A Failed Empire

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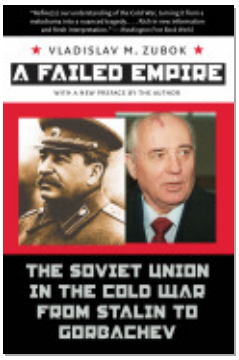

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(CHAPTER 6)

THE SOVIET HOME FRONT

FIRST CRACKS, 1953–1968

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The Soviet way of life can breed its own enemies.
It generates and educates its adversaries.
—Historian Sergei Dmitriev, in his diary, October 1958

As the drama of the Cuban missile crisis unfolded, the intelligentsia of Moscow and Leningrad hardly noticed it. In early November 1962, the members of the intelligentsia, as well as millions of other Soviet readers, were frantically looking for copies of a thick literary journal that had just published Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, about the fate of a Russian peasant in Stalin's concentration camp.[1] During the second decade of the Cold War, momentous changes began to take place on the Soviet home front, in society and culture, in public opinion and collective identities.

The Cold War was not just another great power confrontation. It was also a clash between opposite social and economic projects, a theater of cultural and ideological warfare. As such, David Caute concludes, it was shaped "by the shared and bitterly contested heritage of the European Enlightenment; and, not least, by the astonishing global ascendancy of printing presses, of film, radio, and television, not overlooking the proliferation of theaters and concert halls open to the broad public, particularly in the USSR."[2]

Recent studies have concluded that global confrontation and this competition of ideologies profoundly affected American society just as the modernization of American culture and society began to influence U.S. foreign policy and international behavior.[3] And a similar interaction occurred on the Soviet side. The "new" foreign policy and Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Party Congress in February 1956 took place at the time of rapid modernization of Soviet society. Restricted to small groups of elites and militarized industries under Stalin, this modernization became a much broader phenomenon after his death. The demands of competition with the United States forced the Soviet leadership not only to promote science and technology but also to expand higher education and to give more freedom and power to the scientific and engineering elites. From 1928 to 1960, the number of college students grew twelve-fold and

reached 2.4 million. The number of college-educated professionals increased from 233,000 to 3.5 million.[4] The post-Stalin rulers wanted to prove that the Soviet model could produce a happy society of creative and highly educated people. Khrushchev and other members of the Presidium agreed to sharply reduce work hours and taxes; they increased investments in public housing, education, mass culture, and the health system. They also set out to create modern urban infrastructures and consumer-oriented industries, neglected or dismantled during the Stalin years. According to Russian historian Elena Zubkova, "Government policy, it seemed, did in fact turn its face to the people."[5] By the early 1960s, government social policies and economic growth boosted optimism among the Soviet population, especially among professionals and students, the growing educated "middle class."[6]

The cultural Thaw and de-Stalinization unleashed by Khrushchev were also far-reaching, although by no means inevitable, factors in Soviet modernization. The gray uniformity of Stalinist culture also started to lessen. Soviet citizens, as their fear of political repression subsided, began to speak in increasingly diverse voices. Passive resistance to unpopular state practices grew, and "oases" of thinking, relatively free from state propaganda, began to spread.[7] These developments attracted the close attention of Western scholars.[8] Recently, Jeremi Suri has argued that de-Stalinization during the 1960s led to the dissident movement, which, in turn, together with the movements in Central Europe, began to challenge the fundamentals of the Soviet regime. This led the Kremlin leadership to a more conservative, détente-oriented diplomacy.[9] Suri's view exaggerates the impact of the dissident movement and downplays other important motives behind the Soviet policy of détente. It is, nevertheless, a promising first attempt to connect histories that too long have remained disconnected.

In this chapter, I argue that the Thaw and Khrushchev's de-Stalinization project did not have an immediate visible effect on Soviet foreign policy. It was, however, intimately related to the outcome of the Cold War. It produced far-reaching divisions within the educated strata of Soviet society and marked the end of the total isolation of Soviet society from the West. The destruction of Stalin's cult wounded the Soviet ideological consensus. It is beyond the scope of this book to analyze changes that occurred in specific branches of the Soviet bureaucracy (the military, secret police, party elites), as well as among workers, various nationalities, war veterans, and so on. The focus here is on the elite groups and networks that emerged in the late 1950s and moved to the center of political and cultural life thirty years later, during the final stage of the Cold War drama. These elites were "enlightened" party apparatchiks, intellectuals, artists, and writers of Moscow and other major urban centers who called themselves

shestidesyatniki, or "men and women of the Sixties," and who were determined to reform and liberalize their country. Their collective efforts would provide the essential background for the dramatic shift in Soviet international behavior under Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985 to 1989.

THE THAW

Stalin's regime shaped Soviet intellectual life and mass culture for decades. Many elements of Stalinist propaganda and mass culture outlived terror and even Communism itself and continue to affect people even in today's Russia. Beginning in the 1930s, Stalin's goal was to instill in intellectuals, cultural elites, and the masses the ideas of service to great power interests, vigilance toward internal enemies, and readiness to go to war against external foes. Stalin's preparations for a showdown with the United States in turn determined the direction and focus of Soviet propaganda and cultural policies. In the spirit of the revolutionary-imperial paradigm, the official propaganda promoted Russian great power chauvinism and the idea of the central role of the Soviet Union in world affairs.[10]

Recent historical research reveals that Stalin acted as the supreme editor of Soviet culture, that is, the narratives of the official discourse defining collective identities, values, and beliefs.[11] In no other regime in modern history, aside from Nazi Germany, did the promotion of culture (*kultura*) preoccupy the political leadership so much and involve such considerable expenditure. A number of cultural institutions, among them the Bolshoi Theater and leading museums in Moscow and Leningrad, benefited from state munificence. Stalin cultivated and nurtured the creative elites, especially writers, whom he called "engineers of human souls." After 1934, the members of the Soviet Writers' Union, de facto members of the state propaganda machinery, became a privileged class. Established writers got millions of copies of their books published, and privileged artists and sculptors grew rich from state orders. A Russian cultural historian, Maria Zezina, observed that by the time of Stalin's death "a vast majority of creative intelligentsia was sincerely devoted to Soviet power and did not dream of any opposition to it."[12]

At the same time, countless writers, musicians, artists, and other cultural figures fell victim to purges and spent decades in the Gulag. The decline of the arts was especially striking, as the brilliance, diversity, and avant-garde experiments of the 1920s gave way to triumphant conformism, kitsch, and mediocrity. The cultural avant-garde was banned as "formalistic" and "anti-national." All had to conform to the doctrine of "socialist realism," officially imposed in 1946. This doctrine promoted creation of a false world in accordance with Stalin's

ideological prescription—the world of the Big Lie, in sharp contrast with Soviet realities. The doctrine of "social realism" was not just a part of the ruling ideology. It was embedded in all mechanisms of cultural production, including the hierarchy of "creative unions" and collective self-censorship.[13] The cultural establishment was divided into unspoken factions, in a vicious fight for resources and privileges. All this resulted in a rapid decline not only of the quantity but ultimately of the quality of the Soviet Union's "cultural output."

Stalin's meddling in the realm of science brought even more contradictory results. On the one hand, in nuclear, missile, and armament programs, he promoted the young cadres, entrusted them with crucial tasks, and showered them with considerable perks and privileges. Igor Kurchatov, appointed the scientific director of the atomic project, wrote down after his conversation with the leader: "Comrade Stalin loves Russia and Russian science." After 1945, Soviet scientists and university professors became a privileged caste; their salaries were far above average. At the same time, the Kremlin ruler's direct and often obsessive interference promoted Trofim Lysenko's pseudoscientific monopoly in biology and resulted in the ban on genetics and cybernetics.[14]

Anti-Semitism became a part of state policies that greatly affected all intellectual and cultural spheres of life. The anti-Semitic campaign reached its climax in January 1953 after Stalin unleashed "the Kremlin doctors' affair." Soviet propaganda news claimed that there was a conspiracy between prominent Soviet physicians ("the Kremlin doctors") and Zionist organizations in the United States, with the goal of murdering members of the Soviet political and military leadership. At any moment, Stalin might order the deportation of Soviet Jews to the Far East. The anti-Semitism had an enormous divisive and corroding influence on Soviet elites and the educated society. In particular, it gave rise to anti-Stalinist and eventually anti-Soviet sentiment in educated circles—doctors, professors, educators, writers, journalists, professionals, and the creative intelligentsia in general—where persons of Jewish descent had been strongly represented since the 1920s.[15]

Hopes for liberalization and a better life that had been building among intellectuals and cultural elites since the war of 1941–45 grew in educated circles of Soviet society. Sharp observers realized that Stalinist policies in cultural, intellectual, and scientific spheres, as well as everywhere else, had reached an impasse.[16] After Stalin's death, the framework and basic mechanisms of state control over education, culture, and science continued essentially unchanged. Yet the anti-Semitic witch hunt, and the mass hysteria and preparations for pogroms, ended after Stalin's death. The harsh propaganda of militarism and Russian nationalism ebbed; the new Soviet leaders called for restoration of "socialist

legality." Gradually, the shocking shifts of 1953, including rehabilitations of the first groups of political prisoners from the Gulag and the sharp reduction of the power of the secret police and its network of secret informers, made room for the cultural Thaw.

