its allies. The Prague collection of documents itself testifies that the Socialist countries were kept informed, and not merely formally, of foreign policy developments. Aside from the documents sent by the Soviet leadership, there were numerous meetings and bilateral conferences among the various leaders.

The countries of the Socialist camp are often characterized as Soviet "satellites". The term expresses their strong dependence on the

USSR; nevertheless, it is somewhat distorting. The dependence developed in the aftermath of the war, when international relations were governed by brute force and military occupation. In time, however, the political and economic structures in these countries evolved, while frequent changes prevented great consolidation of governmental and administrative apparatus. Developments were punctuated by repeated intervention by Soviet agencies and advisers. This period ended only in the years 1953-1956, when the USSR acknowledged the "mistakes and deformations" of the past, limited its intervention in the affairs of its allies, and institutionalized its relations with them. The Comecon was set up, while the Information Bureau of Communist Parties, the agency of political control of the European Communist parties was abolished and the coordination of political and military affairs was institutionalized in the Warsaw Pact and its agencies.

Relations between the USSR and its allies, however, cannot be compared to those existing among Western countries. The differences in Soviet social and political regime alone played a significant role here, giving the tensions and disagreements that occurred within the bloc a different form and expression. Relations were conducted largely amid secrecy which was broken only when open conflict erupted. It is also significant that unlike the Western community with its great power constituents (the United States, Britain, France) and large countries who had temporarily lost great-power status (West Germany, Italy), the Soviet bloc consisted of small to middling states without the ability to make an independent entrance on the international stage. Within the Socialist camp the only great powers were the USSR and the People's Republic of China, whose international position was complicated by the fact that it was denied recognition by the western powers and the United Nations as the legitimate representative of China.

All these circumstances influenced the results of Khrushchev's foreign policy. Soviet domination within the Socialist camp remained intact after Stalin's death. When it faltered in 1956 it was bolstered by military intervention in Hungary, which placed limits on the degree

of permissible divergence. The institutionalization of relations within the bloc, however, also limited the possibilities for Soviet control of developments within the individual states. As they consolidated their political structure, they began more and more to express their own views and interests, so that regardless of Soviet wishes, numerous differences and even disputes arose within the camp. A further factor contributing to the failure of Khrushchev's policies was the dispute between the USSR and China, which from 1960 appeared increasingly difficult to overcome. The sudden worsening of relations became the subject of meetings of Communist parties at Bucharest in June and at Moscow in October 1960.

The attitude of the other Socialist countries also played a role. The reservations expressed by Poland and to a lesser extent by Hungary over Khrushchev's confrontational methods obliged the Soviets to take account of initiatives by the Polish foreign minister Rapacki. The East German leadership, on the other hand, maintained pressure on Khrushchev to press the German question and preserve an anti-West German stance. Ulbricht's attitude influenced the Soviet demands for "concrete measures" in Germany which were to accompany the conclusion of a peace treaty. Ulbricht's efforts to keep the treaty question open in 1962, as we have seen, led to serious differences between him and Khrushchev.²¹³

Toward the end of the Khrushchev era it was chiefly Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia which maintained a conformist stance towards the Soviet Union, which reflected their relations with their neighbors and their economic interests.²¹⁴

²¹³ See transcript of conversations between the Czechoslovak delegation and Khrushchev, Moscow, 7-8 June 1962, Reiman-Luňák, 360-361. The Soviet leadership had figures suggesting that East German losses in the event of a German crisis could amount to 1.8 billion marks in domestic commerce alone. This probably explains Khrushchev's remark that the USSR would have to pay for Ulbricht's policy at the expense of the living standards of its citizens.

²¹⁴ See transcript of meeting between Khrushchev and Novotný, Gomulka and Ulbricht in Warsaw, 21 July 1964, Reiman, Luňák, 379-387.

