

# **RUSSIA**

**The Soviet Period and After**

**THIRD EDITION**



**Woodford McClellan**



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### **Third Edition**

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**Woodford McClellan**  
*University of Virginia*



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## **To Irina**



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# PREFACE

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In the first edition of this book (January 1986), I noted that the “revolutionary Soviet period [of Russian history] that began in October 1917 had come to an end.” I make no claim to having foreseen the demise of the Soviet Union. It had, however, become clear a few months after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in March 1985, that *something* was going to change—dramatically.

This new edition brings the story forward through the early post-Soviet period under President Boris N. Yeltsin. Three new chapters on the events of 1989–summer 1993 analyze Mikhail Gorbachev’s futile attempts to preserve the USSR, the CPSU, communism, and his own personal power; record the final agony; and discuss Russia’s struggle to nurse democracy and free enterprise through a perilous infancy. They highlight one of the greatest threats to freedom, the organic “red-brown” alliance between Leninist-Bukharinist-Stalinist communists and fascists.

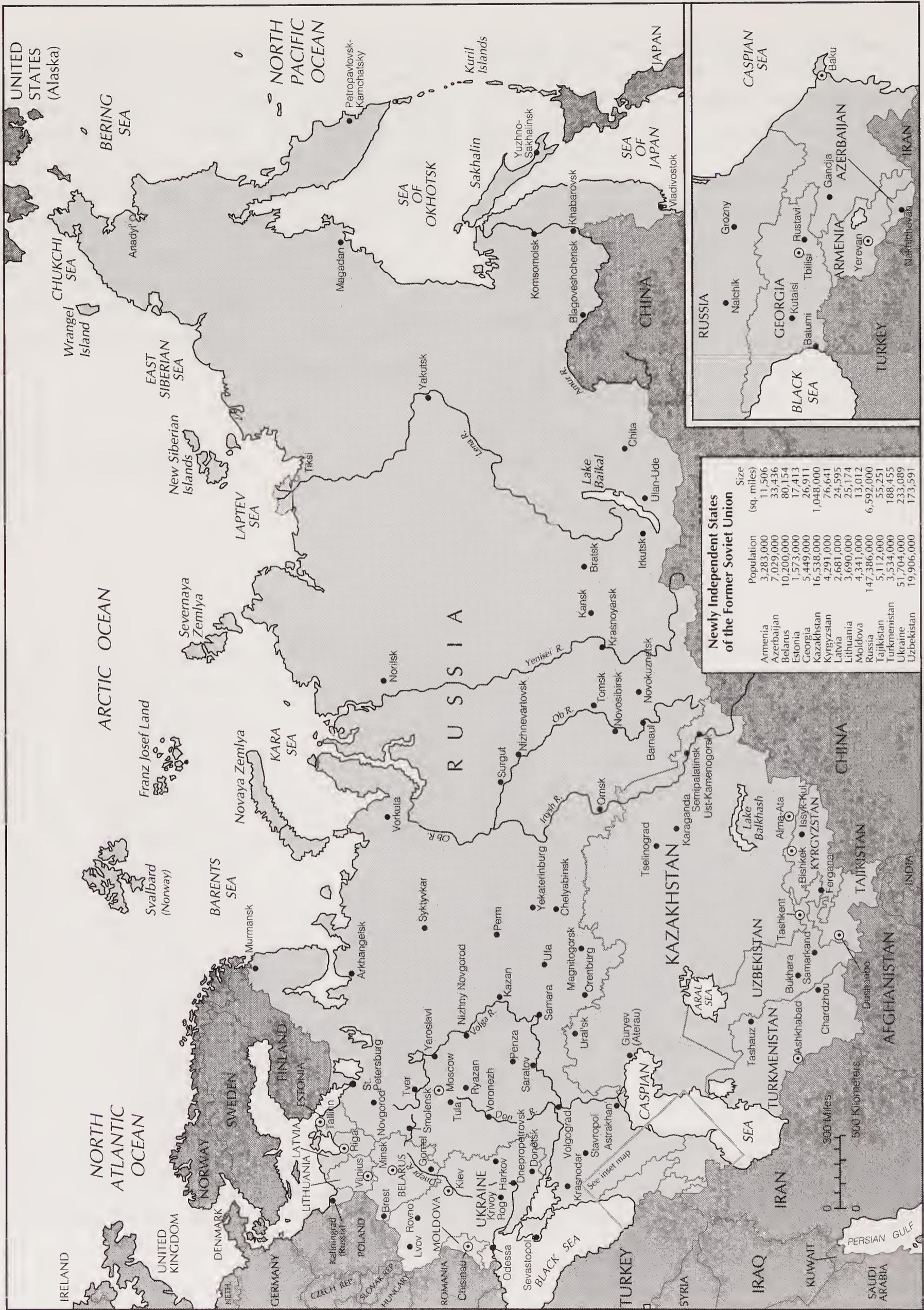
The manuscript has undergone revision in the light of the ever-increasing mass of historical evidence emerging from various archives of the old Soviet regime; new material has enabled me to add fresh detail and clarify—if not always solve—some old mysteries. I have tightened the narrative to make room for this material, included a new map of the entire region showing the newly independent states, and added new photographs thanks to the kindness of James Trott, formerly of the *National Geographic*, Yuri Zhukov of the Russian Federation Academy of Sciences’ Department of Modern Russian History, and ITAR-TASS.

Since the spring of 1990 I have made five sponsored research visits to Russia to work in the archives. While directed specifically at the training of cadres for the Caucasus, Central Asia, Siberia, and the Comintern in the 1920s and 1930s, that research has significantly influenced this new edition.

I am indebted to the director of the Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of the Documents of Contemporary History, K. M. Anderson; his deputy V. N. Shepelyov; and their coworkers. I have profitted from extensive debates on Russian history with Aleksandr Pantsov, Aleksandr Chechevishnikov, Yuri Zhukov, and the late Aleksandr Lokshin. Among others who have shared their expertise and views, I wish to thank G. P. Padva, D. A. Volkogonov, V. T. Loginov, Miklós and Agnes Kun of Budapest, Boris Starkov, P. V. Volobuyev, and Yefim Pivovarov. In the summers of 1992 and 1993, Vladimir and Tatyana Sablinsky graciously welcomed Irina and me to the village of Yerakhtur, far from Moscow, and

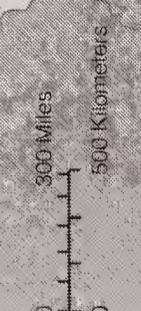
showed us a glimpse of the Russia that endures no matter what takes place in the capital. Irina McClellan's deep knowledge of and love for her homeland, and her insights into the psychology of the Russian people, continue to inspire me. Finally, I am grateful to those at Prentice Hall who have contributed so much to this book: Rob DeGeorge, my production editor; Dan Pellow, who brought the original manuscript to Steve Dalphin's attention; and to Steve himself, now executive editor, for his continuing support.

W. M.  
Alexandria, Virginia



**Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union**

Country	Population	Size (sq. miles)
Armenia	3,283,000	11,506
Azerbaijan	7,029,000	33,436
Belarus	10,200,000	80,154
Estonia	1,573,000	17,413
Georgia	5,449,000	26,911
Kazakhstan	16,538,000	1,048,000
Kyrgyzstan	4,291,000	76,641
Latvia	2,681,000	24,595
Lithuania	3,690,000	25,174
Moldova	4,341,000	13,012
Russia	147,386,000	6,592,000
Tajikistan	5,112,000	55,251
Turkmenistan	3,534,000	188,455
Ukraine	51,704,000	233,089
Uzbekistan	19,906,000	173,591



See Inset map

# chapter 1

## TOWARD OCTOBER

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The West's relative unfamiliarity with Russian history stems in no small measure from its lack of knowledge of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, which survived more than a thousand years after the Visigoths sacked and burned Rome. Heir to the glories of ancient Greece as well as those of Rome, in terms of cultural level, wealth, size, and ethnic diversity, Byzantium had no rival in the West during the first nine centuries of its existence.

When the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, or New Rome, fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, a small East Slav principality assumed the dignity and burden of leadership of the Eastern Orthodox Christian community. In time, some of that state's leading clerics would advance the claim that God had designated its chief city, Moscow, to be the Third and Final Rome, its prince the Defender of the True Faith.

### THE ORIGINS OF RUSSIA

Toward the end of the tenth century, the pagan East Slavs from whom the Russians are descended accepted Christianity from Eastern Orthodox priests-missionaries under the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Clergy from Rome were not in a competition that included—according to legend—Islamic mullahs (religious scholars) and rabbis. The mullahs came from the Middle East, the rabbis from the only state other than Israel ever to adopt Judaism as its official religion, Turkic Khazaria on the lower Volga. When the eastern and western branches of the Universal Catholic Church split in 1054, the newly Christianized East Slavs remained faithful to Eastern Orthodoxy. Rome and Constantinople exchanged excommunications, anathemas, denunciations. Nearly a millennium later, the wounds still fester.

Because of the church schism, the East Slavs—modern Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians—and all other Eastern Orthodox communicants (modern Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbs, and others) did not experience at firsthand the Renaissance, Reformation, or Counter-Reformation. They did not know the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, Blaise Pascal, Erasmus of Rotterdam. They benefited only belatedly from the seventeenth-century scientific revolution and imperfectly—through the prism of Byzantine-oriental experience—from the Enlightenment.

Founded by Scandinavian adventurers-traders and native Slav princelings, the first East Slav state, Rus, the fortified town of Kiev on the Dnepr River and its hinterland, grew from humble beginnings in the eighth and ninth centuries into a thriving principality. Byzantium accorded it full diplomatic recognition, Hungary and France contracted dynastic marriages with its rulers, and in the eleventh century its religious institutions were fully integrated into those of Eastern Orthodoxy.

Then came the Mongol invasion of the early thirteenth century. Kiev Rus, already in decline because rivalry among various princes—and in some areas embryonic democratic institutions—had thwarted the rise of a powerful central monarchy, collapsed under the weight of these last, most powerful conquerors from inner Asia. Part of the population fled the southern steppes (prairies) to the forests of the northeast, to the “mesopotamia” of the triangle formed by the upper Volga and two smaller rivers, the Moscow and the Oka.

The refugees from Kiev Rus blended with indigenous Finnic peoples and others to forge the modern Great Russian ethnic group. Those who remained behind on the Dnepr and its tributaries became the modern Ukrainians, those west of the “mesopotamia” and east of medieval Poland became the Byelorussians or White Russians.

The peoples who moved to the northeast slowly built a principality whose capital took the name of the river on which it was located, Moscow. Toward the end of the fifteenth century that principality, known to the West as Muscovy, finally shook off the last vestiges of vassal status vis-à-vis the descendants of Genghis Khan. A succession of capable rulers warded off threats from various foreign enemies, including the powerful Polish-Lithuanian state, and in the second half of the sixteenth century Ivan the Terrible extended Muscovite territory beyond the east bank of the Volga. Muscovite explorers and a few settlers spread over vast Siberia.

By 1613, when a new dynasty began its reign in Muscovy, Europeans who lived west of the Oder, the Morava, and the upper Danube knew more about the Western Hemisphere than about the kingdom on the Moscow River. This had not changed when the Romanov dynasty fell 304 years later.

Social and economic relations in Kiev Rus differed from those of contemporary Western Christian principalities and kingdoms only in that they were more progressive. The hallmark of the citizen was freedom rather than serfdom, the capitalist market developed normally, and rulers vied for power with both an aristocracy descended from ancient princely retinues and—especially in the rich subprincipalities Novgorod and Pskov—unruly proto-democratic town councils.

The Mongol invasion and protracted rule over the East Slavs changed all this. Individually and ultimately collectively, the tiny successor principalities—Moscow was but one of a couple of dozen—were swept inexorably into the vortex of centralized power. From commoners and aristocrats alike, the central authorities collected tribute due the Great Khan. Commoners who could not pay their share of these and other, purely local, levies found themselves reduced from freeholders to serfs of the state or of private landlords. Aristocrats fallen on

hard times attached themselves to a prince, agreeing to become his vassals in return for protection and recognition of their social standing vis-à-vis the free peasantry, minuscule free town population, and growing class of serfs.

As Mongol power stabilized, became complacent, and began to decline, the central authority in some principalities organized military operations aimed at establishing independence. A decisive victory came in 1380, the final rout of Mongol forces a century later; princes from Moscow led both campaigns. By the late fifteenth century Muscovy had brought most of Central Russia's principalities under its sway.

Mongol rule foreclosed continuation in Muscovy of the Kiev Rus tradition of limited princely power checked by aristocracy and free commoners. Nearly 260 years of submission to a foreign conqueror forged a new system born of the dual Byzantine-Mongol heritage: Byzantium knew no form of government other than autocracy, the Mongol Horde only the Great Khan's despotic rule. The Romanovs came to the Muscovite throne as personalistic rulers whose decisions outweighed all law and brooked no counterclaim. At a time when Western Europe hovered on the verge of intellectual developments that would topple divine-right monarchs, Muscovy was putting the final touches on an autocracy based on the submission to the crown of a serf-owning aristocracy.

## MODERN RUSSIA

Russia entered the modern world an Eastern Catholic country driven by the quest for power more than the search for wealth. She would never know a genuine bourgeois-capitalist stage of history because she would not know Protestantism; the names Martin Luther and John Calvin mean no more to Russia than

those of Nil Sorsky and Joseph of Volokolamsk to the West. A Byzantine-Mongol rather than a Protestant ethic would guide Russia.

This is not to say that Russia would not be part of the world capitalist economy. Kiev Rus had participated in that economy; after the colossal dislocations of the Mongol period, Muscovy resumed the process in the sixteenth century. But until the twentieth century, Russia would not achieve a fully articulated capitalist mode of production.

The Muscovite tsar (or czar, deriving from "caesar") was First Landlord as well as ruler, and that made him or her First Capitalist, land being the chief form of capital. Peter the Great—under whose rule from the late seventeenth century until 1725 Muscovy became the Russian Empire—retained the political attributes of his predecessors but tried to revolutionize society and the economy. Russia could not compete on the world market, he realized, by exporting agricultural and forestry products and importing manufactured goods—i.e., by being a colony. But as he set out to develop manufacturing in Russia, Peter did not follow the European example of permitting native entrepreneurs free rein; he himself became First Businessman.

The state rather than private capital financed the establishment of about 90 factories during Peter's reign, at the end of which only 191 such enterprises existed in the country. Moreover, as Vasily Selyunin has pointed out, Peter created "something unprecedented in history: a serf working class." Previously, only the crown and private landlords had the right to own serfs. Along with credits, technical expertise in the form of hired foreign specialists, and extensive bureaucratic oversight, Peter extended that right to factory owners.

Peter's successors to the end of the nineteenth century continued and extended the state's financial and bureaucratic interference in the economy. With an assured supply of labor and capital that normally guaranteed profits,

manufacturers had no incentive to modernize, seek innovations, expand. Coddled and protected from the vagaries of domestic and world markets by the state, such entrepreneurs could no more carry out an industrial revolution than Russia's serf-owning landlords could duplicate the productivity of Western farmers. Matching British iron output ton for ton in the late eighteenth century, Russian producers doubled production in the next 50 years, but their British counterparts increased tonnage 2,900 percent. The heavy hand of bureaucracy stunted the growth of the economy and prevented modernization.

## RED HORIZONS

Paradoxically, class conflicts worsened in Russia after the formal emancipation of the serfs in 1861–1863. Juridically free, millions remained economically bound to the land they worked, obligated to make “redemption” payments, i.e., to pay the state—which had compensated the landlords for the loss of serf labor—for their freedom. The peasants detested the payments and despised the government bureaucrats who took over police and fiscal functions from the landlords. Still loyal to the “good” tsar in St. Petersburg, the peasants coveted the vast lands of the crown and the Russian Orthodox Church.

A nation whose history was so marked by strife was almost certain one day to undergo a major social upheaval. As foreign invasions, more than any other single factor, had spawned the highly centralized, despotic rule of the tsars, so did the violence of the tsars and landlords against the peasantry generate periodic convulsions in the countryside. Peasant rebellions, however, produced more bloodshed than social reform, and it was not peasant violence but rather the threat of it that led to the Emancipation. The liberation of the serfs brought great changes, but in many im-

portant respects the peasants merely exchanged one set of masters, the landlords, for another, the bureaucratic state.

These historical patterns and the absence of industrial capitalism made Russia the despair of Western Marxists. Toward the end of his life Marx himself, pressed by his tiny handful of Russian disciples, toyed with the idea that agrarian Russia might somehow leap across the gulf that separated it from industrialized Europe and America and become the first nation to make a socialist revolution. He never worked out a coherent position on the issue, however, and he maintained that no matter what happened in Russia, no revolution there could survive unless there were simultaneous upheavals in the West. His insistence on Russia's dependence on Western developments was to color Bolshevik ideology well into the 1920s.

Russians who made an effort to reconcile Marxist theory with Russian reality had adopted a fundamentalist position, interpreting Marx literally: Only a fully industrialized country, which would obviously have a large working class, could make a socialist (proletarian) revolution. It followed that revolution in Russia, a country just beginning to industrialize, was generations away.

The leader of the Russian Marxists, Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov, known to history by his revolutionary nom de guerre, Lenin, rejected this view. Basing his projections on an optimistic assessment of the strength and political consciousness of the Russian proletariat and a creative reading of Marx's random thoughts, he concluded that revolution could take place in Russia in the not-too-distant future. A strong revolutionary party could prepare the way through propaganda, education, agitation, and political leadership. History itself would supply the critical complex of events—economic depression, war, breakdown in government—that would force a crisis.

Lenin was born at Simbirsk on the middle Volga on April 10, 1870 (April 22 in the West;

Russia used the Julian calendar until 1918), one of six children of a middle-level state bureaucrat. His mother was German-Jewish on both sides of her family. His paternal grandmother came from the Mongol Kalmyk people; his paternal grandfather was either Kalmyk or Tatar. Lenin had little or no Russian blood.

In May 1887 Lenin's older brother Aleksandr and four associates were hanged for plotting to assassinate Tsar Aleksandr III. Enrolling a few months later at Kazan University, Lenin read law, philosophy, and the works of Karl Marx. By 1890 he had become a Marxist determined to make a revolution. As a Marxist, he could not take his brother's execution into account as he shaped his view of history, which moves in majestically impartial ways indifferent to the fate of any individual. But as a human being he could hardly forget that scaffold in St. Petersburg. As some historians believe Genghis Khan's enormous conquests vengeance for the ill treatment of his family and clan, so several modern specialists see Lenin obsessed by a desire to avenge his brother's blood.

In 1892 Lenin took and passed the bar examination by correspondence. In September 1893 he arrived in St. Petersburg to begin a clerkship with an established attorney.

He practiced law, but most of his prodigious energy was expended on the study, discussion, and propagation of Marxism and revolution. He became convinced that the misery in tsarist Russia could be overcome not through peaceful reform but only by violent revolution. His interpretation of Marx's theories had convinced him that there would be war between the classes. He joined a Marxist circle composed of disciples of the leading Russian Marxist, G. V. Plekhanov, then in exile in the West, and tested his own ideas against those of the St. Petersburg intellectuals.

He had not yet solved the vexing problem of terror. Not surprisingly, given his own youth

and his brother's fate, he clung to the illusion that the teachings and practical experience of the terrorists might be useful to a Marxist party. But nothing Marx ever said or wrote dovetailed with the kind of terror advocated and practiced by some of the revolutionary Russian populists: Lenin was confusing the style with the goal. Single-minded dedication to a cause, secrecy, tight organization, irresistible élan—*these* were the qualities needed in a revolutionary party.

The party which Lenin forged over the years 1903–1917 would display these traits in full measure. Before he created it, however, he changed his position and expressly rejected individual acts of terror as useless from a practical standpoint and profoundly un-Marxist. If the removal of a few officials could overthrow a society, one could hardly maintain that that society had been produced and could be destroyed only by impersonal historic forces. But this majestic, implacable march of history was the quintessence of Marxist theory; Lenin had no choice but to reject terror directed against individuals.

After the 1905 Revolution, however, he would insist that “revolutionary class terror” was fully consonant with Marxism. He would also maintain that the peasants, millions of whom supported a party one of whose wings actively preached and practiced terror, the Socialist Revolutionaries, or SRs, could play a revolutionary role in history. This did considerable violence to Marx, who never advocated any kind of terror and who considered the peasantry a hopelessly reactionary class from which nothing positive, and much that was negative, was to be expected.

It was neither the first nor the last time Lenin proved himself ideologically flexible, able to promote new and qualitatively different products under reliable old labels. His whole career after 1905 demonstrated a willingness to modify theory when tactical considerations demanded.

Arrested in 1895 for revolutionary and strike activity, two years later Lenin was exiled to a remote Siberian village. It is ironic that exile provided him with a peaceful, productive interlude. He married Nadezhda Krupskaya; carried on a wide political correspondence; wrote a major work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*; hiked, hunted, and fished; did some minor legal work for the locals; and took the name Lenin (“Lena River man”) from the region where he lived.

By 1905 Lenin had worked out his strategy of revolution. He believed that the events of that year in Russia confirmed its correctness and helped produce a major new tactic, the formation of an alliance between the workers and the poorest stratum of the peasantry. Less than a decade later, millions of Russian peasants and workers would be in uniform, fighting and dying for a tsarist regime that could offer them no better fate. Ultimately they would in despair forge the alliance Lenin sought.

New and potentially more dangerous class antagonisms quickly developed when capitalism swooped down on the empire with a rush in the 1890s. Peasants fleeing the impoverished countryside flocked to the cities to find jobs, but they encountered misery and degradation worse than that in the “hungry village” eloquently depicted by Russian writers. The peasants who had tolerated landlord rule and privilege for centuries, only occasionally rising up in short-lived insurrections, became implacably angry once they entered the ranks of the landless, rootless, industrial proletariat.

Unlike its counterpart in the industrialized West, the working class of the Russian Empire did not experience two generations of essentially leaderless development in which it was at the mercy of the entrepreneurs and the state. The Russian workers were from the beginning influenced by professional revolutionaries. This proletariat quickly won a reputation as a work force singularly disinclined to submit to management. The peasant transplanted to

the city had become an aggressive rebel who regularly showed his distaste for the 11½-hour working day—a frequently ignored legal maximum established in 1897—by beating up foremen, wrecking machinery, and illegally going out on strike. The peasants’ refusal to submit to capital and state the way their ancestors had submitted to the landlords was grist for the socialist mill. In the Revolution of 1905, 93.2 percent of all enterprises were struck at least once. The proletariat had matured quickly; and there were those among the socialists who correctly gauged its revolutionary potential.

The Marxists preached class struggle and revolution, exhorting workers to rise up against their masters and seize not just factories but also control of the state. Hostile or indifferent to the peasantry, as Marxist parties then were, the Russian Social-Democratic Labor party (RSDLP), founded in the period 1898–1903, concentrated its propaganda and organizational activities among the workers. The aggressive, impatient wing of that party broke with the more gradualist elements in 1903 to form the Bolshevik (Majoritarian) faction of the RSDLP; the cautious Russian Marxists formed the Menshevik (Minoritarian) wing.

The January 9(22) “Bloody Sunday” massacre of peaceful working-class demonstrators in St. Petersburg touched off the Revolution of 1905. In that great upheaval the two RSDLP factions together won the allegiance of the urban workers but had little impact on the countryside. Russia experienced enormous turmoil throughout the year, however, as the middle class, shocked by Bloody Sunday, came forward with demands for reform. Urban elements in general, except for the rich, voiced discontent with the regime. Some factory owners, determined to secure state concessions to business and industry, continued to pay striking workers. Finally, in October, an 11-day general strike—the most massive work stoppage in modern history—brought the regime to its knees.

Nicholas II was forced to establish a parliament, extend the franchise, guarantee civil liberties: his October Manifesto blunted the revolutionary impetus and split the opposition. The middle class, its revolutionism satisfied by the reforms, accepted the tsar's promises at face value and affirmed its loyalty to the crown. The entrepreneurs won the regime's assurance of an improved climate for capitalist development. But the workers, their illusions badly shaken, remained hostile to the regime and late in the year launched armed uprisings in several cities. The most serious conflict took place in Moscow in December and ended only after more than a thousand people had been killed.

A key element in the labor equation in 1905 was the emergence of workers' soviets, or councils. Such organizations, spontaneous creations of working-class despair that were quickly seized and shaped by socialists, arose in many cities; the most famous and important was the St. Petersburg Soviet, which won immense authority in the capital and the country at large. For several weeks in the autumn of 1905 it was the only authority recognized by hundreds of thousands of workers. Its chief spokesman and later its chairman was a young Socialist using the name Yanovsky. His real name was Bronstein; he is best known as Leon Trotsky.

The tsarist regime survived the revolution and there was every indication, by 1914, that Nicholas's reforms—many drastically modified after the crisis passed—had succeeded in shoring up tsarism and capitalism against a repetition of the events of 1905. Marxist leaders despaired of seeing another upheaval in their lifetimes. But should the time come when the great peasant masses (80 percent of the population) would act simultaneously with the workers, revolution in Russia might well have a different outcome.

## RUSSIA AND THE WAR

When Austria-Hungary resolved to avenge the June 1914 murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Bosnia by invading Serbia, suspected of supporting the Bosnian Serb assassins, Nicholas II and his circle saw an unacceptable threat to Russian national interests. The Austrian attack on Slavic Serbia, Russia's ally, could not be tolerated. The long series of humiliations had to end somewhere: the Crimean War, the Congress of Berlin, the 1908 Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina—these and other defeats had tarnished Russia's honor. Nicholas and his advisers decided to go to war despite the certainty that Russia would have to fight not only the Habsburg Empire but also its ally, the German Reich.

The outbreak of the Great War signaled the beginning of a new and uncertain era in Russian history. Russia could hold her own against Austria-Hungary but could not compete on equal terms with the armed might of industrialized Germany. After enormous losses in East Prussia in August and September, it was, as we can see in hindsight, all over. The Russians did not have commanders of the caliber of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the German generals. Worse than that, they had nothing worth fighting and dying for. The Romanovs and tsarism would not survive the war.

## THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

In 1917 there were antigovernment and antiwar demonstrations around the country on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, and the demonstrators also protested the lack of food. The manifestation in Petrograd, as St. Petersburg was renamed in 1914, was the largest and most important, with nearly 150,000 workers on strike. Serious interruptions of production and street marches also took place in Moscow, Baku, Harkov, Nizhny Novgorod, and else-

where. More demonstrations followed on February 23 (March 8), the formal beginning of the Russian Revolutions of 1917. The next day, more than 200,000 Petrograd workers went out on strike, and many marched down Nevsky Prospekt crying, "Down with the war!" and "Down with the autocracy!" and singing revolutionary songs. They demanded food.

Tsar of all the Russias and Autocrat Nicholas II was at General Staff Headquarters at Mogilyov in White Russia. His beloved, empty-headed Alexandra wrote to him on February 25 (March 10) that all would be well if only the Duma, the parliament created by the 1905 Revolution, behaved itself. But by this time nothing depended on the Duma.

The tsar agreed with his wife's assessment. He ordered General S. S. Khabalov, commander of the Petrograd Military District, to put down the "inexcusable" disturbances. The autocrat had spoken. It might have been Ivan the Terrible expressing his will in Red Square.

The turmoil showed no sign of abating and for lack of any better policy Nicholas ordered the dismissal of the Duma. But the citizens of Petrograd, not the tsar, would decide the issue. They revived the Petrograd Soviet and entered the Tauride Palace en masse to demand that the deputies formally certify the existence of a new order. No one knew what the new order was, but hundreds of thousands of people knew beyond any doubt, by the afternoon of February 27 (March 12), 1917, that the *old* order was no more.

A Temporary Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies came into existence. It immediately issued an invitation to the workers and soldiers of the capital to elect deputies to the Petrograd Soviet, the first meeting of which was scheduled for that evening. The process of creating soviets in the various military units was already under way. Conservative deputies formed a Provisional Committee of Members of the State Duma for the Restoration of Order in Petrograd and for

[the Establishment of] Relations with Institutions and Functionaries.

With the revival of the Petrograd Soviet and the creation of the Provisional Committee of the Duma, the revolution formally sanctioned its own existence. It was now impossible to reverse the flow of events. Frantically trying to do *something*, General Khabalov called on one unit after another to crush the demonstrations; each unit in turn declined to recognize the tsar's authority. On the night of February 27–28 (March 12–13), Khabalov and 2,000 or so loyal troops took refuge first in the Winter Palace, then the Admiralty, and finally just melted away into the early morning gloom.

In Moscow the Mensheviks, best organized of the radical parties, spurred the formation on February 27 of a Provisional Revolutionary Committee. It was open to all who supported the revolution; the next day, several Bolsheviks were coopted onto it. Mass demonstrations and meetings took place all over the city, especially in working-class districts. On the 28th, armed workers and a few soldiers seized the prisons and released the political prisoners. A Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet quickly came into existence.

Spontaneous creations of the working class and the soldiery, soviets appeared all over the country: by late spring there were 600. In the beginning they were invariably controlled by some combination of Mensheviks, Trudoviks, and SRs. The Mensheviks projected a calm, reasoned, and progressive message to the workers; the SRs and Trudoviks were agrarian socialist parties which appealed to peasants. The Bolsheviks ran fourth, but in the cities they already had strong positions in many of the factory committees—one of the major sources of delegates to the Soviets.

The rest of Russia followed the lead of revolutionary Petrograd. In many areas the pent-up pressures of nationalism blended with and helped shape political and class trends, especially in Finland, the Baltic region, and

Ukraine. The Muslim peoples of Central Asia began to stir, and the ancient Christian civilizations in Georgia and Armenia found new hope for deliverance from colonial status.

All afternoon on March 2 (15) telegrams poured into the imperial train's communications center. Military commanders who had tirelessly proclaimed loyalty to the tsar now advised abdication. Late in the evening, two deputies from the old Duma arrived to plead with Nicholas to step down. After an exhausting conversation the tsar agreed.

