The Fundamental Weaknesses of Khrushchev's De-Stalinisation Programme in the USSR

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Abstract: The following article assesses the limitations of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation programme. It argues that although Khrushchev tried to come to terms with the Stalinist past by acknowledging its atrocities, this was only done partially, guided by his own political agenda. The process of de-Stalinisation was shaped by frequent inconsistencies that led to 'thaws and freezes' both in the domestic and the external sphere of the Soviet Union, at cultural, political and social levels. Nevertheless, this incomplete de-Stalinisation allowed for a renegotiation of the status quo of the Soviet system, planting the seeds for future dissent.

The notion of 'de-Stalinisation' (*destalinizatsiya*) refers to a series of state reforms implemented in the Soviet Union after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. This term is overloaded with complexities, often leaving room for interpretations and challenges that are difficult to overcome. Although it was never part of public rhetoric during Khrushchev's leadership, it subsequently came to acquire certain popularity amongst Russian and Western Sovietologists,[1] providing a historical framework for the following dictatorial eras. It can first be traced from the expression of the

[1] Polly Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 2.

"*[overcoming of] the cult of personality*" guised in the title of the 'Secret Speech' itself,[2] and later on, in the June 1956 resolution.[3] [4]

Furthermore, it possesses a wide range of connotations. Even though its fundamental meaning referred to the direct criticism addressed to Stalin during Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech,'[5] which was perceived as an *ad hominem* attack on the former Soviet leader, it later broadened to the notion of Stalinism,[6] encompassing both the ideology and the policies adopted by Stalin. Moreover, the historian Polly Jones further advocates for a heterogeneous understanding of the notion of 'de-Stalinisation,' arguing that "it has come to denote more diffuse processes of revision and reform"[7] that does not always apply directly to the figure of Stalin, thus raising issues of the intent beyond reforms and the extent of assessment of such processes of de-Stalinisation.[8] Therefore, these reform modifications encompassed a multitude of facets that affected all layers and apparatuses of Soviet society, being characterised by changes in the political system, socio-cultural reforms, implementations of economic policies, new approaches towards the criminal

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[2] "On the *cult of personality* and its consequences" (emphasis added). See "Khrushchev's Secret Speech, 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences,' Delivered at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," February 25, 1956, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, From the Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 84th Congress, 2nd Session (May 22, 1956-June 11, 1956), C11, Part 7 (June 4, 1956), pp. 9389-9403. Available at: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115995

[3] "On o*vercoming the cult of the individual* and its consequences" (emphasis added). See the Press Office of the U.S.S.R. Embassy, *On Overcoming the Cult of the Individual and its Consequences: A Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Ottawa: 1956). Available at: https://archive.org/details/OnOvercomingCultIndividual/mode/1up

[4] Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation,* 15.

[5] Robert C. Tucker, 'The Politics of Soviet De-Stalinization', in *The Soviet Political Mind: Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change* (New York: W. Norton, 1971): 173–202.; Herman Achminow, 'A Decade of de-Stalinization,' *Studies on the Soviet Union* 5, no. 3 (1965): 11–20.

[6] Polly Jones, 'From Stalinism to Post-Stalinism: De-Mythologising Stalin, 1953-56,' in *Redefining Stalinism*, ed. Harold Shukman (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003): 127.

[7] Polly Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006): 3.

[8] For example, Polly Jones reflects upon some of these dilemmas: "Can we deem a process 'de-Stalinization' if the desire to break with Stalin(ism) is not explicitly articulated? Or, lastly, if a policy claims to constitute de-Stalinization, do the outcomes, which might well end up still being 'Stalinist', matter?" Quoted in Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation*, 3.

justice system, and vacillations in foreign policy and Khrushchev's ambitions, having at its core the ideological departure from Stalin's cult of personality towards a rapprochement with Marxist-Leninist credentials.

The comprehension of the programme of de-Stalinisation is a challenging phase in contemporary historiography. Recent revisionist literature exposes the intricacy of this phenomenon, arguing that de-Stalinisation is not a straightforward, linear process, but rather a process characterised by high fragility and waves of "thaws and freezes."[9] Similarly, historian Anne Applebaum supports this view, stating that the new emerging Khrushchevian era had a certain peculiarity, where "reforms took two steps forward, and then one step – or sometimes three steps – back."[10] Following this hypothesis, this paper aims to examine the limitations behind Khrushchev's programme of de-Stalinisation by looking at the conceptual framework, its weaknesses and the shortcomings of its implementations. The discussion will look at reforms conducted in the political, social and cultural field and will assess their outcomes and implications in the domestic and international sphere. The weaknesses themselves are shaped by conceptual inconsistencies and disagreements in the scholarly world – as in, by different understandings of what de-Stalinisation represents, where it begins, where it ends, and what the extent of its implications and causality is. Therefore, the overall assessment of its implementation is, to a certain degree, subjective, and must be treated with caution and scepticism**.** Moreover, the author acknowledges the absence of an ample discussion on

[9] *Ibid.*, 2-4.
[10] Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Allen Lane, 2003): 458.

