

## ***The role of the department for party organs in centre-periphery relations under Khrushchev***

Alexander Titov

The Central Committee department of party organs was one of the key agencies responsible for interaction between the central party leadership and the regional elites in the Soviet Union. This paper looks at the structure, personnel and main functions of the department in the Khrushchev period. It also attempts to show reasons for the eventual dismantlement of the system formed under Khrushchev and the impact it had on centre-periphery relations.

Khrushchev was traditionally seen as the champion of the party supremacy in the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> At the end of Stalin's era there were three centres of power in the Soviet Union – the government, the security apparatus and the party organs. Khrushchev successfully shifted the balance of power in favour of the party apparatus. In this context, his term in power can be divided into three periods in relation to the reforms of state and party apparatuses. The first period between 1953 and 1957 was marked by attempts to find solutions to over-centralisation and bureaucratisation of state and party apparatuses. An important factor during this period was the ongoing political struggle for power among the Presidium members, which spilled over onto institutional rivalries between party and state organs, represented respectively by Khrushchev and his senior colleagues in the Presidium who held ministerial posts.<sup>2</sup> This period ended in the middle of 1957 with the sovnarkhozy reform and the defeat of the 'anti-party group' at the June Plenum of the Central Committee (CC).

The second period between 1957 and 1962 saw the peak of Khrushchev power, with little institutional reform in both state and party apparatuses. The system of government that was built in the previous period was given a chance to show its worth. The third period between 1962 and the removal of Khrushchev from office in October 1964 saw the incessant reorganisation of the party and state apparatuses which ultimately led to the end of Khrushchev's influence and reforms. The post-Khrushchev leadership declared stability as the cornerstone of its policies which defined Soviet politics for the next two decades. This periodisation can be also applied to the analysis of reforms of the CC apparatus. In this context, the department of party organs was also subject to series of reorganisations which underlined its importance in new system of government.

### **Structure**

There were two distinct changes to the way the department for party organs operated under Khrushchev. First, there was the greater emphasis on regional organisation of the department which culminated in a division of the single department for party organs into two different departments, that for the Union republics and for the RSFSR. Second, the department and its successors were subject to staff cuts to a greater degree than the rest of the CC apparatus.

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<sup>1</sup> R.G. Pikhov, *Sovetskii Soiuz: Istorii vlasti, 1945-1991* (Moscow: RAGS, 1998), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Analysis of this power struggle and its impact on institutional reorganisations is given in Y. Gorlizki, 'Anti-ministerialism and the USSR Ministry of Justice, 1953-56: A Study in Organisational Decline', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48/8 (1996), 1279-318; V.P. Naumov, 'Bor'ba Khrushcheva za edinolichnuiu vlast', *Novaia i Noveishaia Istorii*, 2 (1996); E. Zubkova, 'Malenkov i Khrushchev: Lichnyi faktor v politike poslestantsinskogo rukovodstva', *Otechestvennaia istorii*, 4 (1995).

One of the most distinct features of Khrushchev period was the trend towards decentralisation and campaigns against excessive bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup> Although the main brunt of reforms was aimed at state government, the CC apparatus was also subject to restructuring and staff cuts losing around 14 per cent of its staff between 1953 and 1957.<sup>4</sup> The department of party organs was affected by this trend to a greater degree than other departments. If in April 1953 it had 298 employees (201 responsible and 97 technical staff), by 1957 it lost 22 per cent of its staff with 232 employees in the two departments which replaced the old department for party organs (132 for the union republics department and 100 for the RSFSR department).<sup>5</sup>

Given the nature of its work with supervision of local party organisations, the department of party organs always had a strong regional focus in its structure with 10 regional sectors covering main areas of the USSR and six functional sectors.<sup>6</sup> The trend towards regionalisation meant that it was one of the earliest departments to be split on territorial principle in May 1954, preceded only by the department of agriculture split into the departments for RSFSR and Union Republics in January 1954. The two areas of special concern for Khrushchev, the agriculture and local party machine, were, therefore, exposed to new organisational methods from an early period.

