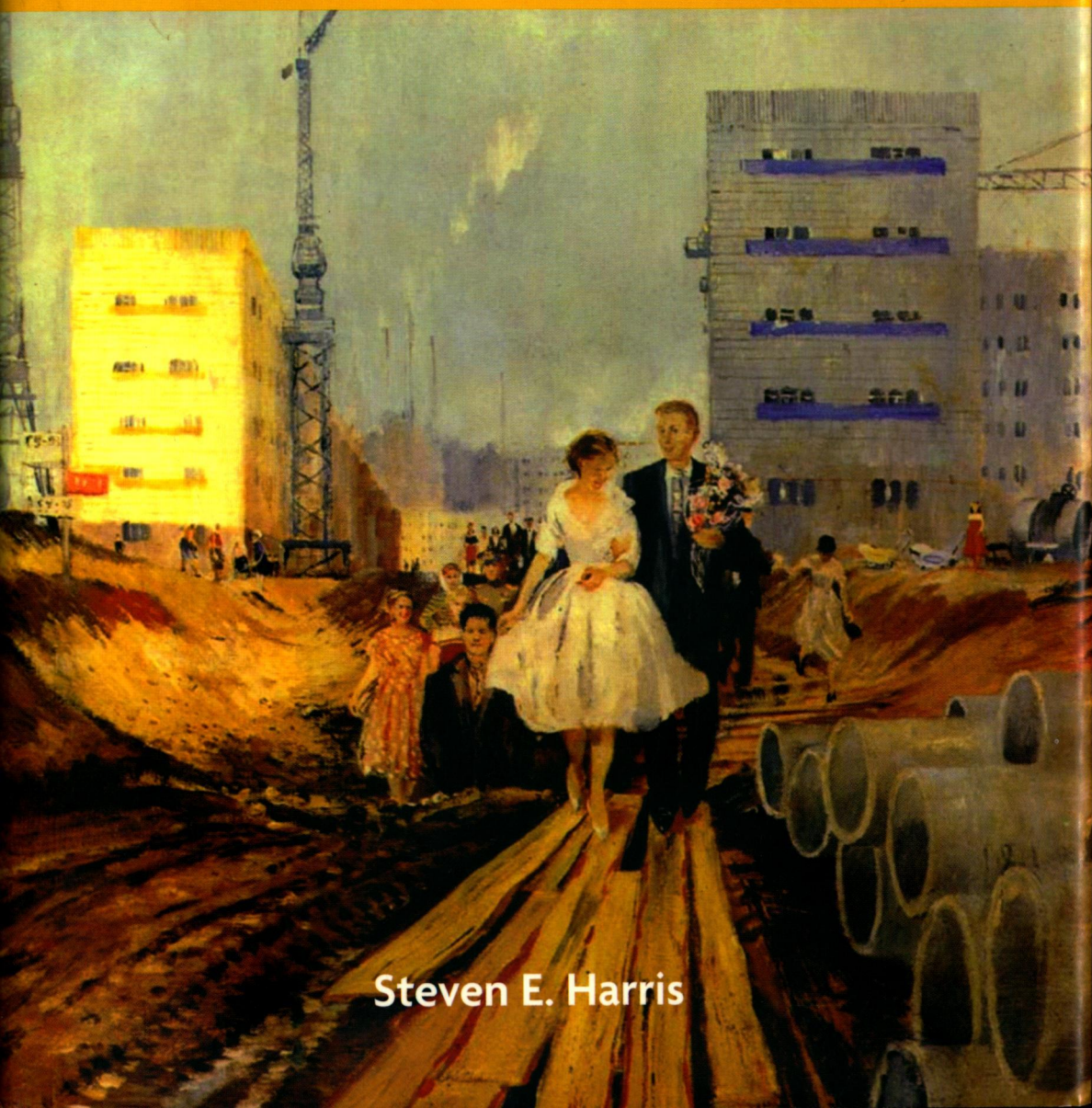


COMMUNISM *on Tomorrow Street*

MASS HOUSING AND EVERYDAY LIFE AFTER STALIN



Steven E. Harris

Communism on Tomorrow Street

Mass Housing and
Everyday Life after Stalin

Steven E. Harris

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

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Introduction: Moving to the Separate Apartment

The year 1956 was a tumultuous one for the Soviet Union. In February, its new leader, Nikita Khrushchev, stunned the party faithful at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress with a stinging denunciation of Joseph Stalin's crimes. Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" was a dramatic moment in turning the page on Stalin's bloody regime, encouraging a thaw in state-society relations, and reviving the country's quest for communism. But by year's end, Khrushchev was meting out his own brutal repression to Hungarians for daring to declare that they would define their own course and even reject the Warsaw Pact.

Below the surface of these well-known events, daily transformations were taking place in the Soviet Union, whereby ordinary citizens tested the waters of Khrushchev's thaw, unsure of where the new limits lay, but determined to make the most of Soviet life after Stalin. Though lacking the political spotlight of the "Secret Speech" or the geopolitical drama of the Hungarian Revolution, ordinary Soviet citizens' words and actions could be dramatic in their own right and can tell us as much, if not more, about what this post-Stalinist existence and Khrushchev's reforms were all about. The present study examines the reform in which most citizens were eager to participate: Khrushchev's campaign to resolve the "housing question" (*zhilishchnyi vopros*) by moving people out of overcrowded communal housing and into single-family, separate apartments. As I argue in this book, moving to the separate apartment was the way most ordinary people experienced and shaped Khrushchev's thaw.