

The Extent and Limits of Authority

(A Rejoinder to Mr. Linden)

By Thomas H. Rigby

FEW WOULD CONTEST Mr. Linden's view that there are sharp conflicts of interest, outlook and aspiration in Soviet society at large and within the party-state bureaucracy, and that many of the shifts in Soviet policy in recent years show signs of having been influenced by such conflicts. Not all, however, would agree with his identification of issues and alignments in the concrete cases he discusses.

The possible focuses of internal conflict within the Soviet system are very numerous indeed, but the following are some of the most important:

- 1) Between the principal leader (at present Khrushchev) and secondary leaders who have a common interest in setting limits to the former's power.
- 2) Between different individuals (and "groupings"?) within the secondary leadership, competing for influence over the principal leaders.
- 3) Between different aspirants for succession to the principal leader.
- 4) Between the inner leadership and the larger bodies from which its power formally derives: *e.g.*, Government Presidium *versus* Council of Ministers, and especially party Presidium *versus* the full Central Committee ("Anti-party Group" crisis, 1957).
- 5) Between subordinate officials and the occupants of superior echelons, whose posts they covet. This applies, for instance, to younger officials aspiring to positions like *obkom* secretaryships, which carry Central

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Committee status; to officials with Central Committee status aspiring to admission to the Presidium; to functionaries in the republics aiming at the republican leadership; to ministers and government committee chairmen coveting deputy premierships; and so on.

6) Between different formal sections of the bureaucracy, *i.e.*, between its major divisions [the party, the state administration, the army, and so on] or between particular units [*e.g.*, State Production Committees *versus* Gosplan departments *versus* *sovnarkhozes*; or *raikoms* *versus* *Kolkhoz* Production Directorates (1962); or the Party Presidium *versus* the Secretariat (1957) or the Government Presidium (1953-54 ?); or between different production branch units (*vedomstvennyi podkhod*)].

7) Between informal groupings of officials, usually based on past career associations and involving patron-client relationships, and either focussed on particular formal units or hierarchies or cutting across the formal structure.

8) Between the interests of one area and another, and between local and national interests (*mestnichestvo*).

9) *Within* groups entrusted with purveying different values (the arts, national culture, science, and even the official ideology), over the forms of orthodoxy; and between the purveyors of these values and the political leadership over the extent of the former's autonomy and influence over policy.

10) Between those cherishing such values and the official purveyors of them.

11) Between different occupational and skill groups over distribution of the national cake.

12) Between the "masses," valuing consumption, leisure, security and freedom, and the regime, valuing production, national power, development, and discipline.

Although it would take far more space than is available here to demonstrate it, I believe that conflict focussed at each of these points has found some reflection in the politics of post-Stalin Russia. The principal defect of Mr. Linden's paper is its attempt to derive all Soviet internal conflict in the last few years from a simple dichotomy between a reforming, pro-consumer, and anti-Stalinist Khrushchev and his supporters on the one hand, and a conservative, production-oriented, and anti-anti-Stalinist opposition group on the other. This simplified analysis of Soviet politics seems to me both implausible *a priori* and inadequately supported by the evidence adduced.

THE VIEW THAT Khrushchev's victory over the "Anti-party Group" in 1957 reduced and modified the opposition within the leadership to his power and his policies, but without eliminating it, has been argued before, along various lines, by Mr. Robert Conquest, Messrs. David Burg and Peter Wiles, and others¹—and Mr. Linden does us a service in providing an extended, up-to-date, and well-argued statement of this view. One might, of course, accept the viewpoint without accepting all the arguments advanced for it, or without treating it as the "key" to all Soviet politics in the last six years. It may be as well, therefore, to give some thought to this wider question, before glancing at some of Mr. Linden's detailed propositions.

First, however, let us not underestimate the difficulty of arguing sensibly about the limitations and opposition to Khrushchev's power. No one either questions on the one hand that Khrushchev occupies a position of special authority in the Soviet leadership (Linden calls him *the* Soviet leader), or suggests on the other that he can do what he likes. Conflicting estimates of his position, therefore, revolve around differences of degree and emphasis, and it is all too easy to argue at cross purposes on this level when the empirical data available to us are so meager, patchy and often conjectural. In this situation one needs to appeal beyond the data, the interpretation of which may be disputed, to broader notions about Soviet politics and about political man in general.

