“Staline est mort”, *L’Humanité*, 6 March 1953

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On 6 March at 6:00 AM the Soviet people learned about Stalin’s death from the radiobroadcast official appeal of higher party and government bodies. The news was relayed by the Central Organ of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, *L’Humanité*, with a stark headline and an oversized portrait of Stalin that corresponded to...
the image he had created in his last years. It is not clear whether the text that accompanies the headline and the photograph on the first page, a reproduction of the communiqué issued in Moscow, is due to the disarray within the editorial offices of L’Humanité caused by this news or by the wish not to depart from the line set by the new Soviet leadership in this communiqué.

2 A Commission on the Organization of Stalin’s Funeral was hastily created in Moscow. According to the memoirs of Lazar Kaganovich, Nikita Khrushchev asked him while members of the Commission were traveling in a car accompanying the body of Stalin: “Lazarus, how shall we live and work without Stalin? It will be hard for us.” In response, Kaganovich reassured him: “If we hold firmly to Lenin’s path on which Stalin led us, we shall survive and move forward successfully.”

3 Khrushchev’s anxiety about the upcoming course of events was not limited to the Soviet leadership. A sense of deep confusion, fear of the future, was widespread throughout the Soviet Union in the wake of Stalin’s death: “What will happen to us?”; “How shall we live from now on and what will happen?” people asked themselves and others. Stalin's personality had played a decisive role in the Soviet political system, and people could not imagine how the Soviet Union would evolve without its leader.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


From Communism to Anti-Communism