The news was published the next day: after 304 years, the Romanov dynasty had come to an end. The tsar proceeded to Tsarskoe Selo near Petrograd and rejoined his family, which was placed under gentle house arrest for its own protection.

## PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

On the recommendation of its Menshevik-SR leadership, the Petrograd Soviet's Executive Committee approved the formation on March 2 (15) of a Provisional government controlled by the middle-class Kadet and Octobrist parties. Prince G. E. Lvov was to be prime minister. Several members of his cabinet were big landowners or industrialists; the lone socialist was Aleksandr Kerensky, minister of justice.

History has judged the Provisional government harshly. It changed over the spring and summer as more socialists entered it, however, and was never merely the servant of the upper classes. Anxious to please all sectors of society, it tried to reconcile peasant and landowner, worker and capitalist, soldier and officer, rich and poor. This was impossible, but freedom confused everyone in Russia in 1917. Those who had power sometimes did not recognize it. No one knew where power came from, how long it would last, whether it bore any resemblance to power as Russia had known it for a thousand years. Democracy was a concept

alien to the Russian experience: Was it people shouting in the streets, decorous debate in the Duma, committees of workers and soldiers, or something else?

In the first few months after the February Revolution all sectors of Russian society supported the Provisional government. All socialist parties and most soviets backed the new regime; before Lenin's return from exile even the Bolsheviks gave it their support. The crucial, overriding issue on which the government would come to grief was the war. Had it carried out a land reform and acceded to all labor's demands it would surely have fallen anyway because it refused to abandon the war effort, unable to understand that Russia could no longer fight.

## ORDER NO. 1

No one in the Provisional government knew what the Petrograd Soviet was beyond the fact that no official decision was valid unless the Soviet approved it: this was "dual power." The government represented a link with the tradition of more or less orderly administration of the nation's affairs, while the Soviet embodied the spontaneous, elemental popular forces that had overthrown the old order. Establishing itself as a kind of inspectorate-general of political and social policy, the Soviet pursued an ambivalent line that now demanded democratic reforms, now meekly went along with policies manifestly not in the best interests of labor or the soldiers.

The most urgent problem facing the Petrograd Soviet was the proper care of the masses of soldiers roaming the streets. The Provisional Committee of the Duma had ordered the troops to return to their barracks and obey their officers. Many soldiers took this as a move to restore the old order; they wanted no part of that. The Executive Committee of the Soviet discussed the matter at length and produced a document stating its position.

Order No. 1, the old army's death warrant, was distributed throughout the city in leaflet form on the night of March 1–2 (14–15). It provided for the election of soldiers' committees in all units, for the election of soldiers' representatives to the Petrograd Soviet, for soldiers' control of weapons, and for full civil rights for soldiers including civilized treatment by officers. It also specified that the soldiers would obey the Military Commission of the government only when its orders did not conflict with those of the Petrograd Soviet.

Order No. 1 made it all but impossible for any authority other than the Soviet to control the soldiers. Nothing in existing law or tradition gave it the slightest legality, but it spoke with the clarity and force of the revolution itself and was received by the troops with something akin to reverence. The officers, however, were horrified; and when a few days later the new government announced its intention to continue the "vigorous" prosecution of the war, the confusion knew no bounds. The army had been democratized; would there now be voting in each unit on the wisdom of attacking the enemy? The logic of the order indicated that this was not such a farfetched possibility. Not only were soldiers to control the weapons and quartermaster functions of their units, they were also to have the right to dismiss "undesirable" officers.

This was no longer an army; but then, Russia had ceased to be a nation. It was now a question of sorting out the strongest waves in the revolutionary tide. In the first week of March, the clear winner was the Petrograd Soviet.

## **BOLSHEVIKS**

According to their own figures, which exaggerated their strength, the Bolsheviks had 24,000 members at the beginning of March. But the core party was composed of professional revolutionaries who could put many times their own number into the streets in a

peaceful or—if the need arose—a violent demonstration. This discipline was one factor that made the Bolsheviks stronger than numbers indicate. Another was their revolutionary audacity, which would increase dramatically after Lenin's return to Russia. In an incredible period when hundreds of thousands of people went into Petrograd's streets every day just to see what was going on; when political speeches and harangues were heard on every street corner for the first time in Russian history; when nearly everybody addressed everybody else as "comrade"; when the hated "Pharaohs" (policemen) disappeared from the streets, giving way to young men and women with red armbands; when democracy and equality were in the air and the war seemed distant and surely soon to end—when all this was going on, it was a good time to be a Bolshevik. Thousands of workers and soldiers and sailors rushed to join the party. In an atmosphere of radical change, this was the most radical organization of all. By the second week in May, Bolshevik membership passed the 100,000 mark.

Lenin was in Zürich when the news came. He immediately conceived the idea of traveling to Russia via neutral Sweden, but at first the Germans would not let him cross their territory. Protracted negotiations, however, led to the organization of a journey in a "sealed" train across Germany to Sweden. Lenin, Krupskaya, Grigory Zinoviev, Karl Radek, and several others left late in March for Petrograd. It was clearly in Germany's interest to have an anti-war politician of Lenin's caliber on the scene in Russia, and archival evidence now indicates that Lenin did in fact accept far greater assistance from Berlin than a mere train ride.

At 11:10 P.M. on April 3 (16), 1917, Lenin and his colleagues stepped off the train at the Finland Station in Petrograd. In a speech he greeted the "victorious Russian Revolution," which he called the first shock of the great social earthquake that would soon strike all capitalist countries. World revolution, he declared, was at hand.

The speech prefigured the one he gave a couple of hours later at Bolshevik headquarters. Members of the party's Central Committee had assembled to welcome him; he proceeded to castigate them severely. It was time, he said, to stop congratulating themselves on making a revolution and get on with the work of transforming the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one. Like everyone else, the Bolsheviks were still drunk with freedoms never experienced by Russians; their leader's words were like jets of ice water.

Three days after his arrival Lenin published his "April Theses," in which he declared that Russia must simply stop fighting. An imperialist war remained just that, no matter what the Provisional government called it. A "revolutionary war" to defend Russian territory would be permissible on condition that political power first pass to the soviets and annexations and indemnities renounced. From this it followed that workers, peasants, and soldiers must withdraw their support from the government and transfer all power to the soviets. Further, Lenin called not for a parliamentary republic but for a "republic of soviets." He would abolish police, army, bureaucracy. A popular militia would replace the army; it was not clear what would fulfill the functions of police and bureaucracy. He would immediately nationalize all land, permitting local soviets to distribute it to the peasants. He urged his followers to rename themselves communists.

Many Bolsheviks were stunned by this harsh political line, and the government branded Lenin insane, a traitor, an enemy of freedom. Worse, the sympathies of the Petrograd mob were clearly not with him in the spring of 1917: his call for the overthrow of the government outraged untold thousands of people.

The Bolshevik Central Committee had already angered Lenin by supporting the Provisional government, even to the extent of ac-

cepting its war policy. Now it challenged him again by initially rejecting his "April Theses." But membership in the party continued to grow, and Lenin was confident that it, and the public, would come around to his side.

## THE "KERENSKY" OFFENSIVE

The Provisional government reorganized in April following a crisis over war aims. Four more socialists joined Aleksandr Kerensky in the cabinet. Defenders of the government, including its Menshevik and SR ministers, insisted that the revolution was over. Any attempt to continue it constituted aid and comfort to Russia's enemies.

The First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which had a Menshevik-SR majority, convened in Petrograd on June 3 (16) and debated the issue of relations with the government. It approved a resolution backing the regime's foreign policy and gave carte blanche for a military offensive "if strategic considerations warrant."

Although the overwhelming majority of the congress supported the resolution, a substantial minority led by the Bolsheviks vehemently opposed it. The Bolsheviks had planned to take their campaign to the streets on June 10 (23), but the congress forbade this and the party backed off. The Mensheviks and SRs scheduled a pro-government demonstration for June 18 (July 1). The sanctioned affair took place on schedule, but scores of pro-Bolshevik marchers infiltrated, carrying banners and placards reading "All Power to the Soviets!" and "Down with the 10 Capitalist Ministers!" This was not what the government's friends had in mind.

The "Kerensky" offensive in early July saw the Russian forces not only repulsed but also thrown back to the lines they had started from in 1914, suffering 58,000 casualties, including more than 7,000 killed. The Germans were

forced to withdraw 11 divisions from France to deal with the offensive; the Austro-Hungarian command pulled 3 divisions out of Italy for the same purpose. No one can say how many British, French, and Italian lives were spared because of Russia's sacrifices.

The 58,000 battle casualties in the nine-day offensive (22,000 *per month* was the average in 1916) flooded the villages and towns of Russia with yet another wave of unbearable sorrow. Widows, orphans, and parents who had to perform that most unnatural human act, burial of the young, fixed their hatred on those responsible for their agony.

The ill-fated offensive sealed the fate of the Russian Revolution. By approving it, the Petrograd Soviet lost its original character as the spontaneous, elemental expression of revolution and became an adjunct of the Provisional government. The revolutionary, democratic instincts of the masses, expressed in the Soviet in the late winter and spring, were sacrificed to the same old political game that tsarism had played and lost. This tragic development confirmed Lenin's analysis of the revolutionary situation and paved his way to power. The Menshevik- and SR-dominated Soviet proved unable to comprehend the rapidly changing events or to manage the revolution. A tougher, uncompromising party would have to assume command. Lenin had been building it for nearly 20 years.

## JULY DAYS

The failure of the Kerensky offensive helped produce the greatest crisis yet to confront the Provisional government. Before its close on June 24 (July 7) the All-Russian Congress of Soviets elected a Central Executive Committee (CEC) of 320: 123 Mensheviks, 119 SRs, 58 Bolsheviks, the rest from splinter factions. Like the Petrograd Soviet, this CEC became



Lenin in disguise, summer of 1917. (Bolshevik party photo)

an ally of the government, which was now so strong that there was no chance the Bolsheviks could overthrow it.

On July 3 (16), however, soldiers from one of the machine-gun regiments organized a demonstration against the government and summoned the workers. The soldiers demanded the overthrow of the government and the seizure of power by the CEC.

Incessant Bolshevik propaganda had succeeded beyond Lenin's expectations. He had repeatedly warned the party against getting too far ahead of the masses; now that was happening. The translation into reality of the old slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" would greatly benefit his chief enemies, the SRs and Mensheviks, who still controlled these organizations and the CEC. Furthermore, in July the soviets themselves were different. No longer the spontaneous revolutionary organisms of the spring, they had become more conventional political

bodies: the Provisional government had coopted them into the management of political power. Recuperating from a minor ailment in the Finnish countryside not far from Petrograd, Lenin considered the machine-gunners' revolt a case of mistaking the fourth month of pregnancy for the ninth.

February had belonged to Petrograd, but not July: the rest of the country had not caught up with the politics of the capital. Lenin's colleagues worked through the night of July 3–4 (16–17) trying to calm things down; they failed. Lenin himself went to the Finland Station in midmorning on July 4 (17) and saw a sea of banners proclaiming "Down with the Provisional Government!" and "All Power to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies!" When he met a group of supporters at Bolshevik headquarters he was uncharacteristically subdued, and no wonder: half a million people were in the streets of Petrograd offering him what he had been asking for since the day he returned to Russia. Speaking to some of the most zealous Bolsheviks, the Kronstadt sailors, Lenin declared that the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" was a correct one and that "it must win and will win despite all the zigzags along the historical way." If this was an exhortation to seize power, it was well disguised.

Unable to cancel the July 4 (17) demonstration, Lenin went to the Tauride Palace, where the bulk of the demonstrators had gathered to call for the soviet's accession to their demands. The CEC stalled for time, waiting for reliable troops to reach the capital. The mood of the demonstrators, however, oscillated dangerously. The possibility of a major insurrection hung heavily in the air and was not dampened by a fierce thundershower.

Finally, loyal troops arrived and dispersed the mobs; there was panic as people ran for cover. The appearance of troops should not have come as the surprise it did: they had

been summoned by the Soviet, obedience to which they had pledged in accepting Order No. 1. On July 4 (17), this loyalty led to the death of about 400 people. The July Days produced both the greatest political confusion and the most bloodshed yet in the revolutionary year.

The CEC had supported the government; under the circumstances that was tantamount to surrendering to it. The Menshevik-SR coalition, its July victory notwithstanding, had foreclosed its options. It was now an agency of a regime determined to halt the revolution.

The government closed down the Bolshevik press and issued an order for the arrest of the party's leaders. Lenin was forced underground. His situation exceedingly precarious, on July 10 (23) he fled to a hideout in Finland.

The rest of Russia was confused by the news from Petrograd. It was not clear who was fighting whom or for what reason. But because of the almost unanimous acceptance of the February Revolution, appeals to support the government spawned by that revolution fell on receptive ears. The citizenry approved the suppression of the Bolsheviks despite having little understanding of the case against the party. It was enough for the ministers and the leaders of the Soviet to identify the Bolsheviks as enemies of democracy. The mood of Russia favored the government, but it was fickle. What held in July might not prevail in August.

## KERENSKY AND KORNILOV

Replacing Lvov as head of the Provisional government on July 7 (20), Kerensky supervised the suppression of the Bolsheviks and put the capital under martial law. He ordered the dissolution of political organizations in the Petrograd garrison, restored the death penalty and courts-martial at the front, and withdrew recognition of Finland's autonomy. To

sweeten this bitter medicine he offered anew what his predecessor had promised early in March: the summoning of a Constituent Assembly that would determine Russia's permanent form of government, decide the land question, formulate new labor legislation, and draft a constitution. He declared that elections to the assembly would take place as scheduled in mid-September; later he would postpone the date until November. Finally, on July 24 (August 6) Kerensky announced his new cabinet. He would continue as prime minister and minister of war and navy, with full powers to deal with "counterrevolution" and to use such measures as arrest without warrant, exile from the country, and suspension of civil rights. The government also forbade unsanctioned meetings and assemblies.

Kerensky appointed General Lavr Kornilov commander of the armed forces and gave vague general instructions about keeping troops ready to fight the enemy "wherever he might appear." That referred to "counterrevolutionary" elements in Petrograd, and *that* meant the Bolsheviks. Kornilov drew up contingency plans for placing the capital under military rule.

With the fall of Riga to the Germans on August 21 (September 3), the moment arrived: Kornilov decided to march on the capital, crush the Bolsheviks and other opponents of the war, and oversee the formation of a new regime, presumably with himself at the head. Telegrams of support poured into his headquarters. The Union of the Russian People and the Black Hundreds, right-wing, violently anti-Semitic organizations, pledged their backing to the general, as did many industrialists and landlords.

A dumbfounded Kerensky received the news that troops were marching on Petrograd and wired Kornilov for an explanation. Back came a reply indicating that the purpose of the action was to "restore order." Kerensky ordered the general to rescind his commands.

Kornilov refused. Kerensky relieved him of his post; Kornilov declined to comply.

At this point the prime minister believed he had no choice but to make temporary peace with the left, including the Bolsheviks. He emptied the jails of all but a few of those arrested in July and appealed for the "defense of the revolution" against Kornilov. Within 48 hours the Bolsheviks had put 25,000 Red Guards armed with weapons supplied by the government on duty across the southern approaches to the city. From his hiding place Lenin wrote, "We are going to fight against Kornilov. We are not supporting Kerensky but exposing his weakness." The Bolsheviks never returned those weapons.

What followed was anticlimax. The Red Guards, soldiers, Baltic Fleet sailors, and railway workers had established a strong defense perimeter. The commander of the advance column of Kornilov forces lost control of his troops, who were unenthusiastic about attacking their comrades in Petrograd, and committed suicide. Other units rebelled and refused to continue their march. Officers loyal to the government arrested Kornilov, whose putsch had failed.

Lenin declared that his party's position was unchanged. The Bolsheviks demanded anew what they had sought in April, namely, the transfer of all power to the soviets and a government of SRs and Mensheviks responsible to the soviets. If these demands were met, the revolution could proceed in a peaceful manner.

The Kornilov affair exposed the Provisional government as unscrupulous, antidemocratic, and—worst of all—incompetent. The Bolsheviks were regarded as the saviors of Petrograd. The new, favorable image of the party was promptly reflected in the political arena: on August 31 (September 13) the Petrograd Soviet went over to the Bolshevik side. Five days later the Moscow Soviet followed suit. Now "All Power to the Soviets!" took on a new meaning.

## TWILIGHT OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

That workers began to flock in great numbers to the Bolsheviks was not surprising: this was a party that professed to speak on their behalf. But in a new development, the peasants were also beginning to support Lenin's party. For months the peasant party, the SRs, had been in a powerful position not only in the Soviets but also in the Provisional government. The lot of the peasant had not improved. In the countryside people continued to ask, "When will we get the land?" The government urged them to wait for the Constituent Assembly. The peasants, no longer in a mood to wait, began to take seriously the Bolshevik exhortations to seize the land and worry about legality later. Their impatience became all the greater when peasant soldiers, bombarded by Bolshevik propaganda for months, came back to the villages demanding land. Instances of land seizure were so numerous that the authorities lost count. Peasant Russia would wait no longer for land and justice.

The centrifugal forces that would sweep away the Kerensky regime included strong breakaway movements among some of the minority peoples. The Provisional government had resigned itself to the loss of Russian Poland, but that was the extent of its concessions. It insisted that Finland remain under Russian control, warned the Romanian government that it would not tolerate the seizure of Bessarabia, and denounced nationalists who were calling for Ukrainian independence. The demands of the Baltic populations for independence were rejected. Separatist movements took shape only slowly in the Caucasus and Central Asia, but warning signals abounded and the government loudly proclaimed its determination not to cede a meter of its territory.

The Provisional government rejected compromise with national-independence movements and declined to consider an accommodation with the Bolsheviks. This ensured the hostility of many non-Russian minorities and forced Lenin's party to concentrate its efforts, from the middle of September, on the preparation of an armed uprising.

Kerensky believed he could outflank the Bolsheviks with gestures. Taking his cue from the French Revolution, he established a "Directory" (Council of Five) that "ruled" Russia for the first three and a half weeks of September. This body proclaimed a republic, announced the dissolution of the Duma, promised that elections to the Constituent Assembly would take place as scheduled, and called a "Democratic Conference" to discuss national issues and create a new coalition government.

The Bolsheviks would not be in the coalition, and indeed their participation in the "Democratic Conference" was restricted by their enemies. Kerensky, the Kadets, the Menshevik-SR "compromisers," and most middle- and upper-class citizens in Russia were determined to keep the Bolsheviks isolated. This policy succeeded, the only one that did. It could not stave off disaster.

## SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READING

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## chapter 2

# THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

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In the autumn of 1917 the Provisional government still had no plan for feeding the cities, providing fuel for the winter, provisioning the army, or resuscitating the economy. Industrial production was off 36.5 percent in comparison with 1916, not a good year. Inflation ran out of control: 1917 prices stood 248 percent above those of 1913, and real wages had fallen 57.4 percent in the same period. Virtually the only people who still supported the government were those little affected by this inflation. Few in number, the fact that they existed at all means that the real burden on the poor was even worse than the figures indicate.

The summer and early autumn of 1917 was a time of overwhelming social anxiety in Russia. The country raced—everyone sensed it—toward an abyss: humiliating defeat and German rule? restoration of the tsarist-landlord-capitalist regime? military dictatorship?

unrelieved anarchy? The February Revolution that had begun with such promise, briefly making Russia, as many people said proudly at the time, the “freest country in the world,” had somehow failed to bring forth the promised millenarian harvest.

The Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik party, which had not yet adopted Lenin’s demand that it rename itself Communist, met in Petrograd from July 26 to August 3 (August 8–16) and shelved the slogan “All Power to the Soviets!” on the grounds that those bodies had capitulated to the government. Nevertheless, the party increased its efforts to win control of the soviets; and because since the spring it had controlled the factory committees that staffed them, it was in a strong position to accomplish that goal. Directing the work of the congress from his hideout, Lenin advised the 267 delegates to work for the

“complete liquidation of the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie.”

The congress reaffirmed the party’s long-standing call for the nationalization of industry, “workers’ control”—by workers loyal to the Bolsheviks—of production and distribution, and the distribution of all land to the peasants. Some party members, notably Nikolai Bukharin and E. A. Preobrazhensky, demanded that the party slow its revolutionary activity, arguing—as Lenin always had—that a socialist revolution could not succeed in Russia in the absence of others in Western Europe. After fierce debates the congress rejected this view.

Enforced isolation in Finland had the advantage of freeing Lenin from the day-to-day cares of running the party to which he had always devoted too much attention. He had time to reflect on the events of spring and summer and ponder the future of the revolution. In early September he concluded that the crisis was rapidly maturing and that the Bolsheviks should prepare for an armed insurrection. Quite independently of anything his party did or did not do, public opinion in Petrograd, Moscow, and other large cities was clearly moving rapidly in a leftward, more radical direction. This was also true of the masses of soldiers and sailors. Lenin understood that the working class, the men under arms, and the preponderance of the urban population, aware of their power, were more willing than ever to use it. New military units were coming over to the soviets daily as pacifist sentiment at the front soared in the wake of the infamous Kerensky offensive. In the countryside, the peasant movement had taken on the character of a land war. The Provisional government daily proved its incompetence, and the “compromisers”—as the Bolsheviks derisively called them—among the Mensheviks and SRs, with no program of their own, supported it.

The handful of Bolsheviks of February had

become more than 100,000 by the end of April, and the delegates to the Sixth Congress that summer represented about 200,000 party members. There were trimmers and bandwagon-jumpers in abundance among the new recruits, but in the summer and autumn of 1917 that mattered relatively little. Whatever their motives, many were enthusiastic and energetic people who would distribute leaflets, bring crowds into the streets, monitor demonstrations, form noisy cliques for Bolshevik orators, jeer and whistle at speakers from other parties, and finally, use weapons when the time came.

There was wide disagreement in the party on this last issue. Many Bolsheviks possessed what Lenin sarcastically called a “Menshevik mentality,” opposing an armed uprising on a variety of grounds. In their view, “All Power to the Soviets” meant precisely that. The Bolsheviks were not a wholly united party; substantial opposition to Lenin existed.

When the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets came over to the Bolsheviks, Lenin believed he could take control of the country. The Kornilov affair, the government’s inept handling of the aftermath, and the Menshevik-SR refusal to back the Bolshevik demand for transfer of power to the soviets convinced him to begin the endgame.

Lenin churned out articles for the Bolshevik press and for socialist newspapers all over the country on the deepening crisis, arguing that the revolutionary consciousness and ardor of the working class had matured to the point where its seizure of power was entirely possible. Again many party members—both leaders and rank and file—opposed him. No less devoted to Marxism than he, they thought that he was confusing it with insurrectionism. They saw his insistence on an armed uprising simply as his pet theory, a weakness, a chink in his armor. Infuriated, Lenin threatened at one

point to quit the Central Committee if the opposition did not capitulate.

## THE BOLSHEVIKS PREPARE

The Petrograd and Moscow Soviets had adopted Bolshevik resolutions on the war, land, and worker control of industry. But those first votes were close; a more meaningful test took place in the Petrograd Soviet on September 9 (22). On that day, Trotsky engineered a test of strength that amounted to a no-confidence vote against Kerensky: the Bolsheviks won, 519 to 414, with 67 abstentions. The margin of victory came from the military deputies, who had lost confidence in the prime minister and would henceforth follow only their own leaders and the Soviet, as Order No. 1 had urged months earlier.

The soldiers had become especially fond of the dynamic Trotsky, who since his release from prison had established himself as a leader of the Petrograd Soviet. On September 25 (October 8) he was elected chairman, a position he had held in the Revolution of 1905.

Events favored the Bolsheviks in Moscow, too. The party won 350 of 710 seats in the October municipal elections. The change in party fortunes in the old capital between July and October was dramatic:

The total vote dropped precipitately, but not nearly at the rate of decline of SR support; and Kerensky was an associate of the SRs. The Mensheviks had thrown in their lot with him. The Kadet vote in Moscow stayed about the same between July and October. No new Kadet votes had appeared, and some people

who had earlier supported the party had left the city.

The Bolsheviks offered a haven not only for the hungry, poorly housed, underpaid, inflation-gouged workers but indeed for every malcontent and bearer of real or imagined personal grievances in Russia. Beyond that, many lower-middle-class individuals—foremen and straw bosses, white-collar workers, retail clerks, young professional people, intellectuals—found Lenin's party attractive. In such numbers did people flock to his banner in Moscow that Lenin came to believe the insurrection should take place there rather than in Petrograd.

The Moscow party organization, however, was less insurrectionist than its Petrograd counterpart; its relatively moderate image accounted in part for its success at the polls. The Moscow workers were a different kind of proletariat. Unlike the heavy-industry working class of Petrograd, they labored in textiles, manufacturing, food processing. Their history differed from that of the Petrograd workers, who were historically better paid because of chronic labor shortages. Moscow workers were better housed, and—the massive uprising of December 1905 notwithstanding—their strike record was less impressive than that of their brothers in the capital.

In March the Bolsheviks had created a special party military organization to spread propaganda, recruit and organize, win over the Petrograd garrison and Baltic Fleet. The success of this outfit led to the July Days. That fiasco proved only a temporary reverse; the military organization resumed its work. Now, in early October, the Bolshevik-dominated Petrograd Soviet decided, at *Menshevik* initiative, to create its own Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC).

The first chairman of the MRC was a young Left SR. Trotsky actually directed the work but as chairman of the Soviet, not as a Bolshevik leader. The MRC had a highly "organic" char-

<i>Change in Total Vote,</i>			<i>Percentage Change</i>	
<i>July–October</i>				
SRs	down	320,511	SRs	-85.5
Mensheviks	down	60,520	Mensheviks	-79.2
Bolsheviks	up	122,911	Bolsheviks	+263
Kadets	down	7,675	Kadets	-7.0

acter in that it was extremely flexible and could “adapt itself to every change in the mood of the revolutionary masses.” Programmed action and bureaucratic discipline were alien to it; that is why it could lead a revolution. The original body had 66 members: 48 Bolsheviks, 14 left SRs, and 4 anarchists.

The moderate socialists in the Soviet refused to cooperate with the MRC, whose main task was to coordinate the politics and revolutionary activity of the Petrograd Soviet with that of the garrison and the Baltic Fleet. It also acted as a liaison between the Bolshevik Red Guards, whose numbers in Petrograd stood at about 40,000, and the Soviet. The MRC quickly emerged as the unchallenged directorate of the 150,000-man garrison and the 80,000 sailors. It also had at its disposal several thousand working-class irregulars.

No one has ever explained why Lenin remained in hiding across the frontier in Finland after the government, under siege in the Kornilov affair, amnestied the Bolsheviks and other leftists arrested in the July Days. At last, fear of losing the moment overcame prudence and he returned secretly to Petrograd. Shortly thereafter, the Bolshevik Central Committee voted on October 10 (23) to make “an armed insurrection the order of the day.” Only Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev opposed him in the ten-to-two vote, but ten members of the full Central Committee were absent. As their public comments at the time indicated, three absentees—Viktor Nogin, A. I. Rykov, and Vladimir Milyutin—would have voted against an uprising. Further, several speakers expressed grave reservations about the wisdom of an insurrection in general and the time in particular.

When the Central Committee vote was communicated to party activists, opposition immediately surfaced. The MRC denounced the plan; these were the Bolsheviks most concerned with the practical problems of mounting an insurrection. Even those who sided with Lenin had little inkling that the party leader

would push them into an immediate uprising: they heard his words but declined to take them at face value. It was one thing to place an insurrection on the agenda, another to issue marching orders. Zinoviev and Kamenev, haunted the rest of their uneasy lives by their votes, expressed what many party leaders and rank-and-file members thought.

Many Bolsheviks wanted to wait for the convening of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, scheduled for October 25 (November 7), before making plans for the future. The congress would presumably be the most democratic and truly representative body yet elected in 1917, and the overwhelming majority of workers, soldiers, sailors, and socialists in Petrograd looked to it for direction. But Lenin could not wait; and in Leon Trotsky, formerly a Menshevik leader and until July 1917 the most influential critic of the Leninist political line, he found a brilliant field commander who could translate his strategy into victory.

## TROTSKY IN OCTOBER

Until glasnost, communist accounts usually did not mention Trotsky’s contribution to the October Revolution. Right after the revolution, however, Joseph Stalin said this about his colleague’s role:

The entire labor of the practical organization of the insurrection was placed under the immediate direction of the president of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It can be stated with certainty that the party owes the rapid coming over of the garrison into the camp of the Soviets and the skillful work of the Military Revolutionary Committee above all and essentially to Comrade Trotsky.

Taken from the party newspaper *Pravda*, these remarks were to be omitted from Stalin’s *Collected Works*.

Trotsky supported Lenin’s call for an immediate armed uprising when—that ten-to-



Leon Trotsky. (National Archives)

two vote notwithstanding—it was difficult to find another member of the Central Committee who truly believed in this course of action. Most Bolsheviks wanted the party to be in power someday; that was why they were in politics. Nevertheless, few wanted to risk everything on one roll of the dice. Trotsky, a newcomer to Bolshevik ranks and frequently Lenin's opponent before July 1917, now backed the party leader without reservation. He directed the MRC and the Bolshevik military organization and formulated the tactical plan for the uprising. As chairman of the Petrograd Soviet he directed the flow of debate and made at least some of the members believe Lenin's claim that Kerensky was about to overthrow it.

On October 21 (November 3), after hearing Trotsky speak, the regimental committees of the garrison passed a resolution stating that the "All-Russian Congress of Soviets must take power into its own hands and guarantee the people peace, bread, and land." This was Lenin's program in all its ultimately persuasive simplicity.

The same day the commander of the Petrograd Military District refused the MRC's de-

mand for the right to countersign orders to the garrison. The next day Trotsky appealed to the soldiers: "The General Staff has broken with the revolutionary garrison and the Petrograd Soviet [this was an exaggeration] . . . thus making itself the tool of counterrevolutionary forces . . . The Revolution is in danger!"