The new leader, Nikita Khrushchev, was not a new Great Teacher guiding people's minds and capturing their imaginations. Nikita was strikingly undereducated and erratic. He neither wanted to nor could direct Soviet culture. He was obviously tipsy at his first meeting with Soviet writers in the spring of 1957. Possessing no means to charm his guests, he tried to remonstrate and intimidate them. The result was disastrous. In contrast to Stalin, Khrushchev was a joke; his behavior left intellectuals amused, appalled, and humiliated at once. A popular saying, a pun on Khrushchev's denunciation of "the personality cult" of Stalin, went: "There was a cult, but at least there was also a personality."[17]

In the fall of 1953, *Novy Mir* published several literary essays by Vladimir Pomerantsev that contained a simple thesis: a writer should write with candor about what he or she thinks and sees. This was a first dig at socialist realism and the mendacity of Stalinist culture. Pomerantsev had spent several years outside the Soviet Union, working for the Soviet Military Administration in Germany. This may have spared him from the paralysis of fear and self-censorship that entrapped many of his colleagues.[18] During 1954 and 1955, university dormitories in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities were abuzz with debates about "candor" in literature and life that quickly became debates about the gap between ideological promise and Soviet reality. Those debates involved future Soviet dissidents, visiting students from Central Europe, and those who later made successful careers in the League of Communist Youth (Komsomol) and the party. Among them were two dorm roommates: a Czech student, Zdenek Mlynar, who would become a leading figure in the "Prague Spring" in 1968, and Mikhail Gorbachev, who would become the last general secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR three decades later.

A creative minority of theater directors, film directors, editors of magazines, lawyers, historians, and philosophers began to test the limits of state censorship, venturing over the boundaries of party discipline in search of innovation and originality.[19] Writer Ilya Ehrenburg, Stalin's emissary to Western pro-Soviet intellectuals, wrote a novel, *The Thaw*, that gave the name to the new era. Alexander Tvardovsky and Konstantin Simonov began to transform the journal *Novy Mir* into an outlet for talented and unorthodox literary works. Film directors Mikhail Kalatozov, Mikhail Romm, and other stars of the Soviet "factories of dreams" came out with films extolling humanistic values and virtues. These people, aided by more sympathetic officials in charge of cultural affairs, formed the milieu in

which a new generation of talented men and women grew up and reached for greater freedom.[20]

The cultural Thaw evolved into a much more radical phenomenon after Khrushchev's secret speech. Khrushchev had neither the vision nor the intellectual ability to foresee the consequences of this speech. The text of his secret speech was leaked to the West. The U.S. State Department published the report, and soon CIA-funded Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe began to broadcast it, to the dismay of Communists in the East and the West.[21] Inside the Soviet Union, Khrushchev sent the secret speech to local party organizations with the instruction to read it to all rank-and-file party members and even broader audiences of "working collectives," the total number probably being twenty to twenty-five million people. The report put the entire ideological and propaganda apparatus into a state of paralysis. At universities, working sites, and even in the streets, people spoke their minds—officials, the KGB, and secret informers were speechless.[22]

Millions of people in the Soviet Union wanted to know more than the speech revealed. Sergei Dmitriev wrote in his diary: "There is no serious interpretation of the facts in the speech. Its implications for foreign policy can hardly be understood. And what is its domestic meaning? At schools students began to tear Stalin's portraits off the walls and trample them under their feet. They ask: who created the cult of personality? If there was only one personality, what did the rest of the party do? Every party committee in every region, district, and area had their 'vozhd' and heroes."[23]

Some Soviet students, according to an American observer, felt that "their faith had been shattered, and henceforth they could believe in nothing" that the Soviet regime told them to believe in.[24] At the end of May 1956, students at Moscow State University boycotted the university canteen, which was notorious for its bad food. It was a semi-intentional reenactment of the revolt on the battleship *Potemkin* during the revolution of 1905—the episode was widely known to the Soviet people from Sergei Eisenstein's celebrated film. Instead of a crackdown, baffled authorities negotiated with the students. Only later were some of them expelled and sent to live in the provinces.[25]

During the fall semester, students at many universities in Moscow, Leningrad, and elsewhere produced posters, bulletins, and journals unauthorized by the authorities. The autumn revolutions in Poland and then in Hungary had a considerable impact not only on the neighboring regions of Western Ukraine and the Baltic but also on students in Moscow, Leningrad, and other major cities. After the Soviet army suppressed the Hungarian revolution in November 1956, students at the Moscow and Leningrad universities gathered for meetings of soli-

darity with Hungary.[26] Some hotheads itched for action. In the Archangel region, a young man distributed a leaflet comparing Soviet power to the Nazi regime. The leaflet read: "Stalin's Party is a criminal and anti-national [organization]. It degenerated and turned into a closed group consisting of degenerates, cowards, and traitors." Future dissident Vladimir Bukovsky, then in high school, dreamed of getting weapons and storming the Kremlin.[27]

As their predecessors had done a century earlier in czarist Russia, radicalized students turned to literature for guidance. The focus of their attention was the new novel *Not by Bread Alone*, by Vladimir Dudintsev, published in *Novy Mir*. The novel described a conflict between an honest innovator and the bureaucrats who tormented him and blocked his creative activity. Meetings between writers and students encouraged radicalism. Konstantin Simonov, the editor of *Novy Mir*, spoke publicly about the need to repeal the 1946 party resolutions on party censorship of literature and art. Widely respected writer Konstantin Paustovsky spoke about a new class of conservative and obtuse careerists in science, culture, and other fields. He expressed the conviction that the Soviet people "would get rid of this group." These words electrified students and they spread around Russia in handwritten copies. Others took Dudintsev's book as a judgment on the whole Communist ruling elite. One anonymous letter to the Ukrainian Writers Union read: "Dudintsev is thousand times correct. There is a whole group in power, the product of the terrible past." The author of the letter called himself "a representative of a quite numerous strata of medium Soviet intelligentsia." "We opened our eyes," the letter concluded. "We learned to tell truth from lie. There can be no return to the past. The edifice of lies that people like you helped to erect is falling apart. And it will collapse."[28]

Breaking with the Stalinist Big Lie did not automatically mean a break with Communist ideology and the revolutionary legacy. In the prevailing mentality, a profound hunger for personal freedom warred with a sincere belief in the validity of socialist collectivism.[29] Other sources also demonstrate that 1956 was only the beginning of a great "emancipation of mind" from the ideas of a Communist utopia.[30] There were many who regarded de-Stalinization as a path to restore the values and norms of the first postrevolutionary years and of "the true Leninism." At the end of a three-day meeting of the Moscow Writers' Union, after the discussion of the secret speech, the audience spontaneously sang "The International." A future dissident, Raisa Orlova, was overwhelmed: "Finally, the true and pure revolutionary ideal has returned, something you can give yourself to without reservations."[31] Marat Cheshkov, then a member of a clandestine group of Moscow intellectuals, recalled: "For me, and also for the majority of the politically

engaged youth, Marxism-Leninism remained the unshakable foundation." He also admitted he "could not conceive, firstly, a society without the socialist order, secondly, without a politically centralized organization, i.e., the Party."[32]

Anti-Stalinist socialist radicalism was centered in Moscow and Leningrad, at universities and in educated circles. The provinces, where the intelligentsia was inconsequential and dispersed, remained quiet and conformist. After coming to Moscow State University from the provincial Rostov University, Alexander Bovin, a future "enlightened" adviser of Leonid Brezhnev, was surprised to find that he was far too moderate for his classmates. "I was not ready for such a high-pitch democratic and anti-Stalinist mood." Bovin disagreed with "unabashed" criticism of the party and the entire Soviet system; he also defended Soviet policies in Poland and Hungary. Other students interrupted and booed him down.[33] Coincidentally, these skirmishes took place at the department of philosophy from which another student, Mikhail Gorbachev's wife, Raisa Maximovna, had graduated just one year earlier. Bovin would later become an "enlightened" apparatchik, advocating cautious liberalization from above.

