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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

February 23, 1962

FROM: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Soviet Visit Report - [REDACTED]

Attached is a report based on  
Summer, 1961 trip to the Soviet Union.  
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cc: Messrs:

[REDACTED]

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Approved for Release  
Date   OCT     1933  

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Last summer [redacted] visited the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary and Poland. He would have liked to spend a whole month in Moscow, but was allowed only two weeks under the pretext of no hotel availability. He spent about five days in Kiev and eight days in Yalta.

Impressions of Poland

While in Poland, [redacted] had talks with several top-level government officials, editors and writers and was invited to many homes. Everybody seemed to be critical of the Communists.

There seems to be a sort of tacit understanding, an unwritten agreement between Gomulka and the Polish people. The people say: "We will play ball, march in your parades, won't make any riots -- we know there is no freedom of speech, of press, but don't touch the Church and leave us alone in our homes. There we want to be free, to say what we like, to exhibit abstract paintings in our dwellings, if we feel like it."

[redacted] the following anecdote in a Communist home:

Question: "What is the difference between a present-day May Day parade and a Communist parade under Pilsudsky?"

Answer: "Then we were not afraid."

USSR - The Soviet People

[redacted] the Soviet people were striving towards the same thing as the Poles, but that Khrushchev was holding them back.

In Soviet homes, however, he noticed that people were much more relaxed than on his last visit to the USSR in 1956. Parents were not afraid to discuss controversial matters, such as purges, in front of their teen-age children as they were then, fearing that the youngsters would denounce them to the authorities.

They read a lot of technical literature, the classics and novels, which give them more information on living conditions than does the press. No foreign papers, except Polish and East European papers, are available on newsstands. The people have a tremendous desire to speak English; therefore many study the language.

The Soviet people do not talk politics. Their attitude is: there is

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nothing to be done, so why talk? There is no noticeable hostility to the United States. They accept the fact that there will be no war, but do not care to discuss the subject unless it is brought up.

#### Foreign Broadcasts

Soviet friends did admit [redacted] that they listened to VOA broadcasts. That is how they learned about the Vienna Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting.

When we asked what they thought of VOA broadcasts, they said that the music and straight news were all right, but did not want anything that smacks of propaganda -- they had enough of that at home.

Nobody mentioned Radio Liberty.

#### Attitude Towards Khrushchev

While many Soviet people were shocked by Khrushchev's drastic move in downgrading Stalin, others were satisfied. They felt that this had cleared the air, that they were more free to talk about Stalin, the twenties, the purges, and are grateful for this to Khrushchev. They know about Khrushchev's speech. The secret speech is now mentioned in the Large Soviet Encyclopedia.

Khrushchev has trouble getting along with the Party. As we know, in 1957, he was opposed by practically the entire Presidium; he is now trying to overcome his difficulties with the Party by ingratiating himself with the people. They say: "In contrast to Stalin, Khrushchev listens to us, he is our man."

#### Varying Attitudes Towards Stalin

In the Crimea, [redacted] saw a new picture, The Clear Sky, the story of a Soviet pilot, a wartime hero who risked his life for his country and the Party, is mutilated, taken prisoner by the Germans, and who finally comes home after the war to be branded as a traitor. He tries to commit suicide; there is a knock on the door and a neighbor announces that Stalin is dead. Someone in the audience said: "Thank God!" The next shot shows a river when the ice is beginning to move. Another remark from the audience: "Stalin is dead -- the ice begins to move!"

When the hero went to Moscow and was rehabilitated by the Party and decorated, there was loud applause.

On the other hand, [redacted] saw a portrait of Stalin on the wall of Moscow University beside Lenin, and when he tried to tell the students the truth about Stalin he met with a hostile response.

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[redacted] In Yalta, where he visited a school, he immediately sensed that the principal had been warned of his visit: the children were all dressed up in their pioneer uniforms and went faultlessly through tests in arithmetic and English. He was presented with a bouquet of flowers and approached by reporters from the Kurortnaya Gazeta. Pictures of Lenin and Stalin were hanging on the wall. [redacted] asked the principal why Stalin's portrait was still there - "He was a murderer." She replied: "This is not our point of view." When a reporter asked [redacted] to say something about the school [redacted] said: "Write what I have just said about Stalin." The reporter moved away.

### Living Conditions

[redacted] living conditions had improved, especially in housing; big blocks of houses, 6-8 stories high, had been erected, but the building materials were of very low quality, and there is still a shortage of apartments. People still live in old ramshackle buildings.

[redacted] a foreign architect whose opinion was that the USSR was 30 years behind Europe and 50 years behind America.

and transportation is good; there are many new buses and trolley buses and good jet planes which take 100 passengers, but they are crude inside.