One such line of "appeal" is suggested in my paragraphs above on the focuses of internal conflict. Another

¹ See Robert Conquest, "The Struggle Goes On," *Problems of Communism*, No. 4, 1960, pp. 7-11; David Burg and Peter Wiles, "Chruschtschows Machtstellung als 'Polyzentrismus' Innerhalb der Sowjetfuehrung," *Ost Europa* (Stuttgart), Aug.-Sept. 1962, pp. 563-77. Professor Robert C. Tucker, of the University of Indiana, has also expressed a similar view.

might be to consider the Soviet leadership in the light of our knowledge of the workings of the supreme leadership in other political systems. Take, for example, the relationship between the premier and other ministers in the cabinet system of government. Despite "cabinet responsibility" (= "collective leadership"), the power of the prime minister both over policy formation and over the fortunes of his "colleagues" is characteristically very great indeed—just consider the story of Mr. Macmillan's ministerial "purge" last year.² One does not have to imagine Khrushchev a "pock-marked Caligula" to be impressed with the tremendous power of his position: it is sufficient to imagine him a British prime minister *without* the constraints of an opposition party and legal intra-party opposition, free elections, a pluralist society, and a free press.

The most obvious comparison is, of course, with Stalin, and a fruitful approach here might be to ask how we always knew that Stalin enjoyed dictatorial power. After all, the myth of "collective leadership" was never completely dropped, and until Khrushchev told us otherwise in 1956, who of us did not imagine that the Politburo did, in some sense, "run" the Soviet Union? Our estimate of Stalin's position seems to have grown up on the basis of a number of considerations, but especially the following: 1) the power manifestly accruing to his *formal* roles, first as General Secretary of the party, later also as Premier, and during the war as Chairman of the State Defense Committee; 2) our memory of his past successes in dealing with opposition and his survival at the top in contrast to the ups and downs of other Politburo members (including "heirs apparent") and despite the manifest failure of some of his policies; 3) his initiatives as spokesman for the regime and as *ex cathedra* critic in all spheres of activity, and the publicity he enjoyed, vastly more flattering in both quantity and quality than that bestowed on any other leader.

If these were indeed the sources of our notions about Stalin's power, it is a striking thought that today they are scarcely less applicable to Khrushchev.³ Of course, one immediately perceives differences in detail, but clearly one does not have to assume that the precise scope and character of the power of the two leaders were identical (no one would argue this) to recognize that there is a methodological problem here which is very pertinent to the dispute.

² See "Behind the Ministerial Reconstruction," *The Times* (London), July 23, 1962.

³ See T. H. Rigby and L. G. Churchward, *Policy Making in the USSR, 1953-1961—Two Views*, Melbourne, Lansdowne Press, 1962, pp. 7-9.

OR WE COULD APPROACH the comparison from the other end. Was Stalin's authority unlimited? Could he, for example, have his principal lieutenants (let alone Tito) destroyed merely at the twiddle of his little finger? Evidently not. The purge of Zhdanov's supporters took him several months to carry through, cost him a considerable accretion of the power of Beria and Malenkov, and involved fabricating the elaborate cover of the "Leningrad Case". Again, as we know from Khrushchev's "secret speech," Stalin in his final months "had plans to finish off the old members of the Politburo." But this evidently cost him far more trouble than the British 1962 cabinet reorganization cost Prime Minister Macmillan, involving at least two complex fabricated "plots" and the intricate maneuver of reconstructing all the central organs of the party⁴—and we still cannot be certain that it did not cost him his life. Stalin did indeed amass tremendous power over the lives and fortunes of his fellow countrymen, but in the exercise of that power he remained, to a considerable extent, a prisoner of the methods through which it had been acquired. Stalin's career illustrates a lesson for which history provides ample evidence: that a tyrant, no matter how mighty, needs to proceed with a certain caution in order to avoid simultaneously alarming the majority of his normally submissive entourage.

Before leaving Stalin, we may also recall that even he devolved upon his lieutenants a good deal of power to initiate policy. Thus, in the postwar period, Zhdanov can plausibly be credited with the initiation of important measures in the field of ideology, Khrushchev in the field of agricultural administration, and Beria and Malenkov on matters of security and internal party organization. Nor did Stalin invariably act as spokesman on the most solemn occasions or on the launching of major innovations.