The bulk of the party and state bureaucracy, the military, and the secret police was forced to support Khrushchev's course of de-Stalinization, but privately these people resented its radicalism and ideological implications. Dmitry Ustinov, the man in charge of the military-industrial complex and secretary of the Central Committee after March 1965, would continue to fume twenty years after Khrushchev's fall that "no one enemy brought us so much harm as Khrushchev did in his policy towards the past of our party and our state, and towards Stalin."[34] Thousands from the military, diplomatic, and economic managers circles felt that their lives and achievements, especially during the Great Patriotic War, were compromised by the criticism of Stalin. Others felt that Khrushchev and the political oligarchs just wanted to turn Stalin into a scapegoat. General Petr Grigorenko was offended by Khrushchev "dancing the cancan on the tomb of the great man."[35]

At first, the confusion in the state bureaucracies and the KGB allowed for spontaneous de-Stalinization from below. The officials in charge of censorship, propaganda, and media were confused. On the one hand, the new radicalism of students and intellectuals frightened them. One the other hand, few of them wanted to resort to repressions only a few months after the denunciation of Stalin, without a clear signal from above.[36] In November 1956, the Soviet invasion of Hungary restored the conservative majority's self-confidence. The invasion came as a cold shower for radical anti-Stalinists, especially students, who realized, as one of them recalled, "that in this country we were completely alone. The masses were possessed by absolute chauvinism. 99% of the population shared

entirely the imperial aspirations of the authorities."[37] Many intellectuals, even those who advocated de-Stalinization, rallied hastily under the Soviet banners. They were eager to demonstrate that they never had had any doubts about the Soviet cause in the Cold War. Almost seventy Soviet writers signed the "open letter" to Western colleagues justifying the military action. Among them were the leaders of the cultural Thaw: Ehrenburg, Tvardovsky, and Paustovsky.[38]

In December 1956, Khrushchev and the Politburo concluded that the unrest among intellectuals and students endangered political control over the society.[39] Hundreds, perhaps thousands, were expelled from research institutions and universities. The KGB made arrests around the country to suppress dissent. The authorities restored the quotas limiting the number of children of intellectuals among university students; they also took measures to increase the numbers of "children of workers and peasants" in the student body.[40]

The events of 1956 revealed Soviet leaders' fear of the subversive potential of intellectuals and cultural elites. A special three-day meeting at central party headquarters with a group of writers resembled the Spanish Inquisition. Dmitry Shepilov, the most educated member of the new leadership, told writers that the 1946 policies in the cultural sphere would remain in force as long as the Cold War continued. When Konstantin Simonov, the editor of *Novy Mir*, asked the party bosses for permission to write a little bit of "truth about the realities" in the country, Shepilov rejected this request. Now, he said, as before, the United States sought to undermine Soviet society with ideological and cultural means. Therefore, literature must stay completely at the service of the party and serve its national security policies.[41]

This Cold War rationale would slow down the liberalization of Soviet cultural and educational policies for decades to come. Soviet cultural elites feared being branded as anti-Soviet and consequently as unpatriotic. The reaction reached a climax in the so-called Pasternak affair. In spring 1956, poet Boris Pasternak finished his novel *Doctor Zhivago*, which depicted the tragic fate of the Russian intelligentsia after the revolution. He submitted the manuscript to *Novy Mir*. At the same time, he broke the Soviet taboo and sent the manuscript to Italy, to the Communist maverick publisher Giacomo Feltrinelli. *Novy Mir* rejected the manuscript, and in November 1957, *Doctor Zhivago* appeared in print in the West and became a world literary sensation. In October 1958, Pasternak received the Nobel Prize for literature. Khrushchev unleashed a huge campaign to denounce Pasternak, which became a test of the loyalty of the entire Soviet cultural establishment. As in December 1956, the authorities cited the bipolar logic of the Cold War: those who are not completely with us are against us. Stalinism seemed to be back, as the entire state apparatus wielded its power to crush one individual. In a

frenzy of ostentatious patriotism, mixed with fear of losing state favors, the vast majority of Soviet writers voted to expel Pasternak as a traitor from the Writers' Union and even demanded his expulsion from the Soviet Union. Pasternak was forced to renounce the Nobel Prize, and his health gave out under the strain. He died of cancer on May 30, 1960.[42]

The swift restoration of "order" in 1956 and the Pasternak affair were sobering reminders to those who expected quick change. Still, the momentum of grassroots de-Stalinization continued. The control of state ideological and cultural institutions over the younger generation and cultural elites continued to erode.

THE ENEMY IMAGE BLURS

After Stalin's death, the Soviet Union slowly began to open up to the outside world. In 1955, Soviet authorities authorized foreign tourism, banned under Stalin. They also eased a nearly total ban on foreign travel for Soviet citizens. In 1957, 2,700 Americans visited the Soviet Union, and over 700,000 Soviet citizens traveled abroad. But only 789 of these visited the United States.[43] The closed nature of Soviet society and the state control of the flow of information generated enormous curiosity in Soviet society about the outside world and especially about America and Americans. The few American tourists and educational and cultural exchange visitors became the objects of immense curiosity. During the summer of 1957, a young Yale graduate (and future CIA analyst and diplomatic historian), Raymond Garthoff, traveled around the Soviet Union and met with hundreds of students. Outside Leningrad, he and his colleague found themselves surrounded by 150 students at an agricultural college. Students were so excited and grateful for the opportunity that they escorted the two Americans in a ceremonial march to the train station.[44]

Many Soviet citizens, avid readers, found their windows to the West in translated literature. After Stalin's death, a great number of works of American writers in translation, among them Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and J. D. Salinger, were published in hundreds of thousands of copies; they were available in thousands of public libraries around the Soviet Union. American films became another window into the New World for the curious public. After World War II, state authorities authorized a controlled release of trophy German and American films captured in Europe. These were mostly musicals, light-hearted comedies, and soap operas. The response of the Soviet public, from children to the old, to these releases was wildly enthusiastic. Music from American films, especially swing by Glenn Miller's orchestra, successfully competed with the Russian clas-

sics repertoire. The *Tarzan* series with Johnny Weismuller and *His Butler's Sister* with Deanna Durbin became as much a part of the generational experience as American canned food from Lend-Lease, ration cards, and fatherless childhood.[45]

During the Thaw, the trickle of Western films became bigger. State film distributors in Moscow and the provinces liked American blockbusters for monetary reasons and won bureaucratic fights against party propagandists concerned by the enormous popularity of Hollywood productions among viewers in the cities and the countryside. Many of the best-known American dramatic films (by Elia Kazan, Cecil B. DeMille, and others) did not reach broad Soviet audiences because of their cultural and religious content. Still, millions saw *The Magnificent Seven* with Yul Brynner, *Some Like It Hot* with Marilyn Monroe and Jack Lemmon, and others. Their impact on Soviet audiences cannot be overestimated. As the Nobel Peace Prize–winning Russian poet Joseph Brodsky, who lived then in Leningrad, recalled, these films "held us in greater sway and thrall than all the subsequent output of the neorealists or the *nouvelle vague*. The Tarzan series alone, I daresay, did more for de-Stalinization than all Khrushchev's speeches at the 20th party congress and after."[46] Writer Vasily Aksenov remembers: "There was a time when my peers and I conversed mostly with citations from those films. For us it was a window onto the outside world from the Stalinist stinking lair."[47]

The ferment that eroded the anti-American propaganda images worked above all on educated and privileged Soviet youth. Under the impact of de-Stalinization and the cultural Thaw, many educated youngsters sought to distance themselves from the Soviet past. They mistrusted and ignored Soviet propaganda and tried to dress and behave differently, in Western fashion. The state media ostracized them, calling them "loafers," "parasites," and *stilyagi* ("style-apers"). Garthoff recalled that the youths he met and talked with in 1957 fell into several categories. Some of them were "naive," especially those recently graduated from secondary school. They had not yet discovered contradictions between what they were taught and reality; they still believed in the propaganda about the United States. The older youths could be divided into the "believers," the precocious cynics, and the "golden youth" who found their escape from the dullness of Soviet cultural life in unabashed Westernism and Americanism.[48] For those of the "golden youth" who were skeptical or disillusioned, everything American became a powerful antidote to state propaganda. Young artists, writers, poets, and musicians exhibited the same attitudes. Joseph Brodsky observed that he and his friends tried to be "more American than the Americans themselves."[49]

