

Khrushchev 'Memoir' Praises Allies' Role in World War II

By THEODORE SHABAD

A new installment of "Khrushchev Remembers" called today for an honest appraisal of the contributions made by the United States and Britain to the defeat of Hitler in World War II.

The reminiscences attributed by Life magazine to Nikita S. Khrushchev, who led the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, assert that "our historical works have perpetrated an illusion" in not giving proper credit to the West.

"I don't think it's ever too late for a new generation, which will soon replace the current leadership of our country, to cast objective light on the beginning of the war," the document says.

Soviet historians have portrayed the Red Army and the Communist party as the principal bulwarks in the struggle against Hitler even though many Russians, especially of the older generation, know about the Lend-Lease program of Western aid to the Soviet Union.

The Khrushchev account, the second of four installments, appears in the Life issue dated Dec. 4 and on newsstands today.

Khrushchev as Commissar

The latest excerpts, focusing on the events of World War II, contain vignettes of Mr. Khrushchev's role as a political commissar during crucial battles and pithy profiles of Red Army leaders.

The following major points emerge:

¶In the period of the 1939 Soviet-German nonaggression pact, with which the Russians expected to stave off a Nazi attack, "Stalin hoped that the English and French might exhaust Germany and foil Hitler's plan to crush the West first, then turn east. . . . Stalin's nerves cracked when he learned about the fall of France" in June, 1940.

¶In the 1939-40 winter war against Finland, "We soon real-

ized we had bitten off more than we could chew. . . . The Finns can ski almost before they can walk. Our army encountered mobile ski troops armed with automatic high-velocity rifles. . . . We recruited our own professional skiers. . . . Poor Fellows, they were ripped to shreds."

¶Early in the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June, 1941, "Stalin refused to accept responsibility for what was happening at the front. . . . I noticed that Stalin's signature did not appear on a single document or order."

¶After the German defeat at Stalingrad in February, 1943, Soviet troops had to dispose of the bodies of German soldiers to prevent an epidemic. "The earth was still frozen. We gathered thousands of corpses and stacked them in layers alternation with layers of railway ties. Then we set these huge piles on fire."

Authenticity Questioned

¶"After the war I frequently heard Stalin speak about Eisenhower's generosity. . . . Eisenhower held his troops back, allowing our troops to take Berlin. If he had not done this, the question of Germany might have been decided differently and our own position might have turned out quite a bit worse."

The new installment sheds little new light on the controversial question of authenticity. Life says the reminiscences are genuine but declines to divulge how and from whom they were obtained. Mr. Khrushchev, apparently upon official prompting, has dissociated himself from the publication.

It is believed that he taped reminiscences for official internal use and that some of this material may have been made available abroad for commercial gain without his knowledge or consent. Now 76 years old, Mr. Khrushchev is reportedly hospitalized with a heart ailment.

In addition to Life, the document is being serialized in 20 newspapers and magazines

around the world. A book version will be published next month by Little, Brown & Co.

In the purported recollections, Mr. Khrushchev endorses the Stalin-Hitler pact, a sensitive event rarely discussed by Soviet memoirists. The Life account says:

"I think the vast majority of the party considered the signing tactically wise even though nobody could say so publicly. We could not even discuss the treaty at party meetings. It was hard for us—as Communists, as antifascists—to accept the idea of joining forces with Germany. It would have been impossible to explain it to the man in the street."

No Reports of Enthusiasm

The late Alexander Werth recalled in his book "Russia at War" that in the days that followed the signing, on Aug. 23, 1939, "nothing more was said about the pact and, surprisingly, there were no reports of any 'spontaneous' and 'enthusiastic' mass meetings anywhere in Russia approving it." Outside the Soviet Union, the signing was a major cause of disillusionment among Communists in western countries.

The Khrushchev account describes a scene in which Stalin berated Marshal Kliment Y. Voroshilov, the Defense Commissar, for Soviet setbacks in the Finnish war.

"Voroshilov was boiling mad," the document relates. "He leaped up turned red and hurled Stalin's accusations back into his face: 'You have yourself to blame for all this! You are the one who had our best generals killed!'"