

# STALINISM: A STUDY OF INTERNAL COLONIALISM

by Alvin W. Gouldner

"DZHUGASHVILI, JOSEF VISSARIONOVICH: peasant from the village of Didi-Lido, Tiflis district; born 1881 of Orthodox faith, attended Gori church school and Tiflis theological seminary .. .Description: height, 2 arshins, 4Vé vershki (about 5 feet, 4 inches), average build; gives the appearance of an ordinary person." *Czarist Police Description of Stalin, May 1, 1904*

The Stalinist past still shapes Soviet society today, even if no longer defining it. Nowhere is this more evident than in the crises of procurement with which Soviet agriculture recurrently beset the Soviet economy. From the October Revolution to *détente*, the peasantry have been a destiny for the Soviet State. This, however, need not have been the case: that "destiny" was a man-made one. If the "thaw" of 1956 was short-lived, this is not surprising considering that it had been ushered in by one of Stalin's closest political associates, the sturdy survivor, Nikita Krushchev. Krushchev's exposé was thus not a critique of the surreal social system whose chief architect Stalin had been, but of Stalin *the man*, his "sickly suspicions," and his "crimes against socialist legality."

Louis Althusser is correct in seeing the profound limits of Krushchev's critique of Stalinism and of any other that merely sees it as a departure from Soviet legality, while overlooking its embedding in the fundamental structures of Soviet society and of the organizational culture of the CPSU.<sup>2</sup> This, however, is a commonplace deemed worthy of public utterance only by those whose life commitments confine them within the inane limits of official Communist discourse, and who, with leaden earnestness, debate whether Stalinism was a "deviation" or merely an "error."<sup>3</sup>

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1. While Stalin's crimes clearly placed him in the super-criminal class, it never occurred to Krushchev that Stalin was to be viewed as one of those ordinary criminals known as statesmen: "Taking the state wherever found," Nock observed, "one sees no way to differentiate the activities of its founders, administrators, and beneficiaries from those of a professional-criminal class."

2. Louis Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism* (London, 1975). Translated by Grahame Lock. It is revealing that Althusser manages to miss the humanly liberative character of Krushchev's exposé, which buoyed even Althusser's own project for an anti-humanist Marxism with its quixotic quest for freedom-within-Stalinism. As usual, Althusser presents only programmatic theatrics; never actually presenting his own critique, he allows it to be leaked by his student and translator, Grahame Lock. Thus, he brazenly condemns Krushchev's speech at the 20th Congress of the CPSU as a "critique from the right," reducing it, with his typical "theoreticism," to a *theoretical* diagnosis, thereby missing its liberative character as a *political* act which had the almost immediate consequence of freeing some 5,000,000 political prisoners in the Soviet Union, whose massive presence could not but profoundly affect the entire public atmosphere of the USSR. Moreover, Althusser apparently writes in ignorance of the fact that Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th Congress were an impromptu act of great personal and political courage, and that his revelations at the 22nd Congress in 1961, made in open not closed session, were even more damning in their implications than his first talk.

3. See, for example, the depressing piece by that otherwise erudite scholar, Valentino Gerratana, "Althusser and Stalinism," *New Left Review*, January 1977.

Today an analysis of Stalinism is not an inconsequential exercise. Although it is an historical event, Stalinism is also potentially recurrent. The cruel repression in Cambodia indicates that Stalinism is hardly a dead issue and Kim Il Sung's regime in North Korea is also essentially a personal dictatorship very much along Stalinist lines. While mass arrests and purges have ended in the USSR, repression of all dissent remains. Moreover, Soviet society has never publicly confronted its Stalinist past<sup>4</sup> even to the very modest extent that German society, after W.W. II, confronted its Nazi past, or that American society debated and agonized over the invasion of Viet Nam.

Krushchev's "secret speech" of 1956 before the 20th Congress of the CPSU, in which he denounced Stalin's "cult of personality" was just that — a speech for an elite rather than a public event. The liberation of Soviet and of East European societies under its domination, from the heritage of Stalinism thus remains a world problem.

The discussion of Stalinism has been much conditioned by the recent history of the New Left and the political context of cold war anti-Communist obsessions during the fifties when it was difficult to seek social change without being accused of being pro-Communist. Those, like the New Left, who refused to surrender to the *status quo*, simply had to turn their back on the issue of Communism and refuse to be diverted by it. As a result, the New Left never came to terms with the meaning and sources of Stalinism, so that, when it collapsed in the late 1960s, many of its participants reverted to varieties of old left Stalinism. Of course, even some old left anti-Stalinist socialists have felt that Stalinism was a tacit indictment and an embarrassment to socialism *as such* and preferred not to expose it to public view.<sup>5</sup>

This phenomenon has now ironically spread also to the most conventional and reactionary elements in American life. With the development of *détente* between the Soviet Union and the United States there is a growing vested interest in the sale of American grain and technologies to the USSR. Seeing new

4. Those who consider Stalinism a closed phase of Russian history need only ask dissidents who have been fired from their jobs, placed in insane asylums, denied travel permission, forced into exile, attacked on the streets, or had their apartments ransacked; let them ask Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, and the writers of the Samizdat. Smith has some pointed commentary on this: "For the greatest moral issue in Soviet history, Stalinism, has been suppressed and, from all outward signs, the youth generation of the seventies is growing up with a severely stunted historical memory of that time. The Party elders have decreed that the Stalinist repressions are a closed book...not to be publicly exhumed...Their sense of moral innocence is as unshaken today as was that of Americans before the awful agony of Vietnam introduced to some a sense of national guilt and capacity for evil. Protecting Russians from that sense, I suspect, is one reason why the Soviet leadership has felt it so terribly important to suppress not just the truth about the Stalinist purges, but also the recognition that millions participated in these bloody repressions." Hedrick Smith, *The Russians*. (New York, 1976), pp. 194, 312.

5. Seeing Stalinism as bad news, socialists may tend to repress any discussion of it even though such discussion is necessary to free socialism and Marxism from its effects. For similar reasons, some sections of even the anti-Stalinist Left became hostile to Solzhenitsyn, condemning his *Gulag Archipelago* for its wrong nationalist and religious sentiments, but often not acknowledging its correct exposure of the Soviet system of labor camps. Cf. Boris Frankel, "The 'Gulag Archipelago' and the Left," *Theory and Society*, 1:4 (1974). Here Frankel notes that "as the largest anti-Stalinist Marxist groups in the West, the various Trotskyist organizations are vitally interested in refuting Solzhenitsyn and yet defending Leninism" (p. 487).

opportunities, powerful American interests tend to accept the present international *status quo* and, as in the Sonnenfeldt Doctrine, even encourage Eastern Europe's submission to Soviet "hegemony." Within this context, discussions of Stalinism also become an embarrassment.<sup>6</sup>

This repression of Stalinism as a topic is not a recent phenomenon. Already in the 1930s the denial of the Stalinist reality was convenient even to a liberal politics, which defined German Nazism as the primary threat and considered an anti-Stalinist critique disruptive of the political unity needed to stop Germany.<sup>7</sup> The repression of Stalinism as a topic thus gathered energies from all regions of the political spectrum and is not confined only to the recent past.

### *Methodological Considerations*

"The reconstructive philosopher does not stand in judgment as the vanguard of another class. He sees himself within the same situation—as one who must, through his actions and thought, lay bare the colonized relationships and change them."

Marcus G. Raskin

The study of Stalinism is also a way of exploring the potentialities and the limits of Marxism as a project for human emancipation contraposed to Stalinism as the very antithesis of that aspiration. Thus, an extended treatment would raise the question of whether Stalinism follows from Marxism itself or whether it was simply a contingent aberration peculiar to Russian culture. Two opposing standpoints have long shaped the dialogue about this issue. One is eager to argue that Stalinism is the inevitable issue of Leninism and Marxism, and uses Stalinism as a stick to beat Marxism. The other, a no less compulsive apology for Marxism, ingenuously denies any connection at all between Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism, even though all Stalinists were proud to call themselves both. We must somehow steer a course between these two compulsions without at the same time pretending that we are some sort of sociological bookkeeper who thinks truth is to be found only in the mid-ground. If Stalinism cannot be understood simply as a child of Marxism, neither can it

6. Thus, when the author of *Gulag Archipelago* came to the United States, he was pointedly refused an interview with (then) President Ford. Indeed, when the book was first published, the broadcasting facilities of the Voice of America hardly mentioned it. In short, elements in the Republican and Democratic Parties find the Russians' Stalinist past an embarrassment to the policy of *détente* with the USSR. That history, and not very ancient history at that, is in the grip of an Orwellian distortion is suggested by President Ford's remarkable statement during the presidential campaign of 1976 that Eastern European countries were *not* dominated by the Soviet Union. On both the political left and right, then, a powerful confluence of forces acts to repress discussion of the Stalinist past and of efforts to understand it.

7. In that vein, Merleau-Ponty wrote shortly after World War II: "If there has to be a choice between a USSR which 'connives with history,' maintains its existence and stops the Germans, and a USSR which sticks to the proletarian line and is crushed in war, leaving future generations with an example of history and fifty years more of Nazism, is it political cowardice to prefer the former case?" Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror* (Boston, 1969), p. 81. Partly as a result of these pressures, scholarly studies do not come into their own until the cold war period. According to Stephen Cohen: "Academic commentary on the subject began in earnest only after the Second World War, with the expansion of Soviet Studies." Cf. S.F. Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation* (New York, 1977), p. 6.

be seen as just a myth cooked up by cold war propagandists to slander Marxism.

Two different tendencies or "schools" of Stalinist historiography have emerged concerning this question. The oldest of these, initiated by Leon Trotsky, conceived of Stalinism as the "degeneration" of the workers' state, a "betrayal" of the revolution, and its Thermidorean halt.<sup>8</sup> Trotskyism's view of Stalinism thus stressed its *discontinuity* with Marxism and Leninism and, far from condemning the latter as the roots of the evil, it presented itself as the truest defender of the faith. In contrast, and as Stephen Cohen points out,<sup>9</sup> there was another, somewhat later interpretation which portrayed Stalinism as a "straightline" outgrowth "fulfillment" and "logical" completion of Marxism-Leninism. This accent on *continuity* expresses a deterministic idealism sharply at variance with the normal paradigm of academic historiography which is emphatically *anti-deterministic*. In this exceptionalism, academic analysts of Stalinism often portray Marxism as a polluting ideology, the magic seed from which Stalinism supposedly grew with inexorability.<sup>10</sup>

The reaction within academic historiography to this vulgar idealism, has in recent years fostered an alternative account which may be called the "social history" paradigm. This paradigm is anti-deterministic; focuses on political processes and structures; minimizes the effects of ideological theoretical commitments, yet stresses the effects of national tradition and culture; tends to have an empiricist character; and emphasizes psychological factors, especially Stalin's character distortions.<sup>11</sup> This account, however, fails to provide a systematic examination of the role of psychological factors in the historical process, is for the most part lacking a collective or social psychology, and fails to explore the social and structural origins of the character pathologies to which it often limits itself. This limited kind of psychopathology also was generally characteristic of Krushchev's analysis of the origins of Stalinism.

The social history paradigm is an articulate dissertation on the dubious relevance of theoretical foresight or political rationality, and a tacit subtextual accent on the forces conducive to social irrationality. It stresses the force of historical circumstances which it counterposes invidiously to ideological

8. See Leon Trotsky, *Stalinism and Bolshevism* (New York, 1937), and *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York, 1937).

9. Stephen Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," *op.cit.* Cohen's essay is also a brilliantly annotated selective bibliography.

10. It would obviously be in error to assume that everyone who adopts the continuity thesis does so to pillory the antecedents. Thus, under pressure after his 20th Congress speech, Krushchev is reported as remarking at a reception for Chou En-lai on January 17, 1957: "Not only do I fail to see a difference between Stalinism and communism, but I am also of the opinion that Stalin, who as a Communist struggled for the welfare of a certain class, namely the working class, was an exemplary Communist." Cited in Borys Levytsky, *The Stalinist Terror in the Thirties* (Stanford, 1974), p. 7.

11. In the psychological vein, Robert Tucker has spoken of "Stalin's compulsive psychological need, born of neurosis, to prove himself a revolutionary hero of Lenin-like proportions" (*op. cit.*, p. 104). In short, Stalin's "revolution from above" was to have been his October Revolution. Also, Medvedev has written: "I still think that the main motives for this terror were Stalin's inordinate vanity and lust for power." *Ibid.*, p. 220. Lewin has also stressed that Stalin "projected his personality over the nation because. . . this was an expression of his own psychic drives and needs." *Ibid.* p. 128.

foresight. As exhibited variously in the work of E.H. Carr, Stephen Cohen, Moishe Lewin and Alexander Rabinowitch, to mention some of the most gifted exponents, the social history paradigm stresses the spontaneity and open-endedness of the Bolshevik response to the historical conditions following the revolution.<sup>12</sup> In this paradigm the Stalinist social system is conceived as the avoidable outcome of unplanned, yet cumulative responses to the "chaos," "pandemonium," or "panic" of the post-revolutionary era. Often, these responses are seen as efforts to meet structural "needs" in the disrupted society—e.g., centralization is seen as a response to the need to facilitate exchange among disconnected parts of the economy—and thus has surprising convergence with Parsonian, Durkheimian, even Michelsian analyses. Bolshevik or Stalinist policies are viewed as the construction of a makeshift system of societal integration to satisfy the most elemental requisites of social order, rather than as the zealous pursuit of revolutionary purpose.

In contrast with this mechanical version of the social history paradigm, Tucker sees responses as having been selected by particularities of Bolshevik history, especially the War Communism years, which he believes left a readiness for a militant, authoritarian voluntarism; he also focuses on elements of Marxist or Leninist theory, or particular features of Russian tradition, especially residual cultural models of state formation and domination. What also needs to be stressed, however, is the influence, not of Marxist theory in general, but of the special reading of Marxism to which the Bolsheviks were prone, as one vital element mediating their reactions to "circumstances." In addition, I would not limit myself to the role of national traditions as a mediating apparatus shaping responses to circumstances, but would attend, perhaps more than Tucker, to structural factors, and the manner in which the actor's location in the social structure also shaped responses to events.

Trotsky's interpretation of Stalinism is also helpful, but only insofar as he generally highlights the role of the bureaucracy. He is much less persuasive when he deals with the question of whether or not the bureaucracy is a true social class (in the Marxist sense). Here Trotsky's Marxism fastens on the defining significance of "ownership" of the means of production, but fails to weigh the significant distinction between ownership and control. Thus he obfuscates rather than illuminates the actual power position of the bureaucracy by clinging to empty legalisms in which the Soviet Union is seen as a "workers' state," albeit "degenerated," since the bureaucracy did not really "own" the means of production.

12. Thus, Carr held that Stalin's aims were "dictated by the dynamic force inherent in the revolution." Cf. E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country, 1924-26*, Vol. 1 (London, 1959), p. 177. Lewin maintained that in "the hungry and anguished years of 1920-21... the elements of a solution were suggested by circumstances rather than theoretical anticipation." (in Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 113). Rabinowitch portrays the Bolshevik Party of the October Revolution as flexible and open to mass movements and sentiments, counterposing this view tacitly to Lenin's theory in *What Is to Be Done?* which had stressed the need for a small centralized group of "professional revolutionaries." Cf. Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The 1917 Revolution in Petrograd* (New York, 1976).

Generally, social and political analysis gains more from careful theoretically refined case studies of concrete social and political pathologies, including Stalinism, than from grand theories of emancipation whose historical function is the provision of *Weltanschauungen*. The quest for a grand theory of emancipation has thus far yielded only the most trivial banalities—e.g., the incompatibility of coercion and rationality—and it has commonly proceeded by an elaborate scholasticism, an interpretation of other texts producing endless commentaries.<sup>13</sup> Thus the following study will assume that social theory should focus on the development of empirically grounded case studies of critical historical episodes, rather than on encyclopedic textual reinterpretations, or on merely logical deduction of the supposed requisites of emancipation. Furthermore, these case studies should stay in close touch with guiding theories of social-political pathologies and emancipation, that are developed cumulatively in intimate association with those case studies.