American radio broadcasts and music exercised huge "soft" power upon many young Soviets. American jazz and swing were repeatedly banned in the

Soviet Union before World War II and again when the Cold War started. Many young people developed the habit of listening to the Voice of America's radio programs, almost exclusively because of the VOA's music programs. The number of shortwave radios in Soviet homes grew from half a million in 1949 to twenty million in 1958. At the end of his life, Stalin ordered the production of shortwave radios to be stopped by 1954. Instead, Soviet industry began to produce four million such radios annually, primarily for commercial reasons.[50] Particularly popular was the VOA's *Time for Jazz*. Its disc jockey, Willis Conover, owner of a fabulous deep baritone, became a secret hero of many Moscow and Leningrad youngsters. They sang, without understanding many of the words, the songs of Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller and listened to Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and the improvisations of Charlie Parker. Later came Elvis Presley. According to all accounts, the VOA's audience numbered millions. Records of American music stars were not available in stores, and getting a foreign-made vinyl disk was considered a miracle. By the late 1950s, tape recorders began to change this and broaden the exposure of Soviet youth to Western music.[51]

Ironically, Khrushchev and his erratic policies helped more than anything else to punch holes in the iron curtain. Despite the comeback of the hard-liners at the end of 1956, Khrushchev wanted to continue de-Stalinization. Paradoxically, the Cold War served as a justification both for asserting the "moral and political unity" of the Soviet people and for introducing the modest reforms aimed at projecting a benevolent image of the Soviet Union in the West. After the crackdown in Hungary, Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and Shepilov advocated the return to a "peace offensive." This resulted in an event with far-reaching domestic consequences, the World Youth Festival, held in Moscow in July and August of 1957. For a quarter of a century, the Soviet Union had remained virtually closed to foreigners, and there was almost no tourist infrastructure in place. The festival's organizers tackled many daunting tasks, such as what to do with the squalid look of most urban areas; the inadequacy and small number of hotels; the absence of nightlife, advertising, attractive quality clothing, carnival costumes and paraphernalia; and the lack of fast-food places and restaurants and opportunities for shopping. All this exposed the relative backwardness of Soviet society and economy in comparison with the capitalist West.[52]

Khrushchev let the leadership of the Komsomol run the show, with instructions "to smother foreign guests in our embrace." As a result, the festival became the first "socialist carnival" in the streets and squares of Moscow since 1918. Even the Kremlin flung its doors open for the young crowds.[53] Soviet authorities were unprepared for the scale of the event and failed to maintain centralized control

over it. The festival turned into a giant grassroots happening that paralyzed all attempts at spin control, as well as crowd control. Three million Moscovites provided enthusiastic hospitality to over 30,000 young foreigners. The curiosity and enthusiasm of the hosts was immeasurable. Many corners of the capital turned into impromptu discussion clubs—a completely new experience for Soviet citizens.[54]

The festival did in peacetime what the last stage of World War II had done before. In 1945, the war brought Ivan into Europe. In 1957, the Soviet regime itself brought the world to Moscow. The appearance of young Americans, Europeans, Africans, Latins, and Asians in the streets of the Soviet capital shattered propagandist clichés. In the Soviet media, a memoirist recalls, "Americans were depicted in two ways—either as poor unemployed, gaunt, unshaven people in dregs or as a big-bellied bourgeois in tuxedo and tall hat, with a fat cigar in the mouth. And there was a third category—hopeless Negroes, all of them victims of Ku-Klux-Klan."[55] As Russians saw freethinking and stylishly dressed youth, their xenophobia and fear of secret police informers evaporated virtually overnight. Many witnesses of the festival would concur later that it was a historical landmark as important as Khrushchev's secret speech. Jazzman Alexei Kozlov believes that "the festival of 1957 was the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet system. After the festival the process of fragmentation of Stalinist society became irreversible. The festival bred a whole generation of dissidents and intellectuals who lived a double life. At the same time, a new generation of party-Komsomol functionaries was born, double-dealers who understood everything perfectly well but outwardly professed to be loyal to the system."[56] Vladimir Bukovsky recalls that after the festival "all this talk about 'putrefying capitalism' became ridiculous." Film critic Maya Turovskaya believes that at the festival Soviet citizens could touch the world for the first time after three decades: "The generation of the Sixties might have been different without the festival."[57]

Nikita Khrushchev genuinely thought that the Soviet Union could catch up with and surpass the United States in the fields of science, technology, consumer goods, and overall living standards. In 1957 he came up with a slogan, "Catch up and surpass America," the cornerstone of his promise to build Communist society over the next twenty years. Khrushchev, buoyed by the fast-growing economy and the huge success of Sputnik, was not afraid of showing American achievements to Soviet citizens. When the first American national exhibition opened in Moscow in Sokolniki Park in July 1959, several million Muscovites poured in to gaze at American artifacts and to taste Pepsi-Cola. Khrushchev laid out his intentions to the GDR leader, Walter Ulbricht: "The Americans believe that the Soviet people, looking at their achievements, will turn away from the

Soviet government. But the Americans do not understand our people. We want to turn the exhibit against the Americans. We will tell our people: look, this is what the richest country of capitalism has achieved in one hundred years. Socialism will give us the opportunity to achieve this significantly faster."[58]

Whatever Khrushchev's intentions may have been, the long-term effects of his bragging did not help Soviet anti-American propaganda. His promises to reach the American level of prosperity (that is, the material symbols of this prosperity) impressed millions of Soviets. Zdenek Mlynar rightly observed: "Stalin never allowed the comparison of socialism with capitalist realities because he insisted that here we build an absolutely new world, comparable to nothing." Khrushchev came up with a new slogan and fundamentally changed the perception of the world for the average Soviet person. Over the course of the next years, people became accustomed to comparing their lives to American living standards and developed a complex of inferiority. One generation after another recognized that, in reality, American living standards remained much higher than in the Soviet Union. And, Mlynar continues, those who looked for explanation could easily come to the conclusion that the main obstacle that prevented them from achieving an American-style life was the existing economic and political system.[59]

As the Khrushchev era evolved, two mutually confusing messages coexisted in Soviet propaganda about the United States. One was the modified version of the traditional Stalinist enemy image in which the United States remained the big "other" that opposed the Soviet Union; American capitalism and the American way of life were presented as antithetical to Soviet "socialism" and way of life. Another message was a rather positive picture of American society as an umbrella for both foes and friends, and of U.S. technological achievements as a blueprint for Soviet technical progress. Khrushchev allowed Americans to demonstrate their achievements at the Sokolniki Park exhibition, but the Soviet press was full of stories on hunger, crime, unemployment, and the persecution of blacks in the United States.[60]

The dualistic image of the United States left many questions unanswered. Very few in the Soviet Union could speak with authority about American society and culture. In 1957, the official weekly of the Soviet Writers' Union, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (Literary Gazette), published a series of articles by Alexander Kazem-Bek, a Russian nationalist who had lived in the United States and then voluntarily returned to the Soviet Union. The articles denounced the United States as "a country without culture," as opposed to the Soviet Union and Europe. Immediately, Ilya Ehrenburg, an opponent of cultural xenophobia, published a rejoinder. He wrote that America was a country of many "progressive" writers and artists.[61] This polemic gave a rare glimpse into the growing tension between the

xenophobic and "cosmopolitan" groups inside the state bureaucracy and cultural establishment.[62]

Later, during the 1960s, the spread of American material and cultural symbols became pandemic. Music and clothing styles, the idolization of mass culture stars, and beatnik-like behavior took root, first of all, among the children of the Soviet nomenklatura. Inside this nonconformist youth milieu, American radio broadcasting and cultural exhibitions became extremely effective tools in fighting official anti-Americanism. John F. Kennedy, Ernest Hemingway, and Marilyn Monroe replaced the hackneyed icons of traditional Soviet heroes. The number of fans of cultural Americanism is impossible to establish; but it became especially high during the 1970s and the 1980s, when the Soviet Union entered a period of ideological vacuum and economic stagnation.[63]

