Denouncement of Stalin; "It is here that Stalin showed in a whole series of cases his intolerance, his brutality, and his abuse of power ... he often chose the path of repression and physical annihilation, not only against actual enemies, but also against individuals who had not committed any crimes against the party or the Soviet Government."- Nikita Khrushchev. His goal was to distance the Soviet Union and Communism from Stalin, as he was seen as ruthless and a abuser of both the Soviet people and the newly formed Eastern Bloc. He believed that once the stain of Stalinism was removed, the Party would inspire loyalty among the people.

Political Reform; Under Khrushchev, the special tribunals operated by security agencies were abolished. These tribunals (known as troikas), had often ignored laws and procedures. Under the reforms, no prosecution for a political crime could be brought even in the regular courts unless approved by the local Party committee. Other sanctions were imposed on Soviet dissidents, including loss of job or university position, or expulsion from the Party. During Khrushchev's rule, forced hospitalization for the "socially dangerous" was introduced. The socially dangerous would usually include his political rivals or other dissenters.

Openness; In 1958, Khrushchev opened a Central Committee meeting to hundreds of Soviet officials; some were even allowed to address the meeting. For the first time, the proceedings of the Committee were made public in book form, a practice which was continued at subsequent meetings. This openness, however, actually allowed Khrushchev greater control over the Committee, since any dissenters would have to make their case in front of a large, disapproving crowd.

A Tale Of Two Oblasts; In 1962, Khrushchev divided oblast level Party committees (obkoms) into two parallel structures, one for industry and one for agriculture. This was unpopular among Party apparatchiks, and led to confusions in the chain of command, as neither committee secretary had precedence over the other. As there were limited numbers of Central Committee seats from each oblast, the division set up the possibility of rivalry for office between factions, and, according to Medvedev, had the potential for beginning a two-party system. Khrushchev also ordered that one-third of the membership of each committee, from low-level councils to the Central Committee itself, be replaced at each election. This decree created tension between Khrushchev and the Central Committee, and upset the party leaders upon whose support Khrushchev had risen to power.

Virgin Lands; In 1953, Nikita Khrushchev had a plan to dramatically boost the Soviet Union’s agricultural production in order to alleviate the food shortages plaguing the Soviet populace. Khrushchev's plan both expanded the reforms that Malenkov had begun and proposed the plowing and cultivation of 13 million hectares (130,000 km^2) of previously uncultivated land by 1956. Targeted lands included areas on the right bank of the Volga, in the northern Caucasus, in Western Siberia, and in Northern Kazakhstan. The First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party at the time of Khrushchev's announcement, Zhumabay Shayakhmetov, played down the potential yields of the virgin lands in Kazakhstan: he did not want Kazakh land under Russian control. Malenkov preferred initiatives to make the land already under cultivation more productive, but Khrushchev insisted on bringing huge amounts of new land under cultivation as the only way to get a major increase in crop yields in a short amount of time.

Virgin Lands Production;

1954- The first Virgin Land harvest exceeded expectations. The total output of grain for Virgin Land regions in 1954 was 14,793,000 tons greater and 65% higher than the average grain yield for the period of 1949–1953. By the start of 1955, 200,000 tractors had been sent to the Virgin Lands, 425 new sovkhozy had been created, and a total of 30 million hectares (300,000 km^2) of land had been ploughed up, 20 million of which were put under crop.

1955- The 1955 Virgin Lands crop fell far below expectations due to a severe drought in the virgin land regions, especially Kazakhstan, which received only one-tenth of its normal rainfall. Even though the total sown area in 1955 was almost double that of 1954, the grain harvest went down by 35% from 1954 in Kazakhstan. However, other regions of the Soviet Union had a particularly good year, which offset poor Virgin Land performance and resulted in an overall increase in grain harvest for the Soviet Union. Khrushchev was forced to acknowledge the validity of some of the opposing viewpoints regarding the Virgin Lands campaign but he maintained that as long as two harvests in a five-year period were good, the plan would be a success in terms of recovering costs and making a profit.

1956- Enthusiasm over the Virgin Lands campaign dampened after the poor harvest of 1955. Much less new land was put into cultivation in 1956. However, the harvest of 1956 proved to be the most successful of the entire Virgin Lands campaign, and the largest harvest in Soviet history up to that point. Grain output for Virgin Lands regions increased by 180% compared to the average of 1949–1953 and 90% compared to the 1954–1955 average. The grain output in 1956 of the entire Soviet Union was 50% higher than the 1949–53 average. Encouraged by the success, Khrushchev went on a tour through the Virgin Land regions awarding medals to farmers.

1957- The 1957 harvest was a failure. Virgin Land's grain output decreased 40% from 1956, and 18% for the total Soviet Union grain output.

1958- In 1958 and 1959 there was almost no new land ploughed up in Virgin Land regions. The 1958 harvest was a particularly good one, reaching 58,385,000 tons of grain, only 8% below the record of 62,263,000 tons set in 1956.

1959- The 1959 growing season was extremely rainy, causing many difficulties. However, the harvest was not disappointing. The Virgin Land crop in 1959 was 54,571,000 tons, only 6% lower than the 1958 harvest.