### *Defining Stalinism*

**"But whatever form they have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other."  
Communist Manifesto**

An analysis of a concrete historical phenomenon such as Stalinism can proceed effectively only on the condition that it be treated *not* as a totally unique event but is, rather, deliberately related to certain types of events; in this way, openings are created between the unique event and (potentially illuminating) general theory. Every analysis of even the most idiosyncratic historical event is always a dialectic, open or occluded, between the concrete and the abstract, between historical particulars and more or less abstract theories. At first sight, Stalinism seems to consist of a series of events that have taken place in the USSR. But without specifying what we think Stalinism is, we cannot claim that it occurred only there, and still less *when* it began and when it ended—if indeed it did end. In short, we must begin by risking a conception of Stalinism and by specifying some of its general analytical dimensions. In an older idiom, we would ask: what is the "essence" of Stalinism? But this would imply that the essence of Stalinism is given to us by history rather than being *constructed* in some transaction between the analyst and the historical situation. Ultimately, it is shaped *both* by what happened in history and by the analyst's long-range interests and short-range theoretical commitments. The question, then, is what general attributes of Stalinism we choose to examine, assign special significance to, and attempt to understand. In this vein we propose a preliminary definition of Stalinism as a systematic regime of terror aimed at bringing about a property transfer, where private property (used for productive purposes) is supplanted by state property. In short, Stalinism is seen as a regime of terror<sup>14</sup> aiming at the collectivization of property, where the

13. What can grand theories of emancipation do? They have not and cannot provide useful guides to empirically grounded social analysis, any more than to political practice. And, of course, they cannot serve as substitutes for such studies, although this is how they often function today.

14. I thus concur fully with Isaac Deutscher who observed that "...the root difference

surrogate of the collective group to whom the property is transferred is the state. As such, Stalinism necessarily also meant a burgeoning bureaucracy, needed both to expropriate the old owners and to administer the newly expropriated property. As a systematic regime of terror, Stalinism has a contradictory relation to the "vanguard party" and to the state bureaucracy in that they are both its instruments as well as some of the central targets of its terror. Stalinism is thus further characterized by the existence of an ambivalent relation between party and bureaucracy, on the one side, and, the supreme leader of the regime who functions as a personal dictator crushing dissent against his regime.

Thus, to understand Stalinism entails an understanding of (1) *regimes of terror*<sup>15</sup> and the conditions under which they flourish or fade, i.e., a contribution to a generalized theory of terror; (2) the relation between the regime of terror and *the property transfer*; (3) why leadership of the regime of terror takes the form of a personal *dictatorship*; and (4) why there is the burgeoning of a *bureaucracy* which serves as both historical agent and historical scapegoat of the supreme leader. Stalinism was a mode of governance that relied on a systematic regime of terror in furtherance of a property transfer,<sup>16</sup> and our hermeneutic of Stalinism would require us to formulate certain general considerations on terror, property transfers, personal dictatorships, and state bureaucracies, in their mutual interrelations, in order to illuminate Stalinism as a unique historical happening. Obviously, however, this undertaking greatly exceeds the limits of any single paper and I will limit myself to certain aspects of Stalinism as a regime of terror in its connection with a property transfer.

#### *Stalinism as Internal Colonialism*

"...the clash that occurred was one between what were almost two nations or two civilizations, profoundly different in modes of production and modalities of organization, in *Weltanschauungen* and in religion (the one stubbornly religious, the other as stubbornly anti-religious)." *Moishe Lewin*

Between 1929, the year when the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture began, and 1939, a year after the last Moscow purge trial, about twenty million Soviet citizens were killed. They were shot, or died of famine, disease or exposure, directly resulting from the punitive actions of the Soviet government. The tragedy begins with the Soviet assumption of power in 1917 in a predomi-

between Stalinism and the traditional socialist outlook lay in their respective attitudes toward the role of force in the transformation of society." Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin, A Political Biography* (London, 1949), p. 343.

15. The term comes from E.V. Walters who contrasts it with "sieges of terror" against constituted authorities. See Walters' splendid *Terror and Resistance* (London, 1969V

16. Our own specification of Stalinism is convergent with, though significantly different from, Stephan Cohen, who defines Stalinism as *generalized "extremism"*: "Stalinism was not simply nationalism, bureaucratization, absence of democracy, censorship, police repression and the rest in an unprecedented sense... Instead, Stalinism was excess, extraordinary extremism, in each. It was not, for example, merely coercive peasant politics, but a virtual civil war against the peasantry; not merely police repression or even civil war-style terror, but a holocaust by terror

nantly peasant society. According to the Census of 1897, there were then in Russia some 2.5 million industrial workers, 1.25 million soldiers, 1 million bureaucrats, 17,000 students and 100 million peasants. These statistics exhibit the fundamental demographic and ecological conditions within which Stalinism first began to grow. They show that when the CPSU seized state power it could only have been the rule of a tiny isolated elite, a "substitute" proletariat, dedicated ideologically to a real but slim proletariat in a society overwhelmingly peasant. Tensions between the peasantry and the revolutionary state begin to heighten during the Civil War when the peasants became the mass basis, if not the elite troops, of the Red Army as they had been under the Czar: ". . . When the Civil War got under way, the Soviet regime rapidly lost most of the good-will it enjoyed among the peasant masses, because of the ravages of the war itself, the grip of the *Entente* blockade, and because of the inexorable necessities of food procurement; compulsory grain deliveries were born not with collectivization but with war communism. Trotsky expressed the truth with brutal honesty when he later said: 'We plundered all Russia to conquer the Whites.' The result was expectable. Henceforward, the Revolution fought for its existence in a countryside ever more denuded of sympathy for it... By the very end of the war, after strenuous efforts, the percentage of proletarian soldiers in it was only 15-18 percent. The rest were peasants, most conscripted... Desertions from the Red Army were massive... In the single year of 1919 alone, there were no less than 2,846,000 deserters."<sup>17</sup> While the Party sought to encourage class war in the countryside and to mobilize the rural poor and middle peasants against the kulaks, this policy failed and the "committees of the poor" were soon disbanded.<sup>18</sup>

However much the CPSU sought to mobilize the middle and poor peasantry and ally them with the proletariat, this "alliance" was plainly intended to be under the hegemony of the proletariat, to whom the CPSU gave its first

that victimized tens of millions of people for 25 years; not merely a Thermidorean revival of nationalist tradition, but an almost fascist-like chauvinism; not merely a leader cult, but deification of a despot... Excesses were the essence of historical Stalinism." In Tucker, *op.cit.*, p. 12. Yet, if Stalinism is excess, we also need to specify analytically, excess of *what*! Once this is done, by "factoring" out the various concrete excesses which Cohen mentions it is plain that the main factor is an excess of "terror," while an auxiliary analytic component is personal dictatorship. The first, main factor is incorporated in what we have called a systematic "regime of terror." But if we simply define Stalinism as this, as "excess" or as personal dictatorship, then it loses its historical specificity and can be found many places, including, as E.V. Walters indicates, the Zulu empire. The fundamental omission in Cohen's specification of Stalinism is his failure to associate this regime of terror and personal dictatorship with a *mass property transfer*. It is this conjunction that has to be explained, not terror and dictatorship in general.

17. "Introduction to Tukachevsky," *New Left Review*, May-June 1969, p. 80.

18. As Teodor Shanin remarks: "The attempts by the government to split the peasantry and establish a Bolshevik foothold among the poor failed...in spite of the socio-economic differentiation. . . Russian villages went on showing remarkable political cohesiveness and unity of action...for the whole period 1905-30.. .and although the Russian peasants had almost uniformly opposed the 'Whites' in 1918-19.. .by the end of 1920 they were in active and passive revolt." See Teodor Shanin, "Socio-Economic Mobility and the Rural History of Russia 1905-30," pp. 10, 6-7, 8, an unpublished manuscript that is an amended version of his article in *Soviet Studies*, 23:2 (1971). For the full discussion and evidence, see T. Shanin, *The Awkward Class* (London, 1972).



commitment. In turn, the proletariat was to be "led" by "its" vanguard, the CPSU itself.<sup>19</sup> Stalin, of course, took pains to argue that "in *every one* of these cases where Lenin speaks of the 'dictatorship of the Party' *in relation to the working class*, he means not dictatorship in the actual sense of the term ('power based on violence') but the leadership of the Party."<sup>20</sup> But while the thrust of Lenin's position had been to enlarge the peasantry's importance in the theory and practice of Bolshevism, Stalin's emphasis was in the opposite direction.

Not regarding the peasantry as a reliable political ally, but scarcely having a proletariat of its own to "lead" (especially after its decimation and exhaustion following the Civil War), the CPSU was radically isolated. At first largely dominated by highly educated revolutionary intellectuals of predominantly urban origins, the party leaders barricaded themselves in the towns and cities against the rising resistance of the vast rural majority. The fundamental structure, then, was not simply one of a "differentiation" between town and country, but of a sharp and growing cleavage between them. What had been brought into being was an urban-centered power elite that had set out to dominate a largely rural society to which they related as an alien colonial power; it was an internal colonialism mobilizing its state power against colonial tributaries in rural territories.

Here, internal colonialism refers to the use of the state power by one section of society (the Control Center) to impose unfavorable rates of exchange on another part of the same society (e.g., the Subordinate Remotes), each being ecologically differentiated from the other. The control center governs by using the state to impose unequal exchange through decisions governing capital allocations, investments, prices and price controls, access by visitors, taxes, tax exemptions and deductions, credit, loans, labor drafts, military conscription, rates of interest, wages, tariffs, customs duties, access to education, passports and visas, and electoral representation. Where these routine mechanisms fail, the control center uses force and violence against the remote subordinates.

The two regions may share much the same culture and language, but they have different versions of it, the Center defining its own culture and dialect as "high" and the periphery's as "low." In terms of Robert Redfield's distinction, the Center defines its own culture as part of the "great Tradition" while deprecating the periphery's as the "Little Tradition." Peasants in Russia were often seen by the Center as unenlightened, backward, suspicious of outsiders

19. As Stalin remarks in his *Problems of Leninism*, "the fundamental question of Leninism, its starting point, its foundation, is the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat...Of course, the peasant question, as the question dealing with the ally of the proletariat, is of the greatest significance to the proletariat, and forms a component part of the basic problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat.. . [but] if Leninism were not faced with the practical problem of the conquest of power by the proletariat, then the question of an alliance with the peasantry would not arise..." Joseph Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (San Francisco, 1934), pp. 11-12.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 56. Stalin's reassurances, of course, were worthless. What it came down to was precisely what Stalin had denied, i.e., the dictatorship of the Party over the working class and peasantry alike, and in the very sense he had also denied, i.e., as power over them based on force and violence. Neither Leninism nor Stalinism regarded the peasantry as a reliable political ally; Stalin, for example, remarked that "it is true of course that the peasantry, by its very position, is not socialistic."

and of constituted authority, unruly, undisciplined, and anarchistic. This was a contempt which the Bolsheviks shared and expressed by characterizing peasants as petty-bourgeois, individualistic, narrow, venal, property obsessed, much as Marx himself had earlier condemned "rural idiocy." The Russian peasantry under Czarism were essentially living in a political ghetto,<sup>21</sup> the remote object of politics and public policy rather than its master. In the system of internal colonialism that continued under the Soviet State, as Preobrazhensky and Bukharin observed in *The ABC of Communism*, "the electoral arrangements of the Congress of Soviets are of such a nature, that, proportionately to their numbers, the urban workers have more delegates than the peasants...These constitutionally specified privileges merely give expression to what actually exists, namely that the solidly organized urban proletariat leads the disorganized rural masses."<sup>22</sup>

To the present day, access to plumbing, paved roads, consumer goods, and education vary directly with closeness to a city. Pensions and labor rates are less in the countryside than in the cities. Indeed, it was only in 1975 that the Soviet Government allowed, in principle at any rate, peasants to be given the same passports required for internal movement and available to others. What Moishe Lewin has so aptly called "this peculiar socialism without the peasant, a deeply anti-muzhik system transforming the whole peasantry into a legally and factually discriminated class, the lowest in the social ladder," is precisely what we have termed, internal colonialism.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Great and Little Traditions*

The new Soviet State was at first controlled by an urban-based elite, preponderantly Russian and in part Jewish, whose advanced education, cosmopolitan travel and culture, and town origins were basically alien to the

21. Peasant religion differed from that of the city-dwellers, devolving around the homestead cult to which the priest had to come, commonly dissented from state sanctioned orthodoxy, and was generally resistant to hierarchy and bureaucracy. Cf. Lewin in Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. 120ff. "The rural milieu in Russia during the course of Russian history, and still so during the NEP, had all the traits of a distinct social system, set quite apart from the rest of society..."

22. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism* (London, 1922), p. 186. This unequal electoral arrangement was eliminated in the "Stalin Constitution" of 1936 at the height of the purges.

23. The analytic value of the notion of internal colonialism is that it is a step toward bridging the radical distinction commonly perceived between so-called international relations and internal social relationships, relations between states and those between classes. This enables what has been learned in one domain to be applied hypothetically to the other. One of the most interesting discussions of this is to be found in Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism, The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley, 1975). See especially his discussion on pp. 8ff., where Hechter notes the use of cognate concepts in Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and Gramsci's "The Southern Question." See also Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, *Sociologia de la Explotacion* (Mexico City, 1969), especially "El Colonialismo Interno," pp. 221-250. The theory of internal colonialism as outlined here is also convergent with the theory of unequal exchange. The basic contributions to this within the idiom of Marxist political economy have been made by Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange, A Study of the Imperialism of Trade* (London, 1972), and Samir Amin, *Unequal Exchange, An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism* (London, 1976). My own interest in the problem of unequal exchange is rooted in my work on reciprocity. See my "The Norm of Reciprocity," *American Sociological Review*, April 1960, republished in *For Sociology* (Harmondsworth, 1975).

vast rural majority united in resistance to them, but whom they remained determined to rule. Thus, the transition from Leninism to Stalinism may be conceived, partly as a readjustment of the Soviet elite, such that its new composition was no longer so different from the Soviet people. In comparison to Lenin's Old Bolsheviks, the Stalinist Elite had relatively less education, were less well traveled, less cosmopolitan, less likely to come from the urban and national centers, and were more likely to be provincials rooted in the countryside, were less Russian, certainly less Jewish, and more anti-Semitic.<sup>24</sup>

The implications of this shift in the background of the Soviet elite, in the transition from Leninism to Stalinism, are ironical: the core cadres of "totalitarian" Stalinism more faithfully reflect the character of the Soviet population than did those of "democratic" Leninism.

There are at least two theoretical traditions within which this shift can be analyzed. One is an old small group tradition of leadership research, particularly its effort to relate the "traits" of leaders to those of the group members. One of the recurrent findings was that those who became or remained leaders were more likely, than those who did not, to resemble the average members of the group. Apparently, even socially prized qualities such as intelligence may impair a person's ability to assume or retain leadership if they diverge too far from the group's norm. It is not, in brief, the "smartest" person who becomes the "class" leader or who remains such.

Divergences between the characteristics of leaders and those of their group may impair the ability of leaders to take the role of followers (even if only for instrumental purposes), as well as leaders' ability to serve as objects of identification for the membership. Deviant characteristics may thus undermine the leaders' authority and effectiveness. From this standpoint, Stalinism may be seen as a mechanism of adjustment, reducing the distance between the Bolshevik leaders and the Soviet masses and thus facilitating the leaders' ability to structure group action. This may be relevant to an understanding of the situation which developed under Stalinism. After all, the brutal measures associated with Stalinism were not simply executed by Stalin, Molotov, or a few other supreme leaders; they necessarily required the willing cooperation of a significant section of the Soviet population (which may explain why Russians have not confronted their Stalinist past.) Furthermore, it

24. This in short was the changing demography at the top leadership level that was emerging from perhaps 1930 onward, particularly among those whom W.E. Mosse calls the "new Bolsheviks." "The 'New Bolsheviks' are sharply differentiated from other groups. Almost three-quarters are from peasant stock. Half originate either from the borderlands or from outlying provinces of the empire... Over a third are of non-Russian extraction. (The Jews, however, are reduced to one, Karl Radek.) Socially, members of the group are evenly divided between those of middle and lower class extraction. This background is reflected also in their education... Over 40 percent have an elementary education only. . . The 'New Bolsheviks' represent a distinct social stratum, the petty bourgeoisie of the outlying parts of the empire, men of peasant stock. The intelligentsia element, prominent although never predominant in the remaining groups, is virtually absent (except for Radek and Rakovsky)." W.E. Mosse, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 1968, pp. 146-148. For a brief discussion of the social origins of early revolutionary leaders in the USSR, China and Cambodia, see my "Prologue to a Theory of Revolutionary Intellectuals," *Telos* 26 (Winter 1975-76), esp. pp. 4-8.

helps explain how Stalinism won popular support, and that it was not kept in power just by terror; this support was real and when Stalin died in 1953, millions of Russians were genuinely grieved, and to this day there are various indications of an abiding nostalgia for Stalin. Finally, Stalin's personal popularity could be turned against the CPSU itself, and helps explain the development of his personal dictatorship.