THE OPTIMISTIC SIXTIES

The Thaw and a growing openness to Western influences affected millions. This impact, however, should not be exaggerated. After the crackdown on student dissent in December 1956, the party and state invested enormous resources in ideological control over the population, especially the youth. For every freethinking publication and Western film, there were thousands of newspaper and journal articles, books, and movies that promoted Soviet patriotism and orthodoxy. The rapid expansion of high school education during the post-Stalin decade did not automatically generate liberal values; for a while it served as a major vehicle for indoctrination and conformist mentality. Although cleansed of images and glorification of Stalin, school textbooks of history and literature continued to impose on young minds a single integrated narrative of Soviet history, culture, and ideology, constructed within a strict and censored framework. New cohorts of students graduated still believing that they lived in the best, happiest, and mightiest of all countries. By the end of the 1950s, Soviet society continued to maintain not only a strong Cold War consensus but also a huge store of Communist romantic illusions. In early 1959, Khrushchev decided to exploit these illusions by proclaiming at the Party Congress that the USSR had completed the "full and final construction of socialism." During the next two years, he and a group of speechwriters brought out a bombastic, sky-is-the-limit, program of catching up with the United States and "finishing the construction of Communist society" in the Soviet Union within two decades. In July 1961, in a speech to the Central Committee, Khrushchev promised that the next generation of Soviet people would live in the prosperity of a Communist paradise. The Soviet Union, the leader boasted, would "rise to such a great height that, by comparison, the main

capitalist countries will remain far below and way behind." After national "discussion" in which 4.6 million people took part, the Twenty-second Party Congress unanimously adopted the program in October 1961.[64]

Among the flagships of official romanticism and idealism were the mass-circulation newspapers *Izvestia*, headed by Khrushchev's son-in-law Alexei Adzhubei, and *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, the Komsomol newspaper. As Adzhubei later recalled, "We used to finish our meetings with indispensable slogans about the victory of Communism. We had no feeling of failure, deadlock or stagnation. I would like to stress: there was still the reserve of energy, many remained optimistic."[65] In 1960, a group of young journalists organized the first Soviet institute for the study of public opinion. The topic of the first poll was, "Will humanity prevent a world war?"[66]

Cinema was another powerful medium in which aged filmmakers of the 1920s and 1930s and their young pupils sought to re-create the spirit of revolutionary optimism and socialist romanticism. With sanction from above, they attempted to return the revolutionary heroes and Bolsheviks to the front stage from which they had virtually disappeared under Stalin. The new films (for example, *Communist*, with Gennady Gubanov) sought to put a human touch on the iron party men.[67]

Under Khrushchev, younger cadres rose in the party and state bureaucracy, people who combined war experience with a good education. It became fashionable among party leaders to hire intellectuals as "consultants." This gave birth to the phenomenon of "enlightened" apparatchiks, usually working in Moscow in the central bureaucratic structures. Among them were future "new thinkers" of the Gorbachev era: Georgy Arbatov, Anatoly Chernyaev, Fedor Burlatsky, Nikolai Inozemtsev, Georgy Shakhnazarov, and many others. Gorbachev himself was a beneficiary of this upward trend; as a young, educated, and energetic party member, he was quickly promoted through the ranks of the nomenklatura in the southern region of Stavropol. The late 1950s and early 1960s were relatively good times for young Communist intellectuals. One of them recalled: "Under Khrushchev a merry, joyful, and even easy-going life began for our circles. We were young. We scored first successes, defended first dissertations, and published first articles and books." All this created a "general optimistic tone of life." Social, cultural, and ideological differences did not corrode the atmosphere of this camaraderie.[68] These young people supported Khrushchev, despite his antics and lack of education, viewing him as a vehicle of change, the force that could sweep away old discredited cadres. This, they believed, would clear the way for their careers.

The new recruits were distinguished by their skill at critical thinking and their

reformist intentions. The younger apparatchiks and intellectuals believed they could contribute to the regime's liberalization by supporting Khrushchev's de-Stalinization. They were proud to call themselves the "children of the Twentieth Party Congress" and, together with the older established figures from the Soviet cultural and educational establishment, worked hard to revive the mass patriotism and enthusiasm that they believed had existed three decades earlier and been wasted by Stalin.

The "enlightened" apparatchiks skillfully walked the fine line between their openness to humanistic values, on the one hand, and careerism, conformity, and patriotism on the other. Unfortunately, the Cold War left little room for a middle ground. In a pinch, most of them supported the Soviet cause and empire: Realpolitik invariably triumphed over their humanistic yearnings and reformist idealism. In 1956, most of them were not ready to support the anti-Communist revolutions in Poland and Hungary. During the festival, in August 1957, Adzhubei, an informal leader of the new recruits, reproved Polish journalist Eligiusz Liasota, an editor of the liberal Polish literary magazine, *Po Prostu*: "Listen, you can do in Poland what you want, but keep in mind that it rubs off on us here as well. You come and spread this plague, [you want to] subvert us. We will not allow this to happen."[69] The "children of the Twentieth Party Congress" wanted to reform the Soviet regime, not destroy it.

The biggest obstacle in their eyes was the rigid bureaucratic apparatus that held the country in steel bands and blocked innovation and change. Still, the reform-minded Communists hoped this apparatus could be repopulated with "enlightened" cadres and transformed from within. One of them recalled later: "I reckoned on the development of party structures and state structures, on their differentiation, since the task of management of society and economy became more and more complex. Therefore, there would be a greater autonomy from the party apparatus."[70] The unofficial motto in some patriotic educated families of the time was: join the party and "purify" it from within.[71]

For a few years after the secret speech, there were still reasons for Soviet patriotism and belief in the potential of reformed Communism. The Soviet Union still demonstrated impressive economic growth, restoring and expanding its industrial power. In the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the appeal of the Soviet way of modernization reached its peak. Soviet leadership in the space race confirmed the vitality and global appeal of the Soviet economic model. On April 12, 1961, Yuri Gagarin, a lieutenant-major in the Soviet Air Force, orbited Earth and became the first man in space. There was a wave of immense pride and hope among millions of Soviet citizens and spontaneous patriotic demonstrations in Moscow and Leningrad. Many of the "enlightened" apparatchiks under-

stood the utopianism in Khrushchev's promises of the rapid arrival of prosperity and the collectivist paradise. Yet, as Chernyaev, a future assistant of Gorbachev, recalled, they wanted to believe in it.[72] The vision of a new Communist frontier, the heated atmosphere of the race with the United States, and the intensified mythmaking activities of official propaganda created a unique mood in the educated loyal circles of Soviet society. The early 1960s marked the peak of Soviet patriotism, the time when "Soviet civilization" reached the age of maturity.[73]

In sympathetic workplaces, in private apartments, in kitchens, people played guitars, drank, fell in love. But in their free time, they also read countless books, both those legally published and those illegally typed by samizdat (publish-it-yourself) enthusiasts. They debated with utmost seriousness on how to improve and change the system without repudiating the Communist legacy. Among the themes of that time were the "end of ideology," the rise of technocratic elites, the convergence of capitalist and socialist systems, and the role of cybernetics in managing public affairs. Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev, residing after their graduation from Moscow State University in 1955 in Stavropol, far from Moscow, managed to be part of this new intellectual subculture. Raisa began to do sociological studies in the countryside. The couple spent hours discussing philosophical and political ideas. The Gorbachevs read and debated the ideas of Western New Left philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Herbert Marcuse.[74]

Many future "new thinkers" gained similar access through their positions at academic institutes and as consultants of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Also, they met foreigners on a daily basis and went on foreign trips. In 1958, Alexander Yakovlev, a young war veteran and party official and future architect of glasnost under Gorbachev, went to the United States on the first exchange program and spent a year of studies at Columbia University. Some of the party intellectuals lived and worked in Prague, as journalists and editors on the journal *The Problems of Peace and Socialism*. It was a unique place in which Soviet functionaries in charge of international propaganda and experts on international affairs and world economy lived side by side and freely with Western leftists. According to Chernyaev's recollection, in the early 1960s Prague was a "cosmopolitan paradise compared to Moscow." The Prague group included Georgy Arbatov, Gennady Gerasimov, Oleg Bogomolov, Vadim Zagladin, Georgy Shakhnazarov, and others, who would form the core of the perestroika brain trust after Gorbachev had come to power.[75]

In the collective thinking of Soviet progressives and young people in the early 1960s, the cult of science became a substitute for religion. As astute observers note, the atheism of that period "was not the result of government despotism. It relied on the ideology of Soviet intelligentsia. Soviet intelligentsia looked towards

the future, then towards the past, but never—at the present." The optimistic spirit of the time was rooted in a strong belief in human reason, in the collective ability to overcome any difficulties if armed with scientific knowledge and freed from bureaucratic constraints.[76]