The principle of territorial specialisation in the CC apparatus was fully introduced in 1956, when the Bureau for the RSFSR was established to serve as a substitute for a RSFSR Central Committee. This was a significant shift of responsibilities in party structures which among other things increased the influence of the new head of the RSFSR department for party organs V.M. Churaev (1904-1982), as he was made a full member of the RRSR Bureau.

After the big reform of 1956, the size of the departments for party organs remained almost unchanged in subsequent years. For example, the RSFSR department had 100 employees in 1956, of which 85 with executive responsibilities (responsible staff) and 15 technical staff. In June 1962, there was 71 responsible and 13 technical staff spread across 10 regional sectors and two functional sectors, the department's head, his two deputies and four inspectors.<sup>7</sup> This structure, based on division of responsibilities between two departments for the union republics and the RSFSR remained unchanged until 1962 when principles of organisation of the party organs, including its CC apparatus, was changed on a new principle of bifurcation between

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<sup>3</sup> Y. Gorlizki, 'Anti-ministerialism and the USSR Ministry of Justice, 1953-56: A Study in Organisational Decline', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48/8 (1996), 1279-318.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Titov, 'Reorganisation of the Central Committee apparatus under Khrushchev' in Jeremy Smith, ed., *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964* (Routledge, forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup> Gorlizki, 'Party revivalism and the death of Stalin', *Slavic Review*, no 1, vol. 54, 1995, p. 20; RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 70, ll. 82-3.

<sup>6</sup> In April 1954 the department's 10 regional sectors were: the Trans Caucasian republics; Baltic republics and Belorussian SSR; Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan; Ukraine and Moldova; Central regions; Black Earth belt; Caucasus and Crimea regions; Northern, North-Western regions and Karelo-Finnish SSR; Urals regions; Far Eastern regions. Six functional sectors were organisational and regulation matters; party information; single party card; trade union organs; Komsomol organs; training and re-training of party and soviet personnel.

<sup>7</sup> RGANI, f. 13, op. 2, d. 426, l. 154. There were the sector of Central districts, the sector of the Black Earth belt and Volga region districts, the sector of North Caucasus region, the sector of the Urals and Western Siberia districts, the sector of Eastern Siberia and Far East districts, the sector of organisational and regulatory matters and party information, the sector of training and re-training of party and soviet employees and secretariat.

industrial and agricultural branches.<sup>8</sup> By December 1964 when the departments of party organs for agriculture and industry were merged into a single RSFSR department, it had 98 employees, with 81 responsible and 17 technical staff.<sup>9</sup>

### **Personnel of the departments**

The composition of the personnel in the two departments for party organs during this period had three distinct characteristics. First, there was high proportion among department's management of staff with work experience in local party organs. Second, there was a high representation of people from Ukraine. Finally, there was a high turnover in personnel particularly in the top echelon of managers.

The power hierarchy in the departments consisted of the department's head, his first deputy, deputies, heads of sectors, inspectors and instructors which were at the bottom of the list of CC employees with executive powers (responsible employees – *otvetstvennye rabotniki*). Thus, in 1957 the department for union republics had in addition to its head and his first deputy, two further deputies, nine heads of sectors, four inspectors and 47 instructors. The RSFSR department had similar number of deputies, eight heads of sectors and eight inspectors with 65 instructors.<sup>10</sup> A biographic study of the heads and their first deputies indicates the high degree of turnover and relatively consistent background of these incumbents.