1960- The two good harvests of 1958 and 1959 gave the campaign a new boost of support. 1,648,000 hectares (16,480 km2) of new Virgin Land were plowed in Kazakhstan alone. Khrushchev organized one of the most important Virgin Lands regions into an administrative unit called Tseliny Krai, a territory consisting of five provinces in northern Kazakhstan. The capital, originally Akmolinsk, was renamed as Tselinograd, or Virgin Land City. However, the year of 1960 ended up being one of the worst years for agriculture during the program.

1961-1963- Productivity of the Virgin Lands underwent a steady decrease following the harvest of 1958. In 1963 Khrushchev began an initiative to widely expand fertilizer production and availability throughout the Soviet Union in order to increase the productivity of the Virgin Lands. The USSR only possessed 20 million tons of fertilizers for every 218 million hectares (2,180,000 km^2) as opposed to the United States, which possessed 35 million tons of fertilizer for every 118 million hectares (1,180,000 km2) of land. Khrushchev ordered 60 new fertilizer factories to be built. Even so, the productivity of the Virgin Lands continued to decline and never got close to replicating the record harvest of 1956.

No More Machine-Tractor Stations!; Khrushchev sought to abolish the Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS) which not only owned most large agricultural machines such as combines and tractors, but also provided services such as plowing, and transfer their equipment and functions to the kolkhozes and sovkhozes (state farms). After a successful test involving MTS which served one large kolkhoz each, Khrushchev ordered a gradual transition—but then ordered that the change take place with great speed. Within three months, over half of the MTS facilities had been closed, and kolkhozes were being required to buy the equipment, with no discount given for older or dilapidated machines. MTS employees, unwilling to bind themselves to kolkhozes and lose their state employee benefits and the right to change their jobs, fled to the cities, creating a shortage of skilled operators. The costs of the machinery, plus the costs of building storage sheds and fuel tanks for the equipment, impoverished many kolkhozes. Inadequate provisions were made for repair stations. Without the MTS, the market for Soviet agricultural equipment fell apart, as the kolkhozes now had neither the money nor skilled buyers to purchase new equipment.

Drought Of '63; Drought struck the Soviet Union in 1963; the harvest of 107,500,000 short tons (97,500,000 t) of grain was down from a peak of 134,700,000 short tons (122,200,000 t) in 1958. The shortages resulted in bread lines, a fact at first kept from Khrushchev. Reluctant to purchase food in the West, but faced with the alternative of widespread hunger, Khrushchev exhausted the nation's hard currency reserves and expended part of its gold stockpile in the purchase of grain and other foodstuffs.

Academic Towns; Khrushchev founded several academic towns, such as Akademgorodok. The premier believed that Western science flourished because many scientists lived in university towns such as Oxford, isolated from big city distractions, and had pleasant living conditions and good pay. He sought to duplicate those conditions in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's attempt was generally successful, though his new towns and scientific centres tended to attract younger scientists, with older ones unwilling to leave Moscow or Leningrad.

Hands Off Books, Hands On Machines; Khrushchev also proposed to restructure Soviet high schools. While the high schools provided a college preparatory curriculum, in fact few Soviet youths went on to university. Khrushchev wanted to shift the focus of secondary schools to vocational training: students would spend much of their time at factory jobs or in apprenticeships and only a small part at the schools. In practice, what occurred is that schools developed links with nearby enterprises, and students went to work for only one or two days a week; the factories and other works disliked having to teach, while students and their families complained that they had little choice in what trade to learn.

No Gods, No Crosses; The anti-religious campaign of the Khrushchev era began in 1959, coinciding with the 21st Party Congress in the same year. It was carried out by mass closures of churches (reducing the number from 22,000 in 1959 to 13,008 in 1960 and to 7,873 by 1965), monasteries, and convents, as well as of the still-existing seminaries (pastoral courses would be banned in general). The campaign also included a restriction of parental rights for teaching religion to their children, a ban on the presence of children at church services (beginning in 1961 with the Baptists and then extended to the Orthodox in 1963), and a ban on administration of the Eucharist to children over the age of four. Khrushchev additionally banned all services held outside of church walls, renewed enforcement of the 1929 legislation banning pilgrimages, and recorded the personal identities of all adults requesting church baptisms, weddings or funerals. He also disallowed the ringing of church bells and services in daytime in some rural settings from May to the end of October under the pretext of field work requirements. Non-fulfillment of these regulations by clergy would lead to disallowance of state registration for them (which meant they could no longer do any pastoral work or liturgy at all, without special state permission).

Walled Off; An indefinite postponement of action over Berlin was unacceptable to Khrushchev, if for no other reason than that East Germany was suffering a continuous "brain drain" as highly educated East Germans fled west through Berlin. Khrushchev authorized East German leader Walter Ulbricht to begin construction of what became known as the Berlin Wall, which would surround West Berlin. Construction preparations were made in great secrecy, and the border was sealed off in the early hours of Sunday, August 13th 1961, when most East German workers who earned hard currency by working in West Berlin would be at their homes. The wall was a propaganda disaster, and marked the end of Khrushchev's attempts to conclude a peace treaty among the Four Powers and the two German states.