Khrushchev's so-called "hare-brained"[11] economic policies due to the complexity of this issue and the spatial constraints required to create a comprehensive analysis.

To begin with, it is uncertain when de-Stalinisation started, as historians seem to disagree upon the chronology of the process. Some argued that it stemmed from the hopes created in the aftermath of the Second World War when there was a widespread transformation in the lives and mentalities of the Soviet citizens, and an expectation for some sort of political and social liberalisation[12] as a sign of the regime's appreciation for citizens' sufferings and their contributions to victory. However, during that time, "the Stalinist regime became more rigid and repressive than ever"[13] and only Stalin's departure could offer a propitious environment for relaxation in Soviet society.[14]

Robert C. Tucker affirmed that the first act of de-Stalinisation was marked by the death of Stalin on March 5 1953,[15] however, recent archival research seems to contradict this claim, noting that the disappearance of Stalin had, in fact, a counter effect and it did not result in an immediate end to his cult. On the contrary, Stalin's cult seems to have flourished. The citizens flooded the public life with proposals of elaborated posthumous commemorations, glorifying the former leader to exalting

[11] For an extensive discussion see Donald Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era: de-Stalinisation and the Limits of Reform in the USSR, 1953 – 1964* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993): 41-48.
[12] Julianne Fürst called this "a hint of freedom." See Juliane Fürst, 'Introduction – Late Stalinist Society: History, Policies and People,' in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. Juliane Fürst (New York: Routledge, 2006): 1-4.
[13] Elena Zubkova, 'The Postwar Years: Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments,' in *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*, ed. D. L. Hoffmann (Oxford: Blackwells, 2003): 279. Similarly, Baberowski and Doering-Manteuffel agreed with this view – see Jörg Baberowski and Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, 'The Quest for Order and the Pursuit of Terror,' in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, eds. Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 219.
[14] Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Postwar Soviet Society: The 'Return to Normalcy,' 1945-1953,' in *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union*, ed. Susan J. Linz (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985): 151-152.
[15] Tucker, 'The Politics of Soviet De-Stalinization,' 174.

demiurgic levels.[16] This popular reaction brought the rationale that in order to move on towards a post-Stalinist future, the Stalinist past had to be addressed in the first place. However, there was little consensus amongst the Soviet leadership on how to carry out this process.

It all started will small steps, with the arrest of Beria in June 1953 under the suspicion of organising a coup d'état, and the July Plenum when the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) was reformed into the KGB, being put under party control so that such a large base of power would never fall into the hands of a single person ever again.[17] Moreover, in December, the same year, Beria was executed.[18] This move was also justified by the impression that 'terror' and coercion would diminish in the public sphere, and thus increase the morale and the economic productivity among the population.[19] Furthermore, the following two years saw a small-scale rehabilitation and release of several political prisoners from forced labour camps bringing with them grim stories to be told – "the beginning of an unstoppable process," as the Medvedev brothers called it.[20] In 1955, the Central Committee set up a commission to investigate the crimes committed by Stalin. It can be said that this investigation was undermined from the start, considering that the person in charge was none other than Pyotr Pospelov, the former editor of *Pravda* and a loyal Stalinist who was involved in the 1930s terrors. The level of criticism was modest, nevertheless, findings were shattering: almost two million Soviet citizens were arbitrarily arrested during 1935 and 1940, out of which more than a quarter were

[16] Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013): 4.
[17] Roy A. Medvedev, *Khrushchev* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1982): 68-69.
[18] Ironically, Deutscher saw Beria as one of the main supporters of reformation after Stalin. See Isaac Deutscher, 'The Beria Affair,' in *Heretics and Renegades and Other Essays* (London: 1955).
[19] Wlodzimierz Brus, *Socialist Ownership and Political Systems* (London: 1975): 112-121.
[20] Roy A. Medvedev and Zhores A. Medvedev, *Khrushchev: The Years in Power* (Oxford: 1977): 19.

executed.[21] Khrushchev seized this moment as a perfect opportunity to consolidate his position by de-legitimising the former leader – Joseph Stalin – and redrafted the content of the report in order to present it at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1956). This is how the 'Secret Speech' was born, the main thrust of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation.