The post of the head of the department of party organs was a key position in the CPSU power hierarchy. According to Mikoyan, the head of the department was almost equal in status to a CC Secretary.<sup>11</sup> The cadre policy in the CC apparatus was to appoint people with experience in the field they were supervising. Accordingly there was large representation of former obkom secretaries in the departments which job was to oversee obkoms. E.V. Gromov (1909-81) was the head of the department for party organs in the transitional period between 1953 and 1957. Gromov made his career in the Moscow party organisation during the 1940s and was promoted to a deputy head of the new department for party organs in 1948, eventually succeeding A. Aristov as the head of the department in April 1953.<sup>12</sup>

Khrushchev kept Gromov in his post until March 1957 when he was appointed the Soviet ambassador to Hungary. After Gromov's removal, the post of the department's head remained vacant for almost a year. Brief tenures followed by A. Shelepin (1918-1994) in April-December 1958 (moved to head the KGB) and his close associate V. Semichastnyi (1924-2001) between March and December 1959 (who was demoted to be the second secretary in Azerbaijan). The next head of the union department for party organs was V. Churaev who previously held the corresponding post in the RSFSR department for party organs. Churaev was an old associate of Khrushchev from Ukraine, who rose through the rank in Kharkov obkom before being brought to Moscow in 1951.

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<sup>8</sup> See below for discussion of the 1962 bifurcation reform of party organs.

<sup>9</sup> RGANI, f. 13, op. 2, d. 751, l. 47.

<sup>10</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 70, l. 82-3. The department for union republics also had 9 responsible and 57 technical staff in two sectors responsible for record keeping of nomenklatura appointments.

<sup>11</sup> A. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o minuvshem* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999), p. 602.

<sup>12</sup> For biographic information I rely on *Tsentral'nyi Komitet KPSS, VKP(b), RKP(b), RSDRP(b): 1917-1991: istoriko-biograficheskii spravochnik*, Iu.V. Goriachev (ed.) (Moscow: Parad, 2005); an excellent web resource [www.knowbysight.info](http://www.knowbysight.info); A.A. Fursenko (ed.), *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964: chernoye protokol'nye zapisi zasedanii, stenogrammy, postanovleniia* 3 vols. (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003-2008); 'Posetiteli kremlevskogo kabineta N.S. Khrushcheva', *Istochnik*, 4 (2003), pp. 76-112; *A Directory of heads and deputy heads of CPSU Central Committee departments 1952-1991*, David Wells and John Miller (eds), (Manchester : Lorton House, 1993).

Churaev was replaced in 1961, a year of large cadres changes, by V. Titov (1907-1980), another appointee from Kharkov, who also became CC secretary responsible for party and organisational matters from November 1962. He was, therefore, combining two most powerful posts in the CC. After Khrushchev's fall, Titov was replaced by I. Kapitonov (1915-2002), a one time Moscow party boss demoted by Khrushchev in 1959 to head Ivanovo region. Kapitonov retained his tenure as the head of the department from 1964 to 1983. This illustrates the great contrast of cadres stability under Brezhnev compared with the Khrushchev period.

Similarly, most of the head's deputies had regional party experience. P.F. Pigalev (1911-1975) had a background in the CC apparatus but also spent several years as the second secretary of Molotovo (Perm) obkom, before returning to the CC and making his way up from inspector (1951-54) to head of sector (1954-57), to deputy head (1957-61), and to first deputy head of the department (1961-66). G.V. Enyutin (1903-69) was another Khrushchev's associate from Ukraine (he was the first secretary of Zaporozhsk obkom in 1947-51) serving as a deputy head of the department in 1952-54. I.V. Shikin (1906-73), the deputy head in 1954-61 was an exception, having made his career in the army's political department in the 1940s, before making his way to the CC apparatus in 1950 as an inspector.

The RSFSR department for party organs' first head was V.M. Churaev, the first secretary of Kharkov obkom in 1949-53. Churaev before that served as deputy head of the old department for party organs and in this sense he was a logical choice to head the RSFSR department when it was carved out of the old department for party organs. He was replaced by M.T. Efremov (1911-2000) in 1959, until then the Kuibyshev obkom first secretary. He was, however, demoted to head Chelyabinsk and then Gorkii obkoms before returning to Moscow in 1965 as a Deputy Sovmin Chairman. Efremov was succeeded by M.A. Polekhin, a long-time deputy head of the department and before that a secretary of Primorsk Region party organisation who remained in charge of the RSFSR department until its abolition in 1965. What emerges, then, is a pattern of frequent rotations between local and central posts in the departments of party organs.