The scientific community was the primary forum for the optimistic leftist intellectual culture in the Soviet Union. Boosted by the growth of the military-industrial complex and competition with the United States, scientists seemed to be one of the most influential elite groups in the Soviet Union, a prototype of a civil society. The military-industrial complex offered scientists hundreds of thousands of new jobs. By 1962, the complex consisted of 966 plants, research and development labs, design bureaus, and institutes, with the total number of the employed reaching 3.7 million people. Many young scientists found jobs in academic research centers in Siberia and the Far East and in a few dozen secret cities and special academic cities, model urban projects built by the atomic ministry, the Academy of Science, and other institutions related to the military-industrial-academic nexus. Those who lived there had stable employment, relatively high salaries, and wonderful social benefits, from free kindergartens to free housing. The closed ghetto of secret cities was a surreally free place inside the Soviet Union. A journalist who managed to visit one of the secret cities in 1963 met with scientists who could talk freely on political and cultural topics without any fear. Scientists discussed the introduction of a "democracy" of scientists and intellectuals that would be a third way between Stalinist Communism and Western capitalism. Some of them believed the Soviet system could be changed "scientifically" by an alliance of scientists and "enlightened" party apparatchiks.[77]

Within the scientific community, the yearning for greater freedom from the dominant ideology and nonscientific bureaucracies coexisted with the fierce competition for and total dependence on state funding and resources. Soviet science historian Nikolai Krementsov describes "the merging of the scientific community and the party-state control apparatus on the level of both institutions and individuals." Scientists, as their advice to Khrushchev regarding the 1963 partial test-ban treaty demonstrated, learned to push the right buttons and manipulate the regime's ideological and military-industrial aspirations.[78]

Initially, most members of these reform-minded communities supported Khrushchev's efforts to expand Soviet global influence, and especially his course of assistance to the national liberation and anticolonial movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Tens of thousands of Soviet specialists, engineers, scientists, and technicians worked in China in the late 1950s, providing "fraternal assistance" in the rapid modernization of that country. Witnesses recall how sincere and enthusiastic their attitudes were. Soviet physicist Evgeny Negin re-

called that by 1959 "the relations between the Soviet Union and China could be best described in the words of the song 'Moscow-Beijing,' that became popular even in Stalin's time: 'Russians and Chinese are brothers forever.' It seemed that the friendship sanctified by the same ideological choice, would be unbreakable. It seemed much more solid than the ties based on sober pragmatic interests."[79]

The Sino-Soviet split came as a shock for Soviet public opinion in the early 1960s, and it contributed to a more critical view of Khrushchev's foreign policy. Still, general support of internationalist activism continued for a while. There were, of course, many other "friends," that is, possibilities for proletarian solidarity. Radical Arab regimes in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria and the faraway and exotic India, Burma, and Indonesia—all provided new objects of fascination. There was also postcolonial Africa: Ghana, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Congo. The euphoria within the Soviet political leadership about the prospects for promoting Soviet-style socialism in these countries was linked to stratagems of the Cold War: the struggle for the third world would reach its peak during the 1970s. At the same time, it initially resonated with optimistic and romantic currents in the Soviet educated elites.[80]

The 1959 revolution in Cuba fuelled new hopes in Moscow that Communism still represented the wave of the future. The victory of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and other *barbudos* captured the imaginations of many Soviet citizens, including members of the nomenklatura who traveled to Cuba to explore a new "socialist frontier."[81] The young poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, an unofficial literary mouthpiece of Communist reformers, rushed to Cuba to glorify "the Island of Liberty," as described in his ebullient stanzas. Everyone sang the new song: "Cuba, My Love!" Ernest Hemingway, whose novels *Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* had earlier been banned in the Soviet Union, now became a part of the Cuban cult. When Anastas Mikoyan, second in the Soviet leadership, flew to Cuba in February 1960, he spent the whole trip reading Hemingway's novels in the expectation of seeing the great writer, who at that time lived on the island.[82]

For the young men and women of the sixties, the Cuban Revolution revalidated the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. It also offered the illusory hope that a genuine revolution could occur without leading to blood and tyranny. Cuba reconnected Soviet foreign policy, tainted by Stalin's cynical imperialism, with messianic revolutionary horizons. "The Island of Liberty" was well within the U.S. sphere of influence but still managed to break loose of the superpower's gravitational pull. Latin America no longer seemed to be out of reach. "One should look beyond Cuba," predicted Komsomol boss Pavlov at the meeting with propagandists in January 1961. "At any time other Latin American countries may follow after Cuba. Americans are literally sitting on the powder keg in Latin

America. Venezuela may blow up at any moment. There are mass strikes in Chile. The same applies to Brazil and Guatemala."[83] The craze about Cuba did not subside even after the Cuban missile crisis; when Castro traveled around the Soviet Union at Khrushchev's invitation in the spring of 1963, he was welcomed by enthusiastic and cheering crowds of Soviet people wherever he went.

EROSION OF SOVIET IDENTITY

Revolutionary romanticism competed with Western influences for the souls of Soviet intellectuals. But the usual result of peeking out from behind the iron curtain was culture shock at the first glimpse of a free, diverse, and thriving life without ideological uniformity, fear of secret police, and regimented existence. Film director Andrei Konchalovsky, from the highly privileged family of the author of the Soviet national anthem, vividly described his impressions during his first trip abroad to Venice's film festival in 1962. Spectacular glimpses of historic Venice, Rome, and Paris, long impossible for educated Russians, left Konchalovsky flabbergasted. Venice, with its splendid Grand Canal, palaces, merry crowds, myriad lights, and Parisian hotels in which white-aproned chambermaids dusted off the glittering brass doorknobs, deepened the dismay that arose from the contrast between all this and the bleak Soviet existence. Many years later, Konchalovsky recalled: "All my ideological vacillations and antipatriotic steps that followed can be traced back to this episode."[84] Konchalovsky would later emigrate to the West and work in Hollywood.

Gradually, trips abroad ceased to be the search for a "socialist frontier" and became a coveted prize for party and state functionaries as well as members of the cultural establishment. There was even a trickle of official "youth tourism": during 1961, 8,000 Komsomol functionaries traveled to the United States, Great Britain, Switzerland, West Germany, and other countries.[85] Many of them found that abroad the consumerist paradise Khrushchev promised in the future already existed in the West. In the mid-1960s, Mikhail Gorbachev, then a party official in Stavropol, made his first foreign trip to East Germany. In 1971, after he was promoted to first secretary of the Stavropol area and became a member of the national-level nomenklatura, Gorbachev went to Italy, rented a car, and saw Rome, Palermo, Florence, and Turino. Raisa Gorbachev continued her sociological studies abroad, filling many little pads with notes. At one point, her observations boiled down to one question for her husband: "Misha, why do we live worse than they do?"[86]

Another longer-term effect of the cultural changes was the decline of militarism and jingoism. Khrushchev's enthusiasm about nuclear weapons pushed

him in 1959 to propose a drastic departure from the practice of universal conscription and long military service, one of the pillars of Stalinist society.[87] An ever-larger number of young men, particularly students, received permanent deferrals that freed them from military service altogether. In 1960 and 1961, the Soviet army diminished by one-third, and hundreds of thousands of teenagers were able to get deferrals from the draft and hundreds of thousands of junior officers entered civilian life, either reluctantly or with enthusiasm. In January 1961, the Soviet version of ROTC was abolished at colleges, universities, and high schools.[88] (These returned in 1965, after Khrushchev was ousted from power.)

The post-Stalin peace offensives and new limitations on militarism and military propaganda in the Soviet Union made the revival of antimilitarism and even pacifism possible in Soviet society. The civil war between the Red and the Whites, as well as World War II, remained major subjects in Soviet films, literature, memoirs, and drama. But the depiction of these wars became less pompous and increasingly realistic. Soviet writers who had seen the war as young officers, soldiers, or journalists began to produce the first honest accounts of their experiences and to make the first attempts at analysis. Among the most realistic war novels were Viktor Nekrasov's *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* and Konstantin Simonov's *The Living and the Dead* and the stories of Bulat Okudzhava, Oleg Bykov, Alex Adamovich, Yuri Bondarev, and others. Simonov's novel blamed Stalin and his purges of the military for the horrible defeats and losses in the first years of the Great Patriotic War. The orthodox *Literaturnaia Gazeta* criticized the "de-heroicizing" of the war, and top Kremlin propagandist Yuri Zhukov wrote in *Izvestia* that "quite a few works" had portrayed war in "a depressing manner, as one continuous human slaughter."[89]