The second useful theoretical standpoint was formulated by Redfield who distinguished between so-called written, "great traditions" borne by urban elites, and so-called "little traditions" borne orally by folk cultures.<sup>25</sup> Originally, Marxism was a typical product of a "great tradition" generated and transmitted by literate, urban, and highly educated elites. It was a product of the most modern European educational and publishing systems, of European literacy, and of a burgeoning urbanism. Like every great tradition, Marxism faced the problem of translation and accommodation when carried into the oral culture of the hinterlands (whether of urban slum and factory culture or of the rural backcountry), and when it sought to win acceptance from workers and peasants. Any "great tradition" is subject to immense pressures to transform itself, if the central elite bearing it wishes it to be understood and accepted by those at the peripheries,<sup>26</sup> but this adjustment is often viewed by the orthodox at the Center as a profanation.

The "betrayal" of the Soviet Revolution, denounced by Trotsky, was precisely the declaration of such a profanation. Even earlier, Lenin himself had warned against such dangers, observing in his *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), that the working class did not spontaneously generate a socialist consciousness but only a trade union "economism" from which socialist theory had to be protected. Essentially the authoritarian hierarchy of the Bolshevik Party, with its control firmly lodged in the hands of a theoretically trained leadership

25. Robert Redfield, *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago, 1960). Redfield's use of this distinction embodies an unreflective elitism; my own, however, I hope, entails irony.

26. Obviously, however, this is no new problem that Marxism alone encountered, nor is it peculiar to the diffusion of political culture. It is an old problem that the church fathers and priestly functionaries encountered early as they sought to win followers among adherents of "pagan" religions. In short, a great tradition must inevitably bend to the little tradition in the very process of imposing itself. It can never call for "unconditional surrender." But elites bearing the great tradition commonly regard such a transformation as a profanation and "distortion" of the great tradition. For a creative application and important extension of Redfield, see James C. Scott, "Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition, I," *Theory and Society*, 4:1 (1977), and Part II, 4:2 (1977). Since my concern here is with Stalinism in the USSR, I necessarily focus on the gulf between the majority of Soviet citizens, who were peasants, and the "Old Bolsheviks." Yet the distance between the latter and industrial workers was also immense and, indeed, it was *that* difference which affected the organization of the Bolshevik Party, as I suggest below. I am grateful to Paul Breines for reminding me of the relevant discussion of "popularization," in the context of an advanced industrial society, by Gunther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany* (Totowa, N.J., 1963). Obviously, however, if the gap between industrial workers and Marxists is substantial, and exerts unremitting pressure for adaptive change in Marxism, how much greater must be the pressure exerted on Marxism by a peasantry who came into contact with it. "Maoism" was obviously an adaptation to that great tension between the culture of the peasantry and urbane Marxism. Redfield's theory is helpful here because it provides a systematic basis for seeing and conceptualizing that gap between Marxism and a peasantry.

expressed the profound fear that such a "profanation" was a continual danger. Lenin's struggle to protect "revolutionary theory" by organizing an elite of "professional revolutionaries" expressly premised that "the spread of Marxism was accompanied by a certain deterioration of theoretical standards,"<sup>27</sup> which is to say, a doctrinal degradation. The history of the diffusion of Marxism in Russia may be read as one in which Plekhanov, Lenin, and Stalin were successive decompression chambers, each providing the step-by-step accommodation of Marxism to Russian culture, to the mass oral tradition, and to the little traditions of the "provincial" cultures at the peripheries.<sup>28</sup> Stalin's policy of "Socialism in one country" was in part an effort to compensate for the revolution's failure to link up with supporting revolutions in advanced industrial societies in Central Europe, and to overcome the Bolshevik's radical isolation from the Soviet people, by retreating to the populism of the little traditions, mobilizing them on behalf of the new state. Like all great traditions encountering a vigorous little tradition, however, it paid a substantial price for such accommodation as it achieved.

It would be oversimplifying greatly, however, to view Stalinism only as the accommodation of a great tradition to the little, or, as Nicholas Vakar does, as the peasantization of Bolshevism.<sup>29</sup> Bolshevik culture also competed with other *great* traditions that were urban, national and religious. The Orthodox Church and Great Russian nationalism were not just little traditions. It would, however, be no less oversimplified to characterize Stalinism as the Russification of Bolshevism. Even in 1939 the Politburo included two Georgians (Stalin and Beria), an Armenian (Mikoyan) and a Jew (Kaganovich). Moreover, the generally dwindling presence of Russians at the top levels surely cannot be interpreted as evidence of Russification. The Russian Stalinists were, in addition, no more conventional Russians than Karl Marx was a conventional Jew. The political culture these Russians bore was not only against Ukrainian nationalism but, at one level, was also generally anti-nationalist and even anti-Russian. Which is not to say that at the level of everyday life they did not also bear certain traditional Russian prejudices, not the least being anti-Semitism. (It is at this level that the Bolsheviks were sometimes perceived as the "Russian" faction and thus differentiated from the Mensheviks, who were often seen as the "Jewish" faction.)

In viewing the Russian revolution as bringing the Bolsheviks into interaction

27. V.I. Lenin *What Is to Be Done?* (New York, 1929), p. 27.

28. Plekhanov had tacitly situated his adaptation of Marxism in cosmopolitan assumptions and urban settings. Although Lenin had instrumentally incorporated the peasantry into Bolshevik strategy, the Party's actual penetration of the hinterland remained very limited and was further limited by the adoption of the New Economic Policy (NEP). Stalinism accomplished that penetration in depth. It was Stalinism that committed itself to establishing Bolshevik rule in the countryside at the level of the everyday life, which accommodated to its anti-cosmopolitan provincialism, and whose energies it co-opted to overcome the isolation of the Soviet Revolution.

29. Cf. N. Vakar, *The Taproot of Soviet Society* (New York, 1961). Again, compare Roy Medvedev's critique of Agursky's argument, which holds that Stalinism was a reaction of a vast Slavonic country to the internationalist, cosmopolitan experiments of the 1920s and 1930s, which ignored the national factor. In Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. 220ff. See M.A. Agursky, "Birth of Byelorussia," *Times Literary Supplement*, June 30, 1972.

with Old Russian culture at the village level, it must also not be forgotten that their village culture was quite distinct from the Great Russian culture characteristic of the cities if, for no other reason, because of the villages' anti-bureaucratic and anti-hierarchic tendencies. Stalinism, then, was not just the Russification of Soviet life; for there was a level at which the Russian people's own culture and national identity was as alien to Bolshevik tradition as was the Ukrainian nationalism they condemned as a "petty bourgeois deviation."<sup>30</sup>

*From Collectivization to the Purges*

As early as 1847 Friedrich Engels argued that the Communist Revolution "will take a longer or shorter time to develop, according to whether industrial life has attained a high degree of evolution, has amassed great wealth, and has a considerable quantity of the forces of production at its disposal." In a letter of 1874, Engels had excluded the possibility of a direct transition to socialism in Russia, but Marx later issued an easement against Engels' determinism. Still, this liberalization (in Marx's letter to Vera Zasulich of 1881) made it emphatically clear that, even if Russia could then move toward Socialism, this could happen only on the condition that her revolution coincide with one in the West from which it could secure material assistance. Advanced industrialization, or access to it, remained decisive for Marx's socialism. However, the revolutionary momentum in post-World War I Europe soon subsided with the defeat of uprisings in Germany and Hungary, thus leaving the revolution in Russia isolated and with no clear precedents to go by except a scientific Marxism positing an advanced industrialization as indispensable for socialism.

After the devastation wrought by World War I, the October Revolution and the ensuing Civil War, the Soviet economy was wasted and disrupted, while its populace, peasantry and working class alike, were exhausted. It was in this context that the CPSU declared the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921, which allowed private ownership to develop the economy. Stephen Cohen and Charles Bettelheim have both shown the untenability of the conventional view of NEP—i.e., as a tactical concession or temporary retreat to recharge the economy. It may be that Lenin first viewed NEP as a breathing space,<sup>31</sup> but he soon changed direction and came to look upon NEP as a bridge into socialism that, rather than being scrapped at the first sign of improvement, would have to be developed. Lenin's sharp about-face toward an outright gradualism congenial to cooperatives and communes, which he now saw as the building blocks of socialism, was a tribute to his political acumen and flexibility. But it also came at a time when, due to his illness, his energies and political influence

30. Tucker grasps the resultant complexity well when he observes that Stalinism entailed an amalgamation of cultures that "paradoxically involved at once the full-scale Sovietization of Russian society and the Russification of Soviet culture," so that in the end the Russian nation and its nationalism is left no more intact than that of other nationalities in the USSR. Cf. Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-102.

31. Cf. Cohen: "Lenin frankly presented the new economic policies to his followers as a retreat born of the failure of war communism." Steven F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York, 1973), p. 132, and especially Chapter 4, "Rethinking Bolshevism." See also Charles Bettelheim, *Les Luttes de Classes en URSS: Deuxième Période, 1923 1930* (Paris, 1977).

were waning within the Bolshevik Party. Moreover, the fact remains that many Bolsheviks continued to view NEP as a temporary expedient. There were many old Bolsheviks, and not simply inexperienced new recruits who had had their political paradigms shaped by the Civil War with its voluntaristic "storming ahead" and its authoritarian intervention.<sup>32</sup> The destiny of NEP, then, was less to be shaped by the new wisdom of Lenin than the older political norms abiding in the Party that he had forged. In the end, the fate of NEP would depend on what that institution had become by reason of its theory, its political culture, and its historical situation.

In about three years, much of the destruction of the economy had been repaired under NEP so that plans could be debated as to how further to develop it along socialist lines. At this point, the Party was subject to pressure by the Left to begin a rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union and/or to encourage revolutionary movements in Western Europe. For industrialization, however, capital was needed. Since foreign credits had been cut off after the Bolshevik government repudiated the Czarist debt in 1918, capital accumulation had to come from native resources. Ideally, the solution to this problem was to reduce peasant effective demand, thereby easing the burden on the crippled industrial sector, while also controlling any inflationary tendencies and generating the capital, or the surplus available for capitalization, needed for Soviet industrialization. The one tactic that could accomplish these objectives was to turn the terms of trade against the peasants, thus exploiting them for what Preobrazhensky called "primitive socialist accumulation."<sup>33</sup> But it also raised the specter of intensified peasant resistance (already frighteningly foreshadowed by the 1920-1921 Tambov Rebellion)<sup>34</sup> which might starve the urban centers and constrict the very agricultural surplus needed to capitalize

32. Cf. Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. 91ff. Tucker's thesis is that Stalin and many of his generation had been shaped by their experience in the Civil War, which left them with a paradigm of political method that they tabled only temporarily during the NEP. The heritage of the Civil War, Tucker argues, "was martial zeal, revolutionary voluntarism, and *élan*, readiness to resort to coercion, rule by administrative fiat, centralized administration, summary justice, and no small dose of communist arrogance...that Lenin later inveighed against" (p. 92).

33. The main account of "primitive socialist accumulation" was outlined in 1924-25 by E. Preobrazhensky in his *The New Economics* (London, 1965). While there is surely an analogy between Preobrazhensky's "primitive socialist accumulation" (which he distinguishes from routine socialist accumulation) and Marx's "primitive capitalist accumulation," there was in principle no identity between them, not only in that the latter furthered capitalism while the former aided socialism, but because Preobrazhensky expressly renounced certain methods of primitive capitalist accumulation (e.g., looting and plunder) as forbidden by socialist principle. This accumulation was to be accomplished through Party control of the State apparatus, which enabled it to use various administrative devices to turn the terms of trade against the peasantry. In effect, Preobrazhensky's was a deliberate policy of internal colonialism in which "exploitation" of the peasantry was expressly foreseen. While rejecting looting, in principle, Preobrazhensky held that "the idea that a socialist economy might be developed without tapping the resources of the petty bourgeois and, above all, of the peasantry can only be described as a reactionary petty bourgeois daydream." Cited in Moishe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* (London, 1968), p. 150. Obviously, however, once Soviet agriculture had been collectivized, what was involved was not the exploitation of pre-socialist forms but of a socialist system and it cannot, then, be characterized as "primitive socialist accumulation," in Preobrazhensky's sense. It is more accurately described as an internal colonialism.

34. Cf. Oliver H. Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism* (New York, 1958).

industrialization.

Believing that intensive Soviet agriculture would produce more effectively than the old, and thus yield a bigger surplus, Preobrazhensky saw the latter as being "tapped" rather than plundered by the state. Instead of entailing a prior collectivization, he foresaw the long continuation of private farms and, like other Bolsheviks, presumably envisioned a voluntary socialization of agriculture. Yet, the keystone of his agricultural policy was the internal colonialization of the peasantry through a state-managed, systematic exploitation that was to supply a major source of capital needed to launch Soviet industrialization. Consequently, he wholeheartedly supported Stalin's turn to forced collectivization as consistent with his own agricultural policy.

Trotsky's policies also aimed at a rapid industrialization, since he considered it the basis of socialism as well as indispensable for the mechanization of agriculture needed to extend the area sown, increase the grain surplus marketable abroad, and subsidize industrialization.<sup>35</sup> The initial launching of Soviet agriculture, however, was to be on the basis of privately owned farms: i.e., capitalist agriculture. Trotsky rejected an exploitation of the peasantry and, like Stalin, he initially supported a policy of gradualistic collectivization aided by state investments in agriculture.<sup>36</sup> In Trotsky's view, collectivization was to be preceded by industrialization which, in turn, was to be based on selling the peasant's grain abroad for gold. This assumed, of course, that the grain could be collected and made available to the government. It assumed, too, that the pace of the industrialization would therefore be adjusted to the size of the agricultural surplus that could be extracted. But how, then, could the rapid industrialization sought in certain of Trotsky's policies proceed without *intensive* exploitation of the peasantry? The rural policy was, formally, one of measured prudence for maintaining the alliance of town and country; but the logic of his position was the logic of primitive "Socialist" accumulation. Furthermore, the continued reliance on capitalist agriculture, under such conditions, would seem to be a danger to the Soviet power.<sup>37</sup>

35. E.H. Carr has noted that although Preobrazhensky's strategy of industrialization by the exploitation of the peasantry was not official policy until 1928, when Stalin spoke of exacting "tribute" from the peasantry, "it was not seriously refuted." "Revolution from Above," *New Left Review*, November-December 1967, p. 20. Trotsky's early policies toward agriculture seem to have undergone a change. In 1923, he accepted agricultural capitalism and even kulak "enrichment." In 1926, in his *Towards Socialism or Capitalism*, he expressed confidence that this would not threaten the Bolshevik power. In 1929, however, his *Bulletin of the Opposition* warns of the counterrevolutionary dangers from capitalist farming. Cited in E.H. Carr, *ibid.* See also R.B. Day, *Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation* (Cambridge, 1973).

36. Like Preobrazhensky, Trotsky never doubted that building socialism required "tapping" the peasantry's resources. "The peasant's grain is exchanged for foreign gold," he said. "The gold in turn is transformed into machinery...for city and countryside... The technical and socialist progress of agriculture cannot be separated from an increasing predominance of industry in the total economy of the nation." Cf. "Toward Capitalism or Socialism?" (1925) in L. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition 1923-2* (New York, 1975), p. 338. In short, the requirements of industry took precedence; collectivization for him was contingent on industrialization: "the industrialization and consequently the collectivization of agriculture will advance parallel with the growth of our exports." *Ibid.*, p. 359.

37. Yet Trotsky at first professed that he thought not, although later changing his position.



Modern appraisals of Soviet collectivization contain an implicit contradiction. They stress that Bolshevik rural policy called for a gradual, voluntary collectivization of farming, thereby implying that their policy and theory must be taken into account. Yet, in characterizing the policy of forced collectivization primarily as a panicky response to threatening circumstances, they also imply the irrelevance of rational theory and policy. An argument can be made that the Party's repeated disclaimers concerning forced collectivization were always uttered with an eye to their possible political effects and were always somewhat shallow political pieties. Class warfare, like war between states, is frequently launched by those who have all along averred that they only wanted peace.