The fact that all heads of the party organs departments had experience at obkom level indicates the close link between them and the people they supervised (except for Shelepin and Semichastnyi who came from Komsomol structures to the CC). In fact, lower level personnel at the departments of party organs had similar background of work experience at local party level before being promoted to the CC. After a period of work at the centre, they were often shifted back to the region in a higher capacity. Work experience at the departments for party organs served as an important step in the career ladder of local party bosses. For example, M.A. Ponomarev (born 1918) made a typical career progress rising through the ranks in Molotovo (Perm) obkom to become its second secretary in 1954-55, before being assigned to head a sector at the RSFSR department of party organs between 1955 and 1959. His move to Moscow was, perhaps, helped by Pigalev, the former second secretary from Molotovo obkom, who was an inspector at the RSFSR department of party organs at the time of Ponomarev's appointment there. After four years in the CC, Ponomarev was appointed the first secretary of Kalmyk obkom (1959-61), and then, after a brief stint as a CC inspector, appointed to head the Vladimir obkom where he served as the first secretary until 1983.

The heads of the departments for party organs changed very frequently during Khrushchev's era, compared to other CC departments. Between 1953 and 1964, the department for party organs and its successor, the union republics department for

party organs, had five different heads. Similarly, the RSFSR department for party organs had three different heads in that period. In contrast, other departments were more stable: the general department was headed throughout by V.N. Malin, the culture department by D.A. Polikarpov, the two international departments headed throughout by B.N. Ponomarev and Iu.V. Andropov, the RSFSR department for industry and transport headed by S.A. Baskakov. Only agricultural departments for RSFSR and Union republics, another problematic area for Khrushchev, had similar rate of changes in its management with three and four different heads for that period respectively.

### **Functions**

There were several functions which made the departments of party organs a key element in the CPSU power hierarchy. Broadly speaking, the three most important functions were selection of cadres, supervision of local party organisations and reporting to the Secretariat on the state of affairs in the regions. The supervision of the local party organisations can be sub-divided into planned inspections by the department's staff, those in response to complaints from below and, finally, those performing the role as the final arbiter of conflicts between regional elites. The reporting to the Secretariat involved both submitting initial reports on state of local affairs as well as drafting Secretariat's decisions into official decrees. The party organs departments were also charged with ensuring their implementation by obkoms.

Supervision of local party organs was carried out through inspections, meetings with regional party leaders in Moscow and local centres, as well as informal interventions, for example by telephone. The two departments for party organs had the greatest number of inspections of all CC departments. For example, in 1955 there were 545 trips to the regions (300 in the RSFSR and 245 to the union republics' Central Committees and obkoms) which lasted between 3 to 40 days. This constitutes almost a third of all regional assignment by the CC apparatus. Some of these trips were made in cooperation with other departments, for example, with agricultural department if the assignment was to an agricultural region. In contrast, the nearest CC department in the amount of regional inspections was the propaganda and agitation department which had only half as many assignments (233).<sup>13</sup>

Planned inspections of the regions were an important method of supervision of obkoms. They were often undertaken in co-operation with other departments such as propaganda and agitation, agricultural or one of the industrial departments, depending on a specialization of the region in question. For example, an inspection of Smolensk region in December 1959 was carried by three representatives of the CC – two from the department of party organs for RSFSR, and one from the agricultural department for RSFSR.<sup>14</sup>

The result of this inspection was a report to the CC Secretariat which is characteristic of the department's work in this period. The report made a damning assessment of the region's economic performance and party work. One of the reasons for the inspection was extremely poor agricultural results in the region. For example, meat procurements fell from 51 thousands tons in 1957 to 40.8 thousand tons in 1958 while for 11 months of 1959 this was only 38.9 thousand tons. The milk production remained static. To meet its procurement obligations 212,000 pigs and 123,000 tons of grain were bought from other oblasts. 216 million roubles were spent on purchase

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<sup>13</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 51, ll. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> They were Milov, a CC inspector in the RSFSR department for party organs, Gromova, an instructor in the same department, and Novikov, an instructor from the RSFSR agricultural department.

of additional cattle and grain, while only 142,000 roubles were received from the sale of cattle.