The Provisional government no longer controlled any significant part of the garrison. Units stationed in the suburbs vied with one another to sign oaths of loyalty to the Soviet. Attempts to bring troops from the front to Petrograd were frustrated both by the refusal of the men to move against their brothers in the capital and by the warning of the railwaymen's union that it would block any such movement by rail.

The soldiers of the Peter-Paul Fortress, mostly older veterans and reservists, refused to recognize the authority of the MRC. Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko wanted to storm the fortress, but Trotsky went there, made a speech, and swung the troops around. The MRC took command of the fortress without firing a shot and seized 100,000 rifles.

## THE CROSSROADS

On October 18 (31), unable to dissuade the Central Committee from following what he considered Lenin's reckless course, Lev Kamenev revealed Bolshevik intentions to a Petrograd newspaper controlled by the writer Maksim Gorky. Lenin demanded that the party oust Kamenev and Zinoviev, who had associated himself with the letter. The other party leaders refused, content to accept Kamenev's resignation from the Central Committee and to order him and Zinoviev to refrain from quarreling publicly with party decisions.

Lenin thought that the publicity given his plans would thwart them; in reality it helped ensure victory by forcing the party's hand. The Bolsheviks could not have survived another crisis like the July Days, when they lagged behind the workers. Lenin was probably correct in regarding July as a false opportunity, but the situation had changed drastically by October, when a stronger Bolshevik party faced weaker opponents.

Since early September, i.e., when the party legally obtained arms to fight Kornilov, there had been talk in the streets of a Bolshevik plot to seize power. Kerensky took note of the rumors when he spoke to the Pre-Parliament on October 20 (November 2):

I must inform you that a part of the Petrograd population is in a state of open insurgency. . . . I have proposed that judicial investigations be started immediately and I have also ordered arrests [protests from the left]. Yes, yes, because at the moment, when the state is imperiled by deliberate or unwitting betrayal and is on the brink of ruin, the Provisional government, myself included, prefers to be killed and destroyed rather than betray the life, the honor and the independence of the state [ovation from all but the left]. All those elements of Russian society, all those groups and parties which have dared raise a hand against the free will of the Russian people . . . are subject to immediate, final and definite liquidation.

The right-wing delegates cheered and gave him a standing ovation, but it was Kerensky's swan song. Facing an armed insurrection at any moment, the government had at its certain disposal only the cadets of the military academy, a battalion of women, and a few Cossacks.

So pitifully small were Kerensky's forces that it is still a mystery why many garrison soldiers believed Lenin's claim that the government was about to launch a massive attack and wipe out all the gains of the revolution. It was a matter of crisis feeding on rumor and rumor on crisis, and of effective Bolshevik propaganda.

Desperately afraid that his own party and the Petrograd Soviet it controlled would procrastinate and miss the crest of the wave, Lenin kept up a barrage of warnings to his colleagues not to delay, not even for the Congress of Soviets. A political sixth sense told him to seize the moment; there would be no second chance.

## OCTOBER 24–25, 1917

Lenin's warnings and exhortations had not gone unheeded despite the party's lack of enthusiasm for an uprising. Trotsky mapped out the tactical situation, the Bolshevik and Bolshevikized soldiers and sailors prepared for action, the Petrograd Soviet hourly moved further to the left. The Red Guards, disciplined squads of energetic, excited young men and women checked weapons, adjusted red armbands, gulped tasteless "victory tea," wolfed down bread and sausage of uncertain provenance, slept only an hour or two in 24, waited impatiently for the order to take up positions. All units were ready, but they could not maintain such a state indefinitely.

Knowing that the revolutionary fervor of the Bolshevik rank and file was unstable, Lenin redoubled his frantic efforts to force the party into action. The revolutionary convulsions approached the moment of destiny.

Late in the evening on October 24 (November 6), the day before the convening of the Congress of Soviets, Bolshevik detachments moved quietly to their assigned positions around Petrograd. Few shots were fired; occasional scuffles attracted little attention. The city went about routine nighttime business. Few citizens dared object to showing identification papers to stern-faced, brusque irregulars with red armbands. The regular police simply melted away at the approach of the Bolsheviks. No one challenged the uniformed servicemen.

Around midnight, bursting with the agonizing tension that afflicts people who normally contain their emotions tightly, Lenin put on a workman's cap and scarf and walked across the city to Bolshevik headquarters, now at the Smolny Institute, formerly a finishing school for daughters of the rich. He had difficulty getting past the guards: he was in disguise, did not know the password, and at first there was no one to vouch for his identity. The guard did not know whether he was a spy, panhandler, or a simpleton trying to pass as Lenin, but they finally recognized him and let him in. As the news began to come in from the city he surely permitted himself a smile. His instincts had not betrayed him. The proletarian revolution had come to pass.

At about 2:00 A.M., October 27 (November 7), the Central Committee received confirmation that Bolshevik units had seized the central telephone exchange, the central telegraph office, the main post office, and the railway stations. Soldiers, sailors, Red Guards, and deputized workers had taken up positions at the bridges across the Neva, key intersections, power stations, the State Bank. They had encountered little resistance. Remaining in government hands at daybreak were only the Winter Palace, where Kerensky had foolishly (given the symbolic significance of the building) transferred his own headquarters, the general staff building, and a few other offices.

At 10:00 A.M., the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet issued Lenin's hastily-drafted proclamation:

### TO THE CITIZENS OF RUSSIA!

The Provisional government has been overthrown. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the Military Revolutionary Committee, which stands at the head of the Petrograd proletariat and garrison.

The cause for which the people have struggled—the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the elimination of landlord estates, workers' control over production, the creation of a Soviet government—the triumph of this cause has been assured.

Long live the workers' and peasants' revolution!

By coincidence the scheduled opening of the Congress of Soviets was only hours away when Lenin wrote this proclamation and had it telegraphed all over Russia. It was necessary to present the congress, to which even many of Lenin's own supporters looked for leadership, with a *fait accompli*.

It was an eerily unrevolutionary revolution. Trams continued to run, cafés and restaurants were open, and although the bustle in the streets seemed greater than ever there was no general atmosphere of momentous events. At 2:35 P.M. Trotsky addressed an emergency meeting of the Petrograd Soviet and gave an account of events to date. Lenin arrived to an enthusiastic welcome and said, "Comrades, the workers' and peasants' revolution has come to pass, the revolution which the Bolsheviks have long shown to be necessary." He commented on the significance of the seizure of power, stressed the critical link between Russian workers and the "world labor movement," and concluded, "In Russia, we must now devote ourselves to the construction of a proletarian socialist state. Long live the socialist world revolution!"

There was an odd calm to all this, one of history's decisive moments. After Lenin

spoke, people would not live their lives in the same way. The course of history was changing, and Lenin and the party he dragged along with him gave it direction. The other elements in the October equation hesitated, debated, waited—a cautious posture that many Bolsheviks preferred. But for one brief moment a single iron-willed political strategist united a quarrelsome party and forced it to seize a unique opportunity.

Meanwhile the government tried to summon loyal troops but found none who would respond. The ministers won a few extra hours in office because the sailors from Kronstadt assigned to arrest them failed to arrive on time. The action scheduled for 2:00 P.M. was postponed several times. The sailors finally showed up late in the evening—the delay has never been explained—and delivered an ultimatum. From its moorings across the river, the cruiser *Aurora* fired some blank shells to soften up resistance. A little after midnight a Winter Palace telephone operator contacted Konovalov, who was now in charge. The operator told Konovalov that a “delegation” was approaching the palace. Kerensky had slipped out earlier, fleeing in an automobile supplied by the American legation.

This procession was led by Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko, who simply walked up to the gates and pushed past the guards and servitors. *There was no storming of the Winter Palace*, decades of both Soviet and Western myth-building notwithstanding. There did not have to be: Russia’s middle class went down to defeat without a real struggle.

The Red Guards found the ministers in darkness in an interior room. Antonov-Ovseyenko read out the MRC order for their arrest. Konovalov: “The members of the Provisional government yield to force, and surrender to prevent bloodshed.” Nothing became them in office so much as the leaving of it. The ministers were escorted to cells in the Peter-Paul Fortress. Along the way Antonov-

Ovseyenko’s Red Guards held back the sailors and workers who wanted to lynch them.

There were no lynchings, no real fighting. Only a handful of casualties were recorded for the night of October 25–26; some say as few as five. Whatever the numbers, there were more than one would expect in a mere changing of the guard, too few to indicate an epochal convulsion.

## SECOND ALL-RUSSIAN CONGRESS OF SOVIETS

AT 10:40 P.M. on October 25 (November 7) the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets convened in Smolny Institute, central headquarters of the Soviet since early August and of the Bolshevik Central Committee since September. The members were significantly younger than those of the first congress, and there were more soldiers. The new congress, which would be asked to sanction and legitimize the insurrection, was dominated by the Bolsheviks—300 of the 670 delegates present. Supported by the left SRs, the Bolsheviks prevailed on all questions. Fourteen Bolsheviks, including Lenin, Trotsky, Antonov-Ovseyenko, Aleksandra Kollontai, and the erstwhile renegades Kamenev and Zinoviev, were elected to the presidium. Seven left SRs and 1 Ukrainian socialist were also elected.

At this stage the Mensheviks, Martov’s Menshevik Internationalists, the regular SRs, and the members of two small Jewish parties, declaring their opposition to the “military plot and the seizure of power,” walked out of the congress. This was a significant political gesture. These people would later argue that they had had to leave or be tainted by complicity with Bolshevism. They also pleaded, after the fact, that they had assumed their walkout would lead to the collapse of the Bolshevik regime before it could legitimize itself.



Lenin and his colleagues,  
Petrograd, late 1917. (National  
Archives)

The action cast the anti-Bolsheviks in an awkward role. They naturally opposed the establishment of a Leninist regime, which many believed would not last through the night. Even if the Bolsheviks had fallen shortly after the exit of their opponents, however, so long as they controlled the speaker's rostrum they were Russia's only government. By rebelling against this regime at the moment of its birth, the anti-Bolsheviks cast their lot with counterrevolution.

At 3:10 A.M., October 26 (November 8), the congress received a telegram from Antonov-Ovseyenko: The Winter Palace had fallen. All the ministers save Kerensky were in custody. Cheers and applause, no wild demonstration: the details of the mopping up were a little concern at this hour.

Around 4:00 A.M. the Bolshevik floor leader, Anatoli Lunacharsky, read Lenin's manifesto "To All Workers, Soldiers and Peasants" and asked for its immediate adoption. This manifesto announced the passing of political power into the hands of the congress

and of local soviets all over the country and declared the old regime defunct. It provided again for the transfer of all land to "peasant committees" and for workers' control in industry. The Petrograd Soviet would "at once" propose a "democratic peace to all nations and an armistice on all fronts." The manifesto provided for the care of the "revolutionary army," which would be supplied through "requisitions from and taxation of the propertied classes." Soldiers' families would be provided for; no previous regime had lifted a finger for them. Finally, the document called on the congress and the people to resist the counter-revolutionary forces already being formed.

The delegates sensed that they were listening to history's statement of what had just been accomplished in Petrograd and repeatedly interrupted Lunacharsky with shouts and cheers. The left SRs announced they would support the adoption of the manifesto, which was approved around 5:00 A.M. with 2 votes against and 12 abstentions. A new era had begun.

## LENIN TAKES COMMAND

On October 26 (November 8) the MRC took control of police functions and calmly began to organize the life of the city. The shops were open; public transportation ran more or less on schedule; there was no interruption in water, electricity, or gas service. That evening music lovers went to the theatre to hear the great basso Fyodor Chalyapin. Fashionable cafés and restaurants on the Nevsky had delicacies and expensive French champagne for customers who could afford them.

Over at Smolny, hectic activity. The Bolsheviks were trying to organize a government. First question: what to call the heads of government departments? The Bolsheviks ruled out “minister” because of its “capitalist” connotations, whatever those were. Somebody called out “comissar?” At once all agreed: that was it—comissars in charge of comissariats. The new government would be called “Council [Soviet] of People’s Comissars.” It had, Lenin observed, a nice revolutionary ring.

Lenin became chairman of the new government, Trotsky, comissar of foreign affairs. Military affairs went to the *troika* of Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko, Nikolai Krylenko, and Pavel Dybenko, leaders of the MRC. The relatively minor post of comissar of nationalities was reserved for a non-Russian; Stalin (Dzhugashvili), an Ossete from Georgia, received it. Subcabinet slots were assigned in haphazard fashion. The job of running the state bank went to a man whose qualifications consisted of attendance at a couple of lectures at the London School of Economics.

A little before 9:00 A.M. on October 26, Lenin arrived at Smolny to preside over the Congress of Soviets and introduce his government. Kamenev, who saw no reason to remind anyone of his opposition to the insurrection that now catapulted him into a prominent position, was in the chair. A couple of minor items—including abolition of the death pen-

alty at the front, a step Lenin firmly opposed—being disposed of quickly, the congress turned to the first of the three main items on the agenda, the question of peace. Lenin rose and read his “Decree on Peace,” which merely repeated what he had said in the general manifesto early that morning. When he finished, there was an enormous cheer. Speaker after speaker rose to praise the Bolshevik proposal for an immediate 90-day armistice and a general peace and conference. One or two delegates mumbled something about the need to have a government composed of all socialist parties; they were shouted down. Kamenev asked for a show of voting cards: the lone dissenter was put in fear of his life. Russia became the first belligerent to demand an end to the war.

Lenin’s “Decree on Land” addressed the second major issue before the congress. Delegates listened in surprise as he read it; they had heard these words before, in the SR program. The first article declared that private landholdings were abolished immediately without compensation. The right to use the land belonged to all citizens as long as they worked it themselves; it was forbidden to hire labor. The land was to be divided among those who worked it and periodically redivided—an ancient custom in many areas of Russia—to reflect population changes and new agricultural methods. The last point of Lenin’s decree declared that “the land of ordinary peasants and Cossacks shall not be confiscated.” This contradicted the first article, but no one paid any attention. The decree and its SR supplement did provide for the final solution of the land problem by the Constituent Assembly, which would shortly be elected.

The final item on the agenda involved the formation of a government. Trotsky called for an exclusively Bolshevik regime; other speakers, among them several Bolsheviks, insisted that all parties be represented. A delegate from the railwaymen’s union declared that it was not

about to become a Bolshevik puppet and warned of reprisals if Lenin tried to become a dictator. The debate became ragged as the hour grew late. The Bolsheviks offered posts in the cabinet to the left SRs, who had by now declared themselves an independent party, only to be rebuffed. Finally, shortly before 5:00 A.M., the congress approved the all-Bolshevik list. The Council of People's Comissars, or Sovnarkom (an acronym), became the legal government of Russia.

## OUTSIDE PETROGRAD

The essentially peaceful Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd stood in marked contrast to events elsewhere. A major problem was sheer confusion: few people in the hinterland knew exactly what had happened in the capital. Most evidently believed that the Petrograd Soviet had seized power and that several parties were battling to form a new government. Many people believed that the SRs would emerge victorious; the prospect emboldened members of that party around the country.

In Moscow, 20,000 well-armed men were poised to suppress a leftist uprising, and the city fathers had every reason to expect reinforcements from the Southwestern Front and from Cossack units in southern Russia and the Ukraine. The local garrison of 30,000 men was not wholly reliable but was less infected with the virus of revolution than its Petrograd counterpart. Beyond that, the officers had locked away the garrison's weapons, issuing them only to friendly units. The Moscow City Duma formed a Committee of Public Safety and prepared to do battle.

The central industrial region around Moscow was crucial to Bolshevik hopes for success. Nearly half the country's 3 million workers were there; if they linked up with revolutionary Petrograd, the heartland would be secure.

The local Bolsheviks, Lenin's assessment of

their revolutionary zeal notwithstanding, were not anxious to fight in the streets. The Bolshevik chairman of the Moscow Soviet, Viktor Nogin, had opposed the insurrection. Now he appealed for support for the Petrograd uprising but stressed its defensive nature against the counterrevolutionary provisional government. The Mensheviks and SRs in the soviet opposed Nogin's motion; when the vote was taken, the Bolsheviks won. The Moscow Soviet thereupon formed a Military Revolutionary Committee, which had at its disposal 6,000 Red Guards and a large number of workers. Opposition within Moscow Bolshevik ranks to a seizure of power remained strong, however, and in the beginning the left in that city was unable to present a unified front against forces loyal to the Provisional government.

The outcome of the fighting that began in Moscow on October 27 (November 9) remained in doubt for several days. Loyalist military academy cadets seized control of the Kremlin and dealt savagely with the guard, which had gone over to the Bolshevik-dominated soviet. The Committee of Public Safety secured the central districts and awaited reinforcements. The Soviet received help first, however, in the form of Red Guard detachments from other cities, notably Petrograd. The arrival of a contingent of pro-Bolshevik soldiers and sailors from the capital tipped the balance. A cease-fire took effect on the morning of November 2 (15), the soviet seized control of the city. Approximately a thousand people died in the process of bringing the old capital into the Bolshevik camp. Anticipating the possibility of Lenin's government moving to Moscow, the local Bolsheviks lost no time in launching efforts to root out hostile elements.

Elsewhere in the central industrial region, fighting continued until the spring of 1918. It was especially fierce in the arms manufacturing city of Tula, Nizhny Novgorod, and Kaluga. By June, however, most of the region was under Bolshevik control.

Second only to the Petrograd-Moscow axis and the industrial center to Bolshevik hopes was Ukraine. There were about a million workers, a third of the empire total, in Ukraine, two-thirds of them concentrated in the Donbas and in Harkov and Yekaterinoslav provinces. About 30,000 Bolsheviks had been agitating for months in the Donbas, and that heavily industrialized sector came under Bolshevik control after the October Revolution in Petrograd. Elsewhere in Ukraine there were only 15,000 Bolsheviks, who were no match for the separatists, not to mention other contenders for power—anarchists, bandit gangs, and private Cossack armies. Not until February 1918 was the red flag of Bolshevism to fly over Kiev, capital of Ukraine, and even then it did not fly long: A short-lived independent Ukrainian regime (Central Rada) succeeded in establishing control over the city, only to yield in turn to a puppet government under German control.

Kiev changed hands frequently in this chaotic period, and not until after the end of the Russo-Polish War in 1920 did the Bolsheviks establish firm control over the city. Fighting continued in many areas of Ukraine throughout the Civil War, and indeed the political situation did not stabilize until the mid-1920s.

The war with Poland complicated the situation not only in Ukraine but also in Byelorussia, Lithuania, and Russian Poland. The new Polish state incorporated some of western Ukraine and Byelorussia as well as formerly tsarist Polish territories. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia all won independence and became hotbeds of anticommunism.

In the southwest, the province of Bessarabia, which Alexander I had seized from the Ottoman Empire in the war of 1806–1812, first declared its independence, then sought and achieved incorporation into Romania. Although about two-thirds of the Bessarabian population was Romanian, the Bolsheviks re-

fused to recognize the loss of the province and swore to retake it.

The agricultural areas of the northern Caucasus only slowly came under Bolshevik control. Comprising dozens of different nationalities, the population was by and large indifferent to politics save when politics intruded on their normally peaceful lives. To the south, in Georgia, Armenia, and Transcaucasia, a no less heterogeneous population was far more active politically, with the Mensheviks the strongest party on the left. The Bolsheviks did not succeed in taking Georgia and Armenia, both of which established independent regimes which would only be brought under Soviet control a few years later. The Turkic Azerbaijanis (Azeris) were under the influence of feudal landlords and Muslim religious scholars. Because of the oilfields at Baku, however, Azerbaijan had many Russian and Ukrainian as well as Azerbaijani workers. Altogether they numbered about 57,000, and there was a large local Bolshevik organization that sought to control this work force. Power did pass to the Bolshevik-controlled local soviet in Baku in the spring of 1918, but later in the year the anti-Bolshevik forces (notably the SRs), with the aid of British interventionists, would overthrow this regime.

In Central Asia, economically and politically one of the most backward areas of the old empire, the Muslim populations (Turkmen, Uzbeks, Kirgiz, and others) had traditionally submitted to the rule of the feudal landlords, religious leaders, and Russian conquerors. The Bolsheviks were at a double disadvantage in this and all Muslim areas in that they were not only Russian but also atheists. The only real revolutionary center in Central Asia was Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, where a few thousand Russian workers—most employed on the railroads—came under Bolshevik influence. Some fighting took place in Tashkent between workers and the local garrison; by November 15 (28) the city and its environs

had come under shaky Soviet control. The cities of Samarkand, Ashkhabad, Krasnovodsk, Merv, Pishpek, Kushka, and Skobelev were nominally in the Bolshevik camp by February 1918. Only the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara remained actively hostile; they were incorporated into the new Soviet state in 1920. Much of Central Asia, however, would long be bedeviled by antisoviet armed gangs. The members of these units described themselves as Islamic warriors fighting the atheistic communists. The Soviet regime insisted they were *basmachi*—bandits.

The vast, thinly populated Kazakh steppe was likewise inhabited by a Muslim people, the Turkic Kazakhs. Nomads whose social and political life was dominated by Islamic religious leaders and feudal barons, they had opposed Russian colonial rule for generations and, aided by another Turkic people, the Bashkirs, had frequently rebelled. In 1917 a nationalist party, Alash, challenged the Bolshevik claim to Kazakh lands and tried to establish an independent state. Fighting between Alash and Bolshevik forces continued until January 1919, when the Red Army finally conquered the area.

In Siberia and the Far East, an area almost twice the size of the United States, there were only about 9.5 million people, of whom about 325,000 were workers. The overwhelming majority of the population was composed of peasants. Most workers and some peasants were sympathetic to the Bolsheviks, but over the vast distances concerted action was difficult. Attempting to seize power in several key towns and cities along the route of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, the Bolsheviks encountered strong resistance from various tsarist and SR forces. In the Far East the Japanese and Americans intervened in force in 1918. Soviet control was not fully established in Siberia and the Far East until the mid-1920s.

Finally, the 6 million men still technically on active duty in the Imperial Army were crucial

to Bolshevik plans. As the Provisional government continued to drift into late summer and early autumn, disillusioned soldiers increasingly looked to the Bolsheviks to deliver them from a hopeless situation. There was no possibility of victory at the front and no government worth defending in the rear. Not all soldiers came over to the Bolsheviks, but in autumn 1917 few still in uniform actively opposed them.

## LENINIST OCTOBER

On the morrow of the Provisional government's fall it would have been difficult to find anyone outside the party speaking of the Bolshevik victory, and even many of Lenin's followers were confused by the events of October. It was clear who and what had fallen; but few people knew who had *won* what. The people of Russia regarded the Bolsheviks as agents of the Soviets, the Germans, the international proletariat, freemasonry, international Jewry, Satan, various combinations of these.

Any attempt to freeze the action at the moment the new regime came into existence distorts the momentum of the organic process of revolution; it is the uncertainty principle at work in the observation of history. In the autumn of 1917 it was by no means clear that the Bolsheviks would survive. Jacobins of the Russian Revolution, their seizure of power in Petrograd was certain to inspire their enemies. It seemed unlikely that they would be able to translate their program into action, and an attempt to do so would unquestionably alienate broad sectors of the population. If few people spoke of their victory, the Bolsheviks were at least at the center of political attention; their program and personnel would be scrutinized as never before. Those who knew—or thought they knew—them best, the sophisticated Petrograd politicians, smugly assured each other that this party of radical crackpots would never withstand such scrutiny.

The real optimists in 1917–1918—Woodrow Wilson is the best example—hoped that once in power the Bolsheviks would ameliorate their harsh political line, mute the call for class warfare, cease agitating for world revolution. Accustomed to meaningless campaign promises, some Western politicians wrote off Bolshevik rhetoric as mere bombast. Having confounded the world by seizing power in Russia, however, the Bolsheviks would soon prove that they did not speak in metaphors. They were not middle-class reformers who were content to develop capitalism slowly and wait generations for the proletariat to mature.

The Bolsheviks claimed to represent the wave of the future. They had a simple program from which they did not deviate. On the great questions of the war, land, labor, class relations, and organization of state and society, their position was unambiguous and capable of being understood by peasant and worker masses. They called for radical surgery to remove the painful excrescences of tsarism and capitalism; the other parties denied the pain or prescribed nostrums.

Despite their adherence to a foreign ideology, the Bolsheviks stood squarely in Russia's Byzantine-Mongol-Muscovite tradition and spoke of a world of black-and-white certainties. The people should overthrow the state, not try to reform it. Workers should rise up against capitalists, not try to reach an accommodation. The peasants should take *all* land.

Bolshevik opponents spoke either for the past (Octobrists and other parties on the right), for middle-class democracy (Kadets), or for glacially slow change (Mensheviks and SRs). These parties were weak, uncertain, pessimistic. They had had the opportunity to take power or at least share in it, and they had failed to bring Russia out of chaos. Now it was the turn of Lenin's Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks came to power promising an inescapably painful transition to a better future. Russia would have to get out of the

war. Under existing circumstances, that could only mean admitting defeat and paying a heavy price for it. Crown, gentry, and church would have to give up lands and privileges. The capitalists would have to yield to the dictatorship of the proletariat. All this would take time and would not be accomplished peacefully. The propertied elements were certain to resist ferociously. If history were any guide, foreign defenders of the old tsarist-capitalist order could be expected to try to overthrow the new regime. The question was not whether there would be opposition but what form it would take.

The moderate and conservative wings of Russian politics refused to accept the Bolsheviks as a legitimate party and excluded them from the political mainstream that had burst forth in February 1917. They denied Lenin's party a share in power despite the fact that its basic program—that simple “peace, bread, and land”—embodied the general aspirations of millions of citizens. This reinforced not only the Byzantine exclusionist tendency in Bolshevism-Leninism but also Lenin's personal desire for apocalyptic vengeance. Themselves ostracized, the Bolsheviks would never compromise with those who had cast them out, nor would they merely neutralize their enemies: they would annihilate them.

The Bolsheviks had made a revolution in the name of the poor, the oppressed, the weak, the hungry, the people without hope. They claimed, and hundreds of millions of people around the world eventually came to believe, that the downtrodden of the earth had at last found a champion. The possessing classes, the “haves,” in all countries proclaimed this messianic movement false, branded it anathema, and declared the destruction of Bolshevism the sacred mission of Christian civilization.

Most of the people of the former Russian Empire, whatever their attitude toward Bolshevism, did not welcome this imperious crusade. And because they did not, Bolshevism, deformed at birth by foreign intervention and

civil war, would survive, a modern dictatorship that grew out of the ruins of a traditional autocracy.

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## chapter 3

# CIVIL WAR AND INTERVENTION

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In the spring of 1918, the task of constructing a stable political regime and bringing order to the country seemed beyond the capabilities of Lenin's party. Bolshevik rule was recognized only in the new seat of government, Moscow, and in Petrograd and some other cities of central and northern Russia. Almost everywhere else in European Russia, in Trans-Caucasia, and along the route of the Trans-Siberian Railway, there was fierce fighting as foreign and domestic groups challenged the new regime. Foreign powers intervened.

The Octobrists, Kadets, SRs, Mensheviks, and other parties mounted violent attacks on the Soviet regime ranging from assassination of Bolshevik officials to foreign-supported campaigns involving large armies deployed across vast fronts. The domestic opposition and the foreign threat loomed all the more menacing after the Bolsheviks concluded a disastrous peace treaty with the Central Powers which

severed much of the industrial and agricultural heartland of the old empire from the new Soviet state.

### **TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK**

The day after the revolution, Trotsky asked the Allied ambassadors to inform their governments of the Sovnarkom's proposal to accept Lenin's "Decree on Peace" as the basis for an armistice and peace negotiations. The diplomats ignored him, confirming the Bolshevik conviction that the Allies had no interest in peace. A few days later the British government announced it would not recognize the new regime; other powers followed suit.

If the Allies would not join them, the Bolsheviks would have to act alone. On November 13 (26) Russian emissaries crossed over to the German lines under a flag of truce and

arranged for peace negotiations to begin six days later at the town of Brest-Litovsk, near where Byelorussia, Lithuania, and Poland meet.

The Germans and their allies presented an ultimatum: 150,000 km<sup>2</sup> of territory, a large indemnity, and the right to station troops on Russian soil. In Petrograd the stunned Bolsheviks split into two camps. Left communists around Nikolai Bukharin wanted to wage a revolutionary war, counting on the German, Austrian, and Polish workers to rise up in support. A peace group around Lenin was convinced that Russia had to get out of the war immediately. This was no mere honoring of a campaign slogan: it was a matter, Lenin argued, of the life and death of the regime.

Trotsky took charge of the Bolshevik negotiating team after the New Year. He did not wish to surrender on German terms but knew that Russia was incapable of fighting any longer. Like all Bolsheviks he sincerely believed that German workers were on the verge of launching their own revolution. Seeking to gain time, he adopted a stance novel in the annals of diplomacy: "neither peace nor war." He declared that the Sovnarkom was disbanding its army and thus not only would not but could not fight. Neither would it sign a peace treaty.

The Germans pondered this unusual position briefly, then resumed their offensive. The renewed drive threatened Petrograd and forced the issue. It was necessary to choose between capitulation and annihilation; while the Bolsheviks debated, the Germans increased their demands.

Lenin told the Central Committee that failure to accept the latest ultimatum would mean the prompt overthrow of the regime. Seven Central Committee members voted with him, but four abstained and four voted against him. Under party rules the majority of those voting carried the day. In symbolic protest Trotsky resigned and was replaced by Grigory Sokolnikov, who signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918. An Extraordi-

nary (Fourth) Congress of Soviets ratified the treaty 12 days later.

The Versailles settlement imposed on Germany in 1919 was magnanimous compared to Brest-Litovsk. Russia lost a million square kilometers of territory, 34 percent of her population, 32 percent of her farmland, 89 percent of her coal fields, and 54 percent of her heavy industry. She had to accept the installation of a German puppet regime in Ukraine. The Latvian, Estonian, and Lithuanian territories, Russian Poland, and part of Byelorussia were lost.