Bukharin's and Preobrazhensky's *The ABC of Communism* can, for example be interpreted as a typical Bolshevik pronouncement on the desirability of gradual, voluntary "socialization" of agriculture. There is the standard argument that the Soviet state "must be careful to avoid alienating the middle peasants by ill considered and premature measures and must make no attempt to coerce *them* into forming communes and artels." Yet, it is immediately intimated that this was then simply a stratagem required by the exigencies of the Civil War: "At the present juncture the principal task of Communism in Russia is to bring it to pass that the workers upon their own initiative, and the peasants upon their own initiative, shall destroy the counter-revolution. When that has been achieved, there will no longer be an insuperable obstacle in the way of the socialization of agriculture."<sup>38</sup> It may be argued, of course, that this simply refers to a voluntary socialization of agriculture and need not imply that, once the Civil War ended, *forced* collectivization might begin. Nonetheless, the sentence immediately before is plainly a disclaimer of *forced* collectivization and not of socialized agriculture in general, so that if the Civil War's ending would allow a change, it would be in the policy opposing forced collectivization.

It was basic to Bolshevik rural policy to divide the peasantry into three groups, the Kulaks or richer minority of peasants, the middle majority of peasants, and the rural poor. It was expected that the Party had the task of organizing and unifying the poor peasants, lead them into struggle against the Kulaks in alliance with the middle majority peasants, ultimately pointing toward a "dictatorship of the poor peasants in rural life ... the rule of the vanguard of the rural workers, and the rule of that minority which is two centuries ahead of the majority."<sup>39</sup> In effect, the rural poor were to play much the same role in the countryside as the proletariat was expected to play in the cities. This was the fundamental conception of Bolshevik rural policy. It was a total failure. The peasant community remained largely solidary against the outside and the city, as it had been for centuries

The crucial political task in the countryside for Preobrazhensky and Bukharin was to isolate the Kulaks and unify the rural poor and the middle

38. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, *op.cit.*

39. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

peasants who "form the great majority of the Russian peasants." Without this alliance the CPSU had no leverage in the countryside. If the poor peasants were their hope, the Kulaks were their irreconcilable foes: "As long as this class of rich peasants continues to exist, its members will inevitably prove to be irreconcilable enemies of the proletarian State." There is no reason to believe that the cadres of the CPSU ever wavered in this judgement. Under the pressures of the Civil War they tabled it but did not forget it. Having judged the Kulaks irreconcilable class enemies, and "agents of international capitalism," Preobrazhensky and Bukharin warned them that they "can expect nothing from the Soviet Power but a pitiless struggle against its counter-revolutionary activities."<sup>40</sup> But this struggle premised the alliance between the middle and poor peasantry "under the leadership of the proletariat, and only through the frank acceptance of this leadership." But the dilemma was this: "the petty bourgeois mentality of the middle peasants inclines them to an alliance with the rich peasantry" rather than with the poor against the rich—and all the more so as they were forced to give grain to the town without receiving industrial goods in exchange .

Party policy calling for gradual and voluntary collectivization was thus *never* meant for the Kulaks, but, at best for the middle and poor peasants. It was from the beginning understood that the rich peasants could be coerced, forcibly expropriated and even forcibly collectivized. (Indeed, Stalin's forced collectivization, too, was in principle directed only against the "Kulaks.") If Bolshevik policy allowed this to be done to the kulaks, and if the middle majority of peasants were defined as having a petty-bourgeois mentality, and came under the hegemony of these "agents of international capitalism," then would not the same policy of forcible collectivization and "pitiless struggle" be applicable to middle peasants as well? And all the more so as poor peasants were seen as coming under the hegemony of the middle peasantry. Still worse, if the experience of a solidary peasant resistance and grain strike confirmed these theoretical nightmares, then was not Stalin's policy of the forced collectivization a product, at least in part, of Bolshevik rural policy? Was it not more than a "panic" in the face of crisis? Did it not have a certain grounding in Bolshevik theory?

With the ebb of revolution in Central Europe, Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution" seemed increasingly irrelevant as a guide to Soviet industrialization, relying on help from the working class in more advanced countries who had by now accommodated to their own societies. If the perspective of the permanent revolution implied, as Trotsky held, that "only the victory of the proletariat in the West could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration and assure it the possibility of rounding out socialism,"<sup>41</sup> the Russian achievement might seem diminished and Soviet survival would now appear to be caught between a passive dependence on others or on an active revolutionary expansionism. The logic of the argument is as follows: not

40. *ibid.*, p. 317.

41. Irving Howe, ed., *The Basic Writings of Trotsky* (New York, 1976), p. 140.

expecting socialism to survive in international isolation, especially a "socialism" that had seized power in backward Russia, a successful revolution in only one or a few countries would have to rely on aid from others; but it could not be expected passively to wait for these other revolutions to succeed in their own good time, especially as the forces of international capitalism would surely attempt to put them down. Therefore, a victorious proletariat in one country would have to take vigorous military initiatives in aid of neighboring proletariats. In short, permanent revolution evolves into "revolution from without."<sup>42</sup> But as these other revolutions were now blocked, the danger of a regression to Oblomovism, i.e., old Russian dreamy passivity, seemed intensified by policies stemming from the theory of permanent revolution. "Socialism in one country," a policy first formulated by Bukharin and then co-opted by Stalin,<sup>43</sup> had its appeal because it seemed to reject passivity within the framework of a seeming realism. With a driving voluntarism, he argued that outcomes depended decisively on what was done by the Party and Soviet people. Socialism in one country thus reasserted the potency and initiative of the party membership. The political dimension of this rejection of passivity hinged on the importance attributed to the alliance with the peasantry. The Stalinists accused Trotsky of relying more on foreign help, from the successful revolutions elsewhere, and less on maintaining the alliance with the peasantry. In the end, which came with Trotsky's expulsion in 1927, the exhausted Party masses seeking an end to "upheavals" voted overwhelmingly against Trotsky's "permanent revolution" and for Stalin and Bukharin's "socialism in one country."

The central issue in the debate between the two policies was how much the Soviet state should rely on international help, and how much on internal resources that it could control itself. The question was whether the Soviet Union could by itself reconstruct its economy and protect itself against the foreign restoration of capitalism, or whether it needed to rely also on substantial help from successful revolutions elsewhere, thus needed to support them, and risk being embroiled in foreign conflicts.<sup>44</sup> Thus, socialism in one

42. In 1921 Trotsky reiterated this, insisting that "in principle, the Soviet Government would always be for an offensive revolutionary war under conditions when such a war could lead to the liberation of the toiling classes in other countries." Cited in "Introduction to Tukachevsky," *op.cit.*, p. 82. In a similar vein, Tukachevsky had also argued for revolution from without, carried in Napoleonic fashion by the Red Army to its class brothers. He painstakingly reiterated that "revolution from within and revolution from without are of absolutely equal value," warning, however, that if the class instinct of a proletariat had been dulled by "petty-bourgeois nationalism" they were susceptible to the bourgeoisie's plea for chauvinistic self-defense. In other words: to defend their country. Tukachevsky thus adopted a very aggressive posture, accenting a military extension of the revolution. In this, he was a Clausewitzian, holding that revolutionary war was an extension of revolutionary politics by other means. Revolutionary war was to be pursued "even if the neighboring working class is not always prepared to receive a socialist invasion from without." *Ibid.*, p. 96, italics added. Tukachevsky conceived of the leaders of the Communist International as the general staff of the world revolution, who, along with their political duties, would "direct the world revolutionary movement, of which socialist war was a part." *Ibid.*, p. 97.

43. See Stephen Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, *op.cit.*, pp. 147-148, 186-188. Cf. E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country, 1924-1926*. vol. 2 (Middlesex, 1970), p. 52,

44. Cf. Naomi Allen's introduction to Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition*,

country represented an isolationist turn, aiming to reduce provocation for an external invasion of the USSR. It was a turn that was, simultaneously, away from internationalism and toward greater national self-reliance. Socialism in one country was a resolute turning away from any expectation that help might yet come from outside at any moment; it was the renunciation of miracles, chiasm and magic so often associated with the commitment to methodical work. Stalin used Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as the whipping boy to cut the last lingering expectation that help might come from abroad and to signal that, from then on, the new state had to rely exclusively on its own labors. It was domestic labor rather than international politics that was to save the state. Socialism in one country, then, meant a kind of Protestantized depoliticization.

No leading Bolshevik, including Stalin, seems to have thought that a mature, "rounded" socialism could be built by or within one country alone. The fundamental issue was the power and security of the Soviet state, not the final victory of socialism. What divided them, then, was not the conditions thought necessary for human emancipation but the requisites of Soviet power, then and there. Trotsky did not believe that the Soviet state could be secure against capitalist restoration unless the Soviet revolution spread to industrialized Europe.<sup>45</sup> The Stalinists, however, thought they could hold off or prevent foreign intervention with the resources at their disposal. They wanted to launch the construction of such socialism as they could then begin, under the umbrella of the Soviet power. Stalinism and socialism in one country, then, came down to the priority of defending the USSR, which Trotsky's "foreign entanglement" seemed to threaten. For Stalinism, state power was decisive. In time it became an end in itself and lost its role as a *means* to socialist emancipation. The emancipatory goals of socialism receded into the vague

*1923-1925, op.cit.*, p. 42: "Stalin's theory of socialism in one country, which was first promulgated in December 10, 1924, was an attempt to free Soviet foreign policy from the program of international proletarian revolution. It asserted that the alliance of workers and peasants was, in and of itself, a sufficient guarantee against the danger of capitalist restoration within the borders of the USSR. This was an instinctive turning away from foreign revolutionary entanglements which had proved disappointing... It was only after Lenin's death that any open challenge to internationalism could be made. Stalin launched it in 1924, under the guise of an attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution." But it could, of course, be argued that ever since Brest-Litovsk, that policy had been on the wane in the Soviet Union, being slowly and uneasily interred by Lenin and Trotsky themselves, no less than Stalin. For a documentation of such an argument about the continual erosion of internationalism, see George Spiro, *Marxism and the Bolshevik State* (New York, 1951).

45. There is no doubt that Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution implies a policy of lending support to revolutions elsewhere. As Trotsky remarked, permanent revolution means "that the revolution does not come to an end after this or that political conquest... we continually and constantly advance it... This applies to the conquests of the revolution inside of a country as well as to its extension over the international arena." In *The Challenge of the Left Opposition, op.cit.*, p. 102; from "The New Course," December, 1923. Italics added. In 1923, Trotsky reaffirmed this practical import of permanent revolution by calling for support for the German revolution. But at the same time, there is little reason to believe—as Stalin insisted—that such a policy was anathema to classical Leninism. "Like Trotsky and like all other leading Bolsheviks, Lenin had said again and again that the *final* victory of socialism could not be achieved in one country—least of all in a country that was economically backward." Cf. E.H. Carr, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 49.

future ; energies were now invested in anything that extended and protected the power of the Soviet state, where power was defined in the lexicon of "scientific socialism" as the development of industrial, technological and military resources.

After 1921, Lenin had become increasingly committed to NEP and had "implied that socialism in an isolated Soviet Russia was possible."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, on November 20, 1922, in what was apparently his final speech in public, Lenin actually contended that "Socialism is no longer a question of the distant future...not tomorrow, but in a few years,...NEP Russia will become socialist Russia."<sup>47</sup> Lenin, Bukharin as well as Stalin had thus all been converging on a policy whose common dimension was socialism in one country. In that sense, Stalin was correct in holding that socialism in one country was "Leninist." And from this convergence, Trotsky might be seen as odd man out, as the deviant against whom the others should and did unite. Stalin's socialism in one country, however, was fundamentally different since it rigorously excluded Lenin's gradualism; instead, Stalin fused socialism in one country with the authoritarian voluntarism that was the Bolshevik's political paradigm in the Civil War period.

A central difference between Trotsky's permanent revolution and Stalin's socialism in one country was that Stalin eliminated from his policy any reliance on revolution from without, stressed legal correctness in foreign relations, and, blocking the Soviet state's external military initiatives, he refocused them on *internal* targets: the Kulaks, the peasantry, and Trotskyism itself. The defeat of Trotsky's permanent revolution thus meant the repression of revolution-from-without within Bolshevism ; an increasing effort to normalize the Bolshevik state's relationship to other states; and the corresponding ability to intensify class warfare within the Soviet Union. Socialism in one country and forced collectivization are thus linked by their common connection with "revolution from without." The core of Bolshevik rural strategy had been to establish an alliance between the rural poor and the middle majority of peasants against the kulaks. This had collapsed, however, because the middle peasants accepted the hegemony of the richer, and the poor accepted that of the middle peasantry. How, then, might the Bolsheviks proceed in the countryside if they lacked an *internal* agent? In effect, the policy of forced collectivization was one of "revolution from without," which is nearly what Stalin himself said in characterizing his policy as "revolution from above."

Stalin's forced collectivization was thus Trotskyism applied within the framework of internal colonialism. Stalin had not so much renounced

46. Cohen, *Bukharin, op.cit.*, p. 138. Already in 1915, Lenin maintained that "socialism is possible in the first instance in a few capitalistic countries or even in one single country." Cited in Carr, vol. 2, *op.cit.*, p. 50. Lenin added immediately that a victorious proletariat would take the initiative in creating revolution from without, i.e., it "would stand up against the capitalist rest of the world, attracting to itself the oppressed classes of other countries, causing revolts among them against the capitalists, acting in case of necessity even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their state."

47. Cited in Cohen, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

permanent revolution and its associated policy of revolution from without as he had redirected and displaced it against an internal target by substituting internal colonialism for external revolutionary imperialism, domestic violence for foreign violence. Stalinism and Trotskyism thus constitute a "unity of opposites": they are the Yin and Yang of Bolshevism. Both are united at the level of their deep structure in the Leninist voluntarism which premised that socialism and socialist consciousness have to be brought to groups from the outside by a theoretically prescient elite, as Lenin explicitly argued in *What Is to Be Done?*

Revolution from without and revolution from above, then, are alternative Bolshevik policies, the latter growing with the repression of the former. What happens, however, when revolution from above is completed? With the end of Stalinism and the completion of collectivization (or with the "solution" to the agricultural problem), there is a possibility of *increased* external aggression. Krushchev's missile intervention in Cuba and the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as the Soviet Union's coordination of the Cuban presence in Angola and elsewhere in Africa, all signify the real end of Stalinism as the repression of revolution from without.<sup>48</sup>

All of this addresses the forced collectivization of 1929, but not the precipitating events that dislodged the CPSU from its seemingly settled policy of gradual, suasive collectivization. The hinge here revolves around events beginning in 1925 and culminating in 1928. The 15th Party Congress of 1927 expelled the Trotskyist opposition and created a strange political situation.<sup>49</sup> Although it clarified who would be responsible for future failures, the defeat of the opposition also meant that Stalin's faction could no longer be effectively held to account. Economic events are, however, considerably less ambiguous: even though there were very good crops between 1925 and 1927, grain collections declined in 1927 and 1928, with those of 1927 being only half as large as the year before. This threatened urban provisioning and sent Party leaders on the road—Stalin for the last time of his regime—resorting to desperate measures which E.H. Carr describes as the result of a "panic." Using forced loans, prosecutions, quotas and requisitions, they succeeded in appropriating the "surplus." Indeed, they garnered almost as much grain as had been collected in 1926-27. But as Carr notes: "The costs were heavy. The peasants had been stripped... Few managed to keep more than was barely necessary... Some went hungry, or had to kill animals. The operation was a

48. After all, detente was plainly only one of several tracks pursued by the USSR and was accompanied by an apparently inconsistent expansionism. From what has been argued, detente is a straight development of the rejection of revolution from without—a natural and unsurprising evolution. What needed explanation was why detente was accompanied by intensified Soviet expansionism.