In 1958 the oblast did not meet its socialist obligations for production of meat and milk. On 1 December 1959 procurements were fulfilled only 49% for meat and 72% for milk. The annual plan was met through individual holdings. Pre-war levels were not yet reached – grain production was half of 1940 level. For every rouble of salary the sovkhoby returned 88 kopecks of production, so that they were not viable economically.<sup>15</sup> The report also criticised unsatisfactory state of cadres work, particularly shown in a high turnover among kolkhoz chairmen. Many kolkhoz chairmen were expelled from the party, some even prosecuted by security organs. The first secretary ruled in a dictatorial manner through his permanent representatives (*postoyannye upolnomochennye*) putting emphasis on sanctions rather than improved organisation in failing kolkhozy. For example, 82% of kolkhoz chairmen were issued official party reprimands. Poor material conditions meant that few specialists sent to work in the oblast would remain there with 1,756 of 2,000 leaving the region in three years.

Despite this damning report including accusations of deliberate data inflation to meet official targets, there was little of real consequence for P.I. Doronin (1909-1976), Smolensk first secretary. Doronin was summoned to the department for an official talk and was seen by Khrushchev on 29 December 1959 after the CC Plenum on agriculture. This Plenum passed a resolution ‘On further development of agricultural production’ and Ryazan’s success in agricultural production was officially applauded. Perhaps for this reason the irregularities discovered in Smolensk were not given the full attention they deserved. However, the poor performance and other failures discovered by the inspection were not forgotten and at the next major cadres re-shuffle in 1961 Doronin was dismissed from his post and went into retirement. Such inspections were a permanent feature of party functioning aimed at ensuring accountability and accurate information about regional politics.

Responses to ‘signals’ from the regions in the form of letters of complaints to the CC or other central party organs such as *Pravda* were another important mechanism at ensuring that the local party elites were aware that the CC in Moscow could intervene at any moment. As a general rule, if some concrete facts were mentioned in a complaint some form of enquiry had to be carried out. This could be anything from a written enquiry, which the obkom had to respond to in a formal way, to inspection by the department’s staffers. However, the large number of complaints meant that majority of them did not have a full investigation. Nevertheless, the threat of a random inspection ensured that local party elites could not ignore completely complaints against them. In this way, the obkom secretaries could not slacken their attention to local problems as they knew that there was always a possibility that the central authority in the form of CC department for party organs could intervene.

Another function of the departments for party organs was selection and appointment of cadres. On 1 January 1954 the department for party organs had 2,235 primary nomenklatura appointments (*osnovnaia nomenklatura*) and 4,539 secondary (*uchetno-kontrol’naia nomenklatura*). 1,628 of the primary nomenklatura were leading party cadres, the rest were the state, trade union and Komsomol posts. Of the secondary nomenklatura, 4065 were party appointments.<sup>16</sup> After the division of the department into the union republics and the RSFRS, the sector of single party ticket

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<sup>15</sup> RGASPI, f. 556, op. 14, d. 134, ll. 103-10.

<sup>16</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 29, d. 33, l. 14-16.

and the sector of records of the leading cadres were kept in the union department, which managed nomenklatura records for CC departments making it the key element in the party appointments system.