The educated public, especially in Moscow, Leningrad, and other big cities became familiar with the "lost generation" literature that had appeared in France and Great Britain and particularly in Germany after the Great War of 1914–1918. Antiwar Western writers, among them Erich Maria Remarque, became hugely popular among Soviet youth. The cinema played the leading role in changing mass perceptions about war and militarism. The films of war veteran Grigory Chukhrai, *The Forty-first*, *Ballad of a Soldier*, and *Clear Skies*, as well as *Cranes Are Flying*, by the older filmmaker Mikhail Kalatozov, presented war as a background for individual dramas, where patriotism, heroism, and duty, but also treachery, cowardice, and careerism, were not rigid categories but matters of choice and chance. In contrast to the militaristic pastiche of Stalin's time, Andrei Tarkovsky's film *My Name Is Ivan* focused on the story of a ruined childhood. The message of these films was patriotic yet antimilitaristic. They reminded millions

of Russians of their most painful and heroic collective experience, but also of their shattered postwar hopes for a better life.[90]

There were no protests "to ban the Bomb" inside Soviet society, and there was remarkably little public response to the Berlin crisis and the Cuban missile crisis. Still, some educated individuals developed feelings and reactions similar to American beatniks Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, whose dissent against the dominant culture grew from their fear of nuclear war. The writer Alex Adamovich and the bard Bulat Okudzhava not only deplored the slaughter of their generation in World War II but also encouraged changes in public mentality to avoid the next, infinitely more horrible catastrophe. Andrei Sinyavsky in 1961 published "The Icicle," a short story with the theme of nuclear testing and fallout. In the fall of 1962, poet Andrei Voznesensky said in an interview abroad: "I admire the beatniks: They are poets of the atomic age." One writer, a regular contributor to *Novy Mir*, wrote in his diary: "Any preparation for war is revolting. I am not afraid for myself, but for my son and millions like him. If this conviction is called pacifism, then I am a pacifist." Later Adamovich recalled that for him and some idealists of the sixties, "our pacifism was linked to our desire to achieve a broader goal." This goal was the transformation of Stalinist society and mentality.[91]

Soviet nuclear designers, most privileged of all scientists, with excellent connections in the political leadership and bureaucracies, attempted to influence Soviet security policies. After the 1955 thermonuclear test, Sakharov suggested to Marshal Mitrofan Nedelin, the military commander of the test, that it would be a catastrophe if thermonuclear weapons were ever used. Nedelin answered the scientist with a lewd joke that meant, mind your business and give us nuclear weapons and we alone will decide how to use them. Sakharov was flabbergasted. As he recalled, "The ideas and emotions kindled at that moment have not diminished to this day, and they completely altered my thinking." There was a rift opening between the scientists who worked to create the Soviet military sword and the military-party bureaucrats who held this sword in their arms. "Beginning in the late fifties," recalled Sakharov, "one got an increasingly clearer picture of the collective might of the military industrial complex and of its vigorous, unprincipled leaders, blind to everything except their 'job.' " A growing awareness about the nuclear disarmament movement outside the Soviet Union made Soviet nuclear scientists increasingly critical of the government's policies, especially the direct and indirect use of force in the international arena.[92]

Demographic changes also contributed to the diminishing impact of militarism. Seventy million Soviet citizens were born between 1945 and 1966, in the period of peace. Their number in big cities was disproportionately large because

of continuing rapid urbanization. These cohorts, in contrast to the youth of the 1930s and 1940s, were not imbued with the spirit of sacrifice. Increasing numbers of them were non-Russians who looked askance at the Russo-centric themes of Soviet patriotism.[93] The youth of the early 1960s had heard from their fathers and older brothers about the terrible price of victory. Vladimir Visotsky, the Soviet Bob Dylan, liked to talk to war veterans, and he articulated their memories with extreme poignancy: the Great Patriotic War was the people's greatest tragedy. "Battalions keep marching and marching westwards. And women back home keep wailing in funeral grief."[94] Those who served in the army found there not only camaraderie but also hazing, crude noncommissioned officers, and old-style drilling practices that were a travesty of training, especially against the backdrop of the nuclear age. The young writer Vladimir Voinovich gave a satirical twist to the growing antimilitarist mood in *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*, a masterly parody on the flood of "patriotic" literature about the Great Patriotic War. He published the novel abroad in 1969, which later contributed to his expulsion from the Writers' Union.[95]

Educated young people began to take any opportunity to avoid military service. As with the student movement in 1956, it would be wrong, however, to exaggerate the scale and tempo of changes. They affected above all a privileged minority from Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities. And as long as the Cold War continued, the new antimilitary trends did not come to the surface.

The Khrushchev era also saw the emergence of powerful national identities that belied the official concept of "Friendship of the Peoples." Some of them, such as the nationalist movements in the Baltics, Ukraine, and the Caucasus, had originated long before the Thaw. Some emerged during the 1920s as a result of the Bolshevik nationality policies.[96] Others, including those in the Russian core of the Soviet Union, attested to the new strains that resulted from the Stalinist legacy. The Jewish Question and the issue of anti-Semitism were pivotal, because of the strong representation of people of Jewish descent in Soviet educated society. After 1953, the more overt anti-Semitic campaigns stopped, but the regime never tried to redress the wrongs committed during the "anticosmopolitan" campaigns. No attempt was made to rehabilitate people of Jewish descent and Jewish cultural figures purged in 1948–52; nor did the regime reopen those institutions of Jewish education and culture that had been closed at that time. Institutional anti-Semitism continued in many hidden and informal ways. People of "Jewish nationality" were permanently marked on secret bureaucratic forms as untrustworthy and not fit to serve in key state organizations and at the top of the party and state hierarchy (the military-industrial complex, nuclear energy, and Academy of Science were notable exceptions). The fact that after 1955

the Soviet Union supported the Arab states against Israel negatively affected Soviet Jews. They were treated as a diaspora whose loyalty potentially was to another state.[97] They had to jump over additional bureaucratic hurdles, compared to Russians, to obtain authorization for travel outside the Soviet Union. Khrushchev and his entourage frowned at Jewish cultural identity and Jewish membership in cultural and scientific elites. And in Ukraine, where grassroots anti-Semitism had old roots, officials promoted anti-Semitic publication under the aegis of "anti-Zionist propaganda."[98]

Many members of the cultural elites with "Jewish nationality" on their passports still thought of Stalinism as a tragic deviation from the positive socialist experiment. Poet and writer David Samoilov wrote in his journal in April 1956 that Stalinism was "the child of Russian misery"; it called to service the people from lower classes and "replaced the real, simple human ideal with anti-human ideas of chauvinism, enmity, suspicion, and anti-humanism."[99] The assimilation of urbane sophisticated Jews into Soviet society went so far that few of them retained their ethnic, or indeed their religious, identities.

Younger educated Jews, however, felt increasingly alienated from this Soviet identity. Their high level of education and sophistication made them distinct from Russians, Ukrainians, and other ethnic groups. They also felt the oppressive nature of the regime, because they discovered they did not have the brilliant career opportunities their parents had had in the 1920s and 1930s. Mikhail Agursky, son of Soviet Communists who became an ardent Zionist, recalled his feelings back in the 1960s: "Could one really expect that a nation that had given the Soviet state political leaders, diplomats, generals, and top economic managers would agree to become an estate whose boldest dream would be a position as head of a lab?"[100]

Many writers, poets, intellectuals, musicians, artists, and actors from Jewish backgrounds suffered from the attacks on "cosmopolitanism" and therefore had considerably fewer illusions about the Soviet regime and the realities around them. This brought them into the vanguard of the movement for cultural and political liberalization. At that time, being a Jew meant to be an advocate for internationalism, dialogue, and greater tolerance. In 1961, Yevgeny Yevtushenko wrote a poem, "Babi Yar," that broke the taboo of silence in the Soviet Union over the Holocaust. Composer Dmitry Shostakovich immediately used the poem's words for his new symphony, the Thirteenth. In December 1962, film director Mikhail Romm criticized Stalin's Russo-centric propaganda and called for the end of self-isolation from Western culture.[101] Ehrenburg and Romm had abandoned their Jewish roots in the search for socialist internationalist ideals, and Yevtushenko and Shostakovich were ethnic Russians who abhorred ethnic na-

tionalism. All of them proclaimed themselves "Jews" in opposition to the remnants of Stalinist regime—xenophobia, chauvinism, and anti-Semitism.[102]