During the Speech, Khrushchev went against Stalinist dogmas and accused the former leader of being guilty of great abuses of power. Stalin was incriminated as the initiator of mass repressions in the postbellum period and was found guilty of proliferating the cult of his own personality, the falsification of history, and was held responsible for the precarious state of the Soviet agriculture, World War II losses and the erroneous direction in the Soviet foreign policy.[22] During the Great Purge, innocent people ended up confessing to crimes that they did not commit, constrained by "physical methods of pressure, torture, reducing them to unconsciousness, depriving them of judgement, taking away their human dignity."[23] Nowadays such acts would fall under *the Fruit of the Poisonous Tree Doctrine*, a legal metaphor that supports the idea of the dangers behind collecting judicial evidence under the inducement of threats and physical violence. When a confession is 'tainted,' then everything obtained from its use as a piece of evidence in court becomes 'contaminated.' Moreover, the fabrications of *kompromat* behind the "Leningrad Affair" (political, anti-Soviet) and the "Doctor's Plot" (anti-Semitic character) were also exposed, leading to questioning the fairness of the Soviet judicial apparatus and its ability to spread propaganda and to conduct misinformation campaigns. Many were left in shock: this was the first time someone dared to speak in public against

[21] William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, (W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2003): 279.
[22] Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, 87-88.
[23] Taubman, *Khrushchev,* 271.

Stalin.[24] It represented an interference with the sacrosanct status quo of a communist system and the infallibility of a dictator.

However, "for all the sensation the details of the speech caused, far more important were its limitations and repercussions."[25] First of all, the speech was not entirely honest. Khrushchev omitted to mention the atrocities committed before Sergey Kirov's assassination in December 1934. The rationale behind this convenient compromise was simple: he was interested in legitimising his takeover of state structures by not undermining the system *per se*, but rather Stalin as a person. Khrushchev himself was a Stalinist product and *undermining the system* meant *undermining himself*. Furthermore, taking down Stalin's cult of personality created a vacuum that could be easily replaced by Khrushchev' own cult. Thus, his discourse did not tackle crimes and acts of repression that were considered 'necessary' for the creation and consolidation of the socialist state, such as the measures taken against Trotskyist, Bukharinist, and other 'enemies' of the Party, and the abuses conducted during the processes of collectivisation and industrialisation.[26] Its accusations were limited, characterised by euphemisms, criticising only acts committed against party personnel and intelligentsia groups; non-party victims were not rehabilitated. Therefore, the acknowledgement of the extent of Stalin's crimes by Khruschev was hardly done by a movement of the heart and was only useful so long as it served a political purpose.

[24] Polly Jones argued that in the private sphere the situation was different and that there were several instances when accusations against Stalin were made. See Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation*, 2.
[25] Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era*, 18.
[26] *Ibid*., 15.

Secondly, the 'Secret Speech' was not secret and was never intended to remain secret. Although Khrushchev's courage and determination in his process of de-Stalinisation were questioned by the fact that he was not capable of reading the text of the speech in front of his own nation[27] and by not allowing for its content to be published in the national press, the text was later disseminated through party committees and by the end of the year, millions of people had had the speech read to them. This determined a lack of consistency in the message that was being spread, leaving to the reader's discretion what was quintessential and which paragraphs necessitated more emphasis. Afterwards, its content was passed by word of mouth and people could interpret the phrases as they wished and could choose what was worth being mentioned. Paradoxically, the content of the 'Secret Speech' was more accurately known abroad, with the Eastern European Communist leaders being first in its possession. Later on, it was passed through Poland to the United States via a CIA agent.[28] A version of it was also published in the *New York Times* in June 1956.[29]

Thirdly, the speech determined a crisis that Khrushchev was not able to foresee. Georgia was the living proof that a country was willing to defend the memory of its former dictator by any means, even at the risk of bloodshed. Likewise, the Chinese Communist Party's disagreements on Khrushchev's attacks on Stalin concluded with a cessation of bilateral relations and the Sino-Soviet split. Contrarily, the satellite states of the communist bloc used this episode to make new purifications and changes in order to achieve a higher degree of autonomy. Thus,

[27] Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009): 110.
[28] Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 273-274.
[29] See Appendix 1.