Savaged by this treaty, the Russian state was weaker than it had been since the accession of the Romanovs. Nevertheless it had gained a breathing space without which it could not have survived, and it was in the hands of a regime not tied to old traditions and practices and norms. Just four days after the humiliating capitulation Lenin told his dispirited colleagues, many of whom were wondering whether the left communists who called for a revolutionary war might not have been right, that the Sovnarkom had neither illusions about nor respect for the treaty and would violate it at every opportunity. That had already begun: the Bolsheviks were supplying the Finnish communists with weapons, ammunition, and propaganda materials.

Aside from mocking the agreement, Lenin's party could only wait for an uprising of the proletariat in the West or for Germany's defeat to recapture the lost territories. To the surprise of almost everyone in Russia, military defeat came first, and the worker uprising never came at all. When the Armistice in the West went into effect on November 11, 1918, the Sovnarkom moved quickly to annul the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

## ALLIED INTERVENTION

The Bolshevik Revolution engendered violent hostility in the West. No Allied ambassador in Petrograd had taken Lenin's party seriously



Lenin speaking at the unveiling of the temporary Marx-Engels monument, Moscow, November 7, 1918. (Sovnarkom photo)

until it came to power; therefore the shock in Western capitals was all the greater. When it became clear that the Bolsheviks were indeed the revolutionaries they said they were, Allied governments launched a propaganda campaign. Paris, London, and Washington solemnly announced that the Bolsheviks were German agents; less formally they claimed that most of the party's leaders were Jews. If the Bolsheviks were allowed to survive in Russia, Allied propagandists warned, they would soon be in the West to "communize" women, sequester private property, stable their mules in churches.

More to the point was the justifiable Allied fear that with Russia out of the war and her resources now apparently at Germany's disposal, the tide of battle would shift. It was a measure of the war-weariness in the Allied nations that this rational argument initially took second place to talk of a Bolshevik threat to

sexual conventions and property rights. No one knew how many German divisions would be withdrawn from the Eastern Front and sent to France, but the force would perhaps be sufficient to offset the increasing flow of aid from the United States. The Allies had been determined to keep Russia in the war; they did not abandon that hope now. At the very least they wanted to keep as many German divisions as possible pinned down in the East. They also sought to retain control of Caspian Sea oil and to protect munitions depots at Murmansk and Archangel.

The Bolshevik repudiation of the tsarist debt, confiscation of private property, and shrill advocacy of world revolution struck fear into the hearts of the middle classes everywhere. With a wary eye on their own working classes, Western industrialists, businessmen, and financiers put great pressure on their governments to intervene in Russia. Under the influence of these circles, the British and French regimes entered into a secret agreement in December 1917 to partition Russia into spheres of influence.

Ironically, Trotsky and others in the new government including Lenin had some hope for aid from the West; they were particularly sanguine about the prospects for American assistance, for President Wilson seemed less hostile to Bolshevism than French and British leaders. The sixth of his famous Fourteen Points called for evacuation of all foreign military personnel from Russian soil and an international guarantee of Russia's right to determine her own destiny.

This proposal collided with the brutal reality of power politics. The Allies were being pushed in the opposite direction by many politicians who called for intervention in Russia. Winston Churchill, minister of supply in Lloyd George's cabinet, emerged as the most vociferous advocate of this policy. Churchill was to prevail over Wilson in the dispute, though not to the extent he wished.

As it happened, Prime Minister David Lloyd George did not share the views of his minister of supply. He cared nothing for Russian aristocrats and refused to sanction the “big” intervention Churchill demanded because of his certain knowledge that the British public would not stand for it: There were no more generations to sacrifice to restore the old order in Russia.

Lloyd George authorized a series of operations neither fish nor fowl. In 1918–1919 the British spent more than £100,000,000 in a futile attempt to protect the flow of Caspian oil and to find a leader to rule Russia in London’s best interests. The oil flowed for a while after a British force helped local anticommunists overthrow the Baku Commune, as the new soviet regime in the city was called, but the execution of 26 Bolshevik leaders in September 1918 inflicted a wound on British-Soviet relations that festered for decades. And after the communist victory in the civil war, Britain had to find oil elsewhere.

The French government shared Churchill’s hostility toward Bolshevism. Raymond Poincaré, president of the republic, and Georges Clemenceau, premier and war minister as of November 1917, were determined to protect huge French investments in mining and manufacturing in Russia. The difficulty was, however, that the French public had no stomach for yet another war, this one against an “enemy” who a few short weeks earlier had been a valiant friend. Bled white at Verdun, on the Marne, on the Somme, and beset by terrible morale in the army, France simply could not undertake a campaign in Russia. The government could send only small forces to the southern part of the country, where French investments were greatest; support various anti-Bolshevik commanders and movements; and hope for the best.

The Japanese proved to be the biggest interventionists. Overcrowded in their home islands, they wanted to seize Manchuria, the

Russian Maritime Provinces, and a large area of eastern Siberia. To Japanese imperialists, expansion on the Asian mainland was a matter of survival. They knew they would never have a free hand in China, where the West had first claim. A disintegrating Russia was therefore the perfect victim. Japan intervened in force and remained on Soviet territory for several years.

President Wilson, who saw a strictly limited purpose for intervening in the stricken country, opposed Japan’s actions. Unlike European and Japanese leaders he genuinely believed in the right of nations to determine their own destinies. He did not approve of Bolshevism but regarded its propaganda as a species of campaign rhetoric and did not share Churchill’s hatred of Lenin’s regime. Wilson sent American forces to protect the munitions depots and to keep an eye on the Japanese.

In addition to the Western Allies and Japan, Germany inflicted enormous damage on Russia. The Germans systematically looted Ukraine; it would be years before the region would recover.

In all, 15 countries intervened in Russia. The Turks moved into Trans-Caucasia. The Romanians took Bessarabia; even the Greeks and Persians intervened, and the Czechoslovak Legion, a force of prisoners of war, became involved. Most intervening powers supported one or several of the domestic opposition groups during the Russian Civil War, which raged simultaneously with the intervention. This outside interference led to the hardening of Bolshevik attitudes.

The Russian Civil War of 1918–1920 pitted “Reds” (Bolsheviks) and their supporters against “Whites” or “White Guards”—loosely, all domestic anti-Bolshevik forces. The White movements, which took shape in the spring and early summer of 1918, were scattered over the territory of the former empire. The Bolsheviks at that time controlled only an area shaped like a huge irregular oval: Petrograd



Intervention and Civil War, 1918-1920.

and Voronezh at opposite poles of the long axis, Smolensk and Yaroslavl opposite each other on the short. Bolshevik-dominated soviets existed in other areas, but these were isolated enclaves and many were easily overrun by hostile forces.

## **BREAKAWAY NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS**

Among the first to declare independence of the Bolshevik regime, and indeed of Russia in general, were some minority peoples on the periphery of the old empire. Because the Bolsheviks had both advocated the right of national self-determination and insisted that the working class and the poor in any country would, given the choice, choose a communist regime, they were in an awkward position with regard to the national liberation movements. Few of the empire's national minorities demonstrated any interest in communism.

The Finns were the first to go. Long an autonomous Grand Duchy, Finland had become restive as a result of the Russification policies of the last two tsars. The first Provisional government had acknowledged Finland's right to independence; the Bolsheviks had no choice but to follow suit. A new government in Helsinki proclaimed Finnish independence.

The Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians likewise established independent states. Literate and industrious, these peoples were few in number but quite capable of establishing and maintaining viable political entities. Many of the poor peasants in Latvia and Lithuania supported the Bolsheviks, but by and large the populations of all three countries detested both Bolshevism and Russia.

The German puppet regime in Ukraine fell right after the Armistice of November 11, 1918. The victorious Western Allies asked the Germans to keep troops in Ukraine as a bulwark against Bolshevism, but the general staff

refused, knowing that the army might be needed to control the working class at home. The German withdrawal was followed by a nightmarish period when control of Central Ukraine changed hands 10 times in 23 months. Simon Petlyura, last leader of the independent Central Rada before the German occupation, now rejoined the struggle for power in Ukraine at the head of a motley group of Cossacks, deserters, brigands, and nationalists.

A major contender for power in Ukraine in 1918 was Nestor Makhno. Unfurling the black flag of anarchism, Makhno quickly proved himself a capable and popular guerrilla leader. He fought Germans, Petlyura, Bolsheviks, and anyone else who needed fighting. In 1919 he joined the communists, left them, rejoined them, and was then attacked by them.

Still another Ukrainian leader with a swash-buckling apolitical approach to politics was Nikifor Hryhoriv (Grigoriev). Hryhoriv had an army of 15,000 partisans in the field by early 1919; his forces terrorized vast areas. Then an ally of the Bolsheviks, by summer he had changed his mind. He was killed by Makhno himself in July 1919.

In Bessarabia, ethnic Romanians formed the largest population group. They proclaimed their independence early in 1918, then opted for union with Romania. The Bolsheviks, declaring that the Romanian army had invaded the province and annexed it by force, refused to accept the loss of Bessarabia.

Armenia and Georgia, two culturally advanced areas of the old empire, declared independence early in 1918. There were then relatively few Armenians in the Bolshevik party, but there were many Georgians, including the new commissar of nationalities, Stalin—a Georgianized Ossete. The loss of Georgia to the anti-Bolshevik camp, galling to Stalin personally, outraged the Bolsheviks because Mensheviks were instrumental in organizing the independent Georgian state.

The Muslims in Trans-Caucasia and Central Asia also sought to break away from Russian domination. Most of these peoples remained politically less sophisticated than the European minorities, however, and their attempts to win national independence were badly defined and poorly led. It would be some time before the example of their ethnic kin and coreligionists across the frontiers, notably in Turkey and Iran, would inspire a more progressive approach to politics.

### TSARIST AND PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT FORCES

Disbanded soon after the October Revolution, the tsarist general staff remained a potent source of anti-Bolshevik plots and machinations. Kerensky and General Krasnov commanded a comic-opera operation on the outskirts of Petrograd which was easily suppressed. General Kaledin, the Don Cossack commander, took the field against the Bolsheviks immediately on learning of the revolution. In November 1917 he tried and failed to take the key southern city of Rostov-on-Don. Kerensky's erstwhile comrade-in-arms, General Krasnov, was then elected chief of the Don Cossacks. He put together an army and attacked the Bolsheviks on two fronts in the summer of 1918. Tsarist officials were instrumental in forming various "governments" and "commissions" around the country, which they offered to the Russian people as alternatives to the Bolshevik regime, concealing the foreign strings.

Tsarist commanders were essential in bringing the Czechoslovak Legion into the battle against the Bolsheviks in May 1918. The 40,000 former prisoners of war were spread across Siberia in 60 troop trains. The Bolsheviks had permitted them to leave through Vladivostok, but at the instigation of tsarist officers the Legion—maintaining internal contact by tele-

graph—rebelled against its Soviet escorts and began assembling in western Siberia. It encountered little opposition from the Bolsheviks, whose rule in Irkutsk, Omsk, Tomsk, and other Siberian cities had been overthrown by White forces in the spring of 1918.

The legion helped to establish the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (KOMUCH) in Samara in June 1918 and the Provisional Siberian government in Omsk the same month. In August the legion captured Kazan and seized that portion—about half—of the Imperial Russian gold reserve.

Pressure from the Czechoslovak Legion on Bolshevik positions led to the massacre of the tsar and his family. The Romanovs and their entourage had been moved for their safety to Yekaterinburg in May 1918, pending the trial of Nicholas. The Urals quickly proved not a sanctuary (Lenin had intended to move the Sovnarkom there if Moscow fell) but a combat zone. In mid-July the communist régime in Yekaterinburg warned that the city was in imminent danger of falling to the Whites and Czechoslovaks. A Cheka (secret police) officer, Yakov Yurovsky, was in charge of the guard over the royal family.

On the night of July 16–17, Nicholas and the others were awakened after midnight. The guard informed them that the city was about to be attacked; they must go to the cellar for their safety. No doubt too sleepy and frightened to understand their predicament, the family quickly made its way downstairs. A dozen or so Chekists burst in, revolvers in hand. Yurovsky hastily read an order from the *local* communist authorities: the Romanovs were to be executed. The Chekists opened fire instantly, each man having received his assigned target in advance.

The detachment took the bodies to an abandoned mine, dismembered them, drenched them with sulfuric acid, and burned them. The executioners later scattered the ashes in a nearby forest.

In April 1989 Yakov Yurovsky's son, Vice Admiral Aleksandr Yurovsky, and a detective writer, Geli Ryabov, revealed their discovery of what appeared to be the remains of the royal family, including the skull of the tsar. The collaboration of the ministry of the interior bolstered the claim and lent authority to Ryabov's published inference that Lenin and the Sovnarkom ordered the slayings. The dramatic find, yet another manifestation of *glasnost*, struck down the long-standing communist assertion that the SR party had massacred the royal family to discredit Lenin's regime.

The SRs, who had made common cause with the provisional government in the summer of 1917, joined the active opposition to the Bolshevik regime after the October Revolution. In the spring and summer of 1918 they organized and led major anti-Bolshevik uprisings in several cities, notably Moscow and Yaroslavl. Although their uprisings were put down, the SRs retained wide support in the country, especially in the Volga valley.

It was after an SR-sponsored revolt in Penza in August that Lenin ordered all individuals suspected of treason put in concentration camps. There was no basis in law for the measure, which stands as an ominous landmark of a period when the communists ruled by executive fiat. Legal authorization for the camps came with the decrees of May 17 and September 5, 1919. Rule by decree was hardly an improvement.

At the end of summer 1918, three-quarters of the old empire's territory was in Allied, White, or other anti-Bolshevik hands. It is difficult to imagine a bleaker situation than that which now confronted Lenin.

### **FIRST ANTI-BOLSHEVIK COALITION: KOLCHAK**

By the latter part of 1918 the Allies had achieved a certain amount of harmony in the matter of Russian policy; they recognized Ad-

miral A. V. Kolchak as leader of the White movements against Bolshevism. Washington, London, and Paris had been deeply distressed over the failure of those movements to coalesce on their own. In expressing preference for Kolchak, they hoped to effect an agreement among the anti-Bolshevik Russians.

Sir Samuel Hoare, the British military attaché, advised London that a military dictatorship would be the best solution for Russia and called Admiral Kolchak "the nearest thing to an English gentleman in Russia," an ideal candidate for the post of dictator. Part of Kolchak's attractiveness stemmed from his willingness to acknowledge the tsarist debt as binding on the government he proposed to form, and part lay in his control of that half of the Imperial Russian gold reserves—651.5 million rubles worth—the Czechoslovak Legion had seized at Kazan.

With massive aid from the Allies paid for with the tsar's gold, Kolchak put an army of 250,000 in the field in late 1918. But that force was spread across enormous distances; essentially Kolchak controlled only a thin line along the Trans-Siberian Railway. For Kolchak, everything depended on the support of the local population and continued assistance from the Allies. The admiral alienated the Siberian peasantry, however, by attempting to introduce the old landlord system, which had never been fully operative in Siberia. Further, Kolchak missed his opportunity to keep Wilson from turning against him when he spurned the American president's call for peace talks. Lenin was skeptical but accepted the proposal in principle; Kolchak and other White leaders rejected it. Their refusal did not end allied aid but did strengthen Wilson's growing conviction that intervention had been a mistake.

In January 1918 Lenin's government established the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (RKKA), and in February the Red Fleet was created. The Red Guards of 1917 provided the

nucleus of the new proletarian armed forces. Trotsky, commissar of army and navy (war commissar), insisted there be at least one communist in all army units down to platoon level. Thus began the politicization of the armed forces.

Early in September 1918 Soviet authorities established the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (RMCR) and gave it responsibility for military operations. Chaired by Trotsky, the RMCR did on the battlefield what the Defense Council did in the civilian war effort. The formation of this body followed immediately on the Sovnarkom's decree placing the entire country under martial law. That decree was issued on September 2, three days after an attempt on Lenin's life.

At the outset of the war Soviet authorities announced their intention to raise an army of 3 million men. This proved impossible. Men might have been found, but there were not enough officers to train them nor enough weapons or food. Over the objections of many

communists Trotsky pressed thousands of ex-Imperial Army officers into service, assigning political commissars to all units to keep the officers in line and, as added insurance, held their families hostage. By early 1919, 29,000 officers and about 166,000 sergeants and corporals of the old army were in the Red Army. In the ranks there were about 1.2 million men, many in noncombat units. The Reds could put only about 450,000 men in the field to face the spring 1919 White offensive. The size of the White force, however, was approximately the same, perhaps slightly smaller.

The multipronged but poorly coordinated offensive began on March 4, when Kolchak, having withdrawn from the river to regroup over the winter, sent a large force westward toward the Volga. At the same time, General Anton Denikin marched his French-supported army northward against Harkov, Kiev, Voronezh, and Oryol. Those cities fell one after the other although the communists soon retook Oryol. A more or less simultaneous attack was

Olga Ovchinnikova and her Red Army artillery unit in the Urals, 1920.  
(Yuri N. Zhukov)



launched by General E. K. Miller—a Russian despite his name—at Archangel. Miller had the support of the British and American troops and more supplies than he knew what to do with. In Estonia, General N. N. Yudenich was still building an army and could not mount a major attack until October. In the spring and summer, however, he harassed the new regime with hit-and-run raids, seizing and briefly holding several Russian towns.

The White attacks on so many fronts dwarfed Napoleon's 1812 invasion and in geographical scale, if not results, put Genghis Khan's thirteenth-century expedition to shame. The White fronts now stretched from Archangel to the Aral Sea; from the Caspian to the Don; and from the Sea of Azov to Riga and Tallinn. In Siberia, there was heavy fighting along the Trans-Siberian Railway and on the coast near Vladivostok. Surrounded, without friends, its industry and agriculture in ruins and its population demoralized, the Russian Republic should have fallen. But the vast distance again worked to the greater disadvantage of the attacker, and Russia's immensity favored those who held the heartland.

There were many days in 1919 when the regime seemed on the verge of collapse. The Whites made impressive advances on all fronts. Kolchak's forces crossed the Urals and swooped down on European Russia but could not establish a position on the Volga. White forces under Denikin swept everything before them in the Ukraine, but they made the mistake of leaving nothing behind but devastation and an embittered population. In Petrograd a nervous party organization under Zinoviev panicked and called for reinforcements when the Whites advanced on the city. The RMCR sent Stalin; a recent source drily notes that "his arrival didn't change things." The Whites took Pskov on May 25. The garrisons of two forts that formed part of the western defenses of Petrograd rebelled against the communists.

At that point Trotsky and Lenin intervened, rushing reserves to the Petrograd sec-

tor and directing suppression of the revolts. The situation stabilized for a few months. Then in September 1919 General Yudenich launched a new strike, using six British tanks to support his infantry, that took him to the gates of Petrograd by mid-October. Once again the RMCR sent reinforcements. Yudenich halted, then withdrew to Estonia.

In the south, General Denikin ordered an offensive in the direction of Moscow in July 1919. Lenin declared that the "most critical moment" in the war had arrived. At the cost of enormous casualties, the Red Army beat back the attack and saved the capital. Denikin regrouped and moved north once again in September. His forces competed for the million-ruble prize offered by Ukrainian businessmen to the first regiment to fight its way into Moscow.

The prize went unclaimed. Their lines stretched taut across increasingly hostile territory, the Whites failed to advance north from Oryol. The RMCR threw every force at its disposal against Denikin and again turned him back. The First Cavalry—it took that name only after the battle—of S. M. Budyonny played an important role in the successful counterattack, as did the Eighth Army. Harkov came back under Soviet control on December 12, Kiev on December 16. Early in January 1920 the Red Army recaptured Tsaritsyn and Rostov-on-Don.

Contemplating the defeats suffered by Kolchak's forces, the Western Allies concluded that their protégé had not lived up to expectations. British support began to waver. The French had serious morale problems with the forces they sent to Russia despite the fact that those troops saw almost no combat. Facing increasingly negative public opinion at home, Britain and France began withdrawing their forces from Russia.

The admiral knew a sinking ship when he saw one. Kolchak resigned his grandiose title (Supreme Ruler of All Russia) on January 4, 1920, but he might as well have kept it. He was captured by his erstwhile friends, the Czecho-



Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Horse Artillery Division of the Red Army. Left to right: Mikhail Chumachek, scout; Daniil Strichko, forward observer; Ivan Dubrovsky, communications chief. (Yuri N. Zhukov)

slovaks, who handed him over to a newly installed Bolshevik regime in the Siberian city of Irkutsk. They executed him on February 7.

## WAR WITH POLAND

Kolchak was gone, Yudenich was gone, Miller had fallen back to the White Sea, Denikin was on the run. Knowing that and nothing more, one might conclude that the communists had victory in hand. Enter the Poles.

The Poland that was restored to life in 1918 naturally had enormous grievances against the three powers—Austria, Russia, Prussia—which had partitioned the country out of existence in the eighteenth century. Austria and Prussia-Germany had just gone down to defeat; Russia had simply disintegrated. The time seemed ripe for Poland to regain her historic frontiers.

The difficulty was that the Ukrainians,

White Russians, Russians, Lithuanians, Germans, and Czechs who surrounded the Poles did not accept Polish historical or ethnic cartography, to say nothing of Polish political aspirations. There was little for the Germans or Czechs to fear, for the Allies would not permit any armed aggression against them. Those same Allies, however, welcomed Poland's assault on the territory of the former Russian Empire. Nationalistic Poles dreamed of "reestablishing" a Poland that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, from Smolensk to Berlin's eastern approaches. Such a Poland had never existed.

Polish attacks to the south and east began early in 1919 as hit-and-run raids. When Polish forces took Minsk in White Russia, however, the war began in earnest. By late 1919 the Poles had put together a large, well-equipped army. France supplied 350 airplanes, 2,800 machine-guns, more than 300,000 rifles, and a corps of military advisers—including the

young Charles de Gaulle—under General Maxime Weygand. With all this aid the Poles had no difficulty raising an army of 200,000 men. With nearly 80,000 of those troops, General Joseph Pilsudski struck southward on April 25, 1920. His forces drove 200 km into Ukraine in six weeks and seized Kiev on May 6. Pilsudski proclaimed Polish sovereignty over the entire right bank west of the Dnepr River.

Trotsky and the RCMR worked out a counterattack that had Budyonny's First Cavalry driving southwest toward Kiev and other units under G. D. Gai and M. N. Tukhachevsky moving west on Brest-Litovsk. In the time-honored manner of Russo-Polish conflicts, pro-Russian Polish communists formed a Temporary Revolutionary Committee at Bialystok and "invited" the Red Army into Poland to "liberate" the country.

The plan was initially successful, and Kiev fell on June 12. Tukhachevsky ripped through the Polish forces in White Russia and moved on into Poland proper. By the middle of August his forces were approaching Warsaw and Lwow. Among those in Warsaw anxiously watching the advance was the papal envoy, Achille Ratti, the future Pope Pius XI.

At this point the RCMR representative on the Southwestern Front, Stalin, made a series of crucial mistakes. He underestimated the threat from the south, where the last important White commander, Wrangel, menaced the Red forces trying to push the Poles back across the Dnepr. Having assured the RCMR in Moscow that everything was under control, Stalin prepared to detach three units including the First Cavalry and send them to the aid of Tukhachevsky, who seemed on the verge of taking Warsaw.

Trotsky and Lenin assumed that this repositioning of forces was militarily sound. Budyonny and the First Cavalry were thrown back by the Wrangel forces, however, before they could disengage and move west. Stalin's plan collapsed. The Tukhachevsky forces poised to in-

stall a red flag atop Warsaw City Hall now scurried ignominiously back toward Moscow.

The British government had failed to find a Russian who could defeat the Bolsheviks; now it would try a Pole. On July 21, 1920, Lloyd George announced that Great Britain and France would render all necessary aid to help Pilsudski build up his armed forces. The Poles soon had half a million men under arms.

## SECOND ANTI-BOLSHEVIK COALITION

It was not difficult to arouse Lloyd George's sympathy for the Poles. Poland, to be sure, had attacked Soviet Russia, and not the other way around, but somehow that fact got lost. Churchill and others had sold the prime minister a shoddy bill of goods about making the Crimea a new Gibraltar or Hong Kong, and they offered him one last White general, Baron Peter N. Wrangel.

Wrangel had served as one of Denikin's commanders in the Great War, and after the Bolshevik Revolution he commanded an anti-communist Volunteer Army in the Caucasus. When he transferred his operations to Ukraine, he quickly came into conflict with Denikin over both military strategy and politics. Denikin eventually exiled him to Constantinople for plotting to take command of the army.

With Denikin's defeat early in 1920 the remnants of his forces, plus some anticommunist units that had been defeated in Trans-Caucasia, gathered in the Crimea to wait for evacuation by the Allies. The leaders of these troops deposed Denikin and with Allied approval appointed Wrangel to replace him. A British warship promptly brought the general from Constantinople and deposited him at Sevastopol on April 2. Two days later the "Black Baron"—he designed his own exotic dark uniforms—took command.

Wrangel differed from previous White commanders in that he had something he called a political and social program. Where his predecessors never really went beyond anticommunism and anti-Semitism, Wrangel addressed himself to the land question. He proposed to nationalize landholdings above 600 desyatins, permit the peasants to buy this land over a 25-year period, and establish agencies of rural self-government (*zemstvos*). Finally, he promised to defend the interests of the workers.

All the White leaders wanted to turn back the clock, Wrangel was no exception. He had no more popular support than any of his predecessors, and neither he nor any other White commander ever consolidated a battlefield position long enough to establish a smooth-running political administration.

Wrangel rebuilt his forces and equipped them with British and French arms. In the spring of 1920 he moved out of the Crimea into Ukraine and northwest Trans-Caucasia. Once again the White advance was aided by Stalin's blunders. Not until the Khrushchev era did Soviet historians begin to acknowledge that Stalin had repeatedly defied orders in the Civil War, and that his disobedience and incompetence led to costly defeats.

In August 1920 the RMCR decided to establish a new front in order to bring all available forces to bear against Wrangel. For reasons that are not clear, the bungling Stalin was entrusted with the task of coordinating the creation of this new front. He failed; the Red Army sustained heavy losses. The southern front was created in September without Stalin, who was recalled to Moscow. Under the direction of M. V. Frunze, assisted by S. I. Gusev and the Hungarian Communist Béla Kun, the RKKA forces on the new front gradually pushed Wrangel's army back.

The final, decisive battles were fought November 7–17, 1920, on the Perekop and Chongar isthmuses that link the Crimean

Peninsula to the mainland. At a cost of 10,000 casualties Frunze's troops routed Wrangel. French and British warships evacuated 80,000 White troops, camp followers, and civilians to Turkey, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia.

## END OF WAR AND INTERVENTION

A few weeks before the final battles in the Crimea, the Poles agreed to a truce. Once again there were zealots who wanted to keep fighting to establish a communist regime in Poland, but Lenin declared that he and his party had "overestimated the revolutionary readiness" of the Polish workers and peasants. A treaty was signed at Riga, Latvia, on March 18, 1921.

The border between Poland and Soviet Russia was fixed east of a line recommended earlier by British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, who had little sympathy for Russia. It deprived Poland of some Lithuanian territory she coveted but gave her sizable areas in White Russia and Ukraine. Poland would later pay the price of placing faith in lines on maps.

With the collapse of Wrangel's army, the signing of the Russo-Polish armistice, and the withdrawal of the Allied forces, the worst of the Civil War was over. The Japanese remained on the mainland for another year, but the Americans kept a close watch on them and they did little harm.

Still ahead lay the fierce uprisings at Tambov and Kronstadt, both of which the Red Army would have to suppress. So-called bandit gangs kept Ukraine, part of the Volga Valley, and much of the strip along the Trans-Siberian Railway in turmoil, but dealing with them involved mere mopping-up operations. The *basmachis*—both Islamic guerrillas and ordinary bandits—in Central Asia posed some threat to the regime, but they were far removed from the heartland.

The Red Army had won a victory inadequately described as astonishing. How did this happen? Why were Britain, France, the

United States, and a dozen other nations, plus hordes of anticommunist Russians, unable to defeat the infant revolutionary regime?

The communists had a number of practical advantages, notably control of the Central Russian heartland. Operating under martial discipline, for once they contained their internal frictions, and they commanded the allegiance of the proletariat. Having secured communications and supply lines, they found excellent field commanders to lead the war against the foreigners and counterrevolutionaries. To a remarkable degree they proved able to exploit the infrastructure of the tsarist war effort—war industry committees, supply committees, civilian auxiliary organizations, zemstvos, and so forth. Above all, the communists had a cause: Russia free, independent, and socialist. No opponent produced an acceptable alternative.

The peoples of the Western nations, as distinct from some politicians (none of whom cared to shed his own blood), had little stomach for intervention. The Great War had so drained Britain and France of blood and treasure and spirit that there was little left over to fight a country that had been an ally until October 1917. As for the United States, there was little point in intervening at all, let alone on the side of a White movement that was not going to help Wilson make the world safe for democracy.

The Whites themselves had no unity and no program, and theirs was a woefully inadequate military force. Most of their leaders, like the French aristocracy after 1789 who had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, favored the restoration of landlordism. Further, the behavior of most White commanders indicated that they wanted either a military dictatorship or the restoration in some form of the monarchy. They could not make up their minds, and this was another index of their lack of unity. Kolchak claimed to unite all anti-Bolshevik forces but could not sustain that posture and ended a lonely, isolated figure.

The Whites never won the support of the Russian and Ukrainian people. With the sole exception of Wrangel's brief public-relations campaign of 1920, they did not even try. The peasants were certainly not enthusiastic about the communists, but they were exhausted, and above all they wanted peace. That peace had not come was not, most people came to believe, the fault of the Bolsheviks; the treaty of Brest-Litovsk surely proved that. The war had continued and had been transformed into a civil war because opponents of the Bolsheviks did not accept their seizure of power.