49. Whereupon Stalin addressed the Congress as follows: "I believe that until recently there were conditions that confronted the Party with the necessity of having me in this post, as a more or less brusque sort of man, to serve as a kind of antidote to the opposition. But...now the opposition has not only been defeated but expelled from the Party as well. And all the while we have had Lenin's instructions, which in my opinion must be put into effect. Therefore, I ask the plenum to relieve me of the post of General Secretary. I assure you, comrades, that the Party stands only to gain from this." Cited by Medvedev in Tucker, *op.cit.*, p. 207.

declaration of war against the *kulak* who would henceforth fight the authorities by any means in his power... On the other side, the authorities drew the short-sighted conclusion that strong-arm methods paid. This episode, more than any other single episode, set in motion the process which ended in collectivization."<sup>50</sup>

After these events, of course, the Party met only the most bitter resistance of a solidary peasant community. Yet, to understand this as precipitating a "panic" among Party leaders is another matter. Who and what was panicking them? Opposition ranks were broken; there was no political party alternative to the CPSU to which disaffected peasants and disappointed workers might turn.<sup>51</sup> The Party's response is better described as unhesitating ruthlessness consistent with its "seige mentality." There are two decisive questions about such ruthlessness, one bearing on motives, the other on opportunity.

In regard to the motives behind it, the ruthlessness was partly a product of a growing commitment to *rapid* industrialization and thus to the means believed necessary for it, including rapid capital accumulation; and the threat of hunger to the Party's urban base among industrial workers. This seige mentality encouraged an increasing uneasiness about the Soviet state's international isolation and a growing determination to tolerate no longer the peasantry's unpredictability and infuriating resistance.<sup>52</sup> The decision to be ruthless was legitimated by a seige mentality but was made possible by the system of internal colonialism within which the most extreme sanctions could be inflicted upon the peasantry with impunity—an impunity that made it unnecessary for the Party leaders to have "panicked." It was the sociology of internal colonialism rather than the psychology of panic that shaped the Party's brutal response to peasant resistance.

The fundamental structural condition for open Party war against the peasantry was the pulverization of society so that there were no group structures or mass media that could be used against the state apparatus.<sup>53</sup>

50. E.H. Carr, "Revolution from Above," *New Left Review*, November-December 1967, p. 25. Carr's remarks here indicate just how flabby the entire concept of a "surplus" is. The concept of an economic surplus is objectivistic. It premisses that the surplus is "out there," already in-being, waiting to be appropriated. But the surplus is a *produced* entity and is produced not only by prior production, but by the very act of appropriation. The size of a "surplus" depends on the ruthlessness of the appropriators and the resistance of the expropriated.

51. As Tucker notes, "Even allowing that the regime was faced in 1927-28 with something like a peasant 'grain strike'... there is no serious evidence of incipient political rebelliousness in the countryside at that time... and the war scare was in fact grossly and crudely manipulated by Soviet politicians in 1927." Cf. Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-88. The quotation by Tucker is from John Sontag. See also Moishe Lewin, "The Immediate Background of Soviet Collectivization," *Soviet Studies*, October 1965.

52. Fantasies of bloody violence against the kulaks may be found even in the language of the temperate Bukharin, who, at the Central Committee meeting of July 1928, spoke of the Party as "machine-gunning" them if necessary.

53. To the destruction of traditional social and political groups we need to add the continuing disruption of the CPSU itself through a series of purges and expulsions: in 1921 against "criminal" elements who had supposedly used the Civil War to infiltrate the Party; in 1924, against critical intellectuals and youth sympathetic to Trotsky; and in 1925 against Trotskyists and other left oppositionists within village units. The Left opposition was expelled in 1927 and Bukharin's followers were purged in 1929. In short, resistance to the state became increasingly difficult inside the Party as well as outside of it.

The resistance of atomized and fragmented individuals lacks conviction and effectiveness. The possibility of effective resistance against any state depends in considerable part on the existence of intact social groups possessing a measure of autonomy and with communication access to other groups. The final and decisive crippling of the capacity to resist the growing Soviet state was, therefore, the total elimination of an opposition press, and of all journals, newspapers or other media that were not government sanctioned.<sup>54</sup>

It is within the framework of internal colonialism that the meaning of the Party's policy of gradual, peaceful, persuasive collectivization revealed its basically instrumental character. Internal colonialism meant that the peasants were the raw material of socialism, not the object of its emancipation.

In December of 1929, Stalin decreed the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class." The Soviet Union's 125 million peasants began to be forced off their land onto collective farms. It is sometimes said that the effect of this property transfer was to transform the peasants into "proletarians," but this is not historically exact. The peasants were more nearly transformed into land-bound serfs than proletarians; they were even denied the passports now required (1932) of city dwellers for internal travel and, moreover, also had to work an obligatory minimum number of days. Collectivization meant the creation of huge plantations whose advantage was not greater efficiency but a more effective system of centralized control over the peasantry than would have been possible had they remained on their 25 million individual farms. Collectivization meant that the state now had direct access to the agricultural "surplus" and could guarantee the provisioning of cities while sustaining the drive to industrialize by selling this "surplus" on the world market to pay for new capital goods. The prized goal was industrialization as required by "socialism in one country"; by a "scientific socialism" that exalted development of the forces of production; by the need to mechanize the rapid collectivization under way; and in order to strengthen the isolated new state against international threat. This also explains why the Party sought to control the industrialized working class. The 1930 Party Congress thus authorized the "Central Control Commission" to supervise and force-feed industrial growth. This meant placing industry under the direction of a Party organ with quasi-police functions, i.e., commissioned to eliminate political dissidence and incompetence, hence able to define industrial failures as politically suspect.

Having appointed itself as the demiurge of industrialization, the Party became subject to a new criterion of legitimation: successful industrialization. Thus, as Stalinism became entrenched, industrialization became the economic substitute for emancipation. As industrialization empha-

54. Medvedev lists and dates the closing of these magazines and journals, concluding that, by the year of the forced collectivization, 1929, "there was not a single non-Party publication left, nor any privately owned publishing houses that might serve as vehicles for oppositionist views." In Tucker, *op.cit.*, p. 205; for the larger significance of mass media in relation to the politics of resistance today, see my *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology* (New York, 1976), especially Chapter 6, "Toward a Media-Critical Politics."



sized the development of heavy industry rather than consumers' goods, even the living standards of industrial workers were undermined and exposed to increasing coercion.<sup>55</sup> Yet, bad as things were in the cities, it was in the countryside and its collective plantations<sup>56</sup> that the greatest suffering was experienced. As Dallin and Breslauer report, "between six and 10 million kulaks and others ascribed to this ill-defined group were liquidated as a class; in most cases they were deported or shot by urban-based cadres who were brought into rural areas."<sup>57</sup> Over the years, vast penal camps were set up in the Soviet Union's desert and arctic areas (the Gulag Archipelago) to which a continuing stream of kulaks and other resistant peasantry were sent. According to Sakharov, "At least 10 to 15 million people perished... by torture or execution in camps for exiled kulaks..."<sup>58</sup>

At the village level, Stalin's decree meant armed invaders encircling villages and bursting into the homes of middle (and often poor) peasant families.<sup>59</sup> The armed men would loudly herd people off, often stripping them of their clothing. If hot kasha was on the stoves, it might be eaten on the spot; if vodka was found, it was drunk on the spot. Mufflers and hats were stripped from children's heads; eyeglasses snatched from their wearers' faces. Some poor peasants and activists seized the occasion for personal enrichment by blackmailing kulaks, promising to remove them from deportation lists. The kulaks were beside themselves in panic; some entered into fictitious divorces, hoping this might protect their property; waves of suicide swept their group, some despairingly killed their wives, children, and themselves. Rather than surrender their livestock to the collectives, many of the peasants chose to kill them and eat as much meat as they could, often gorging themselves sick.<sup>60</sup>

55. Trade unions were smashed during 1929-1930 after Tomsy's removal as their head. Workers were increasingly enserfed to the factory managers from whom they had to secure permission if they wished to leave or change jobs. Plant management was also given control over food supplies and other necessities by a decree of the Party's Central Committee in 1932. Workers were also threatened with imprisonment if they failed to meet quotas. The smashed unions could only remain silent.

56. "The plantation or estate wage laborer is typically cut off from other occupational groups and completely dependent on his fellow workers. Unlike the peasant or commercial farmer, the agricultural wage laborer is typically part of a work gang... As Erving Goffman has pointed out, the plantation or landed estate is similar to a prison or other total institution... The plantation is an enterprise owned either by a commercial corporation or government body or by an individual, if the enterprise includes power-driven processing machinery, and worked by wage laborers resident for continuous terms of more than one year." Jeffrey M. Paige, *Agrarian Revolutions* (New York, 1975), pp. 37, 79.

57. Alexander Dallin and George W. Breslauer, *Political Terror in Communist Systems* (Stanford, 1970), p. 63.

58. Cited in Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York, 1973), p. 713. See also Roger Garaudy, *Le Grand Tournant du Socialisme* (Paris, 1969), where he accepted these figures while he was still on the French Communist Party's Politburo.

59. The following account is from Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, 1954).

60. Between 1928 and 1934, there was a vast butchery of the country's livestock: the number of horses declined from 32 million to 15 million; cattle declined from 60 million to 34 million. By 1929, urban workers were eating substantially less meat, sugar and bread; by 1932, a countrywide famine was in full swing. In 1932, urban workers were eating one-third as much meat as they did in 1928 while people in rural areas were then eating slightly more than one-third of the 1928 meat consumption.

The ensuing 1932 famine alone is estimated to have killed about five million persons, some from outright starvation, others from physical deterioration and diseases linked to hunger and malnutrition.<sup>61</sup> Almost a quarter of the Ukrainian CP was expelled and "liquidated" in 1933. It was during the 1932 famine that plant managers were given control over workers' rations.<sup>62</sup>

Collectivization also meant a drastic increase in the number of secret police; notwithstanding early party expectations of peaceful and voluntary collectivization, when the time came, the collectivizers arrived with guns in their hands.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, in order to expedite the liquidation of the kulaks it was necessary to make lists of the village families to be deported, of the adults and children in each of the families and, above all, lists of property and livestock. It was also necessary to arrange the logistics of deportation by train or other means of transportation. The infrastructure of rational terror consists of committee meetings, of clerical computations, bookkeeping inventories, personnel and budgetary appropriations. The collectivizers came with guns in one hand, and pencil and paper in the other. In short, collectivization meant an immediate massive expansion of the secret police and of the entire state bureaucracy. The infrastructure of Stalinism was being built. By 1929, the one million public officials of pre-revolutionary times had grown to 4.6 million. Four years after the collectivization, however, they had almost doubled.

Stalinism also entailed the political outflanking of the CPSU itself on two fronts: on one, from the direction of a burgeoning state bureaucracy whose loyalty to top authority did not result from discussion or political persuasion, and, on the second front, by the development of a direct link with the urban populace, bypassing the Party itself (and the bureaucracy). Both the bureaucracy and the urban following gave Stalin an independent base that allowed him to move against the Party in ways reminiscent of Mao's use of the Red

61. According to Ciliga, "In the villages of the Ukraine, the North Caucasus and Central Asia cannibalism was, if not extensive, at least a widespread phenomenon." Cf. A. Ciliga, cited in Kostiuk, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

62. Closely connected with the collectivization drive, and partly in preparation for it, there was also an extensive anti-religion campaign. As Medvedev put it: "In the fall of 1928 this campaign began to assume the character of a wave of terror against the church... Religion was apparently regarded as one of the chief brakes upon collectivization... Thus, during collectivization, hundreds of thousands suffered not because of social criteria but because of their religious beliefs... Eighty percent of all Russian villages' churches were closed in 1930..." In Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. 208-210. What was happening was that the war against the peasants was the hub which connected numerous other tensions in Soviet society.

63. There was good reason for these arms, for the peasants, often including robust sons with experience in the Red Army, did not simply resist passively but often engaged in determined armed struggle. Kostiuk gives a detailed account of armed peasant resistance to collectivization: "Often it was only the NKVD troops and the regular army who saved the regime from being overthrown by mass rebellions of the hungry, tortured, and ferocious peasants, determined to drive the government from the countryside... The most usual reprisal against the most active participants in the resistance was execution on the spot; less active participants were given long sentences in concentration camps, while the rest of the population, women and children, the aged and the sick, hundreds of thousands, were deported to distant, unpopulated places in the North of the USSR and there the majority of them perished." Cf. Hryhory Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine, A Study of the Decade of Mass Terror (1929-1939)* (New York, 1961), p. 10.

Guard during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. This independent base made possible the transformation of party leadership into a *personal dictatorship*.

*The Internal Threat to Stalinism: Political Repercussions*

The resulting mass discontent in the country began to work its way up through the Communist Party. In his talks with Boris Nikolaevskii in Paris during the spring of 1936, Bukharin described the internal Party situation as follows: "In 1932... half the country was stricken with famine. The workers were on short rations. The productivity of labor had greatly fallen... The predominant view in Party circles was that Stalin had led the country into an impasse by his policy, that he had roused the peasants against the Party, and that the situation could be saved only by his removal from Party domination. Many influential members of the Central Committee were of this opinion. It was said that an anti-Stalin majority was being formed in the Politburo as well. Wherever Party officials met, the subject of the discussion was: what program was to be substituted for Stalin's 'general line'."<sup>64</sup>

Opposition also grew at the grass roots level,<sup>65</sup> and there were increasing indications that even Stalin's closest following was deserting him: the political assets with which he had entered the forced collectivization were now spent. There is also the emergence of a moderate opposition bloc led by Sergei Kirov, the extremely popular secretary of the Leningrad Party, who opposed Stalin in connection with the 1932 "Riutin affair."<sup>66</sup> At that time, Kirov leaned toward a policy of reconciliation both within the Party as well as between the Party and society, urging the relaxation of the terror that had accompanied the collectivization. After the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, such a policy was seen as a way of unifying the Soviet Union to meet the growing threat of German invasion. Reconciliation was one of the themes of the 17th Party Congress in 1934: leaders of the defeated right opposition were allowed to attend, and Kamenev, Bukharin, Radek and others were even allowed to speak and were, in some cases, applauded by the delegates. At the 17th Congress, Kirov was given a particularly lively reception and was not only elected a Politburo member but also a secretary of the Party. At this point, Kirov had become the most visible and popular alternative to Stalin's

64. Originally published by Nikolaevskii in 1936 as his record of Bukharin's remarks in the Menshevik *Socialist Messenger* and as *Letter of an Old Bolshevik* (London, 1938); see also Robert V. Daniels, ed., *Foundations of Soviet Totalitarianism* (Lexington, Mass., 1972), p. 139.

65. For example, foreign Communists who had come to work in the USSR but had become disillusioned were quickly brought into contact with the organized opposition on the local levels. Cf. Andrew Smith, / *axu a Communist Worker* (London, 1937). The Yugoslav Communist, A. Ciliga, also confirms this in his book *Au Pays du Grand Mensogne* (Paris, 1938).

66. Riutin, an Old Bolshevik, had published an alternative program to the Party's "general line" containing an exceptionally pointed attack on Stalin's obsession with power as well as the phenomenon that Krushchev later described as the "cult of personality." Riutin called for Stalin's removal from the general secretariat—his power base. After having admitted writing the new program, Riutin was brought to trial before the Politburo, where the secret police, believed to be acting on Stalin's initiative, asked for the death penalty. At that time, this was a remarkable demand since Bolsheviks had been hitherto protected from the death penalty by "Lenin's legacy"—a policy opposing bloodshed within the Party. Under Kirov's influence, the majority of the Politburo defeated the recommendation for the death penalty.

leadership, to whom any Stalinist opposition would naturally gravitate.

Shortly thereafter, on December 1, 1934, Kirov was murdered in Leningrad under what Krushchev in his 1956 speech called mysterious circumstances.<sup>68</sup> On the very night of the assassination, Stalin rapidly

67. Indeed, "post-Stalin recollections indicate that the leader [Stalin] had cause for concern with the possible rivalry of S.M. Kirov. A surviving delegate to the Congress (a rarity), L. Shaumian, wrote in 1964 that Kirov was in 1934 'the favourite of the whole party' and that 'the thought sprang up among some delegates,' especially older members, that 'the time had come to shift Stalin from the post of General Secretary to other work'." Cf. Robert H. MacNeal, ed., *Resolutions and Decisions of the CPSU, Vol. 3: The Stalin Years, 1929-1953* (Toronto, 1974), p. 130.