"the Soviet bloc threatened to crumble."[30] Poland, Hungary and Romania[31] saw episodes of civil unrest whilst they were trying to reform from the inside. Once again, Khrushchev proved his vacillation in his strategies of foreign policy by choosing to violently suppress the Hungarian Revolution on the one hand, and by granting greater concessions to the other two states on the other hand.[32] The Stalinist-style Soviet armed intervention in Hungary showed once more to Western countries that the USSR was not capable of reformation and that Khrushchev's accusations brought to Stalin regarding his brutality and the cult of personality were mere strategies to legitimise his leadership.

Khrushchev's weaknesses in his process of de-Stalinisation were also encapsulated by his lack of a long-term vision regarding the reforms implemented in the Soviet criminal justice system. Khrushchev's introduction of 'socialist legality' (*zakonnost'*) saw the re-establishment of the rule of law as the first step to combat arbitrariness and to renegotiate the rules of society.[33] This implied a rehabilitation of most Gulag prisoners through different waves of amnesty, noting that in 1960 the Gulag population was downsized to approximately 550,000 prisoners, compared to 2.5 million in 1953 when Stalin died.[34] However, Gulag releases had a wider effect on Soviet society; it was more than Khrushchev envisioned. The process of rehabilitation and the reconsideration of high-level purges in the 1930s, whilst also re-evaluating the status of the communist 'enemy,' opened up questions of

[30] Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 296-297.
[31] Romania, for example, took advantage of this to remove several Soviet agents and the Red Army from its territory.
[32] Charles Gati, 'Fifty years later,' *The Hungarian Quarterly* 182 (2006).
[33] Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, 5.
[34] Ibid., 3.

culpability, blurring the line between victims and victimisers.[35] At the same time, it created partially justified waves of moral panic, where the returnees became the accountable 'folk devils' for the rise in the levels of criminality. The labour camps were also considered to be an economic burden, as Galina M. Ivanovna has argued, that the cost of producing 1,000 bricks in a camp in Krasnoyarsk Oblast in 1952 was 631 rubles, compared to 210 rubles and 49 kopecks represented by the cost of local producers.[36] This high price can be explained by the high expenditure on human resources and the associated costs for securing the area.

In his attempt to de-Stalinise Soviet society, Khrushchev repeatedly targeted symbolic representations of Stalin. Many cities and territorial landmarks were re-named or had their names reverted. The most well-known example, in this case, is the change of *Stalingrad* to *Volgograd*, however, there were many other instances where places were assigned new identities.[37] Furthermore, the lyrics that made reference to Stalin were removed from the Soviet national anthem and were replaced by an instrumental partiture, a change that lasted until 1977. Similarly, an iconoclastic campaign of destruction of monuments and objects of art that portrayed Stalin was carried out all over the Eastern bloc. The climax of de-Stalinisation was reached in 1961 at the Twenty Second Party Congress, when Khrushchev's critique against the former dictator increased in intensity, culminating with the actual physical removal of Stalin's corpse from Lenin's Mausoleum in the Red Square, and its relocation in the peripheries of Kremlin's Wall. This symbolic act, indeed, reinforced

[35] For a broader discussion see Lynne Viola, 'The Question of the Perpetrator in Soviet History,' *Slavic Review* 72, no. 1 (2013): 1-23.; and her approach with the dualist character of criminality, arguing that during Soviet times, a perpetrator could also be a victim of the state.
[36] Galina Mikhailovna Ivanovna, *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System*, (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000): 118.
[37] See Appendix 2.

Lenin's authority, but it did not entirely diminish Stalin's presence in Soviet memory. Just because he was sent to rot outside the walls of the Kremlin did not mean that he ceased to exist in people's memory. Khrushchev's attempt to castigate Stalin to *damnatio memoriae* ('condemnation of memory'), and thus erase his presence in communist history, was a total failure. One cannot reengineer the souls of the people. After all, "how can we remove Stalin from Stalin's heirs?"[38] when "there's a Stalinist in each of you, there's even some Stalinist in me."[39] Once again, Khrushchev did not prove to be convincing and convinced in his methods and by 1963, Stalin's name was partly rehabilitated and censorship was already becoming stricter.