To sum up, and to state the comparison between Khrushchev's and Stalin's positions in the leadership in rather sharper terms than in the preceding paragraphs, I would suggest that those positions on the face of it show much in common—particularly if we take the Stalin of before the *Yezhovshchina*, when he was clearly on top but merely rusticated, rather than destroyed, his opponents or disappointing "lieutenants," and when he was still something like *primus inter pares*, receiving massive publicity but without being deified. If we see anything analogous between the post-1957 Khrushchev and the pre-1937 Stalin, we might well consider further that 1) in some ways Khrushchev's position looks

⁴*The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1956, pp. 84-85.

stronger, particularly in his formidable concentration of formal roles; and 2) Stalin's power in the early 1930's proved sufficient, after all, to defeat the first moves against him and to *carry out the Yezhovshchina*. We may add here: while few of us would expect a repetition of the *Yezhovshchina* under Krushchev, are we always clear as to our reasons for this? Mr. Linden offers one possible (and partial) reason, but there are others. How much weight are we to assign to broad social changes, how much to differences of personality, how much to changes (and what changes?) in the structure of power, how much to differences (and again, what differences?) in the route to power pursued by the two leaders, and how much to differences in the international environment?

PASSING FROM PARTICULAR comparisons to a more general point, there is observably a strong tendency among groups of men entrusted with providing executive leadership—be they chiefs of a barbarian warband, a board of directors, or a British cabinet—to endow one of their number with special authority both within the group and over it.⁵ Furthermore, a high level of continuity and security in office of the principal leader appears to be an important condition of the effectiveness of such groups, especially in combat situations.⁶ Various devices have been invented to secure these ends and to place the principal leader, in some degree at least, "above politics." In states, the usual method until fairly recent times was to make the chief executive office hereditary; but even if we take the liberal-democratic states, the more smoothly-functioning and stable of them will usually be found to have generated some device for this purpose.⁷ Moreover, quite apart from the

⁵ One of the most interesting experimental explorations of this topic is that undertaken by Leonard Berkowitz. See his "Sharing Leadership in Small Decision-Making Groups," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, No. 48, 1953.

⁶ To quote from the *London Times* report cited above, "For the Cabinet and the party managers realize that *only an unchallenged leader* and a strong administration will have the moral force to take Britain into Europe, or to withdraw from the negotiations to go in." (Italics added.)

⁷ In Britain the House of Commons majority leader "forms a Government," which falls if he falls. This produces a strong incentive to solidarity behind the leader between elections. In the United States the leader's authority and security in office are ensured by making the cabinet appointive and the President's tenure independent of a Congress majority. The absence of comparable arrangements had much to do with the instability of governments under the Third and Fourth French Republics, which contributed to disillusionment in parliamentary processes and demands for a strong leader.

pressures from *within* the ruling group for one man to be elevated above the others, a collective need is also experienced for a leader who will personify the government to the population at large and serve as a focus for their loyalty and confidence. Here, one may see a certain analogy between the manifest underpinning which the Soviet regime as a whole derived from the Stalin cult before 1953 and the concern shown by political parties in democratic countries for the "public image" of their leader.

All this is axiomatic, but do we always bear it in mind when discussing the politics of post-Stalin Russia? Of course, in Communist countries the situation is complicated by the lack of regular procedures for the transfer and legitimation of leadership. However, they are far from unique in that respect, and the student should merely see here a challenge to understand *how* leadership works in countries where such procedures are lacking.⁸

Of the many difficulties besetting the leader in such systems, perhaps the most obvious is the problem of leadership succession: How can he ensure that his departure from the scene will not be followed by a period of potentially disintegrative internecine struggle unless he fosters the formal and informal power of an "heir apparent" to the point where the latter may be tempted to seize his patrimony prematurely? Here, four lines of behavior would seem open to him:

- 1) To reconcile himself to handing over power in his lifetime;
- 2) To prevent any possible successor from accumulating special power, and—"après nous le déluge";
- 3) To foster possible successors, but to keep two or three of them in the running at any particular time (this involves the delicate matter of timing when the leader wishes to transmit a decisive advantage to just one of them);
- 4) To build up an "heir apparent," but at the same time to invest another leader (or group) with sufficient countervailing power to discourage an attempt at "premature succession."

On the whole Stalin seems to have favored the third line (was he in the process of tossing the scepter to Malenkov at the time of his death?), and Khrushchev the fourth, as indicated farther on.

There are special difficulties, too, attached to being one of the top man's "colleagues" in such a system. Not the least of these is that the stability and security of the

⁸ Valuable comparative evidence should be forthcoming not only on Communist systems, but on such non-Communist systems as those, say, of Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, Spain, etc., not to mention political systems of the past.

ruling group as a whole necessitate investing the leader with considerable power, but this power then becomes a danger to the *individual* security of the other group members. How are the latter to set limits to this danger without direct collusion among themselves, which the leader would justifiably regard as a threat to *his* position and take measures to scotch?