The nomenklatura of the RRSRSR department for party organs in 1956 included six first secretaries of kraikoms (*kraevye komitety partii* – regional party committees), 67 first secretaries of obkoms, six secretaries of obkoms within krai, second secretaries of Moscow and Leningrad obkoms, second secretaries of kraikoms and obkoms and all heads of departments of obkoms and kraikoms (578 positions). In addition the RSFSR department supervised appointments to all Soviet organs including the chair of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet and the chair of the RSFSR Sovmin, as well as top trade union and Komsomol appointments.<sup>17</sup> These appointees answered to the head of the department which appointed them, making that head their immediate boss. Since Khrushchev did not meet obkom first secretaries one on one very often, the two heads of the party department were in essence his viceroys over the obkom secretaries.<sup>18</sup>

The department also reported to the Secretariat on the state of affairs in the regions. For example, between May and December 1963, the Department for party organs submitted 31 issues for the Secretariat's consideration from a report on shortcomings in the selection of cadres by economic agencies to restructuring of Moscow branches of creative unions (*tvorcheskie soiuzy*). It also prepared decrees on decisions made by the Secretariat on all aspects of party work. In 1963, there were 110 decrees, reports and other official documents prepared by department.<sup>19</sup> The department was also responsible for supervision of implementation of leadership's decision in the regions. In this way, the department collected the information from the regions, reported to the Secretariat on its findings, drafted the latter's decisions and supervised their implementation back in the regions concerned. This gave the head of the department an enormous degree of power over the regional policies in the Soviet Union.

Another crucial function the departments for party organs performed was as a final arbiter in local disputes. This function was particularly important during Khrushchev period when there was a high turnover among obkom secretaries with greater potential for a conflict with incumbent elites. For example, in 1958-9 there was a conflict in the Kalmyk obkom between Zhezlov, the newly appointed first secretary, and some representatives of local hierarchy.<sup>20</sup> The conflict was exacerbated by the recent return of the Kalmyks to their homeland from the exile. It was alleged that Zhezlov, a native of the neighbouring Stavropol region, promoted only his friends, who were ethnic Russians, to positions of power, while Kalmyks were relegated to secondary posts in their own republic. The dispute was taken to Churaev, the head of the RSFSR party organs department. It is also interesting to note that Zhezlov was being informed about Kalmyk opposition visits to the CC and knew contents of their conversations with Churaev and Furtseva from Orlov, the CC instructor who was supervising Kalmyk region in the department. Eventually, Zhezlov

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<sup>17</sup> RGANI, f. 13, op. 1, d. 445, l. 2.

<sup>18</sup> For a general overview of the frequency of Khrushchev's personal appointments including obkom secretaries see 'Posetiteli kremlevskogo kabineta N.S. Khrushcheva', *Istochnik*, 3 (2003), pp. 51-55.

<sup>19</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 214, ll. 119-41.

<sup>20</sup> This included Dzhibbinov, obkom secretary, the chairman of republic's Supreme Soviet Ivanov, chairman of republican trade union Mantsynov, republican minister of culture Nadbitov and writer Indzhiev.

was dismissed from the post of first secretary in February 1959.<sup>21</sup> Moscow decided to calm things down by appointing a familiar figure from the centre that it could trust. Zhezlov's replacement was M.A. Ponomarev, until then the head of a sector in the RSFSR department of party organs.<sup>22</sup>

The departments for party organs, therefore, played the central role in the relation between the centre and local elites. Its broad sway of functions from selection of cadres to inspection of the regions and supervision of implementation of central authorities' decisions meant that local party elites saw it as the most important agency which they had to deal with.

### **Bifurcation of party organs**

There is a prevalent view among historians also supported by the contemporary accounts that the causes of Khrushchev's downfall lied in the excessive reorganisations of the state and party institutions, which unsettled the governing nomenklatura and undermined Khrushchev's authority.<sup>23</sup> This is particularly true of the last two years of Khrushchev's era dominated by the radical reform of party organs split into agricultural and industrial branches.

In the last years of his rule, Khrushchev concentrated on the reforms of the party apparatus against the background of mounting economic problems. This is in great contrast to the first period in power, when he channelled his attention at the fight against the state bureaucracy and excessive centralisation. While in 1953-57 the party elite were his core group of support, in the final years Khrushchev turned them against himself and this ultimately cost him his job.