Furthermore, the notion of 'thaw' (*ottepel'*) is quintessential in order to understand the process of de-Stalinisation conducted under Khrushchev's leadership. Polly Jones warned that it is not a synonym for the term of de-Stalinisation, but rather a homonym, representing an effect of de-Stalinisation, usually in the socio-cultural sphere, and not de-Stalinisation itself.[40] It was inspired by Ilya Ehrenburg's novel published in 1954,[41] and it refers to the post-Stalinist period as a melt-down of state repression and authority, and an interval of freedom and liberalisation of the political culture in Soviet society. Nevertheless, perceiving Khrushchev's era as a process of a continuous linear de-Stalinisation and exclusive liberality can be misleading. Journal editors were struggling to take into account the

[38] Verse cited in Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 2.
[39] Abraham Rothberg, *The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime: 1953-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972): 57.
[40] Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation*, 4.
[41] K. Simonov and Ilya Ehrenburg. 'The Argument on the Thaw,' *Soviet Studies* 6, no. 3 (1955).

party line on censorship and to understand what was acceptable in terms of publishing and what was not.

Boris Pasternak's novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, was not allowed to be printed in the Soviet Union until 1988.[42] However, the manuscripts were smuggled abroad and were published in the West in 1957, where he was so highly appreciated that he received a Nobel Prize for Literature in the year that followed. This sparked outrage within the Soviet intellectual groups, which culminated with the poet's death in 1960 due to harassment and reprisals.[43] *Au contraire*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's book about his Gulag grim experiences, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, passed the censorship filters and was published in November 1962 in the literary journal *Novyi Mir*. It was an immediate cultural and political sensation, selling all ninety-five thousand copies of the issue in just one day. Ivan Denisovich Shukhov quickly became "[the] symbol of the suffering which the Russian people had endured under the Stalinist system."[44] This was an exceptional moment that created the impression that it was acceptable to perceive state actions as injustices and moreover, one could speak about them, with a certain reluctance, in the public Soviet space.

Another example in this regard comes from the diplomatic field and it refers to the Soviet policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West. Khrushchev's foreign approach was rather antipodal with this theory, repeatedly contradicting his commitment to reducing hostilities with the West. The international détente with the United States was undermined by a trivial academic exchange conducted in

[42] However, an Oscar-winning film version was released in 1965.
[43] Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, 134-136.
[44] Marvin L. Kalb, 'Introduction,' in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, ed. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (New York: Signet Classics, 1963): 4.

September 1958. Instead of taking place under the aegis of the best of intentions, most of the students sent by the Soviet state were in fact KGB agents.[45] Other emblematic moments of foreign policy failures are represented by the 1960 U-2 incident when a U.S. aeroplane was shot down, the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

The outcomes of de-Stalinisation are often contested, mirroring a quote used by Stephen Cohen – *"Tell me your opinion about our Stalinist past, and I'll tell you who you are."*[46] On the one hand, the process of de-Stalinisation revealed the weaknesses of the communist state and crushed the myth of Stalin. Van Herpen applied Nye's concepts of 'soft' and 'hard power'[47] to the context of Khrushchev's reign, affirming that "what came closest to soft power during the Soviet era was the communist ideology."[48] However, Khrushchev's public denunciation of Stalinist atrocities had extirpated this attractiveness of communism, undermining the Soviet state at an international level. For the French historian François Furet, this shocking moment represented the beginning of the end for the Soviet regime, arguing that it was a moment of disillusionment with the communist ideology which could not persist "once the myth of party infallibility was broken,"[49] it simply "destroyed the past of a universalistic utopia."[50] He joined the trend of other Western socialist

[45] Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016): 19.
[46] Quoted in Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 93.
[47] 'Soft power' is defined as the power to influence through attraction, whereas 'hard power' refers to a more aggressive form of coercion, usually implemented through military and economic means. He believed that the latter one often undermined the former, at least in the context of the Soviet Union. For a more detailed discussion on these concepts, see Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 8.
[48] Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine*, 69.
[49] Donald Reid, 'François Furet and the Future of a Disillusionment,' *The European Legacy* 10, no. 2 (2005): 195.
[50] François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999): 361. A similar view was encompassed in Aron

intellectuals and defected from the Communist Party,[51] thus weakening, even more, the illusion of a Communist revolution 'from below' abroad.