68. "It must be asserted that to this day the circumstances surrounding Kirov's murder hide many things which are inexplicable and mysterious," declared Krushchev. "There are reasons for the suspicion that the killer of Kirov, Nikolayev, was assisted by someone from among the people whose duty it was to protect the person of Kirov. A month and a half before the killing, Nikolayev was arrested on the grounds of suspicious behavior, but he was released and not even searched. It is an unusually suspicious circumstance that when the Chekist assigned to protect Kirov was being brought for an interrogation, on December 2, 1934, he was killed in a car 'accident' in which no other occupants of the car were harmed. After the murder of Kirov, top functionaries of the Leningrad NKVD were given very light sentences, but in 1937 they were shot. We can assume they were shot in order to cover the traces of the organizers of Kirov's lulling." Cf. *Anatomy of Terror, Special Report to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Closed Session, Feb. 24-25, 1956, by Nikita S. Krushchev, First Secretary, CPSU (Washington, 1960), p. 33. There is also an edition edited by Boris I. Nicolaevsky (New York, 1962) with a useful introduction and annotations by the editor. There are also editions edited by Bertram Wolfe (New York, 1957), and one translated by Tamara Deutscher, with an introduction by Zhores A. and Roy A. Medvedev, containing additional documents, and the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU, June 30, 1976, on the Twentieth Congress, in which Stalinism is defined as a "stage the Soviet Union has passed through in its development..." (p. 115), published for the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation (Nottingham, 1976). The United States State Department first released on June 4, 1956, a text of the speech that it characterized as having "been prepared for the guidance of the Party leadership of a Communist Party outside of the USSR;" "foreign Communists had not been allowed to attend the original speech. While the State Department formally denied that it vouched for the text's authenticity, the fact that it released it suggested that it considered it substantially correct. Confirmation of this is implicit in the Central Committee resolution cited above, published in *Pravda* July 2, 1956, and in a *Pravda* editorial of March 28, 1956. Zhores and Roy Medvedev have stated that Krushchev's speech "was very far from containing all the grave truths about Stalin's offences; supplementary information given five years later, at the Twenty-second Congress in 1961, startled and shocked the listeners anew." *Ibid.* p. 11. They also provide a detailed account of how Krushchev had to maneuver in the Central Committee so that they might not quash his talk, how it was presented at a midnight session that had not been announced in advance, and how, subsequently, the talk was printed, dispatched first to regional Party Committees and activists, then to district committees and only finally to all registered Party members, then sent to parties abroad, from one of which the U.S. State Department must have secured its text. When news of the speech first reached the press, it was denied by various Communist organs. Characteristically, the Dutch Communist Party (*De Waarheid*, June 7, 1956) accused the State Department of a falsification that sought to sow mistrust; while acknowledging that "serious errors were now being corrected," it also insisted that Krushchev's speech "contained nothing new of significance." Subsequently, however, the world Communist press and parties accepted the essential allegations of the speech, and the American CP criticized it as not having gone far enough. On June 12, the *Daily Worker* published an article by a Stalin Prize winner, Howard Fast, characterizing the speech as "a strange and awful document... one must face the fact that it itemizes a record of barbarism and paranoid blood lost that will be a lasting and shameful memory to civilized man." On June 18, Eugene Dennis, the American Party's general secretary, acknowledged that "the Krushchev report on Stalin tells a tragic story. Shocking and painful as it is, however, it is a part of history." Subsequently, Dennis took the view that Stalinism was part of the "terrible price" that world imperialism had exacted from the Soviet people, a position that Louis Althusser seems to have followed. For an excellent set of documents, concerning these and other reactions by other Communist parties, see the

processed a decree that called for speeding activity against terrorists; forbade delaying their executions; and demanded the immediate enforcement of any death sentence that was issued. "This directive," says Krushchev, "became the basis for mass acts of abuse against socialist legality." The point, however, is not so much that Stalin had deftly seized the occasion of Kirov's death to destroy the opposition and tighten his control of the Party, but rather, that he had created that very occasion.<sup>69</sup> It was not simply that the degree sprang to hand. Rather, it and a great deal more had even earlier been placed in readiness to administer the terror that soon followed Kirov's murder.<sup>70</sup> Well before Nikolayev's murder of Kirov,<sup>71</sup> the pieces were being moved into position for the great purges of the 1930s.

In 1935, 1936 and 1938, the three major showcase trials were held. In 1935, Kamenev and Zinoviev, the so-called "right" oppositionists, were charged with plotting against Stalin. In 1936, the so-called United Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terror Center was charged with the killing of Kirov, presumably on Trotsky's orders. In May 1938, the Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites (including Bukharin and Yagoda) was brought to trial, charged once again with the killing of Kirov and, in addition, of Maxim Gorki, as well as with espionage against the state and for plotting to dismember the Soviet Union and overthrow its socialist order. Three central themes dominate the trials: one links the accused to the murder of Kirov, thus accounting for the murder to silence the widespread rumors within the Party that implicated Stalin. A second was the Satanization of Trotsky as the demon at the center of conspiracy. A third was the linking of many of the accused to foreign espionage and treachery, so that their crime was seen as not only against the

Columbia University's Russian Institute, *The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism* (New York, 1956).

69. Djilas writes that: "Recently it was made public in Moscow that he [Stalin] had probably killed the Leningrad Secretary Kirov in order to gain a pretext for settling accounts with the intra-Party opposition." Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, 1962).

70. Thus, six months before the murder, the old OGPU had been abolished and replaced with a streamlined, all-union secret police, the new NKVD, with Yagoda in charge of it; in January 1933, there had been an announcement of a Party purge and in April, a central purge commission, including Yezhov, had been formed to implement it; a new Special Sector of the Central Committee—in effect, Stalin's private secretariat—was then also created, along with a special state security committee; and in June 1933, a Prosecutor-Generalship for the entire Soviet Union was newly established, which was directed by, among others, Andrei Vyshinsky, who was to be the prosecutor in the showcase purge trials that began in 1935.

71. That Stalin was most likely implicated in Kirov's murder does not mean that we do not have to account for Nikolayev's own motivation, which Krushchev does not clarify. No one now seems to believe that Nikolayev was a police agent who assassinated Kirov under orders or that he was politically motivated. One recurrent story coming out of the labor camps and elsewhere was that Nikolayev's wife was having an affair with Kirov. The puritanism of the older generation of Party leaders would dispose them to repress this aspect of the story. Thus Krasnikov's biography of Kirov, published in Moscow in 1964, accents the cozy domesticity and mutual affection ("All right, you shall have dumplings tonight") allegedly existing between Kirov and his wife, Mary. See the materials compiled by Borys Levytsky, *The Stalinist Terror in the Thirties* (Stanford, 1974), p. 38. But surely Kostiuk is mistaken in assuming that these two accounts must be incompatible. An integrated scenario would see Stalin and the secret police exploiting Nikolayev's jealousy, bending it to their own purposes, and allowing him access to Kirov, thus uniting both motive and opportunity. For a dissenting account, see Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine*, *op.cit.*, pp. 149-151.

state and Party but against the nation itself and could thereby mobilize sympathies from traditionalists, patriots and church fathers.

While the trials of the former opposition leaders attracted most of the world's attention during the 1930s, they were only the symptoms of the real mass terror that had been launched simultaneously against the entire populace and the leading Soviet institutions—the Communist Party itself, the Red Army and several other large ethnic minorities. It was they who were the terror's main targets, rather than a few former leaders of the old opposition who had long been personally broken and politically isolated. To be sure, the main targets included Stalin's old political enemies, but these were no longer a rag-tag remnant of old Bolshevik leaders. The prey was the party masses themselves, who had been gravitating toward the moderate bloc around Kirov—the drift of whose aspirations had been revealed at the 17th Party Congress.<sup>72</sup> It was this ill-fated 17th Congress that elected the Central Committee whose plenum of February 23-March 5, 1937, challenged the purges. According to MacNeal: "there was a challenge to Stalin from a group of undetermined size probably led by a candidate member of the Politburo, Pavel P. Postyshev. While not calling for the replacement of Stalin, Postyshev expressed disbelief concerning the charges of treason that were being leveled at many senior party members. . . ."<sup>73</sup> Thus, from 1934 to 1937, right into the very jaws of the purges, there was inner Party opposition to Stalin by the Stalinists themselves. **74**

This Stalinist opposition was clearly born in the effort to protect themselves from the terror and secret police. Increasingly, the secret police had become Stalin's mainstay and personal instrument and a power base exerting domination over the Party itself, reducing its autonomy as political instrument.<sup>75</sup>

In short: the stronger the secret police became and the more they were

72. Levytsky has noted that the "Soviet reference books admitted after Stalin's death that disenchanted Stalinists attempted at that time to remove Stalin from his position as General Secretary of the Party and to replace him with Kirov." Levytsky also cites Giuseppe Boffo's *Dopo Krusciov*, which reports that rumors in 1956 were rife in Moscow that at the 17th Congress, "in the secret balloting Stalin's name was crossed out more often than any other person's... Some even claim that he was never elected and that he barely made it only because the number of Central Committee members was increased at the last moment." Levytsky, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

73. MacNeal, *op.cit.*, p. 10. Kostiuik cites A. Avtorkhanov, who writes that the Central Committee actually defeated a Politburo resolution calling for action against Bukharin and Rykov, and that opposition to Stalin was so widespread that there was a purge of all Party secretaries and heads of republics in the fall of 1937. Cf. Kostiuik, *op.cit.*, p. 118.

74. It was the most thoroughgoing Stalinists—Kirov, his close friend, Ordzhonikidze (who committed suicide), and Postyshev—who also became alienated from Stalin and his policies. Postyshev, for example, was the troubleshooter whom Stalin had entrusted to bring the Ukrainian Party under control and extinguish its "nationalist deviation" but who, according to Kostiuik, in time became sympathetic with the local culture and alienated from Stalin. Cf. Kostiuik, *op.cit.*, pp. 116-117. Military commanders were probably also drawn into the growing anti-Stalin opposition. Krushchev's "thaw" of 1956 was the belated resurgence of that inner-Party Stalinist opposition. Thus, the first to be rehabilitated during his regime were "former Stalinists [including Postyshev] and they were followed by persons in non-political categories, scientists, industrial managers, and members of the intelligentsia." Cf. Levytsky, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

75. Thus, Beria used his career in the secret police to obtain control over the Party in Georgia as Bagirov had in much the same way become head of the Party in Azerbaidzhan.

relied upon, rather than the Party, the more threatened were the Stalinist Party leaders and the more resistant they became and the more therefore Stalin relied upon the secret police and state bureaucracy rather than the Party. Put differently, the more Stalin sought to bypass the Party because of its opposition, the more he fostered this opposition.<sup>76</sup> In the end, therefore, the Party itself had to be destroyed.

Krushchev's account of the fate of the delegates to the 17th Congress reveals how central a target of the purges they were, and how totally they were destroyed: "of the 139 members and candidates of the Party's Central Committee who were elected at the 17th Party Congress, 98 persons, i.e., 70 percent, were arrested and shot mostly in 1937-1938... What was the composition of the delegates to the 17th Congress? It is known that 80 percent of the voting participants of the 17th Congress joined the Party during the years of conspiracy before the Revolution and during the Civil War; this means, before 1921. By social origin, the basic mass of the delegates were workers. (Sixty percent of the voting members).. .of 1,966 delegates with either voting or advisory rights, 1,108 were arrested on charges of anti-revolutionary crimes, i.e., decidedly more than a majority."<sup>77</sup> Sakharov maintains that "in 1936 to 1939 alone, more than 1.2 million party members, half the total membership, were arrested. Only 500,000 regained freedom. The others.. .were shot (600,000) or died in camps."<sup>78</sup> By 1939, 60 percent of those who had been Party members in 1933 were no longer members.<sup>79</sup> Most of the Party membership at the time of the 18th Congress in 1939 had not been members during the 17th Congress in 1934. Prior to the 18th Congress,

76. Moishe Lewin (in Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. ISOff), sees the bureaucracy as wanting to settle down and regularize their careers, and thus as wanting to limit Stalin's power, having him serve *asprimus inter pares*, i.e., as the chief executive of a powerful central committee. Lewin believes that Stalin began the purges because he was not ready to be just another member of the system, however powerful. Thus Lewin essentially views the Stalinist opposition in a Weberian way, as the outgrowth of the inner logic of bureaucratization, rather than expressing political differences that had a certain autonomy. But top bureaucrats *also* had a *political* tendency. They were not simply careerist technocrats concerned only about their tenure and devoid of organizational moralities or political sentiments. The Central Committee, for example, was apparently opposed to purging Bukharin and Rykov in 1937; and in 1934 the Kirov tendency sought an end to the terror in the countryside and moved toward "reconciliation." These were political, indeed, ideological, motives. Moreover, the Central Committee's resistance in 1937 placed them all in the greatest personal jeopardy, as they certainly knew it would. How can such great risk-taking behavior, indeed, such courageous behavior, be accounted for in terms of a quest for bureaucratic security? These men were not just acting to protect their private careers or even their lives, but also to enforce their conception of the Party. Indeed, they were enacting a larger idea of a rational social order. A "vulgar idealism" would focus only on the latter, forgetting that we need to examine *why* men act in conformity with their norms; a vulgar materialism would ignore these norms and focus, in a Weberian or Michelsian way, only on the bureaucracy's pursuit of its own vested interests as a status group. I have sought to avoid both. Lewin's appraisal rests on an uncritically appropriated Weberian view that bureaucratization necessarily means depoliticization, akin to Jürgen Habermas' view of the undermining of the public sphere by the rise of a technocratic bureaucracy.

77. Krushchev, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

78. Cited by Conquest, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

79. Cf. MacNeal, *Resolutions...*, *op.cit.*, p. 9. "The high point of 3.5 million members was achieved as early as 1933 while as late as 1938 membership was down to 1.9 members and candidates."

about half a million officials in the Party and in the Government had been replaced.

### *A Stalinist Criminology*

Medvedev relates the following Brechtian anecdote from 1937-38 : "A knock comes on the door at night and a voice bellows out roughly, 'NKVDI Open up!' 'But we're non-Party people,' they answer from behind the locked door. 'The Communists are the next flight up.'"

The terror of the late 1930s thus destroyed the old Communist Party, which was not seriously rebuilt until Krushchev's regime.<sup>80</sup> This had been necessitated by the fact that the Party was developing a moderate anti-Stalin bloc and, notwithstanding its authoritarian hierarchy, it was the only remaining political medium for the expression of popular sentiment.<sup>81</sup> But the Party was not the only institution that was destroyed: also destroyed was the established military elite.<sup>82</sup>

The results of this were visible soon after in the Finnish-Russian War of 1940, when so many of the poorly led and equipped Russian troops were massacred by the Finns or froze to death. When the Russians finally won, it was purely because of vast numerical superiority. The purge of the Red Army also meant, again in Krushchev's words, "very grievous consequences in reference to the beginning of the war..." when a year later the Nazis plunged deep into Russia and overran its disrupted armies.<sup>83</sup> The Nazi colonial policy that defined Slavs, especially Slavic peasants, as subhuman and which treated

80. Stalin killed and tortured more Communists than any other dictator in the 20th century, whether Hitler, the Czar, the Shah of Iran, or the Chilean Junta. That he regarded the Communists as so intransigently menacing to his regime was perhaps the last generous historical testimonial ever made to Communists.

81. The Party was disposed to function in that manner precisely to the extent that provincial cadres became incorporated into it. These provincial cadres (distant from Moscow's surveillance) had been growing in importance from 1930 onward, and were naturally closer to the views and interest of local constituencies. They might, therefore, be expected to support Kirov's policy of reconciliation.

82. Krushchev calls this terror against the Red Army's officer corps an "annihilation." Well-known members of the general staff, such as Marshals Tukachevsky and Bluecher, and Generals Gamarnik and Yakir, were killed, along with the commanders of all the military districts, practically all brigade commanders, a half of all the regimental commanders, and all but one fleet commander. In addition to killing 13 of the 15 generals, 80 percent of all colonels were killed or removed, as were 30,000 officers below the rank of colonel. Between 35 to 50 percent of the entire officer corps was eliminated. More senior officers were killed during the purges than during the entire war with the Nazis. The most experienced and talented officers of the Red Army, including those who had gained military experience in Spain and in the Far East, were, as Krushchev states, "almost entirely liquidated." Cf. Krushchev, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

83. Soon after the invasion, General Vlasov, one of the most popular and brilliant of the general staff (who had survived the purge) went over to the Nazis. After having been captured by them Vlasov organized 200,000 disillusioned Soviet troops to fight alongside the Germans against their own nation. Vlasov's ability to muster Soviet troops against the USSR indicates how deeply the Soviet masses had been alienated by the Regime. Indeed, during World War II, no other European country had such a mass defection of its troops to the enemy, nor was there anything like the mass disaffection in the Ukraine that Djilas reports. Robert Conquest quotes a Polish prisoner of war who remarked: "I think with horror and shame of a Europe divided into two parts by the line of the Bug, on one side of which millions of Soviet slaves prayed for liberation by the armies of Hitler, and on the other, millions of victims of German concentration camps awaited deliverance by the Red Army as their last hope."



them bestially following the invasion of Western USSR, soon destroyed many Russian peasants' illusions about the Nazis. Ultimately, it may have been Nazi racist ideology and the colonial policy it shaped in Eastern Europe that tipped the balance against Germany.

