

# NEW ZEALAND LISTENE

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## Russia Without Stalin

munist Party in Russia, is a short mocracy" at the Congress, Resoluand sturdy man who can speak in tions were adopted with the usual public for five or six hours with- unanimity; no delegate rose to out signs of distress. At the 20th criticise Mr. Khrushchov or his Party Congress a few weeks ago colleagues. "Nor did the Central he presented the report of the Committee expose frankly the Central Committee, a statement differences of opinion which had that filled more than 90 pages of arisen in its midst in the interval foolscap, closely typed. It was a momentous speech of which much appeal to the Congress for a verhas already been heard, mainly because it endorsed the change from autocracy to "collective leadership," and foreshadowed the attack on Stalin. Yet the repudiation of the leader cult has not taken place suddenly and without preparation.

Some observers believe that Mr. Khrushchov is presiding over the removal of Stalin so that presently his own effigy might occupy the pedestal. This could still be true: it may at least be said that Mr. Khrushchov, in throwing the first brick at the dead lion, was either brave or secure. There is much evidence, however, that the Communist regime has become less rigid. If a new leader arose in Russia he could not in the present situation be another Stalin. The regime is committed to policies which favour the spread of responsibility. World opinion is better understood and is not entirely disregarded, in spite of the truculence of Soviet propaganda. Many forced labour and concentration camps were disbanded last year; a new criminal code has been completed; and wages and pensions for lower paid workers are to be increased, apparently at the expense of the managerial groups. "For the first time for 30 years," wrote Isaac Deutscher in The Times, London, "the Soviet rulers have attacked social inequality. Soviet opinion will certainly see in this the guarantee of a progressive democratisation of regime."

Democracy in Russia, it is true, has little resemblance to Western practical aim in politics.

R. KHRUSHCHOV, First ideas and practices. Deutscher Secretary of the Central pointed out that there was still no Committee of the Com- sign of "Leninist inner party debetween the two Congresses and dict." This may, as Deutscher suggests, be only a transitional stage. The alternatives still seem to be a widening of freedom within the Party or the appearance of a new dictator. Whatever may be said of milder policies since Stalin, the mood of government remains paternal; and although paternalism can be benevolent, it can change swiftly to sternness.

> In every department of Russian life may be heard the admonishing voice, "Creative work in literature and art," said the Central Committee's report, "must be permeated with the spirit of struggle for Communism, it must ... cultivate a socialist mentality and a comradely sense of duty." Stalin used much harsher words on the same theme (his dislike of other people's writings was equalled only by the dullness of his own); but in spite of the gentler mood it is still a stick that is being shaken at the artists. Yet in trying to understand events and changes in Russia it is too easy to use standards of judgment which have no historical justification in that country. The comparison to be looked for is not between what is done there and here, but between Russia of yesterday and today. A movement away from Stalinism by no means implies a repudiation of Communist doctrine. It does, however, imply a weakening of tyranny; and it offers grounds for hope that "peaceful co-existence," or at least a state of mutual toleration in East and West, is a

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Scala," Milan.) Sung in Italian.

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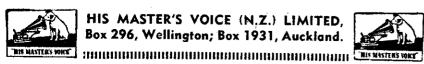
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