The Allied attempt to crush Bolshevism came to nothing. Winston Churchill and those who shared his views tried to convince political leaders in the West that Lenin's regime had vast potential for future mischief; they had some success with the leaders, almost none with the public. Anticommunism was not a cause to inspire the Western masses, at least not right after the Great War.

## IMPACT OF CIVIL WAR ON SOCIETY AND PARTY

Beginning as an armed contest for political supremacy, the Russian Civil War developed into a great class conflict. To a considerable extent this was foreshadowed in the treatment the soldiers and sailors of 1917 accorded their former officers—most of whom were from the middle and upper classes—in the wake of Order No. 1. As institutions disintegrated in the months after the October Revolution, social relations degenerated to the level of an elementary struggle for survival. The “war communism” of 1918–1920 was in part a cause, in part a result, of this process. The state—such as it was—itsself became a bandit, stealing the food it required to feed its soldiers, workers, and bureaucrats.

There was no protection from the marauding state in areas where the Red Army enforced its

will, and still less was there any defense against the White forces where they held sway. As usually happens in civil wars, people were forced to choose between two terrible alternatives, recognizing that, whatever the choice, the likely outcome was disaster. Many families were torn asunder as members clashed less over ideology—the struggle was too primitive for that—than over violent differences of opinion concerning the survival of the family and the clan.

As the Whites learned to their sorrow, the social conflict quickly reached the point where peasants could no longer be persuaded, let alone coerced, to fight for the interests of the upper classes. The *muzhiks* of 1918–1920, whose ancestors had periodically burned and slaughtered in great rebellions, were utterly indifferent to the death agony of the Russian landlords and aristocrats. And the workers, those peasants transplanted into the misery of the industrializing cities, fought the forces of counterrevolution and intervention with a passion that far transcended ideology.

In the course of the war the Bolshevik-Communist party itself underwent a profound transformation, becoming militarized as no political party in history up to that time. To be a communist in 1918–1920 was literally to be a front-line soldier. To *become* a communist in that period meant that one accepted the death sentence decreed by the Whites and many Interventionist commanders, who publicized their intention to massacre party members. As the ferocity of the anti-Bolshevik regimes in various parts of Russia clearly demonstrated, a White-Interventionist victory would have been followed by a bloodbath.

A party membership forged in civil war was unlikely to be magnanimous toward its external enemies or tolerant of internal dissent. The democratic traditions of Bolshevism were inescapably compromised as the party fought for its own, and Russia's, existence. Nor would the coming of peace dilute this war experi-

ence. Of all party members in 1927, fully a third had joined in the 1917–1920 period, only 1 percent before 1917. Militant Bolshevism was not born in the Civil War, but that conflict shaped the party's future as much and in some respects more than its revolutionary tradition.

At the birth of the Bolshevik regime, the West presented Russia's new rulers with an immensely important psychological weapon. Every communist leader since 1917 was able to rally popular support for an aggressively defensive foreign policy and for the suppression of internal dissent by raising the specter of "capitalist encirclement." The siege mentality of Soviet leaders was born in 1917, and it is part and parcel of the emotional baggage of most party members.

Against overwhelming odds the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army defeated all Soviet enemies. When the Perekop and Chonkar battles ended in victory on November 17, 1920, Russia knew peace for the first time since July 31, 1914. She had been at war for 2,301 consecutive days.

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## chapter 4

# BOLSHEVIZATION

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Tsarism had fallen with scarcely a whimper, and the overthrow of the Provisional government proceeded almost as smoothly. These victories confirmed thousands of Bolsheviks in the belief that the natural instincts of the proletariat would produce, now that the “dictatorship” of that class was in place, a just and equitable society almost overnight.

### CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The institution that was supposed to define and shape the new society was, so millions of citizens thought, the Constituent Assembly. The left wing of the intelligentsia had called for it since the 1860s, and one of the Provisional government’s first acts was to set up a board to conduct elections. After several postponements, the date was fixed for November 12 (25), 1917.

Although in 1903 they had favored a Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviks now opposed it on several grounds. It smacked of peasant-oriented populist socialism, and it seemed likely to become a vehicle for middle-class parliamentary democracy. In the “April Theses” Lenin had defined a “republic of Soviets” as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Clearly there was no room for a Constituent Assembly.

Wary Bolsheviks suspected the country would return a strong SR majority. Whatever its weaknesses in the cities, the SR party retained enormous popularity in the countryside. The *muzhiks*—and their womenfolk now—would unquestionably vote for the party that promised to look after their interests.

As it happened the Bolshevik Revolution occurred just 18 days before the balloting. Because the parties had already published lists of candidates and had begun the electoral cam-

paign, Lenin did not dare dispense with the elections.

Once again the voting took place in unsettled conditions, but it could not have been otherwise: the Civil War had already begun. In only 39 of 79 electoral districts did the election take place on the day scheduled. Other districts voted in December and January. In all, the returns showed that 45 million (of 90 million eligible) had voted, with these results:

SR	40.0%
Bolshevik	24.0%
Kadet	4.7%
Menshevik	2.6%

The rest of the voters cast ballots for religious and national parties—Muslim, Polish, and so on—or for small splinter groups.

The Bolsheviks never ceased to claim that the vote did not reflect the mood of the country, but on a one citizen, one vote basis, the elections unquestionably indicated the will of the people. What actually happened was that the rural areas dominated the urban. Bolshevik strength was overwhelmingly concentrated in the cities. In Petrograd, for example, they received 45 percent of the vote, compared with 16.7 percent for the SRs; in the surrounding rural areas the Bolsheviks won 49 percent, the SRs 25 percent. In the city of Moscow the Bolshevik margin of victory over the SRs was 50 percent to 8 percent, and in Moscow province, 50 percent to 26 percent. Further, the Bolsheviks received large majorities from the soldiers on the Western and Northern Fronts and from the Baltic Fleet sailors. In the army as a whole, however, the SRs outpolled them.

What was the Bolshevik regime to do now that the voters had returned the expected SR plurality, really a decisive majority when SR allies were counted? Lenin's enemies helped make the decision. The regular SRs, the Popular Socialists, and some Mensheviks and Kadets formed a Union for the Defense of the Constituent Assembly in December 1917. Active

in Petrograd, Moscow, Odessa, Samara, and other cities, this organization called for the immediate summoning of the Constituent Assembly. Borrowing a page from Lenin, it proclaimed "All Power to the Constituent Assembly!" It organized conferences around the country, published broadsides and proclamations, and ceaselessly agitated for the overthrow of the Bolsheviks.

Lenin's response to the Union was to outlaw the Kadet party, which had taken control of the organization, on November 28 (December 11), and to serve notice that he would not long tolerate the Constituent Assembly. He argued: The majority has voted for other parties and against the Bolsheviks. But the Bolsheviks represent the working class and the Army plus the "poorest stratum of the peasantry," that is, the productive classes, the soldiers being merely peasants in uniform. These classes have given the Bolsheviks clear majorities in the soviets, which represent a new, "higher" form of democracy. The Constituent Assembly represents discredited bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

The assembly convened on schedule on January 5 (18), 1918, in the Tauride Palace in Petrograd. Only 410 of the 715 elected deputies appeared. They had difficulty entering the building through the ranks of the secret police, the guard, and a Bolshevik crowd.

Once the proceedings got under way the SR majority elected its leader, Viktor Chernov, as chairman. The Bolsheviks and their left SR allies constituted a noisy opposition block of 155. Chernov read an opening speech, and then Yakov Sverdlov, Bolshevik chairman of the Central Executive Committee (of the Congress of Soviets), spoke on behalf not of the CEC but of the Sovnarkom, a body most of the deputies refused to recognize. Sverdlov proposed the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Toiling and Exploited Peoples, an updated version of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. This document spelled out

in detail the promises of Lenin's manifesto "To All Workers, Soldiers and Peasants" and constituted the basis of the first Soviet constitution, which would be introduced later in the year. The declaration had been unanimously adopted by the CEC on January 3 (16); now, however, the assembly deputies refused (237–146) to approve it. The majority held that the CEC was usurping the Constituent Assembly.

There was a little more politicking; then, on a prearranged signal, the Bolsheviks walked out. The left SRs remained a while longer to debate the regular SRs on the questions of peace and land, then they too departed. In the galleries, armed sailors pointed their weapons at speakers jeered, whistled. Finally, shortly before 5:00 A.M. on January 6 (19), the sailors refused to stay on duty any longer and ordered the delegates to quit the building.

The Constituent Assembly was never to meet again. Russia, it must be said, seemed largely indifferent to the fate of what was until spring 1989 the only freely elected deliberative body in her history.

## FIRST STEPS OF THE NEW REGIME

In the process of laying the foundations of the new society the Bolsheviks had to contend not only with the hostility of other political parties but also with still more dissension within their own ranks. On November 17 (30), 1917, five members—almost a quarter—of the Central Committee resigned to protest the "exclusion" from the Sovnarkom of members of other parties. This was a political miscalculation. Lenin had tried to include the left SRs and was still negotiating with them; they actually entered the government in December. No other party accepted the Bolshevik stand on the war, and so it would have been impossible to include anyone but the left SRs.

All the resignees save Zinoviev soon asked for reinstatement.

As in any new administration, decrees, orders, directives, proclamations, and guidelines emanated from the Sovnarkom with bewildering rapidity in the early days. With regard to civil status, a decree of November 10 (23) abolished estate distinctions and civil ranks. No more gentry, peasants, merchants, townspeople, and so forth; now all were simply citizens of the Russian Soviet Republic, as the new state was then called. An earlier decree had declared all citizens equal before the law regardless of ethnic origin.

Women received equal rights under the law. A November 1920 Sovnarkom resolution abolished penalties for performing or undergoing abortions; Russia thus became the first nation to legalize the practice. There was, however, strong resistance to the emancipation of women, and men continued to enjoy preferred status in politics and in most sectors of the economy. Aleksandra Kollontai was the only woman on the Central Committee in this period, and her influence was limited. The wives of party leaders—including Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife—were largely relegated, no matter what their abilities, to positions considered suitable for women, e.g., cultural and educational activities.

Marriage and divorce procedures were established early in 1918. Marriages could now be dissolved at the request of one party; this would change several times over the years, as would family law in general. Church marriage became a matter of private preference, having no force in law; only a civil ceremony was legally binding. In the freewheeling atmosphere of those early years, wedlock lost its role as a social regulator; common-law marriage, long practiced among the radical intelligentsia and people in the arts, lost its wicked Bohemian stigma and became quite popular. Children born outside registered marriages had the same rights as those of registered unions.

On January 20 (February 2), 1918, the Sovnarkom proclaimed the separation of church and state. Church land had earlier been nationalized, and now most other church property was seized by the state. Churches could continue to hold religious services, but the comisariat of justice, responsible for church affairs until 1924, ordered them to make their buildings available for secular purposes as well. The party converted some churches into antireligious museums; the most notorious example was Kazan Cathedral on Nevsky Prospekt in Petrograd. Parochial schools were abolished, and teaching religion in schools forbidden. The constitution of July 1918 stripped the clergy of most civil rights. As disfranchised persons they either received no food-ration cards or cards of the lowest category. The highest categories, permitting purchase of the largest amount—about 2,700 calories worth—were reserved for workers, the Red Army, and party officials. The children of the clergy could not attend state schools above the elementary level, and clerics had to pay higher taxes and rents.

On the chaotic economic front the new regime moved at first through the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets. On November 14 (27), this body adopted Rules of Workers' Control, which were transmitted to all enterprises employing hired labor. The rules declared that workers were to exercise an undefined "control" over a given enterprise through trade unions, councils of elders, and other worker-elected groups.

A Supreme Economic Council was formed on December 2 (15) to direct economic planning. Actual nationalization, which this council was supposed to oversee, proceeded initially on an ad hoc basis. Foreign trade became a state monopoly; banks were nationalized in December 1917.

Nationalization of the land was accomplished in the first hours of the revolution: Lenin's "Decree on Land" had turned the

land over to those who worked it but specified that the actual transfer was to take place under the supervision of local soviet authorities. Early in 1918 the city councils, or *zemstvos* (rural councils), and other agencies and institutions of tsarist times gave way—on paper—to a hierarchical network of soviets. In practice the establishment of soviets would take years; in 1918 the process of land transfer was ragged and irregular.

On the last day of January 1918 the vexing problem of the calendar was solved in the only possible way, adoption of the Gregorian calendar. Russia went to bed on January 31 and woke up on February 14.

In March 1918 the Sovnarkom moved the capital back to Moscow, from which Peter the Great had removed it more than 200 years earlier. The dangerously exposed location of Petrograd lay behind this, but the move also made sound psychological sense. Peter's "window on the West" always had too much of the West about it for old Muscovy's taste. Better to retreat into the heartland, back to Russia's roots, away from the corrupting influence of foreigners.

## CREATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT

The tactical organization that had actually made the revolution, the Military Revolutionary Committee, could not serve as the administrative vehicle to achieve Lenin's goals of "precision, discipline and accountability in government." The MRC's "organic" character was indispensable in October 1917 but inappropriate in the making of a state. In the urgent matter of supplying food to Petrograd, for instance, the 20 to 25 members of the MRC present for duty at any given moment would simply organize "flying food-supply squads"—in effect, gangs of legal thieves—to go into the countryside and take food from peasants and merchants, sometimes leaving a worthless re-

ceipt. This could work only briefly. To ensure the orderly provisioning of the cities and the military forces it was necessary to create a bureaucracy, a formal body with a fixed mandate, established procedures, and legal responsibilities. In other words it was necessary to replace the “organic” MRC with a body of bureaucrats.

To a certain extent the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Congress of Soviets served, in the beginning, as an alternative to the MRC. Lenin called the congress the “highest type of democracy,” and its representatives on the CEC spoke, he maintained, for the revolutionary people, for “soviet democracy.” The CEC was an important organ in the power structure for the first half of 1918, but after June of that year it met only every few weeks and in 1919 ceased to meet altogether. Chiefly responsible was the decline of the soviets themselves. Under Civil War conditions, those bodies, so indispensable in the revolution, proved incapable of making quick, coordinated decisions. The Civil War did not create the unity that the struggle against tsarism did. The dream of democracy died as Lenin’s regime moved rapidly toward a system of centralized decision making.

The Sovnarkom filled the breach created by the demise of the MRC and the CEC. Some scholars trace the origin of Stalin’s despotism to Lenin’s destruction of the MRC, the one body that had responded to the pulse of a nation in revolution. Lenin’s defenders argue that there was no choice; a state cannot depend on “flying food-supply squads” to feed its population. It was also true, however, that Lenin had promised something new and radically different. In power he began to copy the old system.

The Bolshevik party bureaucracy took over the old institutional structures and both transformed them and was remade by them. At the top there was little, in the beginning, to distinguish the Sovnarkom from any modern European cabinet save the name. Lenin remained

the unchallenged head of the government and leader, but in no sense dictator, of the party that dominated it. After he finally put together a stable group of commissars in mid-1918, the Sovnarkom began to function reasonably well.

Achieving that stability proved difficult. There were frequent resignations of Bolsheviks who opposed this or that policy, and the six left SRs who were briefly in the government left in protest against the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. People with administrative skills willing to work for the Bolsheviks were in critically short supply. In the circumstances it was only natural that Lenin would work through the old administrative apparatus. His party had, however, come to power promising to destroy that apparatus, not assume control of it, and Lenin’s pragmatic approach to the problems of governing introduced considerable tension into the emerging system.

Two bodies within the Sovnarkom acted as specialized arms of the executive power. The first was the Defense Council (in 1920 renamed the Labor and Defense Council), entrusted with the mobilization of the “human and material resources of the country in the interests of defense.” During the civil war it had unlimited powers; its decisions “had the immediate and unqualified force of law.” It was composed of five men, including Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin.

The second subagency of the Sovnarkom was the Little Sovnarkom. Unlike the Defense Council, from whose decisions there was no appeal, this body was subordinate to the Sovnarkom. It dealt not with grand questions of defense but rather with the routine, inescapable administrative problems that demand bureaucratic intervention in all modern societies in normal times.

Through the Defense Council the party-appointed Sovnarkom quickly became the true government. It was not merely the executive agency; it had all power. The Civil War was

the main cause of the withering away not of the state but of the soviets.

After the Civil War, the Central Committee of the Communist party and ultimately its Politburo replaced the Sovnarkom as the sole repository of power. Lenin realized too late what was taking place. He tried from the spring of 1922 until his final, incapacitating stroke to strengthen the state and thwart the growth of the party machine. It had been difficult to create the monster; it would prove impossible to destroy it.

From the beginning the new state apparatus and the party structure existed side by side, something like the parallel religious and secular institutions of medieval Europe. In the first few years of communist rule almost all leading party officials held state offices more or less corresponding to their party rank. Because of the nature and philosophy of the ruling party, any tension between party and state interests, or between party and state obligations of officeholders, was invariably resolved in favor of the party. The state structure was open to public scrutiny, and initially, officeholders to public accountability. The party, however, was responsible only to itself.

## FIRST CONSTITUTION

As Petrograd could not long be fed with forcibly requisitioned supplies, so Russia could not long be governed by decrees, resolutions, declarations, and revolutionary rhetoric. The Bolsheviks recognized the modern state's need for a coherent set of general principles expressing the sources of its legitimacy and its aspirations. The Third Congress of Soviets (January 1918) had directed the establishment of a constitutional commission, but because of the international situation that body was not formally created until April by the Fourth Congress. On the commission were the communists—the Bolsheviks having

adopted that name—Sverdlov, Stalin, Bukharin, M. N. Pokrovsky, and several left SRs.

The commission produced a draft that proved unacceptable. Bukharin and Pokrovsky took the old revolutionary slogans seriously, and some fellow members on the commission agreed with them. They genuinely believed in the possibility of creating a revolutionary “commune state,” which would have no need of coercive bodies such as police, army, or bureaucracy. Lenin had argued precisely this point in his *State and Revolution*. Bukharin and his allies regarded communism “less as a commitment to actual policies than to a vision of the new order as the antithesis of the old.”

Times had changed, however, and Lenin himself was no longer so wary of Leviathan. He pressed the constitutional commission to accept his revised view of the state and won a substantial victory. On July 10, 1918, the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets confirmed the new constitution, which received some last-minute editing from the CEC before publication on July 19, five days after the exclusion of regular SRs and all Mensheviks from all soviets, two days after the execution of the Romanov family.

The Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), as the state was now called, consisted of 17 chapters and 90 articles. Part I was a Declaration of the Rights of Toiling and Exploited Peoples, which proclaimed world revolution, the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism, and a dictatorship of the soviets in Russia. It also stated that “he who does not work does not eat.” Supreme authority was vested in the All-Russian Congress of Workers', Peasants', Cossacks', and Red Army Soviets, a body of more than 1,100 deputies that was to meet twice a year (yearly from 1921). Day-to-day business was to be carried on by a 200-member Central Executive Committee of the Congress. Actual power, however, resided in the Sovnarkom, which had the authority to legislate by decree,

a weapon its Defense Council used repeatedly; the decrees were in theory subject to review by the CEC. Village, town, city, district, and provincial soviets, through their own executive committees, exercised local authority and served as liaison agencies with the central power. Because communists dominated the soviets at all levels, outlawing some parties and placing severe restrictions on *all* other parties, “soviet democracy” meant confirmation of the communist monopoly on political power. The 1918 constitution thus marked out the road toward the one-party state even if it did not create it.

With an eye on the Constituent Assembly elections, the framers of the constitution made one urban elector—any citizen 18 or over not disfranchised under other provisions of the document—equal to *five* rural electors. The principle of one citizen, one vote was unacceptable to the makers of a proletarian revolution in a state where the peasantry had an overwhelming majority.

The constitution specifically disfranchised certain categories of people: those who hired labor or who lived on interest, rents, or dividends (i.e., “exploiters”); private businessmen; the clergy; ex-policemen; the Romanovs; the mentally unfit; convicted criminals; and “enemies of the people” as the state defined the term. The number of the disfranchised seems not to have exceeded 3 percent of the adult population.

## CHEKA

Early in November 1917 the Military Revolutionary Committee in Petrograd posted a guard of “40 sober men” over the tsar’s Winter Palace wine cellar. Drunkenness, disorder, and street violence had reached almost unmanageable proportions, and the new regime was forced to introduce severe discipline. The tsar’s wine was poured into the Neva; great

batches of drunks and “hooligans” were arrested; and Lenin, blaming the Kadets for much of the lawlessness as well as for “counter-revolutionary” agitation for the Constituent Assembly, outlawed that party.

These measures proved insufficient. Early in December the MRC, which initially had responsibility for keeping order, went out of existence, and the Sovnarkom created an All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage. The name of this organization was to undergo several changes over the years, and its mandate was soon extended to cover everything that impinged, however remotely, on state security. The name was shortened to Cheka, an acronym; a member of the commission was a Chekist.

The first director was Felix Dzerzhinsky, a Polish revolutionary of upper-class origins. A few days before the Bolshevik seizure of power, the MRC had appointed him commandant of Smolny, and in that position he quickly became an expert on security. It will be recalled that the CEC of the Congress of Soviets and the Bolshevik Central Committee both met in Smolny; the Sovnarkom met there after the revolution. Dzerzhinsky was thus the logical choice to head the organization which would become, under his leadership, the “shield and sword of the revolution.”

In an administrative decision with fateful consequences for the future, the Cheka was attached not to the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets, the body that had the most democratic mandate, but rather to the Sovnarkom, the executive agency. As the Sovnarkom’s power gave way to that of the party’s Politburo, the security forces would be left in a murky zone beyond the government.

In the beginning the Cheka was authorized to employ only “soft measures”—as the communists would later refer to them: confiscation of property, expulsion from domicile, deprivation of ration card, and publication of

lists of “enemies of the people.” This quickly changed.

Interpreting party instructions liberally, Dzerzhinsky promptly ordered the shooting without trial or investigation of “enemy agents, counterrevolutionary agitators, speculators, organizers of uprisings” and other undesirables. In the climate of the times that not infrequently meant that innocent citizens were accused of being “enemies of the people” and summarily shot.

Dzerzhinsky and his “revolutionary vigilantes” went with the rest of the government to Moscow in March 1918, leaving behind a detachment to deal with Petrograd problems. Units of the Cheka were established all over Bolshevik-controlled territory.

The Bolsheviks had many enemies, most of whom were willing to use violence to overthrow them. There was widespread political and economic sabotage. Speculation in all kinds of valuables had assumed colossal dimensions. Some new officeholders misused their positions, bringing discredit upon the regime and fueling hostility toward it. The frontiers were unstable; anti-Bolshevik agents of many nationalities were constantly infiltrating, committing acts of sabotage. A prominent Petrograd Bolshevik, Moses Volodarsky, was murdered by an SR agent on June 20, 1918. In July, the left SRs in Moscow assassinated the new German ambassador, hoping to provoke a renewal of the war with Germany and thus topple Lenin’s government. The left SR plotters, many of them Cheka agents, managed to kidnap Dzerzhinsky and a couple of his associates, and they bombarded the Kremlin with artillery. On that same day, a left SR uprising began in the north Volga city of Yaroslavl; it continued until July 21 and inspired similar revolts in Murom, Rybinsk, and Arzamas. On August 30, Moses Uritsky, Petrograd director of the Cheka, was assassinated. In an unrelated incident on the same day, Lenin was shot and severely wounded in Moscow by a woman

named Fanya Kaplan. Although an SR, Kaplan had acted strictly on her own initiative. Moreover, the Civil War was raging out of control.

To combat all this, the Cheka swung into action. The left SR uprising in Moscow was put down by Latvian riflemen, one of the few military units in the city that did not waver in its allegiance to the communists in that crucial period. The Cheka freed its chief from his kidnappers and proceeded to execute 13 leaders of the plot. The communist regime blamed the whole affair on the British, who allegedly hired the SRs and who did indeed have an active secret agent, Bruce Lockhart, in Moscow.

It was not until after the assassination of Uritsky and the attack on Lenin that the regime finally unleashed the “Red Terror.” Nationwide martial law was declared on September 2. On September 4, the Sovnarkom newspaper *Izvestiya* (*The News*) published the text of a telegram from the commissar of internal affairs to all soviets around the country demanding the taking of hostages and “mass shootings.”

The communists responded to violent opposition by declaring war not only on the oppositionists but also on the social groups from which they came, notably the middle class. The secret police became the agency entrusted with the dragooning of the population into total submission to the will of the party. From the beginning the principle was established: better to condemn any number of innocents than risk the escape of a single guilty one. At Lenin’s direction, the Cheka initiated a savage tradition that was ultimately to cost millions of innocent lives.

Abstract theory as well as politics lay behind Lenin’s thinking. As Vasily Selyunin pointed out in a May 1988 article pinning a major share of responsibility for the Civil War’s savagery on Lenin, the party leader believed that unless it destroyed both market-oriented production and the market itself, the Bolshevik

triumph might degenerate to the level of a mere bourgeois revolution. In February 1918 Lenin signed a decree authorizing the shooting on sight of all speculators. At the time, *anyone* who sold food could be called a speculator.

## WAR COMMUNISM

Russia was in a state of unbelievable chaos in the months after the Bolshevik Revolution. To understand why Lenin's party now embarked on the policy known as war communism, however, we need to examine three sets of figures:

<i>Industrial Production</i>	<i>Area Under Cultivation</i>
(1913 = 100)	
	average 1909–1913: 83 million desyatins
1917: 74.8	1920: 63 million desyatins
1918: 33.8	1921: 58.3 million desyatins
1919: 14.9	
1920: 12.8	
	<i>Gross Yield of Crops</i>
	pre-1914 average: 3,850,000,000 poods
	1920: 2,082,000,000 poods
	1921: 1,689,000,000 poods

The figures for industrial production would seem to bear out the contention of some historians that what happened to Russia was the most severe depression ever to strike an industrialized or semi-industrialized country. Much of the blame for the situation can obviously be laid on war, foreign intervention, and Civil War, but the communists brought a great deal of it on themselves by declaring war on the productive elements of society.

Life in the cities, increasingly difficult since August 1914, became under Bolshevik rule a grim daily struggle for survival. Moscow and Petrograd lost between one-third and one-half their populations; people could not find work and only rarely food. In Moscow's Sukharevka Market, for centuries a social crossroads, one paid 500 rubles for a lump of sugar in 1918.

Milk cost 1,800 rubles a mug, and 50 cigarettes cost 6,000 rubles. "We lived," the writer Ilya Ehrenberg recalled, "on hope and rations." And on *psha* (millet gruel). They burned furniture, shade trees, interior and exterior wood molding, doors—anything combustible in the attempt to keep warm. People dressed in fantastic getups: old uniforms, draperies, tablecloths, canvas, gunnysacks, even newspapers. And the newspapers in Moscow in 1919 were printed on blue paper made from sawdust; the pressure of the eye on the page, people said, made it disintegrate. Everyone ate and dressed and got warm, or tried to, in this way. The shortages, they joked, were divided equally among all the comrades.

In the villages, to which millions of urban dwellers flocked in search of food and warmth and escape from the violence of the cities, life was horrible, and it would get worse before it got still worse than that. The peasants had supported revolution in general in 1917, but the majority had voted against the Bolsheviks. When they saw early in 1918 that the Lenin reform brought most of them only about a desyatin (2.7 acres) or so of new land, they sank back into their accustomed distrust of all authority. Any surplus food they grew they tried to sell at a good price; failing that, they stored it away, waiting for better conditions, or kept it for their own needs. Currency had largely lost its value, and anyway the cities were no longer producing anything the peasants could use. The peasants increasingly refused to supply the cities with the goods they needed for survival. The deadly downward spiral terrified all who were trapped in it.

To combat this trend, beginning in May 1918 the authorities introduced the policy that came to be known as *war communism*. Historians still debate whether Lenin and his party intended this policy as a temporary expedient or as a deliberate leap into pure communism. There is no scholarly consensus. The exigencies of the moment, however, unques-

tionably obliged the Bolsheviks of 1918 to move quickly to translate rather vague and imprecise theory into practice. The state was to take over the means of production and reduce the sphere of private ownership to the narrowest possible dimensions. The principle of universal labor service was introduced, wages were equalized. Because money was virtually worthless, however, the communists attempted to “naturalize economic relations” by introducing that most primitive method of exchange, barter. They instituted the direct exchange of goods between town and countryside. In theory they took grain from the peasants and gave them matches and kerosene in return. In practice there were no matches and kerosene, but this did not save the peasants’ grain from confiscation. Further, war communism was marked by the extreme centralization of the economy.

In the first few months of Bolshevik rule, only 72 large factories and plants were nationalized by the government; another 449 were taken over by Red Guards or by their own workers. A decree of June 1918 expanded this program and nationalized all large-scale enterprises. Labor conscription was imposed for some categories of production in January 1919 and for all categories a year later. This was Trotsky’s “militarization” of labor: the country’s economic problems were the enemy, and he would organize the working class into an army to fight and overcome them.

The decree nationalizing *all* industries was issued in November 1920, when the Civil War had already been won. In actual practice, most small-scale enterprises remained in private hands. Next, two decrees promulgated in December 1920 authorized free distribution of food to workers and officials and free provision of “objects of wide use” (fuel, clothing) to all “productive citizens.” Finally, in January 1921 the authorities eliminated rents and utility charges for workers and the poor. It appeared that communism, for better or for worse, had arrived.

War communism not only did not induce an increase in production, it nearly destroyed production altogether. This was not due solely to communist mismanagement, of which there was a superabundance. The working class—large sectors of which were already marked by anti-Bolshevik tendencies that would soon find political expression in the “workers’ opposition”—responded to the attempt to introduce communism by simply staying off the job or by showing up and not working. Nearly two-thirds of the possible working days in 1919 were lost to such job actions.

The factories and small enterprises that did remain in production managed to supply the Red Army, but on the whole, war communism was a disaster in industry. Its record in agriculture was even worse: The cities and the Red Army were threatened with starvation. On January 11, 1919, the Sovnarkom decreed the requisitioning of foodstuffs. Food requisition detachments went into the countryside and seized grain from the peasants. Those who resisted were branded with the hot iron marked “enemy of the people.”