The terror of the 1930s permeated the everyday life and most intimate experience of the Soviet people. Most estimates agree that about 5 percent of its population were imprisoned during the period, making a total of some eight million persons, of whom perhaps 10 percent were killed. By 1938, almost every other Soviet family had had one of its members imprisoned. The proportions, however, were substantially higher, the more educated the group. The terror of the 1930s differed from that of the collectivization in that it was directed against the urban population, against political and military elites, and against the better educated intelligentsia. It was directed primarily against urban males in the age group 30-55, although their women and children also suffered terribly when the men were denounced and arrested. The terror of the collectivization period, however, was directed primarily against the rural population and all members of families in that group, including children.

Under Stalinist terror, persons were not prosecuted because of what they individually had done, said or even believed, but because there was need of a public accounting system in which what was done to them might seem rational and justified. Most commonly, there was no individual guilt and what happened to the accused was not punishment but a ritual of punishment aimed at placating world liberal opinion. In most cases, then, persons were jailed, shot or exiled not because of what they had done but because of their supposed readiness to do injury to Soviet society inferred on the basis of their social category: social origin, nationality or group membership.<sup>84</sup>

This imputation of criminal guilt from persons' social category is related to the "conditioning model" of personality implicit in "scientific" Marxism according to which the essence of persons is not their individual consciousness or ideology, but their "social being" that determines that consciousness. Since people's true being cannot be established from what they say about themselves—for they may have a false consciousness—or even from what they do—since they may dissimulate deliberately to conceal their guilt—it is the social categories that establish their social essence. This is the core of the Stalinist theory of crime and punishment that guided the terror. Given the devaluation of what people say, Stalinism could not place credence in the very confessions that it used as practically the only evidence against the accused. The confessions were primarily public confirmations of proclivities imputed to persons on the basis of their social category.

84. A person's social category, then, largely determined his fate. Those who had foreign connections or acquaintances were most vulnerable, as were religious or former religious functionaries; one-time members of former political parties; generals and colonels in the Red Army; Kulaks, the so-called "former people" or ex-aristocrats; members of the Communist Party. Railroad workers, for some unclear reason, belonged to an especially hazardous category. So, too, did those who had once been arrested by the secret police and released.

Within such a context, the critical distinction between real and potential guilt was conflated into the encompassing category of the *virtually* guilty. The production of confessions was thus routine. Being words only, confessions were not intended to convince. They were part of a bureaucratic ritualism designed to pacify; they were arguments to which the Party faithful around the world could point to persuade the morally needy. The object of the confession and of Soviet terror more generally was to terrorize and deter a population that scientific socialists could only expect, because of its social characteristics, to oppose the Bolshevik Regime. The aim of the terror was to paralyze the expected opposition until such time as the new industrialization would produce a proletariat whose sentiments would presumably be loyally socialist. It was the new industrial economy that was to be decisive, in the reckoning of the scientific Marxism on which Stalin and Lenin had both grounded their voluntaristic politics. The essence of both Leninism and Stalinism, then, was precisely this fusion of a relatively voluntaristic politics with a model of economic development that stressed industrial development seen as a matter of fostering technological hardware (e.g., "electrification") and the "forces of production."

*Chinese Perspectives: Toward a Comparative View*

Maoism, of course, had a different reading of Marxism. While its politics was also voluntaristic, its model of economic development placed less emphasis on developing the forces of production and on the urban sector. It operated with a different conception of human nature and thus generated a different strategy for change. Maoism placed more systematic reliance on coercive persuasion and militant mind "washing." There was terror—routinized, deliberate and horrible—but at the same time there was substantially less blood spilled than under Stalinism. In place of the Stalinist axe, the Maoist carefully slit the vein, letting it bleed for a guarded interval. This is no trivial thing to the millions of Chinese who were spared that holocaust, and raises the question of why it was that, despite its ideological affection for Stalinist voluntarism, Maoism never really succumbed to the extremes of Stalinism.

The Maoists were able to do this in part because they had *alternatives* to terror, but these were not altogether due to differences in the objective structures of Russian and Chinese society. In the Chinese revolution as in the Russian a militant revolutionary elite had come to power in a society overwhelmingly peasant, and yet the Chinese did not emulate the Russians bloody revolution. How may we account for this difference?

The Chinese Communists could develop alternatives to extreme terror because they had made a different reading of Marxism, which involved different assumptions about human personality. To the Maoists, even class enemies were not beyond change in consciousness. There was the slogan, "Cure the disease, change the man." From the Chinese standpoint, therefore, a "confession" was a different and more serious matter than it was to the

Russians : it was the starting point in a long process of changing the enemy's consciousness. The Chinese stress on "thought reform," even though grounded in coercive persuasion, premised that persons' beliefs and loyalties could be changed sincerely whatever their class position, and well before the advent of an advanced socialist industry.

Maoism also had a different conception of socialism and of the peasantry's ability to build it. The Chinese did not stress rapid industrialization and urbanization; they did not have the same abiding distrust of the peasantry as the Russians had; and they therefore did not have to subject the Chinese peasantry to the same crushing internal colonialism deployed by the CPSU.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, although they had no more material rewards to motivate the peasantry than the Russians, the Chinese Communist Party did not alienate the peasantry so profoundly that they could be controlled only by extreme terror.

After defeat of the Canton uprising and their "long march" north, the Chinese Communists settled into the countryside. Living and fighting among the peasantry, they acquired extensive experience in administering a peasant society long before they finally assumed state power on the Chinese mainland. Not only did the Chinese Communists acquire an administrative and political culture that subsequently facilitated their mobilization of the peasantry, but it also gave them the opportunity to build an *organizational* apparatus in the countryside.<sup>86</sup> This allowed the Chinese Communist Party to develop a leadership with a rural background. During much of this time, moreover, the Chinese Party was waging a long war of national liberation against the

85. The Chinese road to collectivized agriculture differed importantly from that of the Russians. As Tse Ka-kui points out, under Mao's influence Chinese collectivization did not propose to limit the use of rural mechanization to seasonal "storming" but sought to integrate it with everyday work; stressed the development of rural industry in conjunction with collectivization; and called for self-financing of mechanization rather than state subsidies. Moreover, the Chinese moved in stages from peasant mutual aid to cooperatives to more highly integrated communes, all the while stressing the importance of political education in the countryside. Cf. Tse Ka-kui, "Agricultural Collectivization and Socialist Construction, *Dialectical Anthropology*, forthcoming.

86. Communist Party cells in the countryside may have been almost twice as prevalent in China as in Russia at the time each achieved state power. Moreover, even by 1930, after the Russian collectivization drive began, "the overwhelming majority of kolkhozes lacked party cells and would continue to for another generation." I concur with Lewin that the Bolsheviks "never constituted a real mass movement... in the countryside... Bolsheviks were an urban party par excellence, ignorant of rural realities and showing little patience with this mass, so backward and conservative." In Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp. 112, 122. This, of course, is related to their reading of "scientific Marxism." Although Marx deplored the split between town and country and expected that Communism would ultimately overcome it, in this split he clearly sided with the town against "rural idiocy," viewing the town as the site of modern industry, technological development and science, and hence as the locus of modern progress. As for the peasantry, according to Marx and Engels, they are doomed to extinction and thus they constitute a reactionary class. According to the *Manifesto*, "the other classes decay and disappear in the face of modern industry... the lower middle-class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these... are not revolutionary but conservative, Nay more, they are reactionary!" Cf. the *Communist Manifesto* (Chicago, 1888), pp. 26-27. The best discussion of the urban bias of Marxism is in Maurice Meissner, "Utopian Socialist Themes in Maoism," in John Wilson Lewis, ed., *Peasant Rebellion and Communist Revolution in Asia* (Stanford, 1974).

Japanese; it effectively assumed control of the national identity, which provided a framework for building collaborative relationships in the countryside as elsewhere. In sharp contrast, the Bolsheviks, far from continuing the war against the Germans, had long advocated "turning the guns the other way" and had capitulated to them at Brest-Litovsk. Rather than being defined as "patriots," the Bolsheviks were often accused of being German agents and spies. Indeed, they did receive substantial funds from the German High Command, funneled to them through the special liaison of Trotsky's former collaborator, Alexander Helphand (Parvus) and others.<sup>87</sup>

The Maoists' ability to find and use alternatives to terror was also related to the very concepts of social control used by rural persons which differ appreciably from those of urban origin. Being more anonymous, and linked by single-purpose associations, when urban people find one another behaving in ways they resent they have quicker recourse to the state's coercion: they call the police. Rural people, however, live in more communal groups, where persons are known individually by name. The rural model of social control, then, uses personal appeal, indirection, the manipulation of connections. In short, it has a multiplicity of practiced strategies to produce conformity: it has numerous alternatives to recourse to force. Furthermore, it was not necessary. The Chinese Party's care in fostering an ideological receptivity to collectivization was matched by the Chinese peasants' openness to it because they often did not have land enough for subsistence.<sup>88</sup> Thus, they lacked the Russian peasants' motives for deep-seated resistance to collectivization. The Russian revolution had distributed land to the peasants in order to win their support during the Civil War and, with NEP, it was the middle, not the poor, peasantry who grew in numbers and strength.<sup>89</sup> The road to forced collectivization, then, could only have been aimed against the majority of middle peasants, however formally directed at "kulaks."

Last but not least, the Chinese were able to avoid the extremes of Stalinism because they were not exposed to the same acute international threat as the new Soviet state, partly because the very consolidation of the latter had provided the Chinese with a powerful military cover. While this was particularly the case when the Chinese Communist Party first assumed

87. Z.A.B. Zeman and W.B. Scharlau, *The Merchant of Revolution: The Life of Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus), 1867-1924* (London, 1965).

88. As Lucien Bianco writes in his *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949* (Stanford, 1971), pp. 94-95: "On the eve of the Communist revolution... even the richest man in the village rarely owned more than 50 acres... [only] a little more than half the Chinese peasants owned the land they tilled... Ten percent of the rural families owned slightly more than half the land." According to Bianco's figures, the rural proletariat who owned no land and the poor peasants who owned the least, together comprised 68 percent of rural families. *Ibid.*, p. 97 note.

89. The poor peasants were only about 30 percent of the peasantry; the rich peasants were only a tenth of their number—i.e., about 3 percent; the remaining 67 percent were the middle peasants. (This was in 1927, two years before Stalin's decree calling for the liquidation of the kulaks and the resulting forced collectivization. In short, two-thirds of the peasantry were middle peasants. The kulaks were only a tiny minority who could not have constituted a significant threat to the Soviet state or to its grain requirements. See Charles Bettelheim, *Les Luttes de Classes en URSS: Deuxième Période, 1923-1930*, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

control of the mainland, it remains true, even today after the schism with the Russian Party, that no military power can confidently expect that the Soviet state will allow a massive incursion into the Chinese mainland.

### *Some Theoretical Conclusions*

This reconnaissance of Stalinism has been provisional, fragmentary, and sometimes unavoidably elementary. Yet it may be useful to attempt to sort out some of the more general conclusions, recalling the preliminary specification of Stalinism as a *regime* of terror in furtherance of a property transfer, entailing a personal dictatorship and bureaucracy. The central question throughout has been: why the terror? Most especially, why did such extremes of terror characterize Stalinism?

Terror is simply one means a state employs under certain conditions. The historical particulars of Stalinism suggest some of these conditions: Terror is used when the state wishes to elicit certain compliances — e.g., grain deliveries—from those whom it defines in a particular way, i.e., not as unable but as unwilling to provide them, or as resistant to its demands. To that extent, terror is a substitute for moral suasion. It becomes such when those on whom demands are made are not seen by the center as part of its own moral *community*, as the peasants were not by the leaders of the Communist "vanguard" who defined themselves primarily in relation to the proletariat. Not being a part of the same moral community, the principle of reciprocity is not felt to apply and correspondingly, a deliberate strategy of exploitation—e.g., "primitive socialist accumulation" or unequal exchange—is permitted. Thus, Stalinism developed as an internal colonialism.

What this means is that Stalinism was primarily a process of state-building grounded in a very specific set of class relations, i.e., one in which the classes are not part of, or are only tenuously part of, one single moral community. In consequence, the more powerful class may treat the weaker as an object of outright exploitation, as a natural resource to be plundered, and subject it to the most brutal violence as one state may treat a conquered foreign country.<sup>90</sup> The internal colonialism thesis links moments of routine, "peaceable" administration with critical moments of brutal violence, treating them as part of a single process of domination which one may alternately impose on another.

The internal colonialism thesis concerning Stalinism avoids the mythology of a Marxism which had speciously held that the alternative was socialism or barbarism. It further links state socialism with the capitalism it had promised to transcend and sees the peasants as the Soviets' Indians and the Soviet countryside as a continental reservation. The theory of internal colonialism is the underside of the theory of emancipation, beginning to clarify what must be avoided by socialists and suggesting, finally, what changes must come

90. Following Oppenheimer's "conflict theory" of state origins, the Stalinist state is thus a social institution forced by a victorious group of men on a defeated peasantry, securing itself against revolt from within and attacks from abroad. One of its major purposes was the economic exploitation of the vanquished by the victors. Cf. Franz Oppenheimer, *The State* (New York, 1975), p. 8.

about in Soviet society before we may have confidence that Stalinism is dead once and for all.

Since the "vanguard" relates to a dependent peasantry in terms of an instrumental strategy of unequal exchange, the latter's unfavorable terms further dispose them to resist the demands of the control center. In short, the periphery's resistance is, in part, produced by the very policies pursued by the power center. In turn, this resistance confirms the center's expectation that the peripheral group is *deservedly* not a part of its own moral community, and has to be treated instrumentally. Although viewing the peripheral group as morally and culturally inferior, the center is nonetheless bound to it since it has no alternative sources of supply. The power center is dependent on the very peripheral group it dominates and may fear that its functional autonomy is undermined and with this also its capacity to protect its very identity. The resistant peripheral groups generate a "crisis of procurement" that may suffice to elicit a policy of terror against the periphery.<sup>91</sup>

When a regime opts for terror, it may be due simply to the fact that it lacks alternatives. Obviously, the Soviet state might have won compliance from the peasantry by offering them "material rewards" in the form of consumer goods, or ideological inducements rather than through a repressive terror. Its capacity to offer the former, however, was limited when the Bolshevik state was still attempting to generate an industrial takeoff. Its capacity to use moral suasion, however, was also limited by an ideologically shaped vision of the peasantry as "backward," unreliable material with which to build socialism. The Party's scientific socialism further led them to concentrate on urban activity and to neglect rural activity. Thus, the Party was ideologically prepared to expect that the peasantry would be reluctant to collaborate in the building of socialism. These same ideological commitments impaired its ability to acquire experience and to develop Party organizations in the countryside, thus limiting its capacity to generate alternatives to terror against the peasants. The Party's alternatives, then, were never only a matter of "objective necessity" but were always partly a function of its own policy commitments and ideology.<sup>92</sup>

91. A regime of terror differs from war in that it does not seek to annihilate opponents but aims primarily to crush their resistance and to produce compliance. While the decree of 1929 was presumably limited to the liquidation of the kulaks, its object was to crush resistance among a vast peasantry that the Party Center could on no account imagine itself liquidating. Similarly, the purges and terror of the 1930s could not hope to eliminate the urban elites against whom it was aimed.

