

Soviet leadership quickly seized upon this statement as a fundamental ideological error which reflected insufficient confidence in the invincibility of the socialist cause. The next month Malenkov backed down and conceded that only capitalism would perish in the event of a nuclear war.⁹² Marshal Kliment Voroshilov reflected the consensus among his colleagues within the Presidium (as the Politburo was then called) when he declared in March 1955: "We cannot be intimidated by fables that in the event of a new world war civilization would perish."⁹³

Henceforth the official position on nuclear war had two main elements. It was acknowledged that a nuclear war would have catastrophic consequences and would result in the death of many millions of people, but it was also asserted that in the event of a nuclear war, socialism would still survive. The new Party Programme, which was adopted under Khrushchev in 1961, clearly articulated this dual formulation. It stated that a nuclear war "can bring unprecedented destruction to entire countries and wipe out entire nations."⁹⁴ But it also implied that in the event of a new world war, socialism would survive and only imperialism would perish: "Should the imperialist aggressors nevertheless venture to start a new world war, the peoples will no longer tolerate a system which drags them into devastating wars. They will sweep imperialism away and bury it."⁹⁵

When a revised version of the 1961 Party Programme was adopted at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, this last passage was dropped, and it was tacitly acknowledged that the socialist system was at no less risk than capitalism. In language similar to the previously rejected formulation of Malenkov, the newly adopted Party Programme stated that nuclear war "could destroy world

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁹³ *Pravda*, 27 March 1955, cited in *ibid.*, p. 111.

⁹⁴ Jan F. Triska, ed., *Soviet Communism: Programs and Rules*, San Francisco: Chandler, 1962, p. 64.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.