The food requisition detachments, composed largely of armed workers from the cities, encountered fierce resistance. The peasants rightly regarded receipts for the seized grain as worthless, and as time went on the detachments did not even bother with these pieces of paper. The peasants resisted with fists, axes, clubs, anything they could find. The detachments were authorized to use deadly force against this resistance and did. In this uneven combat, there could be only one winner—in the short run.

A popular ditty of the time went like this:

I’m sittin’ on a barrel,  
A barrel of flour.  
Don’t think, you sonofabitch,  
That Russia’s in *your* power!

But if the detachments could find the barrel of flour, they took it, and often they shot the peasant who had hidden it.

The peasants did not totally lack means of retaliation and resistance. They concealed their grain or, failing that, burned it to keep it out of the hands of the state. This was war, instigated by the Bolsheviks, and in the beginning the peasants held their own: 7,300 men out of 36,000 in the food requisition detachments were killed by October 1918.

The authorities created Poor Peasants' Committees in June 1918 in a deliberate attempt to fan the flames of this war. This added the horrors of intraclass war to the conflict that already existed between the regime and the peasants. The committees had the task of helping the food requisition detachments; in other words, the poorest peasants, who staffed the committees, had license to plunder their neighborhoods. This amounted to an incentive to denounce and ruin the more prosperous elements in the countryside, the so-called kulaks (better-off farmers); the poor peasant considered almost *everyone* a kulak. The opportunities for everything from malicious mischief to murder were limitless, and under war communism many people took advantage of them.

As Trotsky had tried to "militarize" labor, so would the party deal with the peasants. The communists tried to rule by decree, always a hallmark of dictatorships, and tried to enforce their decrees through the Cheka. The old

tsarist bureaucracy had intruded into the lives of citizens, but the new communist administrative apparatus threatened to smother the population with rules, regulations, ordinances, decrees, and directives. In the period of war communism people quoted this quatrain:

I'll be in trouble, that I know,  
Goin' to the privy, no pass to show.  
I'd gladly get one, but, alas,  
There's no one around, to issue a pass.

People greeted each other with "Nothin' to eat, but life's a treat!" And as always in the Russian village, they said that there was plenty of everyone for food.

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## chapter 5

# NEW ECONOMIC POLICY, 1921–1927

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As the conflict with the Whites and the foreigners wound down, serious challenges to the new regime emerged among the sectors of the population that should in theory have been most sympathetic. Peasant discontent erupted in Tambov province in the summer of 1920. An obscure artisan named A. S. Antonov put together an army that eventually numbered 40,000 men; not until August 1921 were the rebel units defeated. In March 1921 the Baltic fleet sailors based at Kronstadt, formerly the staunchest defenders of the Bolsheviks, rebelled against communist rule. They saw themselves as the vanguard of a revolution that would recapture the gains of 1917 taken away by Lenin. The striking Petrograd workers on whom they had counted for aid, however, had been beaten into submission by the party and the Cheka; no one joined the mutineers. Red Army troops under M. N. Tukhachevsky attacked on March 16 and crushed the rebellion.

Lenin telegraphed congratulations to Tukhachevsky and his superior, Trotsky, but he knew the victory was a hollow one. He used the Kronstadt and Tambov uprisings to persuade the Tenth Party Congress, then in session in Moscow, to accept his new program. To the peasants and to petty entrepreneurs in the cities he would make concessions so broad that many communists considered them a repudiation of party history.

### **DIMINISHING RETURNS OF TERROR**

Most of the Kronstadt sailors who had not been killed in action and who had not escaped to Finland were executed. This barbaric act of vengeance was directed by Trotsky and Tukhachevsky, themselves future victims of the revolution. Bolshevik retaliation against the rebellious peasants of Tambov was no less

severe: an unknown number went before firing squads, and thousands were sent to concentration camps.

The chief advocate of terror began to have doubts. In March 1921 Lenin denounced “scandal and gossip” about the excesses of the food requisition detachments, but his attack of scruples came too late to save the victims. Russia seemed on the verge of another great peasant rebellion; this nightmare frightened him as much as it had the tsars. It was necessary somehow to placate the peasants, to soothe their anger and reestablish their alliance with the workers, which Lenin’s opponents swore had never existed. The tension between town and countryside had to end. Industrial production was virtually at a standstill, and unless the peasants agreed to supply food the entire economy, and with it the regime, would collapse. The peasants needed a fair price for their grain, but they could not be paid in currency so worthless that the equivalent of 100 U.S. dollars in 100,000-ruble notes weighed a kilogram.

Trotsky had called for a retreat from war communism in 1920, for an accommodation with the peasants. Now briefly allied with Bukharin and the left communists, Lenin rejected this proposal. Civil War victory seemed to confirm his judgment.

The left communists were prepared to accept continuation of the terror to hold and consolidate what the party had gained. Lenin, however, saw the necessity for change: terror could make Russia submit, but it could not, in the 1920s, make Russia produce. Lenin never swerved from his goal of creating a communist society, but he accepted the necessity for flexible means to achieve that goal.

Before he could get a new policy functioning, however, a disaster of terrifying dimensions supervened. Debates within the party ceased as Russia gazed in horror on the suffering along the Volga.

## FAMINE

By the time the Tenth Party Congress approved Lenin’s demand for an “economic breathing space,” the meteorological and man-made conditions necessary to produce a catastrophe were in place. The peasants throughout European Russia were winding down their rebellion against the authorities; grain and seed stocks were dangerously depleted; hundreds of thousands of peasant-soldiers had not yet returned to the villages; and in the spring and summer of 1921, the rains did not come to the Volga valley.

Late in the spring American officials in Constantinople intercepted Sovnarkom radio messages warning of the dangers to public health and order posed by the famine in the middle Volga region. In some localities people were already eating grass, leaves, bark, and clay. Tree bark was selling for 40,000 rubles a *pood* (36 lbs., or about a bushel), bitter dock (horse sorrel) for 50,000. The Volga was so low that men and animals—the few animals that had not been eaten—could wade it at Green Island near Saratov. From May into September temperatures stayed well above normal. The heat baked the soil and seared the bodies and minds of the millions of starving people who wandered about aimlessly, looking for the food that was nowhere to be found. There exist nauseating photographs of traffic in human flesh.

Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote in his poem “My Speech at the Genoa Conference,”

Cast your gaze upon the Volga:  
Isn’t this starving inferno,  
This peasant desolation,  
The ass-end of your wars and blockades?\*

\*Vladimir Mayakovsky, “Moya rech na Genuezskoi konferentsii,” in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Gos. izdat. Khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1957). English translation by W.M. On the Genoa Conference, which Mayakovsky did not attend, see Chapter 7.

No one knows how many people were affected. The official Soviet famine relief agency, Pomgol, put the figure at well above 25 million; the head of the British trade mission then in Russia estimated 35 million. No fewer than 3 million and perhaps as many as 5 million people starved to death.

The wounds of the Intervention were too fresh for the Sovnarkom to appeal directly to the international community. Lenin asked the writer Maksim Gorky, who then opposed the communists but accepted the legitimacy of their rule, to make the plea. Gorky issued a dramatic cry for help, “To All Honest People,” and the West responded. Anatole France donated the money from his 1921 Nobel Prize for Literature. George Bernard Shaw, Albert Einstein, Theodore Dreiser, and others prominent in science and the arts raised funds. Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian polar explorer, organized a massive relief campaign in Western Europe. President Harding’s secretary of commerce, Herbert Hoover, who had organized assistance to Belgium during World War I, headed the American rescue effort.

The fiercely anticommunist Hoover may have had the base motives that the communists and many of his critics in the United States claimed he had; the Soviet government expelled the American Relief Administration (ARA) in 1922. By that time, however, the organization had managed to distribute more than \$20 million worth of food and seed.

There was little the Sovnarkom could do on its own. Pomgol tried to organize relief measures, and a special “agit-prop” (agitational-propaganda) train called Red October toured the stricken districts. Equipped with loudspeakers, films, printed matter, and agitators—everything but food—the train rolled through the Volga valley. As the crisis worsened, Pomgol was obliged to concentrate its efforts on helping local authorities control the millions of refugees who fled the area seeking food.

Eventually the weather improved, aid poured in from the West, the spring and autumn 1922 harvests were good. The crisis passed.

## NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

In March 1921 Lenin told the delegates to the Tenth Congress of his party that some drastic changes were in order:

In this backward country, the workers, who have made unprecedented sacrifices, and the mass of peasants, are in a state of utter exhaustion after seven years of war. This condition borders on complete loss of working capacity. What is needed now is an economic breathing-space.

He was describing conditions *before* the famine.

Lenin proposed a compromise with the peasantry. Admitting privately in March and publicly in July that the food requisition policy was “bad and primitive,” he proposed a tax in kind to replace it. Despite opposition from the left communists, this plan, similar to the one Trotsky had proposed a year earlier, was adopted. The amount of the new tax was fixed at 60 percent of the tonnage forcibly collected in 1920.

This was the cornerstone of Lenin’s new economic policy, or NEP, for which he received overwhelming approval at the Tenth Congress. An American scholar has written that NEP “originated as an ignoble retreat.” Although more than a few party members—perhaps including a majority of those who had joined since the October Revolution—refused to acknowledge the fact, war communism was a failure. There was no viable alternative to a change of course.

Soviet historians maintained that Lenin conceived both the NEP and its discredited predecessor as mere tactical moves with limited life expectancies. Western scholars, how-

ever, have demonstrated conclusively that Lenin and his followers, especially Bukharin, regarded the NEP as a reform program that would have a long tenure. They had however learned—as Lenin was fond of saying—from life itself, and they accepted the necessity of taking a different route to their goal. With varying degrees of grace all party leaders accepted NEP; Bukharin and Trotsky became its chief spokesmen. Stalin went along with the party majority.

The peasants were permitted to own land, and private ownership of small shops and plants was legalized. Worst of all, from the standpoint of communist true believers, rural and urban entrepreneurs were permitted to hire labor. Lenin's opponents complained that NEP meant "new exploitation of the proletariat."

Lenin pressed on and put forth another slogan: "Learn to trade!" Condemned by generations of Marxists, the marketplace now offered a way out of the country's economic difficulties. Supervised but essentially free trade in grain was allowed. Peasants were encouraged but not forced to join producer cooperatives; attempts to herd them into collective and state farms were abandoned.

The state retained control over the "commanding heights" of the economy: heavy industry (mining, metals, heavy machinery, etc.), financial and credit institutions, transportation, and foreign trade. The state also kept its monopoly on political power, communications, and education. State enterprises were organized into vertical or horizontal "trusts" and ordered to make a profit. Communist apologists explained that the profit, extracted from labor's hide, went to benefit the proletarian state.

Gone was the attempt to equalize wages, to pay the lowliest hod carrier the same as the manager of the largest plant. The formula "to each according to his work" replaced the utopian "to each according to his needs." En-

gineers and other specialists were well paid. The salaries of party and state bureaucrats remained low, but a system of special perquisites allowed those at the top to live relatively well.

All this added up to a mixed public-private economy. The public or state sector predominated in industry, the private in agriculture. Because free trade was now permitted, the peasants had an incentive to sell; at least in theory they could get a fair price for their products. A steady supply of food would feed the cities and enable the workers to get production rolling again. That, in turn, would provide the manufactured goods the peasants needed and could purchase with profits from the sale of their own products. A money economy was reintroduced, the currency stabilized.

Three agencies directed the NEP. The Supreme Economic Council had overall responsibility for the economy, and two new planning bodies were established, the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia (Goelro) and the State Planning Commission (Gosplan). Neither agency provided the data that would have made it possible to check the regime's startling declaration in 1925 that it had balanced its budget.

Agriculture recovered quickly. With a sufficient supply of grain by the end of 1922, free market prices declined. Industry, however, did not rebound rapidly, and production remained inadequate to meet demand. Further, the state's monopolistic practices enabled industrial managers to set artificially high prices. The purchasing power of agricultural products thus declined, and the peasants had to sell more grain to obtain a steel plow or other agricultural implement. The manager of the plant that produced the plow, however, now needed to sell fewer of them because the price was so high.

After October 1923 the crisis began to ease; the state improved the peasant's position by intervening in the marketplace with agricul-

tural subsidies. The authorities also reduced prices of manufactured goods.

Industrial production reached 35 percent of the 1913 level in 1922, 73 percent in 1925. Thus, in the latter year Russia still produced only three-fourths of what she had manufactured prior to the Great War, but this was an *increase* of more than 500 percent over 1920 levels. The record in agriculture was even more spectacular despite poor harvests in 1921 and 1925. Grain production returned to prewar levels; meat lagged behind.

Lenin sought to learn from and make use of the capitalists. His regime granted wide concessions to foreign entrepreneurs; the capricious American businessman Armand Hammer received the first, to mine asbestos in the Urals and organize foreign trade. Royal Dutch Shell obtained the concession to exploit Caspian Sea oil. Swedish Nobel interests obtained mining rights in the Ukraine and the Urals. Henry Ford supplied 300 million gold rubles' worth of motor vehicles over four years technical assistance and invention-use rights over nine years. By the end of 1928, 49 foreign individuals and firms had come to do business, everyone conveniently overlooking the Bolshevik promise to wipe the capitalists off the face of the earth. Lenin even invited foreign governments to invest.

## NEW GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

As a member of the minorities, Joseph Stalin was a reasonable choice for the relatively minor post of commissar of nationalities in the first Sovnarkom. An Old Bolshevik—that is, party member since 1903—he had long served as Lenin's expert on the nationality question. Following the Civil War he was charged with revising the constitution to integrate the regained territories—Ukraine, Byelorussia, Trans-Caucasia, Siberia—into the new state.

Along with many other communists, Stalin fa-

vored a highly centralized state, with no concessions to the minorities. At Lenin's insistence, however, the 1918 constitution had provided for a federal structure consistent with national self-determination. In Lenin's view, the minorities should have rights surpassing those of the states in the United States. He argued that the larger minorities should have their own political-administrative entities with the right to conduct foreign policy.

The intense Russophobia encountered during the Civil War forced both centralizers and federalists in the Communist party to rethink their positions. Stalin wanted to make all non-Russians submit to Moscow's domination. Lenin abandoned his utopian view of a free association of sovereign and independent states but for tactical reasons demanded that this fiction be incorporated into the new constitution. He did insist, however, on some concessions to the non-Russian population in order to bring peace and stability and ease introduction of the system. He hoped that by allowing a wide degree of cultural autonomy in the non-Russian areas, the regime would encounter less resistance.

The language of the new constitution, worked out while Lenin lay dying and adopted on January 31, 1924, shortly after his death, reflected his wishes. On paper, each constituent republic was sovereign, independent, and equal. Each joined the union freely and could leave freely. Freedom of speech was guaranteed. Citizenship was not in one of the constituent republics but in the union. The union had control over defense, foreign relations, the general economic system and plan, the national budget, the monetary and credit systems, transportation, and communications. The republics had control over "everything else."

Under the amended constitution sovereign power resided in the people through the All-Union Congress of Soviets. There was no change in the favored status granted workers in

the election of this body: one worker's vote equaled five peasants' votes. Even so, direct elections took place only at the local level. Each next higher soviet (district, province, republic, union) was elected by the body directly beneath it—in effect a system of electoral colleges. There was no provision for a secret ballot. The Central Executive Committee of the Congress and its presidium were in continuous session to govern the country. In practice, power remained concentrated in the party Politburo, which formally exercised it through the Sovnarkom. It was clear from the beginning that in a conflict between the party wishes and the provisions of the constitution, the party would win.

An October 1922 plenum of the party Central Committee approved a plan to create a new state organization. On December 30 of the same year the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) came into existence as a merger of the Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, and Trans-Caucasian republics of the original state.

## THE PARTY

The Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor party had changed its name to Russian Communist party (RKP) (b) in March 1918, the *b* in parentheses standing for “Bolsheviks.” The RKP (b) made another change in December 1925, when the Fourteenth Congress renamed it the All-Union Communist party (b), or VKP (b).

In 1921 the communists enjoyed enormous prestige as the victors of October, conquerors of Whites and foreign Interventionists, vanguard—so their propaganda claimed—of the international working class. The hostility demonstrated in Tambov province and at Kronstadt could not be ignored, but party leaders and thousands of rank-and-file members remained unshaken in their sense of

themselves as agents of history. They were creating a new society; victory would be theirs.

In theory anyone not a member of the “exploiting classes” or other “hostile element” could become a party member. Admission required the sponsorship of three members who had known the candidate for a year or more at her or his workplace, enterprise, or military unit. On passing the scrutiny of a review board; which in the 1920s looked for purity of class origin and ideological reliability, the applicant became a candidate member (nonvoting probationer) for one year. At the end of the year, assuming he or she had demonstrated satisfactory ideological, political, and personal behavior and had proved to be a good worker or member of the armed forces, full party membership was bestowed.

Not many people were admitted to the party in the first four years of the decade. In 1921 Lenin had ordered the purge of “rascals, bureaucrats, dishonest or wavering communists, and of Mensheviks who had repainted their ‘façade’ but have remained Mensheviks at heart.” The people said he was attacking “radish” communists—red outside, white inside. The purge rendered the number of full members from 567,000 in 1921 to 350,000 in 1924. If all the 165,000 candidates in 1921 had become full members, this represented a decrease of more than 382,000.

On the leader's death the party announced a “Lenin Enrollment” aimed at rebuilding its depleted forces. Within two years membership more than doubled, to just over 1 million. The recruiting drive concentrated on industrial workers, peasants, and members of the Red Army and the Red Fleet. At the beginning of the drive only 18.8 percent of the party membership was of working-class origin; by January 1927, the percentage had risen to 39.4. There are no figures for peasant membership in 1924, but by 1927, 13.7 percent of party members and candidate members were peasants. These were impressive gains. Nevertheless, in Janu-

ary 1927 only 8.4 percent of all industrial workers, and only 0.6 of the peasants, were party members. In the Red Army, 13.9 percent were communists.

The proportion of working-class and peasant members continued to rise, however; the figures do not reflect the considerable success of this policy. By 1927 more than a quarter of a million people who had entered the party as workers had been promoted to white-collar jobs or to other positions—the military, college studies—that technically removed them from the proletariat. In the same year, only 0.8 percent of party members had a college degree, and only another 7.9 percent had finished secondary school.

The party structure had as its basic unit the primary party organization, or cell. Composed of as few as three members, it might number hundreds, as for example in a large mill or factory, where there would be several large cells. Those with 300 or more members had their own bureaus and secretariats.

The next higher organization, the city or county conference, amalgamated local primary party organizations. The conference established its own committees and had its own secretariat. All cells were subordinate to it. The local conference was in turn subordinate to the provincial conference, which had its own central committee and secretariat. Although full-time, salaried party workers were found at all levels (but only in large cells), it was at the provincial level that they began to dominate party work.

Above the province was the republican party congress, which elected a central committee and a secretariat. Originally elected locally, as were all lower bodies in the party structure, the republican officials were increasingly appointed by Moscow. The inexorable trend toward centralization affected the party organization no less than government agencies.

At the top of the pyramidal structure, the

All-Union Congress was the supreme authority. It met annually through 1925; after that year, party rules were suspended or ignored as it met at the pleasure of the Stalinist faction. In the 1920s the congress elected a tenth of its members to a Central Committee entrusted with the day-to-day work of the party. In the summer of 1917 there were 21 members of the committee, plus 18 candidate members. This number grew to 40 members and 17 candidates in 1923, and to 53 members and 34 candidates in 1924.

Even in the beginning the Central Committee was too large a body for effective decision making. In March 1919 the Eighth Congress instructed that body to create three new organs: (1) a Political Bureau\* (Politburo) of five Central Committee (CC) members; (2) an Organizational Bureau (Orgburo), also composed of five CC members; and (3) a Secretariat, consisting of one general secretary, who had to be a member of the Politburo, and five technical secretaries chosen from among party officials.

Always in session, the Politburo dealt with matters requiring immediate action. It became not only the chief executive arm of the party but also the main policy-making body. Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Kamenev, and Krestinsky were the original members; Bukharin, Zinoviev, and Kalinin were soon added as candidates. This inner circle set policy and decided questions requiring intervention of the highest authority.

Charged with “all party organizational work,” the Orgburo met three times a week and like the Politburo had to make biweekly reports to the CC. Stalin and Krestinsky, both Politburo members, were appointed to the Orgburo, which Stalin was to transform into the foundation of his own personal party organization. Krestinsky was soon removed from

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\*The Politburo came into de facto existence on October 23, 1917, legitimized by the Eighth Congress.

both bodies, leaving Stalin the sole Orgburo link to the Politburo.

By 1921 Stalin, widely acknowledged as the party's leading authority on organizational and personnel questions, had come to dominate the Orgburo. His power was all the greater because of his control of the Secretariat. The ill-defined mission of this body, which functioned as a high-level secretarial agency in the first three years of its existence, took on real clarity only after the appointment of Stalin as general secretary on April 4, 1922. He made the Secretariat an adjunct of the Orgburo.

The Secretariat was divided into departments, of which the single most important was Records and Assignments, a personnel department. Through it, using the authority from his positions on the Secretariat, the Orgburo, and the Politburo, Stalin regularly reviewed the qualifications of party officials. A second important department of the Secretariat was Organization-Instruction, which transmitted the decisions and orders of the CC and its agencies to all lower party organizations. Organization-Instruction also had investigatory functions and was empowered to determine compliance or noncompliance with party directives.

The process by which the party was transformed into a coercive bureaucratic agency is still not fully understood. A major factor was the contradictory nature of certain key party rules, one of which provided for free discussion until a decision was made; then there had to be compliance. This was "democratic centralism." Not only was there to be no dissent: all members were required to give active support to party decisions. All this presupposed infallible majority decisions. The either-or certainties that had always characterized Russian religious and political thinking surfaced again in the rules of the Communist party: there was truth and error, right and wrong, black and white, no compromise.

The rendering of CC and by extension

Politburo decisions sacrosanct had profound implications. At each level of the hierarchy party members elected representatives to the next higher level. In theory this organization should have made the top officials responsive to the rank and file, but in practice this was not the case. Old Muscovy's despotic, centralizing traditions surfaced again as the party established the principle that the lower must be slavishly responsible to the higher. Key local party officials were appointed directly by the CC of the VKP (b).

The emerging state structure paralleled the party organization at all levels, and officials held government positions corresponding to their party rank; in his government capacity Lenin was chairman of the Sovnarkom, or prime minister. The other members of the Politburo also held high positions in the government. By the mid-1920s the top positions in union and republic government bodies were held exclusively by communists. There were elections, but after 1920 there was only one candidate for each post, and he or she was invariably a communist selected by party authorities or—rarely, and only at the lower levels—a docile "nonparty" individual. Voters could show their disapproval by declining to vote, but abstention came to be equated with disloyalty.

At the Tenth Congress in 1921, an exasperated Lenin pushed through a resolution banning factions and factionalism within the party. Having grown accustomed to military-administrative procedures in the Civil War, the membership by and large did not oppose this savaging of its political traditions.

Seeking to defend Lenin against the charge of having prepared the way for Stalin's dictatorship, some scholars in the USSR and the West have insisted that he intended only a temporary ban on factionalism to smooth the transition from war communism to the NEP. There is no evidence that Lenin calculated this particular move so carefully. The many

thousands of members who had joined the party during the Civil War were largely indifferent to and even ignorant of its pre-October traditions, and they had little patience with the infighting and bickering that had *always* characterized Bolshevism.

Even before the Tenth Congress, central party authorities had indicated how they would deal with dissent. A group calling itself Democratic Centralists seized control of the Ukrainian party organization in 1920; it was committed to upholding the democratic traditions of bolshevism. The VKP (b) CC promptly dismissed the Ukrainian CC and appointed a new one. In 1921 the workers' opposition, party members who urged that a freely elected Congress of Producers take over the economy, seized control of the Samara provincial party organization. The CC again threw out the dissidents and appointed its own people.

By 1922 Lenin realized that the CC was becoming the nucleus of a powerful dictatorial tendency. He sought to curb the process by restoring the power of the Sovnarkom. It was too late.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

Lenin suffered a stroke in May 1922. He seemed to improve over the summer; the prognosis was guardedly optimistic. In October he returned to the Kremlin and a full work load despite the pleas of his physicians and his wife. A second stroke in December removed him from active politics.

It was axiomatic that no one individual could succeed the leader. Lenin's legacy could only be parceled out among his closest colleagues. The question was not who would succeed him but rather which group; nevertheless there was speculation as to which of the lieutenants would emerge as first among equals. In terms of political power the chief

contenders were Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin, and Trotsky.

Lev Kamenev, an Old Bolshevik, was head of the Moscow party organization, member of the Politburo, and deputy chairman of the Sovnarkom. In October 1917, however, he betrayed the plans for the armed uprising. He passed as an intellectual, but his learning had little substance; he was shallow and insecure. In a country with a long history of anti-Semitism, his Jewishness and marriage to Trotsky's sister were liabilities.

Grigory Zinoviev, also Jewish, headed the Leningrad party organization, was president of the Communist International, and sat on the Politburo. He too was an Old Bolshevik. He was a bombastic public speaker; this had served him well earlier, but the demand for fiery speeches lessened after the Civil War. He was widely known as the other man who betrayed the plans for the October Revolution. Until that monumental error he had been closer to Lenin, in the strictly political sense, than anyone in the party. That, however, inevitably aroused jealousy. Zinoviev had ruthlessly suppressed the Petrograd strikes of 1920–1921 and the blood of Kronstadt was on his hands. Nevertheless he had consistently supported labor in the period of war communism and never ceased to remind Leningrad workers that they had bread on their tables only because he had made the party squeeze the peasants. In addition to his labor support he enjoyed some popularity among students.

Nikolai Bukharin, youngest of Lenin's lieutenants and one of the youngest Old Bolsheviks, had a reputation as a Marxist theorist. Lenin once charged that he had never fully understood the dialectic, but he also called "Bukharchik" the "favorite of the whole party." Bukharin was editor of *Pravda* and a member of the Politburo. He frequently opposed Lenin, however, and the rapid adjustment of his views after a defeat indicated a certain ideological instability. He fought the

Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, but that was not fatal: thousands of party members shared his concerns. More serious was his hostility toward the NEP. He argued for continuing war communism after it became clear that it had brought disaster. Bukharin reversed himself and became one of the strongest supporters of the new line. The centrist faction, which never allowed itself to be seduced by left or right, welcomed his conversion, but again he had not enhanced his standing.

Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, the Russified (by 1917) Ossete from Georgia, was not the favorite of any first-rank leader other than himself, but he was the candidate of many communists at lower levels of command—the *komitetchiki* (committeemen) who were in their jobs because he had put them there. In addition to this personal organization, which he had quietly been constructing since 1919, Stalin's chief asset was longevity of service. He was not unshakably loyal to Lenin: witness his support for the Provisional government early in 1917, his disobedience during the Civil War, and his stand on the centralism-federalism issue.

By 1923 Stalin had made mistakes serious enough to cost a dozen men their careers, maybe their heads. The Bolsheviks, however, had an "old boy" network that protected even the most wayward from the wages of sin. At every turn Stalin was shielded, often by men who detested him and whom *he* could hardly wait to destroy.

Stalin had the ability to spot and exploit weakness in an adversary. He saw Kamenev and Zinoviev for the puny politicians they were but defended them against Lenin's wrath in 1917; he was to call in this debt in 1923–1924. He urged leniency for those who opposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, asked for understanding of comrades hostile to war communism, counseled patience in the case of opponents of the NEP.

Not only officials but also many of the rank and file were indebted to Stalin. He was given

the post of general secretary, which at the time had no conventional power. The general secretary was to coordinate the work of party commissions, committees, agencies, and departments and present reports on their activities to the Central Committee. Bent as most of them were on strengthening their own more glamorous fiefdoms, Lenin's other lieutenants failed to see that the general secretary's control over the flow of information to the CC and its Politburo gave him enormous power. Stalin sat on the Politburo and the Orgburo; directed the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, or Rabkrin (Lenin had been especially critical of his work here, and he soon lost the job); and remained commissar of nationalities. Moreover, his timing was impeccable: he was consolidating his position while Lenin was ill and absent from Moscow much of the time.

In short, Joseph Stalin was a clever and ambitious politician, the ideal committeeman who performed routine work behind the scenes to make the party function. His various responsibilities allowed him to insinuate himself into control of party personnel at all levels. As his power grew, so did his arrogance.

Leon Trotsky had come late to the Bolshevik camp with a modest dowry, the tiny Interdistrict faction of socialists. The public record was filled with his vituperative attacks on Lenin, especially from 1903 to 1912. All was forgiven, however, in the heady days of 1917, when more than any other single individual he translated Lenin's will into action.

Trotsky clashed with Lenin over the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk but seemed to atone for that with a brilliant record in the Civil War. Once again Lenin was the master strategist, Trotsky his indispensable tactician. Trotsky's building of the Red Army out of the ruins of 1914–1918 stands as one of the most remarkable episodes in military annals. At the end of the Civil War, before the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion, he was unquestionably the second most respected and popular figure in the country.



Lenin and Stalin at Gorky, late summer 1922. This is a fake photo, made to suggest a closer relationship than actually existed. (Sovnarkom photo)

A challenge to Trotsky materialized simply because he was there. After Zinoviev's fall from grace, someone had to be ranked next to Lenin, and anyone in that position attracted envy and opposition. Trotsky, however, was particularly vulnerable to the three Old Bolsheviks, Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Stalin, who resented him as a parvenu who had reaped rewards they coveted.

Lenin wrote in December 1922 that Trotsky was distinguished by "exceptional ability" and that he was "the most able man in the present Central Committee." He also spoke of Trotsky's "too far-reaching self-confidence," his love of the "purely administrative side of affairs." It would seem at first glance that this comment more accurately described Stalin, the administrator-bureaucrat par excellence, but Lenin apparently referred to Trotsky's readiness to use military administrative methods and coercion rather than political manipulation. In December 1920 Lenin prevailed on the CC to pass a resolution criticizing Trotsky.