THE RESPONSE TO these and similar intra-leadership problems in a Communist system will obviously be much affected by the personalities of the individuals involved and by the external environment, but the problems themselves are built into the basic relationships of leader and ruling group, and cannot be ignored. In particular, they largely determine the *expression* of disagreements over policy.

Those who believe there is some sort of "stop-Khrushchev" opposition within the party Presidium may fairly be asked for guidance on the following point: In 1957 a majority of Presidium members, including several whose long-term standing and prestige were no less than Khrushchev's, began to collude against him; they were quickly and decisively defeated; and all of them, sooner or later, were reduced to political impotence and obscurity. Since then, has Khrushchev been less well situated to deal with such hostile collusion? Has he lost all incentive to do so? If the answer to these two questions is No, I fail to understand not only how an opposition grouping whose existence is supposedly so manifest that it is apparent to foreign observers can manage to survive, but even how any Presidium member could be foolhardy enough to make the *first move* towards the formation of such a grouping.

It seems reasonable to assume that there are frequent disagreements in Presidium discussions; that Khrushchev actively participates in these discussions and finds himself from time to time at odds with other members; and even that he occasionally gives way on matters that he regards as major issues. But it seems equally reasonable to assume that he would not tolerate any persistent posture of opposition involving basic questions on the part of *any* of his Presidium "colleagues," or any sign of a recurrent configuration of opposition on the part of two or more of them. To revert to our analogy, no British prime minister would, or could, fail to take steps to eliminate opposition once it assumed such forms. Is there anything in the Soviet political or social structure that makes the Soviet premier and party first secretary less able, or less willing, to do so?

Considering Mr. Linden's paper in detail, alternative explanations immediately suggest themselves for many

of the events and phenomena he describes. Let me give just three examples:

First, the recurrent attacks by Khrushchev and some of his younger colleagues on the "Anti-party Group" do not have to be viewed as "repeated attempts to expel the defeated leaders from the party," and there is therefore no need to attribute the fact that such expulsion did not eventuate to "the successful resistance of Khrushchev's associates." In part, these attacks are useful to Khrushchev as a reminder of the legitimacy of the steps taken against the "group" and as a prophylaxis against its becoming a focus for disaffection. But much more, I believe, they are a gimmick to exploit the prevailing revulsion in the USSR against the methods and atmosphere of the Stalin era—the foundation on which the Khrushchev regime has sought largely to build its popularity. On the one hand, by tarring his defeated opponents with the Stalinist brush, Khrushchev comes out as the savior of the people against the evils of the "cult"—a role that becomes increasingly plausible as the memory of the 1953-57 period fades. On the other hand, by stressing the enormity of the "group's offenses, he drives home the magnanimity of his treatment of them—and this is the most dramatic device at his disposal for convincing the population of the genuineness of his break with the past.⁹

Secondly, Mr. Linden takes the fact that it was Kozlov rather than Khrushchev who reported on the 1960 Bucharest meeting as evidence of the weakening of Khrushchev's position. Yet, could it not equally well be regarded as a demonstration that Khrushchev's intransigence under Chinese fire was not a personal stand but had the collective backing of the whole party leadership? (This interpretation becomes all the more plausible if one accepts Mr. Linden's view that Kozlov stands towards the "tough" end of the Soviet political spectrum.)

Thirdly, Mr. Linden also sees the leadership changes at the May 1960 Plenum and the 22nd Congress as a setback for Khrushchev because of the removal of leaders identified as his "supporters." But, as I pointed out in this journal last year, these changes greatly

⁹ The case of Voroshilov provides special opportunities here which Khrushchev has not been slow to exploit. See especially his reported comments to the orbiting Tereshkova in *Pravda*, June 17, 1963. At the 22nd Congress there was, of course, the added point that intra-bloc attacks on the Khrushchev regime flared up coincidentally with Molotov's memorandum to the Central Committee condemning the new Party Program, the common ground here being hostility to destalinization. This was an unprecedented development, and simple prudence dictated some prophylactic countermeasures.

enhanced Khrushchev's personal dominance over the interlocking directorate of central party and government bodies.¹⁰

FINALLY, LET ME turn to three methodological criticisms of Mr. Linden's paper.

1) One detects in it little awareness of the difficulty of identifying sources of policy when you have a leader acting as general spokesman for the regime. Mr. Linden shows some tendency to identify Khrushchev's statements as personal views when they fit in with his (Linden's) own notion of the leader's basic policies and attitudes, and to treat them as concessions exacted by the opposition when they do not. All governments trim and alter their policies when those policies run into difficulties, or when circumstances change. There is no need to posit an internal tug-of-war in the leadership to explain this. Think, for instance, of Stalin's "zig-zags".