On the other hand, Polly Jones emphasised that a move away from Stalinism was often accompanied by both hope (reform and liberalisation) and peril (resistance and disillusionment), generating reactions of 're-Stalinisation' or neo-Stalinism.[52] In order to assess Khrushchev's era, she takes all these factors into account, concluding that it was an "exceptional" and "unique" period that paved the way for the emergence of dissident movements during Brezhnev and the instauration of Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost'* and *perestroika*.[53] These reactionary movements, in their turn, planted the seeds for a new civil society and concluded with the fall of the Eastern bloc and the dismantlement of the Soviet Union. Even though the extent of its implementation is sometimes questioned, some still wonder if this was a missed opportunity for a more radical change or an act of courage and benevolence in the reformation of the old Stalinist system.[54]

Nevertheless, this discussion on the weaknesses of de-Stalinisation should not belittle the importance of reform, even though it was limited, inconsistent and carried out at an uneven pace. As Lynne Viola put it, since Soviet atrocities had no Nuremberg Trials of their own, this was one of the closest moments when Russia came to reconciliation with its past (the other one being during Gorbachev's

Raymond, *Democracy and Totalitarianism: A Theory of Political Systems*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970).

[51] J. Arch Getty, 'The Future did not work,' *The Atlantic*, March, 2000. Accessed: February 11, 2020. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/03/the-future-did-not-work/378081/

[52] Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation*, 2-4.

[53] Ibid, 13.

[54] For an ample bibliographical list on Khrushchev's see note 2. in Elena Dundovich, 'Khrushchev: Contemporary Perspectives in the Western Press,' in *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence, 1953-65*, ed. Wilfried Loth (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004): 194.

leadership).[55] It was the point in time when dictators lost their sanctity and could be held accountable for their wrongdoings in the collective memory of Soviet society and when reforms in different sectors contributed, to a certain far-reaching extent, to the fall of communism in Europe. It breathed a new life into the socio-cultural aspects of a rigid regime, where citizens had the opportunity to renegotiate the status quo of Soviet society.

Appendices

[55] Viola, 'The Question of the Perpetrator in Soviet History,' 3.

Appendix 1. The 'Secret Speech' published in the New York Times, June 1956

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION

KHRUSHCHEV TALK ON STALIN BARES DETAILS OF RULE BASED ON TERROR; CHARGES PLOT FOR KREMLIN PURGES

U. S. ISSUES A TEXT

Dead Dictator Painted as Savage, Half-Mad and Power-Crazed

2 City Firemen Accused Of Taking Tips at Stotler

Eisenhower Calls on Labor To Serve, Not to Dominate

Capital Can See No Change In the Soviet System Itself

Salisbury, Harrison E. "KHRUSHCHEV TALK ON STALIN BARES DETAILS OF RULE BASED ON TERROR; CHARGES PLOT FOR KREMLIN PURGES; U.S. ISSUES A TEXT Dead Dictator Painted as Savage, Half-Mad and Power-Crazed Khrushchev Discusses Delay Speech Adds Much Detail STALIN DEPICTED AS SAVAGE DESPOT Korean War Data Awaited Many Officers Liquidated Revelations by Khrushchev 'Leningrad Affair' Recalled 'Doctors' Plot Laid to Stalin". 1956. In *The New York Times Archives*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/1956/06/05/archives/khrushchev-talk-on-stalin-bares-details-of-rule-based-on-terror.html

Appendix 2. Re-naming Soviet Towns, published in the New York Times, November 1961

Stalingrad Name Changed

MOSCOW, Saturday, Nov. 11 (Reuters)—The "Hero City" of Stalingrad has been renamed Volgograd, the Soviet Communist party newspaper Pravda reported today.

The move was the third name change of a Soviet city named for Stalin since the sweeping "de-Stalinization" program of Premier Khrushchev was stepped up last month.

The huge steel city of Stalinsk in southern Siberia reverted today to its old name of Novokuznetsk and the Ukrainian mining city of Stalino was renamed Donetsk yesterday.

Last Wednesday the Mayor of Stalingrad, which earned the status of "Hero City" because of its defeat of Nazi Armies in World War II, said that proposals had been made to change the city's name.

Pravda reported the Stalingrad name change in a decree issued today by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) of the Russian Republic.

Cities in the Soviet Union still carrying the former Soviet leader's name include Stalinabad, capital of the Tadzhik Republic; Stalinogorsk, in central European Russia; and Staliniri, in the Georgian Republic.

The highest mountain in the Soviet Union, a 24,590-foot peak in the Pamirs, is also named for Stalin.

The New York Times Nov. 11, 1961

Stalingrad (cross) is to be known now as Volgograd.

"Stalingrad Name Changed". 1961. In *The New York Times Archives*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/1961/11/11/archives/stalingrad-name-changed.html

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