The reforms of the 1962-64 were forced on Khrushchev by the deepening crisis in the economy, above all agriculture. The rise of state food prices introduced on 1 June 1962 negatively resonated around the country. This was damaging to Khrushchev personally as it came just several months after the adoption of the Third Party Programme in October 1961 which promised great abundance for the Soviet people. The popular reaction was deeply negative despite the attempts by local party bosses to present it in the report to the Central Committee in the best possible way. 'I have three children. Together with my husband we earn 120 roubles. With this state of affairs our children won't see any meat or butter.'<sup>24</sup> 'The resolutions of the Twenty Second Party Congress and the Party Programme promise unabated rising of workers' material conditions, while in practice the prices for meat and milk are rising, the living standards are falling' claimed a miner from Tula region.<sup>25</sup> 'We are advancing towards communism, while the material conditions are worsening' said workers from a Gorky city factory.<sup>26</sup>

The solution to the mounting problems in agriculture was to strengthen party's role in running the economy. Several reforms were tried over the course of 1962. At the Central Committee's March Plenum on agriculture it was decided to strengthen Party's control over agriculture by creating committees for agriculture at the local level headed by first secretaries of party organisations.<sup>27</sup> Finally, in a more radical

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<sup>21</sup> RGASPI, f. 556, op. 14, d. 139, ll. 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> See section on department's personnel above.

<sup>23</sup> Pikhov, *Sovetskii Soiuz*, p. 240. For contemporary view see *Nikita Khrushchev, 1964*, A. Artizov, V. Naumov (eds), (Moscow, Materik, 2007), pp. 193-6.

<sup>24</sup> RGASPI, f. 556, op. 14, d. 203, l. 12.

<sup>25</sup> RGASPI, f. 556, op. 14, d. 203, l. 24.

<sup>26</sup> RGASPI, f. 556, op. 14, d. 203, l. 36.

<sup>27</sup> *KPSS v rezolutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, koferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Moscow, Politizdat, 1986), vol. 10, p. 225.



move, the whole party apparatus was split into agricultural and industrial branches at the CC November Plenum.

Khrushchev's stated intention was to strengthen party's economic role at the expense of its other duties, party-political work and propaganda. He argued that 'the unification of communists according to the place of their economic activity gives party organisations the ability to concentrate their main attention on economic questions, subjecting all other forms of work – organisational, ideological, culture and educational – to solving the principal task.'<sup>28</sup> The principal task of the party organisation became economic management, while other areas of party activity were now deemed of a secondary importance. As a result, many party apparatchiks who did not have economic background were sidelined. This included professional party bureaucrats graduated from the party schools and who did not have any practical experience of work in economic management. The previous core constituency was turning against Khrushchev.

The bifurcation of party organs led to confusion and resentment in CC apparatus and obkoms. This reorganisation caused further confusion in the work of the CC apparatus making the work of the two RSFSR departments for party organs and the union department particularly difficult. In December 1962 the RSFSR department for party organs was split into department for RSRSR party organs for agriculture (headed by M.A. Polekhin, previously the head of the united RSFSR department) and department for RSFSR party organs for industry (headed by N.A. Voronovskii, previously the deputy head of the old RSFSR party organs department). These new departments had structures similar to that of the abolished department with five regional and two functional sectors. The personnel also came from the abolished department.<sup>29</sup>

The union department for party organs was renamed simply the department for party organs. Its structure was changed to reflect the new principle of party organisation. They were two sub-departments now – the party organs for management of industry and agriculture of the Union republics and the sub-department of party organs of central organisations and organisational-regulatory matters.<sup>30</sup>

Khrushchev's attempt at burdening the party organs with responsibilities for economic performance at a time of deepening economic crisis drew hostility from party bosses who did not want to 'carry the can' for Khrushchev's mistakes. The first secretary of Smolensk obkom Kalmyk told a local party meeting that 'Everyone should understand that no other organs but oblispolkom [local Soviet executive organ] can conduct direct management of all multitude of agricultural production, work of production departments and all other agricultural organs, enterprises and institutions.' Kalmyk was severely reprimanded by the CC's department of party organs for agriculture for attempting to shift responsibility from himself and the party

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<sup>28</sup> Khrushchev's report to the November Plenum, 1962. RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 596, l. 33.