Khrushchev's "Peace Offensive" in Perspective

As Khrushchev's foreign policy wound down at the end of 1962, it was clear that none of its chief goals set at the 20th Party Congress had been achieved. The German "offensive" had failed, along with the disarmament proposals, while relations with the West remained far from normal. Of the package of multilateral disarmament agreements which Khrushchev pursued, only that prohibiting nuclear testing was duly signed, in August 1963. It was one of the few points on which Khrushchev and Kennedy agreed.²¹⁵

Nevertheless, Khrushchev's policies cannot be judged unequivocally. The process had begun by which the USSR was partly opened to the world after the death of Stalin. Khrushchev himself was the first Soviet leader to travel extensively abroad and seek personal contacts with political leaders and the public. Although his confrontational methods led to dangerous crises (Suez 1956, Berlin 1958-59, Cuba 1962), East-West relations had eased since the days of Stalin, and it was possible to negotiate on a range of disputed questions and establish a modicum of economic, scientific and cultural contacts. Khrushchev won significant popularity abroad with his criticism of Stalin and his efforts at reform, but his impulsive and unconventional behavior also made an impression. His policies evoked a complex response in developing countries as well as a number of crises, but they also accelerated the dismantling of the colonial system.

The positive response evoked by Khrushchev's policies by some of his contemporaries in the West as well as the East should not lead to the conclusion that he had turned Soviet policy from Marxist universalism toward superpower pragmatism. His plans were based on an unrealistic estimate of Soviet assets and prospects. The expression was the attempt to "encircle capitalism". The confrontational policies which sparked international crises appear to have

²¹⁵ It is significant that the agreement covered tests in the atmosphere, at sea and in space but not underground testing, where the powers remained divided over the question of controls.

prevented the achievement of a number of East-West agreements. Nor can the dissipation of Soviet resources in military expenditure and aid to the third world be ignored. With this Khrushchev's policies undermined the basis for the domestic reforms that he had proclaimed.

Summary

This study is based on a large variety of Soviet documents from Khrushchev era to be found in A. Novotny's archiv, and was used for internal information of the Czechoslovak leaders on current Soviet activities concerning foreign policy issues. The major part of the documents is related to the period of 1955-1962, and demonstrates mostly the Soviet relations to the Western Powers, first of all the USA. The first part of the study deals with Khrushchev political conception originating from the revised conception by Malenkov and Beria. Contrary to this often sketchy conception by Malenkov and Beria who intended to change the relations to the West attempting to reduce the Soviet sphere of influence, first of all by leaving out Germany, and redefining social-economic priorities; Khrushchev, on the other side, decided for an ideologically motivated global policy. He made it public at the 20th Summit of the Communist party of the USSR (KSSS) in February 1956. We can thus consider Khrushchev the author of the Soviet global policy conception. This policy, however, lacked credibility due to the internal criticism of the Stalin's terror and atrocities as well as the political events in Poland and the Soviet occupation of Hungary that have shaken the Soviet block. Khrushchev's conception was based on maintaining the status quo in Europe and denying the status quo in the developing countries. He suggested that such status quo was an attempt to maintain colonies by the Western Powers, and he tried to undermine their influence there. In Europe the conception brought about the German question, which

Khrushchev had conditioned the peace treaty. By this he attempted to legalize the existence of the Eastern Germany by the West, and at the same time, to give Berlin a separate political status. This conception aimed at undermining the Western community and fragmentation of the united Germany that was not acceptable for the West. The only positive feature about this conception was the fact that he made communication between East and West possible. The two different points of view thus could start to approach each other, a basis for negotiating questionable and conflicting issues could be created as well as mechanisms diminishing the danger of possible conflicts in the future. Khrushchev's conception was a success till 1960 with four summits taking place on the current European issues and mutual relations between the two blocks. This trend stopped suddenly after Khrushchev ruined the Four Powers Summit in Paris in May 1960. It was a landmark to start a new period concerning foreign political situation. On one side, fast evolving conflict between Soviet Union and China considerably weakened Soviet international position; and on the other side Kennedy's administration came to power in the USA. This brought about the new pro-German policy by the USA, and its firm position towards Khrushchev's attempts to destabilize political situation in the developing countries. Khrushchev, at the top of it, had to face internal social-economic failures. From 1962 Khrushchev's foreign policy conception proved unsuccessful, and the Soviets had to step back not only in the German question but also in the Cuban crisis. The global aspect of the Soviet foreign policy however survived all these failures.

Translation: Frederick L. Snider