People are proud of the progress that has been made, yet apologetic, saying that they would have been further along if not for the war. When [redacted]

remarked to his Intourist guide that Stalin had liquidated many of their architects, economists, etc., he said: "That was Beria." When [redacted]

asked whether he really believed that the 1938 purges took place without Stalin's approval, she replied: "Well, actually, it would have been better for us if we would have been ruled by a Russian like Sverdlov."

Some Soviet citizens hold one-and-a-half jobs, some two. Most of them work very hard, but, on the whole, live better.

Prices are extremely high. For example, the price of a small bar of chocolate is equivalent to 66¢, a pound of granulated sugar: 60¢. Clothing is very expensive. A shirt costs the equivalent of \$7.00, a very poor quality suit, 100-90-80 rubles.

A man [redacted] in Yalta made 90 rubles a month, holding a job and-a-half. The average wage is 80 rubles, i.e. - \$40 per month.

### Literary Life

Poetry is very popular in the USSR. In the summer, young poets gather around the statue of Mayakovsky and recite his and their own poems, full of longing and "loneliness"--and one knows that it is their own loneliness they are trying to express.

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[redacted] talked to several people about Pasternak. Pasternak's funeral was attended by a crowd of some 5,000 people; after the burial young people stayed on for hours reciting Pasternak's unprinted, memorized poems. Olga Ivinskaya was unpopular; they felt that she had speculated with the money and had done more harm than good.

He talked to one or two prominent writers; one of them remarked: "If only we could get Kolokol from abroad." He was a highly-cultured man of about 66. The talk [redacted] was really give-and-take. The writer was entirely on his side and critical of the hypocrisy and futility of Party-directed literary meetings which achieved nothing. He said that young people did not want to listen to talks on Marxism-Leninism. They have had enough of that.

#### Anti-Semitism

This is a fact of which people with [redacted] were ashamed. He was told the following anecdote on the subject:

When Khrushchev visited the United States in 1959, he realized that there was a wide-spread feeling that the Soviet Union was anti-Semitic. Upon his arrival in Moscow, he called a commission of Party leaders and told them that he wanted a synagogue built right in the Kremlin. A month later he was told that the synagogue was ready. Then Khrushchev wanted the commission to find a rabbi in a month. When this deadline had elapsed, the commission asked for another month's delay. They came back at the end of the second month and said that the order could not be carried out -- they did find some rabbis, "but they were all Jews."

There is less intermarriage than previously. It used to be an advantage to marry a Jewish person, but now it is a disadvantage - for career reasons.

Some Jews join the Communist Party and the Party is eager to acquire new members. People are now urged to join the Party, but nothing happens to them if they refuse.

#### Relations With China

The Chinese are not liked in the Soviet Union; people feel that there is trouble brewing from that direction.

Soviet technicians who returned from China said that they were isolated from the Chinese in some kind of ghetto, on orders from both the Soviet and the Chinese governments. Their relations with Poland are much more cordial.

#### Yalta

[redacted] in Yalta [redacted] a group of

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people who had gathered around an artist displaying his works, and participated in an hour-long, pro-and-con, animated discussion on abstract painting, modern music, Picasso, Shostakovich, Stalin's dislike of cacophonous sounds, and the shortness of Soviet foreign news. When the group had finally dispersed [REDACTED] was sitting alone on a bench, a man who had not said a word during the discussion came up and asked [REDACTED] to spend the day with him [REDACTED] that he wanted to talk, but was afraid to be seen in his company in Yalta.

Finally, the man asked [REDACTED] to take a letter and photograph to his wife in Moscow, but wanted to make sure that this would remain between them. No Soviet citizen would have risked this five years ago. The man, a Party member, complained about his drab life--nothing but hard work, nothing to hope for, no scope.

He also asked about his experiences in Hungary during the revolt in 1956. The Soviet troops were given orders to leave Budapest; their trucks were stopped by Hungarian students who seized their guns and beat them up, and yet they were not allowed to shoot. "I hate these Hungarians!" he exclaimed. [REDACTED] showed him a dispatch on the Angola situation. The man knew what it was about. "Do you realize," [REDACTED], "that in Hungary, you were the Portugese?" The man grew pale and cut the conversation short.

#### Kiev

There is less reconstruction in Kiev. [REDACTED] buildings [REDACTED] in 1932 [REDACTED] had still not been completed in 1961, and people were waiting to move in at an indefinite date.

One evening, when he left the hotel to get some air, he was accosted by three young men who had obviously seen that he was a foreigner. Completely ignoring [REDACTED] warning about the decree prohibiting black-market dealings with foreigners, they asked for phonograph records, nylon socks, etc. When [REDACTED] gave them the brush-off, they simply said goodbye and disappeared.