## TWELFTH PARTY CONGRESS

Lenin finally grasped the direction of the succession struggle and tried in the winter of 1922–1923 to stop Stalin. In a memorandum dictated in December 1922 and amended slightly in January 1923 he wrote,

Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated enormous power in his hands, and I am not sure he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution. . . . Stalin is too rude, and this fault, acceptable among us Communists, is intolerable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it a man who is . . . more patient, more loyal, more polite, and more attentive to comrades, less capricious. . . .

It is not clear whether, at the time he wrote this, Lenin knew of Stalin's mistreatment of Krupskaya. The CC had entrusted its general secretary with responsibility for overseeing Lenin's medical treatment. In December 1922 Stalin berated Krupskaya for conveying mes-

sages from her husband to various party members, notably Trotsky. Stalin already knew of Lenin's hostility toward him; possibly he knew too of Lenin's desire to remove him as general secretary.

Lenin was paralyzed and could barely speak. Nevertheless he recovered sufficiently to issue instructions for the forthcoming Twelfth Party Congress: He wanted Stalin ousted as general secretary, and on the eve of the congress he dictated a note to him, demanding an apology to Krupskaya. He declared that he would consider Stalin's refusal an indication that he wished to break off relations.

The Twelfth Congress, the first without Lenin in attendance, came and went in April 1923. Trotsky did not make use of the weapon Lenin had given him. His reluctance has been explained by his followers as the product of his fear of being seen as a Bonaparte, a man on horseback riding in to steal political victory after battlefield triumph. Those supporters also point to Stalin's taunting of Trotsky for

refusing to accept the deputy chairmanship of the party: was he too arrogant to serve as Lenin's deputy?

Lenin's "testament" was not the crucial document of Trotskyite and post-1956 anti-Stalinist myth. When he was healthy Lenin used far stronger language against associates with whom he had fundamental differences. All things considered, his attack on Stalin was relatively mild; as a guide to political maneuver the "testament" had little value. Lenin did not claim that the party's fate hinged on Stalin's removal, nor did he give any clear-cut guidelines, still less express a preference, concerning his successor or successors. This is why Trotsky declined to use the document at the Twelfth Congress.

A secondary reason was the composition of the meeting: Stalin's supporters occupied all key leadership roles. Many delegates supported Trotsky or were friendly toward him, but they were heavily outnumbered. Nevertheless, had the hero of October and the Civil

From right: Lenin, Krupskaya; Lenin's nephew, Viktor; Lenin's sister, Anna Yelizarova-Ulyanova; unidentified child, August 1922. (Sovnarkom photo)



War acted as Lenin requested, the congress could not have ignored him. Stalin would surely have suffered a public rebuke, perhaps a demotion. A silent Trotsky, however, stood on the fringes and watched the general secretary direct his first congress flawlessly.

### “PERMANENT REVOLUTION” VS. “SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY”

Engrossed in developing his theme of “permanent revolution,” in peacetime Trotsky showed little interest in the routine affairs of the commissariat of war. Disinclined to believe in the ebb of the Western revolutionary tide and grasping at every street fight in Germany as the harbinger of cataclysmic upheaval, Trotsky held that socialism could not succeed in Russia in the absence of proletarian revolutions in the West. A socialist island such as Soviet Russia could not long exist, he maintained, in a capitalist sea: sooner or later the capitalists would unite to destroy it. The isolated socialist state would lose its identity. The necessity of maintaining a large national defense and of coercing the population would create a state-capitalist society. It was therefore the international class duty of the Soviet workers to subordinate their own immediate interests to those of the world proletariat, to foster and support revolutionary movements in the industrialized countries.

Stalin counterpoised Bukharin’s theory of “socialism in one country”: Russia *could* go it alone. The Marxist-Leninist historical timetable, never very precise, would simply be adjusted. If revolution did not come in the West it was the duty of the Soviet communists to build up Russia as the bastion of socialism, a beacon to the oppressed and downtrodden peoples of the world. Stalin agreed that Russia was threatened by the capitalist states but disagreed concerning the proper response. Trotsky argued that the best defense lay in providing ideologi-

cal and political cadres and, when necessary, arms to revolutionary and working-class movements in the West. Employing Bukharin’s arguments, Stalin insisted that Soviet communists had first to build a powerful Soviet state.

Stalin quickly got into step behind Lenin concerning Brest-Litovsk, while Trotsky clung to illusions concerning the imminence of revolution in the West. Stalin approved war communism from the beginning; Trotsky had to be won over. When it was time to recognize the failure of that policy and turn to NEP, Stalin supported Lenin. Trotsky, having earlier proposed his own new economic policy, declared that communists should not abandon war communism. Temporarily allied with the right, Stalin would steadfastly champion the NEP to the very end, while Trotsky and the left would call for an “unequal exchange” between town and country, that is, for the exploitation of the peasantry to finance industrialization.

After the Twelfth Congress Trotsky realized the magnitude of his mistake in failing to oppose Stalin and tried to put together a broad attack on the bureaucratization of party and state. But even Lenin had come to his senses too late: Trotsky did not stand a chance.

Several second-level leaders attacked Stalin in an October 1923 “Letter of the 46,” expressing alarm over the direction party and country were taking and calling for reforms. Trotsky did not sign the letter, but the Stalin faction that now dominated the CC condemned him anyway, warning that he and the signers were violating the 1921 ban on factions. The CC suppressed the letter and stepped up the whispering campaign against Trotsky. Proclaiming the infallibility of the Politburo, where they had a majority, the Stalinists claimed that he was preparing to stage a military coup d’état the moment Lenin died. There was no truth to the charge, but it put Trotsky on the defensive.

Rumors and innuendos swirled about in ever-widening circles. Having neglected to

build a personal political organization, Trotsky was obliged to fall back on the old socialist tactic of appealing directly to the proletariat. He toured factories and workshops in Moscow and Leningrad, attempting to explain his criticism of the party and bureaucracy. He had to walk a thin line: at what point did disagreement become factionalism, thus a violation of the 1921 ban? He who had so recently used naked power to such advantage now made the mistake of appealing to reason. In trying to explain, to justify, and to persuade, Trotsky appeared weak and vulnerable.

## DEATH OF LENIN

In March 1923 the attending physicians, including German and Swedish specialists, declared Lenin's recovery entirely possible. The Sovnarkom intended the statement to reassure the public. In fact, whole sections of his brain ossified from calcification of the blood vessels; Lenin was dying. All anyone could do was to make him as comfortable as possible. The end came on Monday, January 21, 1924. Attendants placed the body on a bier in the dacha, flowers and fir branches laid around it. The CC, Stalin in the chair as its general secretary, met the next day and decided to embalm the body and put it on permanent display in a mausoleum to be erected in Red Square.

This decision outraged Krupskaya and most of the Old Bolsheviks, who rigorously opposed glorification of individuals. For an atheistic party to display the mummified corpse of its leader seemed grotesque. And yet Stalin and his friends on the CC knew their Russians and other Christian peoples, most of whom continued to profess their faith. Stalin shrewdly calculated that a people who *had* nothing needed to *believe* in something. A cult of Lenin would provide the spiritual sustenance peasants and workers ached for and serve as a unifying force, a system of basic, unchallengeable

beliefs. A cult would also demand a priesthood of interpreters and keepers of the mysteries. One was already in place.

In the midst of a winter that even Muscovites considered severe, for three days hundreds of thousands of citizens queued patiently, 24 hours a day, to pass the open coffin in Union House on Hunters' Row, in the center of the city. It seemed the whole city was sobbing; medical personnel were swamped by cases of hysteria, shock, frostbite. Bonfires burned at corners all over Moscow as people congregated to share their grief and their fear. On January 26 Petrograd was renamed Leningrad.

On the morning of January 27 Stalin, Zinoviev, and six workers carried the open coffin from Union House to Red Square. There, the next contingent of pallbearers took over and bore it across the square to a temporary wooden crypt. At 4:00 P.M. the leaders disappeared from public view as they followed the coffin into the crypt. At that moment every siren, factory whistle, ship's horn, motor vehicle horn, and other noise-making device in the country sounded from Vladivostok to the Polish border. Thousands of artillery guns fired salvo after blank salvo.

Stalin had delivered the main funeral oration the previous evening. It was couched in the cadences and rhythms and to a certain extent the language of the Russian Orthodox Church. The speech grated on the nerves of party members, but to the Soviet people by and large it gave some comfort and reassurance.

## STALIN'S EMERGING VICTORY

The grief of Russia was real. As the peasants had for centuries believed in a "good tsar" who did not know of their distress and so bore no responsibility, so Ilich—the patronymic by which Lenin was affectionately known—

seemed remote from the harsh conditions and commissars of war communism. Too, the country had begun to recover under NEP, and that was Lenin's doing. Life was easier; it was possible to hope again. One could improve one's position through hard work, sharp practices, thrift.

When Lenin died, Trotsky was in the southern part of the country recuperating from an illness. He was informed only when it was too late to rush back to Moscow and thus could not participate in the awesomely symbolic funeral. The "most able man in the present Central Committee" did not serve as a pallbearer, nor did he speak. His absence had less political significance than his followers claimed, but the party certainly noticed it.

On the eve of the Thirteenth Congress in May 1924, Krupskaya gave the CC Lenin's December 1922–January 1923 memorandum and noted his wish that the first congress after his death review it. The "testament," a weaker document than myth has it, would have compromised Stalin, who had many supporters on the CC—Molotov, Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Kirov, Ordzhonikidze—but did not control it. He still needed the backing of Kamenev, Zinoviev, and party committeemen.

The CC decided not to publish the "testament." The man whom Lenin wanted to remove as general secretary escaped with nothing worse than hurt pride. The embarrassed Stalin remained in office, and Trotsky re-

mained on the CC. Grown pudgy in power and called "baba au rhum" to his face, Zinoviev once again proved himself a fool by demanding that Trotsky "recant" his views.

Lenin had manifestly become irrelevant as the party entered the crucial stage of the struggle for power. The Soviet citizens huddled around streetcorner bonfires that cold Moscow January never suspected that the outcome would doom them to three decades of horror.

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## chapter 6

# LIFE IN THE 1920s

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In 1921 the great economic experiment was seriously—many distressed communists believed fatally—modified when a dramatic policy reversal ushered in the golden reform age of NEP, the period of “communists but no communism.” The capitalists were gone, but petty entrepreneurs rose up to resume the capitalist tradition. The peasants could own land, sell their produce on the free market, hire labor. There were at least 1 million unemployed workers—all too often a hallmark of free enterprise. The heady revolutionary communism of 1917–1921 had disappeared. In September 1921 cinemas and theatres, admission to which had been free, began to charge for tickets. October saw the end of free newspapers and magazines.

Party members were shocked by the party’s betrayal, as they saw it, of their ideals. They had given their lives to communism, fought and suffered for it, made one of history’s

greatest revolutions. Had it all been in vain? So enormous was Lenin’s prestige that few outside the highest councils dared criticize the NEP, but there was great dissatisfaction among the rank and file and, more important, among committeemen beginning to regard Stalin as the best post-Lenin leader.

Because their party retained a monopoly on politics, members had little reason to fear that Lenin would permit the return of old opposition parties or the creation of new ones. Their fears were concentrated on the economic and social sectors, where they had anticipated changes as sweeping as those in politics. The communists had always insisted that they would revolutionize not only politics but the whole of society. A new social order would transform egotistical, selfish people into altruists; each would learn to identify his or her welfare with the welfare of society. With the end of exploitation and the establishment of a

new social order, people would attain hitherto undreamed-of spiritual and material levels. Communist culture would be accessible to all.

It quickly became obvious that the social and cultural revolution was not going to take place under NEP. The communists were in control but also in retreat. To some party members and to optimists among their enemies it seemed another case of “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.”

## URBAN LIFE

Nothing could ever be the same, however, if only because of the demographic disaster that had struck Russia: In 1926 the population was about 30 million fewer than it should have been. The losses included approximately 4 million victims of wars and revolutions, about 1.5 million deaths in the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918–1919, at least 5 million deaths in the famine of 1921, roughly 12 million inhabitants of areas of the old empire who were now citizens of other countries, and 7 to 8 million children not born because of these developments.

The work force and the Red Army, to say nothing of science, education, and the arts, suffered irreparable harm. And the grim statistics do not tell the whole story. It is impossible to determine how many people were lost to society because of psychological wounds associated with war, revolution, and other calamities. Emotional disorders, alcoholism, domestic violence, indifference to social norms including work, and crime all rose dramatically in the 1914–1921 era.

Moscow lost half its population in this period and more than ever resembled, as the humorists Ilf and Petrov wrote, a “large, badly planned village.” No one would ever mistake regal Petrograd for a village, but that city had lost two-thirds of its inhabitants, and hunger and fear stalked its streets.

The new economic policy quickly turned the situation around. People came out of hiding, returned to the cities, and life improved. A key element in the urban recovery was the *nepman*, the petty entrepreneur spawned by NEP. The *nepman* was a wheeler-dealer, a fixer, an intermediary. *Nepmen* could bring buyer and seller together at a satisfactory price, and they learned more quickly than anyone the limits of communist toleration. They knew which laws and regulations were rigidly enforced, which were flexible. They knew who could be bribed and who was incorruptible; who was an alcoholic or drug addict; who wanted sex enough to cut a deal; who had a personal grudge against whom; who had skeletons in the closet. Everyone had his or her price and the *nepman* knew how to discover it.

*Nepmen* were not capitalists but they were indispensable in an economy that was neither capitalist nor socialist but an odd blend of the two. They could oversee the grain market, ensure that the cities were fed, and help get factories back into production. There were about 75,600 *nepmen* in 1926–1927; with their families they numbered about 209,000. (There were in the same period 339,000 “servants,” another social category incompatible with communism.) Communists who had revolutionized society’s political superstructure detested those who were restoring the economic base.

The *nepmen* hardly constituted an élite, yet their highly visible contribution to economic recovery, for which they were amply rewarded, made them the premier urban element. After them came party officials and government bureaucrats, the new political and administrative masters. Like bureaucrats everywhere they tried to create empires and often succeeded. At the top, the staff of the party Secretariat—one of Stalin’s organizations—increased from 30 to 602 between 1919 and 1921; by 1926 it had grown to 767. At that level officials naturally insisted that they needed a large body of un-

derlings, but lower-ranking bureaucrats and officials also demanded sizable staffs. By 1927 there were 3.65 million government and party employees.

The idealism of the early years had by no means died, NEP's compromise with capitalism notwithstanding, and most officials labored tirelessly to build the new state. They were paid only at the level of skilled workers, 250–300 rubles per year. Inevitably there were opportunities for graft and corruption and some bureaucrats succumbed, but the problem was not serious.

The creation of a new state system was a monumental task, and few overworked bureaucrats had any technical skills. The regime was obliged to employ specialists (*spetsy*) from tsarist institutions. Tensions arose between these “former people” and the new masters; violence was not uncommon. In April 1922 four zealots were convicted of hounding the director of the Moscow waterworks, a distinguished engineer and university professor, to suicide because they did not want noncommunists in responsible positions. The four were convicted by the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal and sent to prison. When a communist who could take charge of Moscow's water supply could be found, Lenin declared, he would be employed. Until then the *spetsy* would serve the state and receive its full protection.

The social class in whose name the Bolsheviks had made their revolution did not attain the exalted status the party had promised, but it fared reasonably well in the 1920s. By 1927 the number of workers had grown to 4.5 million, up from 3 million in 1917. Industrial workers, the core proletariat, numbered 2.56 million, of whom 215,500—about 8.4 percent—were members of the party.

Huge billboards proclaimed GLORY TO LABOR! and similar slogans. Poets such as Vladimir Mayakovsky and Demyan Bedny glorified work in their verse; artists produced posters and paintings of workers in heroic

poses; songwriters extolled the proletariat. All this may have been good for morale but did not raise labor's standard of living.

The nationalization of private property had put thousands of urban dwellings at the disposal of the state, which apportioned them among party and government officials, new and old specialists, and the workers—in approximately that order. As people streamed back into the cities after the Civil War, and as demobilized soldiers returned in search of work and excitement and a place to live, officials redivided and repartitioned housing space repeatedly. Communal apartments, in which two or more families shared cooking, bath, and toilet facilities, became the accepted norm. As the urban population grew, people were often forced to divide a room simply by hanging a sheet or blanket from the ceiling.

Crowded living conditions remained the bane of urban life for decades, sapping morale and adversely affecting production. For many workers, however, a cramped communal apartment was an improvement over the filthy doss houses—converted in the 1930s into apartment dwellings—in which they had lived before the revolution. (It is instructive to note that Russian, like Chinese, has no word for “privacy.”) Still more serious was the problem of food: workers who did not eat could not produce. In the difficult years of the Civil War and war communism, the party assigned the workers first priority after the Red Army. That priority remained unchanged after recovery got under way, and the state provided subsidies to hold down the cost of staples. Sometimes the subsidies were byproducts of inadequate planning, but more often there was deliberate state intervention.

In the educational and cultural sphere, the party moved rapidly to bring workers out of the morass of illiteracy in which the old regime had kept them. A successful innovation was the concept of *rabfaks*, or workers'

schools, special institutions for adult workers with little or no education—the overwhelming majority. The first was opened in an impressive ceremony in February 1919. Anyone wishing to enroll had to present evidence from a factory political committee, by now a ubiquitous institution, or party cell stating that the applicant (1) belonged to the worker or peasant class and had never exploited the labor of others and (2) supported the soviet regime.

Usually attached to existing institutions (e.g., Moscow University), the *rabfaks* educated several hundred thousand workers prior to World War II, among them Nikita Khrushchev. They began to decline in 1933, however, and the last was closed in October 1941. The *rabfaks* served workers and state well, but as late as 1939 only 8.2 percent of the proletariat had seven or more years of education. This situation was comparable to that in the United States. The Bolsheviks had been the party of the illiterate masses; two decades after the revolution, the communists were the party of the undereducated masses.

Because NEP unofficially operated under the slogan “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work,” and not “to each according to his need,” skilled workers were paid more than the semiskilled and unskilled. Technicians, engineers, and specialists of all kinds were paid at a higher rate than skilled workers; foreign specialists were paid more than anyone.

Wage differentials meant that favored groups could compete with free-spending *nepmen* for tables at expensive restaurants and for luxuries at a Moscow food shop unambiguously called The Stomach. Workers did not frequent such restaurants and shops. After 1921 they had enough to eat, but their diet was limited to the traditional fare of bread, cabbage, and potatoes; they rarely ate meat.

Workers were the social group most affected by the imposition of charges for news-

papers, theatres, concerts, and other cultural events. Once again the Bolshoi Theatre was the province of the privileged.

Worst of all was the existence of privately hired labor and unemployment. From an ideological standpoint this was not only unacceptable but unthinkable. With an undetermined number of workers employed by small—five or fewer employees—private enterprises and at least 1 million workers unable to find jobs (1926–1927), the communist utopia seemed more remote than ever. A primitive welfare system provided the unemployed with a marginal existence, but the spectacle of some workers laboring for private employers and others depending on the dole was bitter gall for party members.

Communists could scarcely contain their hatred of the *nepmen* who danced the tango, shimmy, and black bottom—more imports from the capitalist West—at expensive clubs and restaurants. The women with the *nepmen* were sometimes prostitutes, whose numbers had dropped from about 28,000 in 1916 to 3,000 in 1928. The existence of *any* amount of prostitution, however, was incompatible with soviet ideals. It was in Odessa that this lament was first heard:

Comrade, comrade, my wounds hurt,  
Comrade, comrade, what did we fight for,  
Why did we shed our blood.  
The bourgeoisie are feasting, the bourgeoisie  
Are gloating.\*

And once again the war ditty resounded:

Eat pine-apple,  
Gorge on grouse.  
Your last day is coming,  
Bourgeois louse!\*

\*From Ilya Ehrenburg (Erenburg), *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Izdat. “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1966). English translation by W. M.



Rehabilitation of prostitutes,  
Moscow, late 1920s. (National  
Archives)

There was a substantial criminal element in the cities in the 1920s. It was a time when, as one writer said, the laws were unsettled and it was easy to find the road to jail. For the criminals, social instability meant not increased danger but greater opportunity. There are no figures indicating how many normally law-abiding people were driven by desperation to crime, but the number must have been considerable. Newspapers and the literature of the time indicate a great deal of crime in the first decade after the revolution. The most common offenses were robbery, assault, drug trafficking, breaking and entering, pilfering, and “banditry.”

Not a little of the crime was the work of roughly 6 million orphaned, homeless children, or *besprizorniki*, who wandered around European Russia and Ukraine for a decade after the revolution. Aged from five or six to the late teens and organized into gangs, these children terrorized the cities, committing

crimes ranging from petty thievery to drug—cocaine, hashish, opium—dealing, prostitution (girls as young as eight were involved), and murder. The children were frequently the object of vigilante retribution. Only toward the end of the decade did the state succeed in bringing this tragic problem under control.

In January 1919 Lenin himself was held up and robbed while on a drive in the Moscow suburbs. The highwaymen knew who he was, for they took his wallet containing his identification card with a photograph. They also lifted and no doubt treasured more the small Browning automatic he always carried outside the Kremlin. The robbers permitted Lenin, his companions, and his chauffeur (who related this story) to go free but took the Rolls-Royce. When the vehicle was found the next day, a policeman and a Red Army soldier who had apparently stopped it lay murdered nearby. The criminals were never apprehended.

## MANNERS AND AMUSEMENTS

The party attempted to organize the leisure time of workers, but it tended to influence primarily the few who were party members. Although workers were joining the party in increasing numbers, the majority were apolitical, interested in resting and having a good time after work, not in political rallies. Too, their spare time was often spent in trying to make life a little more comfortable, and such mundane problems as finding a decent mattress occupied them. Most prerevolutionary mattress factories had closed, and it was extremely difficult to locate something to sleep on. Several writers produced short stories and plays on this theme.

After hours the workers sometimes went to soccer matches, but in the 1920s mass spectator sports had not yet developed to a very substantial level. A crowd of 15,000 was considered large at games of even the most popular teams. Organized gymnastics, cross-country skiing, ice-skating, swimming, and hiking were likewise only in an embryonic stage.

After hours the workers gathered in their clubs and in beer halls to eat black (rye) bread, dried *vobla* (a fish) and drink Volga Hawk, Zhiguli, or Tip-Top beer. Much to the distress of officials they perpetuated the old custom of “wetting” a young worker’s first pay packet with alcohol. They smoked Kavkaz (Caucasus) *paprosy*, a kind of cigarette with a long hollow mouthpiece and a short tobacco end, and Cannon, Sappho, Our Mark, Beach, and Boxing cigarettes. When they could not afford cigarettes they smoked *mahorka*, a cheap, coarse tobacco rolled in newspaper.

They celebrated “red weddings” at factories, bride and groom standing before a piece of machinery and pledging their loyalty first to the communist state, then to each other. A party official performed the frequently raucous ceremony.

The workers discussed everything but pol-

itics, which was reserved for communists, but popular wit produced some intriguing commentary:

Chicken roasted, chicken steamed,  
Just to live, the chicken dreamed.  
Ain't no Kadet, ain't no Red Star,  
I'm just a chicken com-iss-ar!  
Didn't cheat, didn't shoot,  
Just pecked a little grain  
With my snoot.\*

That one poked fun at *nepmen* and bureaucrats, and this popular ditty summed up the whole era:

My dad's a drunk, for the shot-glass he pines,  
He lies, he blusters, he whines.  
My brother's a crook, sister's a whore,  
Ma took up smoking—I can't stand any more!\*

The workers could always get *samogon* (home brew) if they looked hard enough, but it was illegal and sometimes, if improperly made, fatal. At the very least, the peasant suppliers said, it would remove all your doubts. To combat the abuses connected with the sale of home-distilled liquor and to obtain the enormous revenues from the liquor monopoly, the government ended the ten-year prohibition on “hard” liquor in 1924 and put 30 percent (60 “proof”) vodka on the market. This “children’s drink” did not satisfy thirsts, especially in the Russian and Ukrainian republics, and in the summer of 1925 the manufacture and sale of 40 percent vodka was permitted. The state treasury and the thirsty public rejoiced; the stronger drink, which sold at a higher price, produced greater euphoria in both. But Russia again became the victim of increased alcoholism rates, lost production, domestic violence, crime, and accidents. The All-Union Council of Anti-Alcohol Societies, es-

\*From Ilya Ehrenburg (Erenburg), *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Izdat. “Khudozhestvennaia literatura,” 1966). English translations by W. M.

established early in the Soviet period, promoted the cause of temperance through public education campaigns and in its monthly magazine, *Sobriety and Culture*, but it had limited influence in the cities and virtually none in the countryside. The ineffective organization was disbanded in 1930.

The workers went to public baths; washed themselves with Hammer & Plow soap; and even after reimposition of a charge for tickets, sometimes went to the Bolshoi Theatre, Tchaikovsky Conservatory, and Moscow Art Theatre. Much more often they went to the cinema, especially when a Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, or Charlie Chaplin film was playing. They attended cultural events dressed in the only clothes—other than work clothes—they had. An aggressive slovenliness replaced fashion even among white-collar workers and bureaucrats as ambitious young party members tried to dress like “hegemon,” the worker.

From the standpoint of purists who exalted the literary language of the nineteenth century, the Russian language suffered under the impact of the revolution. It was not merely that upper-class accents and vocabularies were shunned; the situation was worse than that. The new regime had its own cant. Communists were especially fond of acronyms: Sovnarkom, Cheka, Goelro, NEP, *rabfak*, sovhoz, kolhoz, Piatiletka (Five-Year-Plan), and so on. To a certain extent this was inevitable, but bringing so many poorly educated communists into responsible positions in government, industry, and other fields meant that insecure newcomers would go overboard in adopting what they believed to be the proper revolutionary terminology. One satirist summed up this phenomenon in a story about a bureaucrat who began to talk in the acronyms that surrounded him in his work: *Privzhendet*, which in “English” might be “Helwichi,” was sovietese for “Say hello to your wife and children.” Foreigners derisively referred to the Soviet Union as “Sovdepia” (Soviet of Deputies) after an acronym

then in wide use. Even worse was the introduction into everyday speech of terminology such as “diamat” from dialectical materialism, awkward enough to begin with. Another unenlightening coinage was “hegemony of the proletariat.”

The coarser language reflected the atmosphere of the times, as did manners and customs in general. Because polite conduct was considered as much the province of the middle class and aristocracy as stylized table manners, people were terribly rude to one another. Many shops displayed the sign FINISH YOUR BUSINESS AND GET OUT. On the walls of bureaucrats’ offices hung the admonition BY YOUR VISIT YOU ARE DISTURBING A BUSY MAN. Few said “thank you,” and “please” was out of style. The satirist team of Ilf and Petrov and the comic writers Mikhail Zoshchenko and Mikhail Bulgakov went to the heart of these unhappy developments in short stories and articles for the popular press.

Even some of the most intelligent communists were perplexed by the failure of an egalitarian society to emerge overnight from the ashes of the old regime. The capitalists had departed, but arrogant *nepmen* and bureaucrats rose up to lord it over the masses and ensure that everyone knew his place and kept to it. Ilya Ehrenburg recorded this scene: In 1921 an old peasant woman boarded a train and by mistake entered a first-class (sic!) compartment. The conductor yelled at her, “Where d’you think you’re going? Get out! This isn’t 1917!” And one of Zoshchenko’s characters says to someone unsuitably clad at the Bolshoi Theatre, “It’s not 1919 now. You can’t sit in a theatre in your overcoat.” It was all right to go to the Bolshoi without a tie, *nekulturny* (uncouth) to keep one’s overcoat on. It was all quite arbitrary, of course, and that was what communists lamented. Life under communism was supposed to be rational and predictable, patriotic revolutionism always fashionable.

## RURAL LIFE

In the countryside no less than in the cities the impact of millions of lives lost during 1914–1921 was severe, but there remained more than 120 million rural dwellers in 1917. The overwhelming majority lived in roughly 25 million households. About 70,000 village soviets, representing on average 1,750 members of 350 families, acted as primary administrative agencies in the countryside.

The country folk were divided into kulaks or well-to-do, average (called middle in Russia), poor, and landless. In 1927 there were about 750,000 kulak households embracing roughly 5.25 million people. They employed about a million landless peasants as farmhands. There were all told about 2.3 million without land; those who did not work for the kulaks were employed by state or peasant associations or existed on charity.

The kulaks produced 15 percent of the grain on 4 percent of the land. A 1927 survey showed that each kulak had two or three cows, up to 10 hectares for sowing, and an annual income of about 240 rubles per family member. He was thus better off than a rural official, who was paid 297 rubles, and earned about twice as much as a middle peasant in the grain-growing districts of European Russia. The kulak owned about one-third of the agricultural machinery and draft animals.

The overwhelming majority of peasants belonged to the middle and poor categories, within which there were many gradations. A technically poor peasant who lived in a part of the country blessed with mild climate and good soil—the North Caucasus, for example—was sometimes better off than middle peasants in the center and north. Middle and poor peasants produced 83 percent of the country's grain.

The *kolhozes* (collective farms) and *sovhozes* (state farms, in effect agricultural factories) still in existence from war communism pro-

duced 2 percent of the grain. These enterprises, on which the state had bestowed its blessings, were widely regarded as failures, but for ideological reasons the party kept them afloat.

Life in the villages under NEP tended to resume patterns interrupted in 1914 by World War, Civil War, and war communism and by the 1921 famine in the Volga valley. After 1921 the peasants resumed their historic task of feeding the country; in the NEP years that was all anyone asked of them. Perhaps the most revolutionary change to come to the village in the 1920s was the introduction of electricity. Lenin had declared that “communism is soviet power plus electrification of the whole country,” confounding even his most devoted followers, but the project moved forward and in the 1920s consumed a large portion of state allocations for development. By the end of the decade about 15 percent of farms in European Russia and Ukraine, 6 percent nationwide, had electric power.