2) Mr. Linden does not explain his criteria for distinguishing between Khrushchev's supporters or protégés and others. The only definition of a "Khrushchev man" I can find is one who "is directly beholden to Khrushchev for his position." At times this appears to mean Khrushchev's old cadres from the Ukrainian and Moscow party organizations; but at others it takes in protégés who evidently came to enjoy Khrushchev's patronage only *after* the death of Stalin, including Ignatov, Mukhitdinov, Pospelov and Kuusinen. What are the grounds for identifying these, but not Kozlov or Ponomarev for instance, as Khrushchev men? If the identification rests solely, or largely, on the attribution of policy orientations, then we have a circular argument. I might add that in my reading of the politics of post-Stalin Russia, no one is more "beholden" to Khrushchev than Kozlov. Further, despite the great differences in the nature and degree of the present Presidium members' past dependence on Khrushchev, they *all* are now dependent on him as least to the extent that without his acquiescence they could not remain in the leadership. And to regard the replacement of some of Khrushchev's earlier protégés by newer ones as a setback to his power is as logical as to view the replacement of Rudzutak or Kossior in the 1930's as a setback for Stalin.

3) A final methodological criticism of Mr. Linden's analysis relates to the underestimation of the role of solidarity based on past career associations, and of rivalry for the succession to Khrushchev, as political

¹⁰ Thomas H. Rigby, "How Strong is the Leader", *Problems of Communism*, No. 5, 1962, esp. pp. 5-8.

factors in recent years. The two have been inextricably linked by virtue of the fact that any claimant to the succession needs to be backed up by informal sources of power as well as by formal ones. To oversimplify somewhat, the two most important informal career groupings since 1957 have been based on association with the Ukrainian and Leningrad party organizations, and Khrushchev has alternately favored a *dauphin* from each. Taking a leaf from Stalin's book, he has consciously balanced one against the other, as well as against smaller groupings and individuals. When Kirichenko was heir apparent, Kozlov was the countervailing force; early in 1960 Kozlov was elevated to the position of *dauphin*, but Brezhnev soon emerged as the countervailing force. Between the spring of 1962 and that of 1963, the royal favor shifted to Brezhnev, and it is not yet clear whether a new counterweight will emerge and, if so, who it will be. One of the most fascinating spectacles of recent Kremlinology has been the ebb and flow of ex-Ukrainian and ex-Leningrad officials in secondary

posts, parallel with these changes in the heir apparent. Without for one minute seeking to replace one magic "key" to Soviet politics by another, one may say that many of the ups and downs of recent years, which Mr. Linden interprets as clues to fluctuations in Khrushchev's dominance, can far more plausibly be viewed as shifts in the fortunes of these rival informal groupings and the contenders for the succession around whom the groupings were formed—shifts produced not only by their own efforts but by the changing distribution of Khrushchev's favor.

Finally, let me again urge acknowledgment of the multiplicity of conflicting interests, values and ambitions influencing Soviet politics, including the politics of the leadership, and—despite some relaxation of inhibitions which has stimulated the spontaneous interaction of these elements—the persistence of a specific political structure leading to considerable continuity in the way these conflicting elements have impinged upon power relationships between individuals.

After Khrushchev: A Conservative Restoration?

By Robert Conquest

IT IS GENERALLY agreed that the Soviet Union is passing through a transitional stage. What the transition is *from* is clear enough, though there may be various views about the other end of the process, set as it is in a not easily determinable future.

In any case, we may accept that transitions of this type, even such as may later appear to have been comparatively smooth, are marked by great political instability at the top. Moreover, Khrushchev is not politically invulnerable; and if he were, at least he is not immortal.

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Stalin succeeded in thoroughly institutionalizing his regime. The men who came up in it were as conditioned, both consciously in ideology and unconsciously in political habit, to his form of state as the bureaucrats and theorists of legitimism had been to the prevailing system of the 1830's and 1840's. This is not to say that among them there were not those who, either to a greater or to a lesser extent, were susceptible to the impact of facts which no longer accorded properly with their prejudices. But in all of them the heavy ballast from the past was clearly discernible.

After Stalin's death, the political leaders were faced with definite problems, some of which would clearly not admit of old-time solutions. To take but one example of many, the agricultural and—to a lesser extent—the industrial progress of the country was evidently hampered by methods which were no longer ap-