<sup>29</sup> The new department increased in size and now had 81 responsible workers and 17 technical personnel including the head of the department, 2 deputies, 6 inspectors, 10 heads of regional sectors and 2 functional ones, and 57 instructors. The new structure consisted of the sector of Central and North-Western districts; the Centre, the Black Earth and North Caucasus districts; the Urals and Western Siberia districts; East-Siberian and Far Eastern districts; organisation and regulatory matters and information; training and re-training of party and soviet employees. RGASPI, f. 556, op. 14, d. 249, l. 4, 17.

<sup>30</sup> The first sub-department had four regional sectors: Ukraine and Moldavia; Kazakhstan and Central Asian republics; Belorussia and Baltic republics; Trans-Caucasian republics. The second one had five sectors on functional basis: organisational and regulations matters and information; training and re-training of party and soviet cadres; trade union and Komsomol organs; the single party card.

organisation for poor performance of his region.<sup>31</sup> However, the mood among party secretaries remained strongly hostile to the new system of party organisation.

One of the biggest problems caused by the reorganisation was the ensuing rivalry between agricultural and industrial obkoms which flared almost immediately after their creation.<sup>32</sup> Each of them protected interest of their respective clients in agriculture or industry. At the same time the economic performance was not improved. It was after the 1962 reform when the CC departments responsible for party work had to assume even greater responsibility for propping up a struggling system that its work finally was undermined by frequent reorganisations and personnel changes characteristic of the Khrushchev era. The profound unpopularity of the party bifurcation among party elites was reflected in the fact the reform was reversed at the first post-Khrushchev CC Plenum in November 1964.

The legacies of the Khrushchev period were also gradually undone and the organisation of the CC department for party organs returned to the pre-1954 pattern. On 12 December 1964 the two RSFSR departments were merged again.<sup>33</sup> Two years later in May 1966, the RSFSR department was abolished after a major reform of the CC apparatus in the wake of the XXIII Party Congress which drew a line under Khrushchev's reforms. Its functions and personnel were absorbed by the department of organisational and party work (the old department of party organs for union republics). Headed continuously from 1964 to 1983 by Kapitonov, this new expanded department was the more formidable organ than its predecessors under Khrushchev. However, its functions and principles of work remained the same, being the main intermediary between the top leadership and the local party elites.

### **Conclusion**

The departments for party organs played key role in the Soviet power hierarchy serving as the main conduit between the top leadership in the centre and regional party bosses. Despite wide reforms of the state and party apparatus, the departments of party organs retained its importance for most of the Khrushchev's period. There were several distinct features of the party organs department in this period. First, relating to its structure, there was a greater emphasis on regional specialisation within the CC apparatus represented by establishment of two departments for party organs in 1954. Second, with regards to its personnel, there was substantial fluidity of staff illustrated by the changes in the top management. In addition, there was high representation of regional elites in the departments, particularly from Ukraine. Finally, the last bout of reforms unleashed in 1962 undermined stability and normal functioning of the party organs including the CC departments responsible for their oversight. After Khrushchev's removal from power a period of stability ensued when the single department responsible for supervision of local party machines was reinstated. This drew a line under Khrushchev's erratic reforms of the state and party apparatus.

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<sup>31</sup> RGASPI, f. 556, op. 14, d. 239, l. 14-5.

<sup>32</sup> Petr Shelest recalled that he had to settle disputes between Poplevkin and Liashko, the secretaries of two Donetsk obkoms already in December 1962, barely a month after the introduction of the bifurcation principle at CC November Plenum. See P. Shelest, *Da ne sudimy budete* (Moscow: Kvintisentsia, 1995), p. 162.

<sup>33</sup> RGANI, f. 13, op. 2, d. 751, l. 47.