For some Jews, Israel became their main temptation and dream of an alternative existence. In the war of October 1956, Israel was the target of blistering criticism in the Soviet press. Jews with strong Soviet identities denounced Israeli aggression against Egypt.[103] But a few months later, the appearance of the Israeli delegation at the Moscow Youth Festival created a sensation. The delegates were young veterans of the recent war, whose demeanor, dignity, and fearlessness, and above all the pride of being Jewish, was new and astonishing.[104] Official reports about the Festival were full of alarm: "Zionists continue to distribute the literature they brought among Moscow Jews," "the workers of Moscow cinema studio for two days have been filming only the Zionist part of the Israeli delegation," and so on. A crowd of young men who could not get tickets to the Israeli delegation's music performance crushed the cast iron fence in front of the Moscow Soviet Theater and stormed into the performance hall. These episodes reflected the renewal of curiosity and sympathy for Israel among Soviet Jews. For the first time, some of them became interested in their religious and cultural identity. Despite very intense anti-Zionist propaganda, an increasing number of Jews began to apply for emigration to their rediscovered Middle East "homeland."[105]

On the opposite side from this "Jewish" movement emerged another movement that emphasized traditional Russian nationalism and rejected the legacy of the revolution. "By the Khrushchev era," concludes Itzhak Brudny, "many Russian nationalist intellectuals held research or teaching positions in elite Soviet universities and research institutes, or were staff members of or regular contributors to important newspapers, magazines, and literary journals." These people protested against the destruction of historical Russian monuments and churches; they deplored the progressive degradation of the Russian countryside, the repository of traditional Russian cultural norms and values. Anti-Semitism became a big component of the ideology of the new Russian nationalism; in fact, with the growing openness, Russian nationalists imported the main anti-Semitic arguments from white émigrés living in the West, above all the thesis of the revolution as a "Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy" against Russian people.[106]

The rise of educated Russian elites led to growing friction and factional struggles in Soviet culture, education, and even science. These pernicious crosscurrents in culture received another powerful impulse from the Middle East. The triumph of Israel over the Arab armies in the Six-Day War in 1967 filled Soviet Jews with pride and set them against the "Russians" and the rest of Soviet society. These developments led some younger Jews to shed their Soviet identity and think about emigration from the Soviet Union.[107]

Khrushchev's behavior toward the end of his career accelerated the demise of the de-Stalinization project. Khrushchev was trying to straddle the gap between his hatred of Stalin and his preference for Stalinist methods of administration and mobilization. He was never consistent, and he often undermined himself with rambling speeches and reckless behavior. Historian Sergei Dmitriev recorded in his journal in March 1961: "Everybody is sick and tired of Khrushchev. His foreign voyages and empty and erratic verbiage have finally reached the state of idiocy. In the public and political atmosphere one increasingly notices the signs of absolute inertia, intellectual vacuum, and a lack of purpose. There are no thoughts, no movement."[108]

Khrushchev's inconsistency in cultural policies made him more enemies than friends among the bureaucracies and influential cultural elites. In November 1962, on his order, *Novy Mir* published Solzhenitsyn's novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. For a brief moment, elated, reform-minded intellectuals believed that all the walls had fallen and the ultimate truth about Stalinism could now be freely discussed. Yet just one month later, on December 1, Khrushchev, prodded by the retrograde figures in the Soviet cultural and propagandist establishment, appeared at an exhibition of young modernist artists and sculptors and denounced them as "degenerates" and "pederasts." He claimed that their art was as good as "dog-shit." In his uncouth raving, Khrushchev reflected personal and generational preferences for realist classical art. But, without fully realizing it, the Soviet leader had jumped into the *Kulturkampf* on the side of the "Russian" faction against the anti-Stalinist cultural vanguard. At two meetings with the Soviet intelligentsia in December 1962 and March 1963, Khrushchev was even more rambling, rude, and intolerant than at the previous meetings in 1957. In blunt words, he told the young writers and poets that their modernist, Westernizing, and liberal bent put them on the wrong side of the Cold War divide. Khrushchev warned them that if they still want to be "the artillery of the party," they must cease the "friendly fire" against their own camp. Most young artists and intellectuals no longer wanted to be the party's "artillerists" but believed that their art had helped to promote "the line of the 20th party congress," that is, de-Stalinization. They counted on Khrushchev's support against "Stalinists." Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesensky, Vasily Aksenov, the sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, and other innovative writers and poets became the targets of vicious organized attacks. They finally realized that the entire, crude, ruthless force of the state opposed them.[109] This realization marked the origins of sustained cultural and political dissent in the Soviet Union.

Both Stalinists and anti-Stalinists approved of Khrushchev's removal in October 1964. People who supported the Thaw and de-Stalinization believed that Khrushchev was a spent force and any future leadership would be better than his. Soon, however, they realized how wrong they were. The new guard in the Kremlin quickly terminated de-Stalinization from above. The majority of party leaders and ideologists did not like what they saw in the educated strata of society: growing individualism, creeping Westernism, popularity of American music and mass culture, growing pacifism, and pluralistic attitudes. Where the party ideologists failed, the KGB began to step in: a special division of Soviet secret police had the task of "guiding" Soviet cultural and intellectual elites and "shielding" them from "harmful influences." A KGB report at the end of 1965 tried to minimize the damage the previous decade had done to the regime: "One cannot say that specific anti-Soviet and politically damaging manifestations testify to the growth of general discontent in the country or to serious intentions to create anti-Soviet underground. This is out of question."[110]

The new leadership and the KGB, however, provoked more antiregime manifestations in the same year. In May 1965, Leonid Brezhnev publicly praised Stalin as a war leader. And in September, the secret police arrested the writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel for "the crime" of publishing their novels abroad under pseudonyms. Suddenly, hundreds of leading Soviet intellectuals, writers, artists, and scientists began to send petitions to the party leadership with appeals to free the arrested writers and to stop the backslide to neo-Stalinism. A new movement was born, which demanded public trials and constitutional rights. "Dissidents," as the members of this movement came to be called, began to appeal to the world via the foreign media.[111]

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 substantiated the fears of the Soviet anti-Stalinist intelligentsia that the post-Khrushchev leadership might take the country in a neo-Stalinist direction. The crushing of the Prague Spring and its "socialism with a human face" dashed the hopes of many educated Soviet patriots that the existing system could be reformed. This produced a remarkable rise of antigovernment sentiment, even among some who were established in the Soviet elites. The history of this sentiment and the dissident movement is beyond the scope of this book. It must only be emphasized that, although the number of open dissidents was insignificant, their sympathizers and supporters among the educated elites numbered in the hundreds of thousands. It is also noteworthy that quite a few dissidents were former enthusiastic Communist reformists who began to feel betrayed, angry, and alienated from the regime. They also felt alienated from the vast masses of their fellow citizens, who were less educated and not capable of understanding their motives for turning

against the regime. The growing sense of alienation and isolation from the state, as well as from the passive majority, led many dissidents to emigrate to the West. Many "enlightened" apparatchiks, however, continued their careers, while waiting for another change of fortune.

The analysis of the period from 1956 to 1968 suggests that the Soviet Union still possessed considerable internal energy and even, as we have seen, was capable of bouts of ideological vigor and optimistic idealism. The Khrushchev decade produced a new cohort of social, cultural, and political leaders, the "men and women of the sixties," who aspired to lead the Soviet Union down the path toward "socialism with a human face." Their patriotic energy and identity were based on Communist ideology and the selective idealized perceptions of the revolution and the leftist culture of the 1920s. By the end of Khrushchev's rule, however, the utopian energies that nourished Soviet patriotism had been exhausted. Soviet identity, rejuvenated by these energies, also began to fragment and erode under powerful external and internal influences. Among the new trends in the educated strata were a passionate cultural Americanism, an antimilitarist and antigovernment intellectualism, as well as a growing conservative Russian nationalism. Last but not least, the "enlightened" apparatchiks lost their prospects for rapid career rise and became increasingly attracted by Western consumerism.

Ultimately, the Kremlin leadership and Soviet bureaucracy mismanaged the process of relative liberalization after Stalin's death. They ended up alienating the cultural, intellectual, and scientific elites that had been the most optimistic and patriotic at the beginning of the "great" decade. Some actions, from the crackdown on artistic creativity to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, inflicted deep wounds on the patriotic Soviet home front and sowed seeds of dissent among some members of Soviet elites. The self-inflicted wounds did not look fatal at first. But they did not heal.

Under Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leadership abandoned reformist projects. It was content to live with the fossilized ideology and sought to repress cultural dissent and force its participants into exile and immigration. Unwilling and unable to carry out domestic reforms, Brezhnev instead launched détente with the Western powers. Détente and the international legitimacy it granted to him and the Soviet leadership became a substitute for the missing dynamism of the Soviet experiment. At the same time, Soviet participation in the détente process led to further erosion of the Stalinist legacy of xenophobia and to the reintegration of the Soviet Union into the wider world.