92. The more economists have analyzed Soviet development, the less convinced they become that forced collectivization, the primeval trauma at the root of Stalinism, was unavoidable. I do not find them altogether persuasive. Some "revisionist" studies of Soviet development have, for example, held that in the transfers between the agricultural and industrial sectors in Russia before 1932, the net balance favored the agricultural rather than the industrial sector. That is, that the value of the latter's contribution to agriculture was more than the value of the goods it extracted from agriculture. When such a conclusion is advanced by Russian economists, one suspects it as an act of ideological piety. Quite apart from a general uneasiness about the pliability of Soviet economists, the problem seems an extremely difficult one to resolve, particularly with quantitative data.

Some of the very things held to constitute a contribution, by the urban-industrial sector to the

Bureaucracy, no less than terror, is a mechanism for dealing with a resistant population on whom a ruling group is dependent for goods and services. Both are ways a power center employs for controlling population sectors on whom it is dependent, but whom it cannot otherwise replace, motivate or mobilize. Terror is more likely to be used when the resistance is expected to be active and concerted; bureaucracy is used when resistance is more passive and atomized. Both terror and bureaucracy are systems of domination imposing subservience upon subordinate sectors and extracting compliance from them. Bureaucratization is the routinization of domination; terror arises when routines of domination collapse in the face of mounting crisis, or before routines of domination have yet developed. A challenge to a center engaged in internal colonialism may alternately foster bureaucracy or terror, both simultaneously, or a sequence in which terror is used early, as a holding action until bureaucratic routines and institutions can be built and is later phased out as the bureaucracy develops. Terror and bureaucracy are each ways of reaching down into and dominating a group from some point outside its own ranks, by those who do not belong to it.

A new revolutionary government, which has recently taken power by smashing the old state, distrusts the remnant bureaucracy, but has not yet had a chance to replace it with a new loyal one. In a socialist society, the problem of maintaining the loyalty of bureaucrats faces certain special problems and constraints. For to the extent that the culture of socialism embodies a populist egalitarianism, special privileges for the bureaucracy may be inhibited and-or, as in the modern Soviet case, discretely kept from

agricultural, may in fact be costs incurred by internal colonialism in dominating the peasantry. It is questionable, for example, whether the cost of prison bars, walls, guns and guards should be counted as the state's investment in the welfare of prisoners or as a return for inmate labor. It seems meaningless to speak of the value of goods and services that people do not want, as a compensatory return for their work and produce. Moreover, the investments or produce of both sectors is assigned a value or price by only *one* of them, those at the center of the system of internal colonialism, who assign unequal values to their respective investments. Given an internal colonialism, the very terms of trade are no longer comparable because they are the very mechanism by which one party exploits the other. If this is correct, then what might it mean to say that the industrial sector had invested more in agriculture than the value of the latter's product that it extracted? Moreover, what if in its effort to exploit the peasantry, the urban center generates a backlash and widespread dis-economies for which it must then pay. Shall the value of the cities' contribution to agriculture include the costs of their dominating it, and in addition the costs of their own incompetence? Finally, the revisionist critique of the conventional view of Soviet capital accumulation has one interesting side effect: it leaves us with no clear theory of how rapid capital and industrial growth was made possible in the USSR.

These difficulties, however, do not really touch our own analysis, for there is little question but that the view of industrialization dominant in the CPSU prior to the collectivization and which shaped its actions, emphasized primary accumulation through exploitation of the peasantry. The Party's policies were shaped by its situation and by its understanding of it. As Leninists, they would be the first to insist that their theory was no mere ornamental embellishment. Like others, the Party's consciousness necessarily affected its actions; but more than others, the Party was militantly committed to the idea that it should. For the revisionist view, see James R. Millar, "Soviet Rapid Development and the Agricultural Surplus Hypothesis," *Soviet Studies*, July 1970; James R. Millar, "Mass Collectivization and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five Year Plan," *Slavic Review*, December 1974; Jerzy F. Karcz, "Back on the Grain Front," *Soviet Studies*, October 1970; and Moishe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* (London, 1968).

public scrutiny. Furthermore, a socialist bureaucracy will initially have to recruit relatively educated persons from the very privileged sectors of society it is attacking, so that its loyalty will be suspect. Far from being a sure instrument of control in a new socialist society, the bureaucracy's reliability is acutely problematic.

One way to overcome this potential unreliability and cope with bureaucratic resistance is to establish new hierarchies of custodians over the custodians, special intelligence units, each of whom, however, are as unreliable as the bureaucracies they are to oversee. Thus the Cheka begets the OGPU who begets the NKVD who begets the KGB. A bureaucracy specializing in the administration of terror surfaces at the pinnacle of the system. But if bureaucracy is a functional alternative to terror, it also prevents the complete renunciation of terror for even the bureaucracies administering the terror are suspect.<sup>93</sup>

Subject to these extraordinary pressures, the bureaucracy seeks to protect itself by supporting unconditionally the continuing growth of its master's powers, contributing to the concentration of his power, to a possible cult of personality. In obeying its masters, the bureaucracy commonly earns the hostility of the resistant populace over whom it has been set, while the bureaucracy and its controllers soon develop an ambivalent solidarity—the solidarity of a dog and its master—against the rest of society. Since it is exposed to the most extreme punishments from its masters, even to terror, and since its privileges also depend on them, the bureaucracy is led into fawning obedience, thus competing with if not replacing the Party as the ruler's instrument. It is out of such a shifting balance between Party and bureaucracy that there may emerge that other characteristic of Stalinism—the personal dictatorship.

Both terror and bureaucracy are somewhat interchangeable mechanisms of domination. Both essentially serve as alternatives to a system of voluntary exchange between social sectors because the voluntary exchange has been impaired by a system of domination, e.g., by an internal colonialism, in which the controlling center has imposed unfavorable rates of exchange on those subordinated to it. Thus, a regime of terror is not, as Walters claims, a response to a crisis of integration. This Durkheimian formulation premisses that the terror is a response to the needs of the society (or system) as a whole and conceives these needs objectivistically. It implies that it is the needs of society-as-a-whole that produce the terror and that, in fact, the terror does indeed "integrate" the society. In the case of Stalinism, both implications are in error.

Soviet society was not integrated laterally by the terror, but was rather

93. Thus, during the purges of 1930s the NKVD itself in time became a particular target of the terror; many were hunted down in their privileged apartment compounds, driven to suicide, and some had been seen throwing themselves from the windows of the secret police headquarters at the height of the purges.

94. E.V. Walters, *op.cit.*, chapter 13.



fragmented and atomized as husbands and wives, children and parents, lovers and friends, grew wary and fearful of expressing "dangerous" views even in intimate company. Moreover, it is also doubtful whether Soviet society was "integrated" even hierarchically by the terror. The flow of upward information diminished, along with trust in superiors, and there was a loss in the expectation of their continued presence in authority. A social system cannot be called "integrated" when obedience is given out of fear and the least deviance is hidden. Furthermore, terror was most definitely not a response to the needs of Soviet society as a whole. No social system need is ever pursued in an unmediated way. The sheer definition of what a system "needs" is always formulated more by some and less by other groups. Groups at the power center pre-empt the right to define social reality for the system as a whole against competing definitions from the peripheries. Usually, they define the system's needs in selective ways, accommodating them to their own special interests, power and prerogatives. They often do so with utter sincerity since they also define themselves as "fathers of their people," indispensable to the collective welfare. System needs, then, are never given by the system, i.e., they are never given objectivistically. The destruction of the Communist Party's cadres, or of the Soviet military leadership, was not a "system need" at all. In the beginning it was, rather, a response to the threat to the power of the Stalinist faction, but, at some point, it was not even that, as the Stalinists themselves became divided and their faction narrowed down to the supreme despot himself. The policies followed were neither in the interest of some system need nor were they always a response to the limited interests of some partisan group, faction or strata. Indeed, the entire assumption that policy must be in *some* group's interest is sorely taxed by the Stalinist experience. The destruction of the Communist Party cadres and of the Red Army's leadership did not contribute to the welfare of the Soviet nation but actually impaired its ability to survive the Nazi invasion. Indeed, Stalin could not have better served the Nazi interest if he had been a German agent.<sup>95</sup> The forced

95. The purge of the Soviet Army High Command was engineered by Nazi intelligence. With the special involvement of Heydrich, intricately forged documents were transmitted to the NKVD to demonstrate that the Soviet High Command had been conspiring with the German High Command. (There seems to be a strong possibility that the same maneuver was, in the beginning, also designed by the Nazis against the German Army's own High Command, but this side of the matter was dropped.) Far from being a "need of the Soviet system," the destruction of the Soviet Command was sought by the Nazis because they conceived it to *their own great advantage* that Tukachevsky, the Red Army's most brilliant strategist, be destroyed. There seems little doubt that their estimate of the matter was correct: "The purge of the generals proved to be exactly as the SD [*Sicherheitsdienst*] hoped, a crippling blow to the war capability of the Red Army. The catastrophe of June-October 1941, in which the USSR was caught completely unawares by the German invasion, losing millions of men and the results of years of industrial construction, must be overwhelmingly attributed to the disappearance of any experienced military command after 1937. It was more than a blunder; it was a crime...contrary to popular legend, the Wehrmacht at no time had military superiority over the Soviet Armies on the frontier. The exact opposite was the case. The Red Army deployed in forward positions outnumbered the German forces on the Eastern Front by 30 divisions in June 1941. Not only this. The Red Army had a staggering seven to one superiority in tanks...even in the air, the USSR had a four to one superiority in planes over the Luftwaffe." "Introduction to Tukachevsky," *New Left Review*, *op.cit.*, p. 88. Cf. John

collectivization was no response to the needs of Soviet society but, at most, to the needs of the isolated and besieged CPSU, and, more accurately, of only one wing of the Party, seeking to saddle the nation with a system of internal colonialism. Stalinist terror thus cannot be understood from the standpoint of a systems analyst. It is also questionable whether it is even intelligible in terms of "conflict theory" if this implies that policy is shaped by some status group seeking its partisan *group* advantage. At some point in Stalinist Russia, all *groups*—including the secret police—became instruments that were discarded without compunction when the supreme person thought it advantageous. Like the successive layers of an onion, then, the group basis of Stalinism can be continuously stripped away without revealing any final *group* foundation which its policies can be said to express. Yet, whether composed of groups or despots, power centers do pursue group welfare only to the extent that this also contributes to the reproduction of the power center. The language of "system needs" is a rhetoric legitimating special interests seeking to universalize their vested interests. "Integration" is the language of a legitimated domination, i.e., of hegemony. If the interests of the system as a whole were indeed being pursued, there would be no need for a bureaucratic regime of terror. To speak of the events leading up to Stalinism as a response to a "system need" is more than a theoretical conceit; it is a grand obfuscation. The core of what happened was a property transfer bitterly and solidly resisted by those who lost out.

In ending these "theoretical conclusions," I want briefly to call attention to the implication our discussion has for two other theoretical issues. One is its bearing on what I have called the "social history" paradigm of Stalinist historiography, which emphasizes the "force of circumstances" while de-emphasizing the way in which the Bolsheviks *defined* their situation, especially insofar as this was informed by their *theory and ideology*. It is impossible to understand Bolshevik decisions apart from an understanding of their special reading of Marxism, i.e., "scientific socialism." The point is clearly not that what the Bolsheviks did was always (or even mainly) the mirror image of their theory, or that it was done because it was prescribed theoretically. What they did was partly shaped by their theory and remains unintelligible apart from it. The "social history" paradigm founders here because of its failure systematically to distinguish between behavior that is theoretically *prescribed* and behavior theoretically *patterned*, between the intended and unintended consequences of theoretical commitments. The paradigm thus mistakenly concludes that, when difference developed between theory-policy and decisions, the latter were uninfluenced by theory. But this is equivalent to

Erickson, *The Soviet High Command* (New York, 1962), p. 584. It is also true, however, that a considerable proportion of the arms and equipment of the Red Army were then outmoded and obsolescent but this, too, was largely a function of the purges, especially of their disruption of Soviet industry. On the effect of the purges on Soviet industry, see Levytsky, *op. cit.*, and Seweryn Bialer, ed., *Stalin and His Generals* (New York, 1969), p. 6S: "No single factor contributed more to undermine Soviet military leadership during the first phase of the Nazi-Soviet War than the Great Purge."

concluding that, since the law is broken, it is without consequence.

Some adherents of the social history model, while more than ready to acknowledge the mediating importance of Russian culture and tradition, are perplexingly ready to write off the importance of the Bolshevik's version of Marxism.<sup>96</sup> In minimizing the role of Marxist theory for Bolshevik history, the proponents of the social history paradigm seek to avoid the unjustified conclusion that resulting events were the mechanical outcome of the "logic" of Marxism, and thus to clear the way for detailed scrutiny of the historical process. Yet the particular remedy they employ is unnecessary and underemphasizes the role of reason in history.

A final point bears on the Weber-Habermas thesis, according to which depoliticization is a result of the growth of technocracy and bureaucracy. The plain lesson of our analysis is that this decline is more the result of other forces. Far more depoliticization was wrought by the regime of terror than by the growth of technocracy. Politics and the public sphere are inversely related to terror and internal colonialism. While politics and terror are close neighbors they are separated by the boundary they share. Politics means that people must be treated as persons to whom power and moral responsibility are imputed and not as inmates in a labor and concentration camp. Politics means mobilizing consent through promises and offered understandings. Such consent is required under two conditions: first, when persons are defined as members of the same moral community and, secondly, insofar as they in fact possess power and resources enabling them to resist domination. With its system of internal colonialism, however, Stalinism meant the end of politics; its radical terror meant a radical depoliticization. Stalinism was one of two great cataclysms of depoliticization in 20th-century Europe, the other of course being Nazism and Fascism. In neither case, however, was depoliticization intelligible as a result of growing technocratic organization and staffs.

Under Stalinism, depoliticization did not originate in the technocracy or bureaucracy. On the contrary: the latter were the result of the drive to depoliticize society. The new state was created to destroy and control what it

96. Thus, Lewin invidiously contrasts the force of circumstances with the role of theory, maintaining that "in the hungry and anguished years 1920-1921...the elements of a solution [which Lewin calls 'statism'] were suggested by circumstances rather than by theoretical anticipation." In Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 113. Yet, only a few lines later, Lewin himself also observes that "direct state intervention was recommended and justified by party authorities not on grounds of emergency, but as a socialist principle par excellence." Here the Bolsheviks are being transformed into pragmatic end-of-ideology liberals rather than seen for the uniquely ideological and theoretically committed men they were. What Lewin calls "statism" Marx had called the "dictatorship of the proletariat," which he insisted was the *distinctive* feature of his theory. The role of the state is fully affirmed in the *Communist Manifesto*; it is in the state, we are told, that the victorious proletariat will "centralize all instruments of production" (cf. *Communist Manifesto, op.cit.*, p. 42) as well as the means of communication, transport and credit facilities. It was not "socialization" of the means of production but the transfer of private productive property to the *state*—i.e., its nationalization—that was the central object of Marxist scientific socialism from the beginning. Why, then, should we believe that the Bolsheviks were deluding themselves in referring to their principles and theory to account for their position on state intervention?

defined as a class enemy within, and the armed forces of a class enemy abroad. The destruction of the Soviet public sphere was not the work of techno-bureaucrats but of the CPSU who, finding itself almost totally isolated, depoliticized society for fear that any political expression endangered its own position. Yet, resistance to the total annihilation of the public sphere was grounded in the interests of the Party itself and in the very faction within it that had first been most intent on destroying it. This hesitant effort to revive the public sphere, the so-called "thaw," was primarily the effort of the very technocracy and intelligentsia which, according to the Habermas-Weber theory, supposedly undermined it. Lacking a public sphere, however, the material and ideal interests of the technical and political elite were endangered and they became vulnerable to purges and terror. Thus, the very destruction of the public sphere ultimately created a counter-tendency in which even this authoritarian elite came to need a public sphere for its own protection. Although inclined at some point to resuscitate the public sphere, the elite could not embrace it for fear that it would be held to account for its own past actions. It was out of this ambivalence that Khrushchevism was born and by which it is defined.

Having come this far, it would be tempting to nail down the political implications of our analysis. I shall resist that temptation. Politics too easily comes down to a firing squad in a dim basement and is, therefore, something that no one should squeeze into a bright paragraph or two to advertise his relevance. The kind of theoretical reflection I have undertaken here flies low, hugging the rugged terrain of history, economics, sociology and anthropology. This form of reflection is as incompatible with the political posturings of the little Lenins as it is with the pop profundities of the *nouvelle philosophie*. We need to preserve an awareness of complexity that will not capitulate to anxiety's pressure for premature closure.