The party created *rabfaks* for the illiterate and undereducated workers, and in the countryside, where the problem was worse, it established “circles for the liquidation of illiteracy,” or *likbezy*. The success of these organizations may be measured by the rise in the aggregate literacy rate from 30 percent in 1897, the year of the last tsarist census, to 51 percent in 1926. The increase was especially striking in rural areas, where illiteracy had been the rule. Female literacy more than doubled, to 37 percent; male literacy rose from 43 to 66 percent. Much of the teaching in the countryside was done by young idealists from the cities, modern counterparts of the students who had participated in the “to the people” movement of the 1870s.

Because the communists represented an urban constituency, it was to be expected that the countryside would get short shrift. Marxists had always despised the peasants; Marx himself made a famous comment about the

“idiocy of rural life.” The villages began to participate in the modernization process only slowly. Medical care reached them long after electricity; consumer goods only slowly made their way to the countryside; educational-cultural facilities for less populated areas developed at a glacial pace.

In the 1920s the peasants continued to go to mass on Sundays, tip the priest at holidays, and get married in church. The state tried to discourage these practices. The authorities insisted, for example, that peasants go through the same procedure as city dwellers with regard to marriage, i.e., present themselves at a registry office (ZAGS) to have the union legitimized. Millions ignored the regulation. Sophisticates might teach their children to taunt priests with “What’s the price of opium today?” but in the villages the clergy retained a certain status and authority.

The village priest, like his parishioners, was all too frequently a victim of alcoholism, at once a tragic Russian tradition and a reflection on the pointlessness and ennui of rural life. Another problem was sexual promiscuity. Aside from the question of morality, carefree attitudes and practices in this realm kept the rate of venereal disease high. The problem also existed in the cities, of course, but medical care was readily available there, and by the end of the decade the urban problem had been reduced to manageable proportions.

The village remained terribly isolated. Only slowly did the state begin to supply electric power and with it, beginning in 1924, radio broadcasts. It would however be three decades before mass communications brought the majority of the peasants into regular contact with the outside world. Down to World War II the appearance of a portable film projector in the village caused a sensation, and party agitators could draw sizable audiences without necessarily resorting to coercion; the peasants simply wanted to be entertained.

## EDUCATION

There was more to education under the regime than *rabfaks* and *likbezy*. The party set two major goals: (1) universal literacy and (2) elimination of the class character of education, sometimes contradictorily called the “proletarianization” of education.

The task of revamping the educational system was not made easier by the hostility of the teachers toward the new regime. But like the middle class in general, teachers had few options. They could leave the country, find jobs as common laborers, or make their peace with the communists and return to the classroom. Most chose the third course.

The standardized ideals proclaimed by the Politburo penetrated the educational system at all levels from kindergarten to university. Students of all ages were taught to regard Lenin and the party as the ultimate sources of truth, happiness, and material blessings.

The state established “unified labor schools” designed to give students an “active, mobile, creative acquaintance with all that is most useful in life.” In a society that exalted labor, schools were at first heavily oriented toward vocational training. The social sciences and humanities were treated with suspicion by communists determined to impose Marxist-Leninist interpretations.

Higher education witnessed some striking excesses in the early years. Party officials declared in 1918 that “purely formal” obstacles such as lack of preparation would not impede workers who wished to attend a university. A Sovnarkom decree gave every citizen “not belonging to the exploiting classes” the right to enroll in any university regardless of whether he or she had completed high school. This was motivated not by reason but by anger and a sense of righteous retribution; before the revolution the universities had been instruments of class rule.

The authorities abolished tenure for university faculty in October 1918, did away with the "bourgeois" practice of examining students, and prohibited the "bourgeois" lecture method of teaching. All classes became "laboratories"; in practice that usually meant political discussion groups.

Dozens of universities sprang up around the country. As early as 1922, however, the party saw that some educational experiments were not worth continuing. As revolutionary passions cooled, officials pondered the consequences of allowing people ostensibly trained, for example, as physicians and civil engineers, to practice without first passing examinations. Further, the policy of open admissions had created enormous problems; the universities and institutes were deluged with hordes of unqualified students who disrupted the educational process. In 1922 the government ordered the registration of all students; those who did not have a high school diploma could not register anywhere but in the *rabfaks*. A rigorous examination system was reintroduced in all fields; diplomas were awarded to graduates. Many of the new universities quietly closed down.

## THE YOUNG GENERATION

As part of its approach to the youth problem in general, and in connection with its long-range goals, the party established organizations that were to become important socio-political agencies. Children up to age ten were enrolled in the Octobrists, where they learned nursery rhymes, games, and songs. Most of these were traditional, but as in any country some inculcated patriotic attitudes and behavior.

A more highly structured mass organization for children 10 to 14 formally came into existence in May 1922. Originally called Spartacus Young Pioneers, it became Leninist Young Pi-

oneers in 1924. It had the task of training children in good citizenship, proper personal and public manners, and reverence for Lenin and, after 1927, Stalin. The children also learned rudiments of close-order military drill.

The Russian Communist Youth League was created in October 1918 as an organization for young people 14 to 28. About 25,000 members fought in the Civil War, and later the league participated in the reconstruction of the country. It was from this organization, according to legend, that Lenin took the idea of *subbotnik*, voluntary work on occasional Saturdays for the benefit of the state. The league became the All-Union Leninist Youth League, or Komsomol, in 1926, when it had 1.25 million members. This figure indicates that the Komsomol, like the party, was originally an elite organization. This changed as the Stalinist dictatorship took hold. For all practical purposes membership became mandatory; by 1941 there were 10.3 million members.

These organizations had the task of indoctrinating and guiding the youth along party-approved lines. The Komsomol was also charged with developing cadres for the Communist party, entrance into which was increasingly limited to people from its ranks. Membership in the Komsomol gave a sense of shared identity and loyalty and of participation in a grand cause. The organization was also a major source of practical guidance for the individual's progress toward the projected communist future.

## WOMEN

The Bolsheviks had come to power under the flag of complete social equality for all citizens, certainly including women. Women had been active in the nineteenth-century revolutionary movement, and some had suffered varying degrees of martyrdom for it. Several women had occupied prominent roles in one or another

of the revolutionary parties and protoparties. Nadezhda Krupskaya and Aleksandra Kollontai were the most conspicuous women officials, but their power and influence were limited.

The ease with which women moved in revolutionary circles was atypical. In Russian Empire society they were at best second-class citizens, and in the Russian and Ukrainian villages and the Muslim areas they were often treated little better than beasts of burden. Among the Uzbek, Kazakh, Kirgiz, Tajik, Turkmen, Azerbaijanian, and other Muslim peoples, no women other than the wives or concubines of rulers or famous outlaws had any historical existence at all. It is all but impossible to find the names of Muslim women in official records. In Estonia, Latvia, and Armenia, the lot of women in the prerevolutionary period was easier than elsewhere in the empire.

The rights of women were guaranteed in the first constitution, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex. In practice this meant that women had new opportunities for education and work; millions began to take advantage of them. The party created special women's sections (*zhenotdely*) within its ranks to advance the cause of women's rights. The organizations were dissolved in 1921, but by the mid-1920s there were as many women as men in most institutions of higher education. In such fields as medicine, not a particularly prestigious occupation either before or after the revolution, women predominated. Women also constituted a substantial majority of the students in the pedagogical institutes, but teaching was likewise not a highly respected profession. The socially glamorous and rewarding fields were engineering and the sciences, where women only slowly began to chip away at traditional male dominance.

In politics, few women attained positions of real power. No women sat in the highest councils of party or state. Increasing numbers of women participated in the work of the Soviets, especially at the local and district levels, but at the republic and union levels pure tokenism

prevailed. In the bureaucracy women won such positions as directors of registry offices, post offices, and the like, but power eluded them. Few women were heads of factories or other state enterprises. On the private farms of the NEP women continued to perform heavy physical labor. As the cities grew, increasing numbers of women were employed in construction as hod carriers, laborers, or apprentices. They took up such occupations as driving trolleys and buses and predominated in the low-paid, socially despised retail trade sector.

In terms of its impact on daily life the October Revolution did less to improve the lot of women than its makers had intended. Wife-beating remained one of the most common crimes, periodic official campaigns against it notwithstanding. Few men saw any reason to overturn traditional roles, in which women were burdened with all household chores, including the enervating task of queuing for almost every purchase and child rearing. Those who had no moral objections saw the legalization of abortion as a major step in the emancipation of women. This extreme form of birth control, however, was an urban phenomenon that had little impact on peasant women.

Finally, the revolution brought women rough equality in one unexpected area: many thousands went to prison. In the first decade of Soviet rule most victims were upper-class women who fell afoul of the authorities one way or another; often their only crime was their class origin. In succeeding years women would be charged with various crimes against the state on a more or less equal basis with men and would help populate the Gulag Archipelago, the vast network of prison camps.

## RELIGION

Marx considered religion both a delusion and a device to maintain class rule. Lenin shared that view, arguing that in the modern Euro-

pean world, the bourgeoisie utilized the main sects to exploit the proletariat. Religion preached submission to the secular authorities controlled by the bourgeoisie and to economic and social injustice. Communism would end what he considered religion's cooperation with tyranny.

Its control established over the entire country, the party moved against the church. In spring 1922 several Russian Orthodox leaders were convicted in Moscow of refusing to turn over valuables to Pomgol, the famine relief agency. The patriarch himself, Tikhon, was called as a witness; later he was arrested and held without trial for more than a year. Five of the convicted churchmen were shot, and the remaining 12 received prison sentences. A month after the Moscow trial a similar process began in Petrograd. Several dozen people were in the dock; the verdict was the same. Ten people were sentenced to death; four were actually shot. Among those executed was Benjamin, metropolitan of Petrograd.

The trials of the clergymen marked the first battles of a campaign—in which the Komsomol was deeply involved—that was to proceed at varying tempos over the next 20 years. There were no more mass trials and executions, but individual clerics and nuns were persecuted. Many priests were denied the right to minister to their congregations, and thousands of churches and chapels were destroyed, converted to secular use (often as taverns or dance halls), or simply padlocked. The famous monastery on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea became one of the most notorious concentration camps for political prisoners and religious figures.

In 1925 the party founded the League of the Godless, a nationwide organization of propagandists with the mission of educating the masses in the ways of "scientific atheism." The society sponsored lectures and antireligious films, of which two of the more sensational

were *Judas* and *Opium*. It staged "debates" in which the religious side was "upheld" by party stooges. The league issued a number of publications, among them *Revolution and Church* (1919–1924), *Science and Religion* (continuous since 1922), *Atheist* (newspaper, 1922–1941; journal, 1925–1941), *Workbench Atheist* (1923–1931), *Antireligionist* (1926–1941), *Atheism* (1922–1930), and *Militant Atheism* (1931).

All this activity failed to produce the desired results. Millions of people continued to worship in defiance of the regime. As an indication of the party's determination to step up the campaign against religion, in 1929 the antireligious association was renamed the League of the Militant Godless.

Other faiths did not initially suffer quite the degree of persecution that befell the dominant Russian Orthodox. Although the churches of Baptists, Mennonites, Lutherans, Uniates, Roman Catholics, and other Christian sects and Jewish synagogues did suffer vandalism, by and large the clergy were left alone. In the 1920s, the communists permitted the existence of a Baptist Youth Union (Bap-somol), a Baptist organization infelicitously called Christ-o-Youth (Khristomol), and a Mennonite Youth Union (Mensomol).

In the Caucasus and Central Asia, far removed from the Slav heartland, the Muslim peoples suffered severe persecution on religious grounds. The Red Army and local officials destroyed nearly all the mosques and arrested the mullahs (religious scholars). As religion and nationalism began to coalesce in the Muslim lands, the local peoples came into ever more serious conflict with the new regime. Especially bloody clashes involved the *basmachi* in the Uzbek, Kazakh, Kirgiz, Turkmen, and Tajik regions. The last important rebel leader, Ibrahim Beg, was captured near Dushanbe in 1931.



Honor guard at funeral of Viktor Nogin, Moscow, May 1924. (National Archives)

## CULTURAL LIFE

The October Revolution promised total liberation in the realm of culture. For a brief period the communists assumed the role of liberators and innovators and universalized access to the arts. The elimination of admission charges to cultural events symbolized this new policy, but those charges were reinstated in 1921. The revolution had promised more than it could deliver, but it nevertheless brought substantial, often positive, change. In overall charge of cultural policy was Anatoli Lunacharsky, the commissar of enlightenment.

Some talented writers supported the October Revolution. The symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok produced two of the greatest poems of the revolutionary era, "The Twelve" and "The

Scythians." In the first, 12 Red Guards patrol Petrograd in October 1917, ruthlessly destroying everything and everyone in their path that does not serve the revolution. Although they do not recognize him, they are led by Jesus Christ. Russia was fulfilling her destiny, bringing a new world into existence. In "The Scythians," Blok warned the West to accept not merely the fact of the revolution but also its spiritual importance or be condemned to damnation.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, who joined the Bolsheviks in 1908 at the age of 15, was a founder of the futurist movement, which sought radical innovation in poetry. Mayakovsky often used crude, unpoetic language to shock, stimulate, and outrage: "I love to watch children die." Uncertain where the future would lead, he

nevertheless demanded to be its herald. After 1917 he wrote panegyrics to the revolution, which have not stood the test of time. His more lyrical poems such as "I Love" and "At the Top of My Voice," however, won him lasting popularity. Toward the end of the 1920s Mayakovsky became disenchanted with communist rule. In the spring of 1930 he was attacked by the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) for "betraying" communism; he committed suicide later in the year at the age of 37.

Sergei Yesenin, one of the most popular of the twentieth-century poets, was born into a peasant family. His first important published work (*Radunitsa*, 1915) revealed a major lyric talent; his poems were love songs dedicated to the Russian village. After the revolution, which he welcomed, Yesenin moved to Moscow and tried to fashion a public image befitting the peasant-poet of the new era. His efforts to lead a bohemian life included a disastrous marriage to the American dancer Isadora Duncan. In such collections as *Tavern Moscow* he revealed his bitter disappointment with the regime. On the eve of his death he tried to make peace with the party, but the insincerity of his verse was transparent. In 1925 he wrote a last poem in his own blood and committed suicide. He was 32.

Four enormously talented poets perplexed by the collapse of the old regime were Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, and Marina Tsvetayeva. Prior to the revolution they had adhered to one or another of the various avant-garde tendencies in the arts: futurism, acmeism, symbolism. Pasternak became famous with a collection of poems entitled *My Sister, Life*, in which he conveyed the excitement of 1917. With good reason, Akhmatova quickly came to fear the new rulers. They shot her husband, the poet Nikolai Gumilyov, in 1921 as a "White Guardist." Tsvetayeva sided with the Whites and emigrated in 1921; she would return on the eve of World War II, only

to commit suicide. Mandelstam, perhaps the greatest poetic talent of the century in Russia, published two major collections in 1922, *The Stone* and *Tristia*, then ceased writing for more than a decade.

Some brilliant poetry was produced in the midst of the great upheavals, but it would be several years before any artistically significant prose appeared. A novelist who had cooperated with the Bolsheviks in the prerevolutionary period was Maksim Gorky, whose fame was then exceeded only by that of Leo Tolstoi. Gorky had written several novels dealing with the seamy underside of life in the late tsarist period, notably the trilogy *Childhood*, *Among People*, and *My Universities* (the last published in 1923). His play *The Lower Depths*, set in a doss house, enjoyed great success.

The first of the major novelists to call attention to the dictatorial tendencies of the regime was Yevgeni Zamyatin, who wrote in *The Cave* about Petrograd under war communism as an outpost of a dying civilization being overtaken by a new ice age. His masterpiece, *We* (1924), attacked "primitive, spiritually empty 'barracks' socialism." George Orwell (*1984*) and Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*) were deeply in Zamyatin's debt and received much of the acclaim that should have been his. Harassed unmercifully in Soviet Russia, Zamyatin finally emigrated.

Another writer who identified the one-party dictatorship in its infancy was Mikhail Bulgakov, whose *Heart of a Dog* skewered the new masters who used weighty vocabularies they did not understand to express views they did not believe. Bulgakov's most important work, *The Master and Margarita*, has as its central theme the clash between the sacred and the profane: Christ on the cross, a writer persecuted by the rigidly authoritarian state. Ribald comedy does not obscure the theme.

Several comic geniuses emerged in this period. The public loved the team of Ilf and Petrov (I. A. Fainzilberg and E. P. Katayev),

writers who poked fun at NEP in *Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf*. An equally popular humorist was Mikhail Zoshchenko, whose short stories and vignettes were all the more powerful for their brevity and realistic language.

One who embraced the party wholeheartedly was Mikhail Sholokhov, whose *Quiet Flows the Don* is the classic novel of the civil war. Other writers who supported the régime were Dmitri Furmanov, Fyodor Gladkov (whose *Cement* was called the first proletarian novel), and Aleksandr Fadeyev.

Writers were an important force in shaping social attitudes, and if the communists did not have their support they took measures to ensure their silence. The task of bringing the artists into line was much easier in the case of the cinema, a new art form. An outstanding cinematographic talent was Sergei Eisenstein, whose *Strike* (1925), *Battleship Potemkin* (1926), and *October* (1927) are film classics. Portraying the masses as a collective hero, Eisenstein pioneered such techniques as montage, overhead shots, moving cameras, dramatic lighting. Another eminent Soviet director, Dziga Vertov (Denis Kaufman), produced *Forward, Soviet!* and *A Sixth Part of the World* in 1926. Although not on a par with Eisenstein's best work, these films won wide acclaim, as did V. I. Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926) and *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927). Grigory Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg collaborated on *New Babylon* (1929), a classic of expressionist cinema for which Dmitri Shostakovich later composed a score.

Lenin said that "the cinema is for us the most important of the arts." The party was dismayed to find that Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, which portrays an episode in the Revolution of 1905, drew only a fraction of the audience that crowded Soviet theatres to see the American production *Robin Hood*. The great Soviet films of 1925–1930, which had an enormous impact in Europe and America, enjoyed less popularity at home.

Like the cinema, the legitimate stage pros-

pered in the early years of soviet rule. The renowned director Konstantin Stanislavsky (real name Alekseyev), born in 1863, created "method acting." Another genius, the director-producer Vsevolod Meyerhold, specialized in staging the works of Gogol (notably *The Inspector General*) and Aleksandr Ostrovsky; later he produced Mayakovsky's *The Bedbug*, *Mystery-Bouffe*, and *The Bathhouse*.

In the field of classical music, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's most talented pupil, Igor Stravinsky, left Russia before the Great War. For political reasons not related to his emigration, Stravinsky's music represented anathema to the communists for more than half a century. It was perhaps a step down in talent to another Rimsky-Korsakov student, Sergei Prokofiev, composer of extremely popular works. Prokofiev left Russia in 1918 but returned in 1932. A giant among composers was Dmitri Shostakovich, pupil of Aleksandr Glazunov. Shostakovich's immense talent was first revealed to a wide audience with the 1925 premiere of his *First Symphony*. Two years later he was commissioned to write a work celebrating the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. The result, his *Second Symphony*, was also an artistic success despite—and a political success because of—his incorporation of a factory whistle into the score.

As in literature and art, the 1920s were a decade of exciting experimentation in music. The attack on Stravinsky and other avant-garde composers would come later. The works of innovative foreign composers were regularly performed: Alban Berg's opera *Wozzek* was staged in Leningrad in 1927, the composer in attendance. The works of Arnold Schoenberg, Maurice Ravel, Ernst Krenek, and Paul Hindemith were frequently heard in concert halls. A Soviet engineer, Lev Termen, invented the theremin, the first new musical instrument since the saxophone. The electronic device was extensively employed by several Soviet composers in the 1920s but was banned by

the party in 1932 as “decadent.” (The saxophone was to be outlawed briefly in 1949 on the same grounds.) In the West, however, the theremin enjoyed great success, especially in film scores; Alfred Hitchcock was particularly fond of the eerie, ethereal sound quality of Termen’s invention.

So far as popular music is concerned, the decade was officially dominated by songs celebrating the October Revolution and the victory in the Civil War. Few had any lasting popularity; most of the great tunes and marches exalting, for example, Budyonny’s horse cavalry appeared later, in the 1930s. Some of the poems of Mayakovsky (“Left, March!”) and Sergei Yesenin (“I’m Not Sorry . . .”) were set to music and enjoyed continuing favor. Less enduring were Pavel Gherman’s “Song of the Brick Factory,” “Mine No. 3,” and Ivan Molchanov’s “Give Us a Ride on the Tractor, Pete!” Such odes to revolutionary patriotism caressed communist ears gently, however, and the party encouraged and rewarded the composers. Fortunately, in the villages and in the less fashionable cafés and taverns of the towns, Russian, Ukrainian, and other folk music survived.

Avant-garde art flourished in the new state for the first few years after 1917. Under the patronage of Lunacharsky, such artists as El Lissitzky, Kazimir Malevich, Vasily Kandinsky, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, Marc Chagall, Ivan Puni (Jean Pougny), and others set off on an exciting search for new forms. Most artists soon became disillusioned, however, as the party denounced their projects as decadent, obscene, incomprehensible, or worst of all, antisocialist.

Chagall had returned from France, as had Kandinsky, to participate in building the new society. He founded and briefly directed the famous Vitebsk school in Byelorussia. Unable to tolerate the restrictions imposed on him, he went back to France in 1922. His successor at Vitebsk, Malevich, was one of the creators of

the supremacist school, which sought to go beyond cubism and futurism to depict nonvisible reality. Ultimately the party declared the works of the supremacists, and indeed of all avant-garde artists, inaccessible—because they were abstract—to the masses and therefore decadent and unworthy of support or even toleration. By 1932 free expression in art no longer existed.

## THE WAY THEY WERE

Before the claws and tentacles of extreme authoritarian rule seized Russia in a deadly grip, there were a few brief years when life was pretty good for most people—“like cheese in butter” is the Russian saying. Ideology was shelved in pursuit of a respite from seven years of hell. People were exhausted and needed a rest. The party eased up, and people half wondered whether a capitalist restoration was at hand.

In the cities and even in some provincial towns one could buy French champagne and Western clothes. Singer sewing machines, which had been manufactured in Russia before the war, were again available, as were Ford vehicles for the few who could afford them. Westinghouse was again installing elevators and air brakes (and inspiring a Zoshchenko feuilleton); Royal Dutch Shell provided technical expertise in the Caspian oil fields; American geologists and mining engineers helped extract the mineral wealth of Siberia; Swedish experts advised the Soviets on how to exploit their vast forests; café life flourished in the cities. It was not Paris, people said of Moscow, but neither was it the miserable Russian village.

It was an unstable period. *Nepmen* or no, capitalism was not going to make a complete recovery. But how long could the new economic policy continue, and what would succeed it?

In their pursuit of happiness and the good life, few people gave much thought to these questions. Serious communists understood

however that under NEP, politics—merely a part of society's superstructure in the Marxist scheme—rested on a dangerously inappropriate base. A party dedicated to a planned economy based on heavy industry could not long maintain its hold on power by sacrificing principle to peasant prosperity. Communists made poor managers of a quasi-capitalist economy. Something would have to give.

The committeemen and hundreds of thousands of rank-and-file members looked to the post-Lenin leadership to end this apotheosis of the peasant proprietor and restore the revolution to its rightful course. Those communists were counting heavily on Joseph Stalin to show the *nepmen*, prostitutes, *spetsy*, and foreigners the broad open road to doom.

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## chapter 7

# FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1920s

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The new regime sought in the beginning not so much to export its own revolution as to persuade the proletariat of other countries, above all Germany, that the time had come to overthrow capitalism. Only a small part of the world proletariat, however, shared Lenin's reading of history. There were relatively few revolutionary uprisings, and those that did erupt were quickly put down. This necessitated reorientation of Soviet plans. Communist excesses, especially in Germany and Hungary, had alienated many governments and alarmed whole populations; establishing normal diplomatic relations was not an easy task. The post-Lenin leadership, acknowledging that the capitalist system had stabilized, modified the strategy of world revolution and began constructing a nationalist foreign policy.

### **SOVIET INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

In the first few years of its rule, Lenin's party founded a number of organizations designed both to keep an ideological commitment and to advance the national interests of the fledgling state. The most prominent was the Third or Communist International (Comintern), founded early in 1919. The organization actually came to life only at its Second Congress in Moscow in July—August 1920. Peace had been restored to most of the world—Russia was an exception—and conditions appeared more favorable to the communist movement. Some 217 delegates from 37 countries attended; they represented 67 leftist organizations.

The Second Congress established 21 conditions for membership that constituted a

political-ideological litmus test; parties, groups, associations, and individuals wishing to join the Comintern had to accept them. Chief among the requirements was the commitment to purge anyone deviating from the Leninist political line defined by the Russian-controlled Executive Committee. Member parties were to maintain strict internal discipline, give unconditional support to Soviet Russia, and create parallel illegal organizations within existing legal party structures. There was nothing about any material improvement in the lives of the workers or their political and social emancipation.

The precarious situation of communist parties had the effect of making them dependent on Moscow. The centralizing, despotic tendencies that had characterized Russian politics for centuries were reflected in the Comintern.

By the latter part of 1921 communism seemed a failure everywhere, including Russia, where the only regime ever to introduce a communist system had been forced to restore a substantial degree of free enterprise. Two basic assumptions had proved erroneous, namely, that the collapse of capitalism was imminent and that the proletariat in other countries would rise up in revolution.

The Soviets insisted that the theory was correct and that only their timing needed adjustment. They had to deal with reality, however, and they put forward the concept of a "united front": under certain conditions communists would unite with other leftist parties. Sometimes this union would be "from above," for example, merely an agreement with leaders of socialist parties. Sometimes the united front would be "from below," an alliance between communist and socialist rank and file. This awkward, risky game was to result in disaster.

On the initiative of the Comintern's Executive Committee and the Soviet federation of trade unions, the International Council of Professional and Industrial Unions was

founded in Moscow in July 1920. A year later it was succeeded by the Red International of Trade Unions, or Profintern. The Profintern condemned various Western trade union organizations and rejected their attempts to promote class harmony. It had some success in infiltrating labor unions in several countries, notably Germany and France, but proved an unsatisfactory weapon in the great struggle against nazism and fascism. Stalin disbanded it in 1937.

A working-class party, communists were always slow to take up the cause of the peasantry and were never comfortable with that class. Thus, the Peasant International, or Krestintern, did not come into existence until October 1923, when the founding congress took place in Moscow. Delegates from Soviet Russia, Poland, Denmark, France, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, the United States, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Indochina, and Japan met under Soviet auspices to work out a program dedicated to the advancement of peasant interests around the globe.

As the Comintern was originally a "counter-intervention" and the Profintern a response to the formation of anticommunist labor organizations, so the Krestintern was designed to counter the International Agrarian Bureau, or Green International. Never recognized anywhere as an authentically peasant organization, the Krestintern was almost forgotten by the communists themselves as the collectivization of agriculture got under way at the end of the decade. It ceased to exist in 1933.

The organizing congress of the Communist Youth International took place in Berlin November 20–26, 1919. Only 29 delegates attended; they claimed to represent 219,000 members of youth organizations in 13 countries. In reality they spoke only for the Soviet communists and a few of their friends around Europe. Only at the second congress, held in Moscow in July 1921, did KIM (the Russian initials) assume a real identity.

By 1921 Lenin's hopes for proletarian revolutions in the West were fading; and KIM, like the other offshoots of the Comintern, was dedicated to the advancement of Soviet Russia's national interests. It was committed to promote harmony and solidarity among the youth of member nations, agitate against militarism, and above all preserve and protect the mother country of socialism, Soviet Russia. In the 1930s KIM served as an important agency in the fight against fascism. A measure of its effectiveness was its survival until 1943, the year in which Stalin liquidated both it and the parent Comintern.

The leaders of the new Soviet state believed that they were history's advance guard whose international class duty was to mobilize "progressive" forces in other countries for the decisive clash with capital. The Comintern and its subsidiaries, Profintern, Krestintern, and KIM, were instruments for that mobilization; there were many others.

In 1921 the Kremlin created the Communist University for the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow to train cadres for party and government service in the eastern republics and provinces of the country. The institution's mission quickly expanded, however, to embrace the schooling of revolutionaries from East and Southeast Asia. In the early years about half the students came from the Soviet east and about half from Japan, China, Indonesia, Indochina, and the Arab lands.

In 1925 the government established Sun Yatsen University for the Toilers of China, in 1929 renamed Communist University for the Toilers of China, or KUTK. About 600 students were enrolled. In 1927 the first rector, Karl Radek, lost his job to Stalin's China expert, vice rector Pavel Mif. Mif remained in the position only two years, during which time he helped create a nucleus of 28 Chinese students who were consistent supporters of Stalin in his struggle against Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Bukharin. They were known as Stalin's China

Section and later as the 28 Bolsheviks. The Soviets intended to create ties between the Chinese students at KUTK and those at Whampoa Military Academy in China, but after the massacre of the Chinese communists in 1927 that proved impossible.

Still another creation was the International Organization for Aid to Fighters for Revolution (MOPR). A kind of Red Cross for leftists, MOPR provided funds and legal assistance to imprisoned revolutionaries around the world.

Several international organizations sponsored by Moscow came into existence in the early 1920s. Some were openly communist, others ostensibly nonpolitical agencies. The Anti-Imperialist League, for example, was heavily influenced by the Soviets although technically not under their control. The League held two congresses, one at Brussels in 1927, which the prominent Asian communists Ho Chi Minh and Sen Katayama attended, and one at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1929.

## THE MUSLIM EAST

On July 3, 1920, Soviet newspapers published a Comintern summons, "To the Enslaved Peoples of Persia, Armenia, and Turkey," to attend a congress in Baku dedicated to the "liberation of the Near East." Comintern representatives fanned out in search of likely candidates to attend the conclave on the shores of the Caspian.

Nearly 1,900 delegates assembled in Baku in September 1920 to spend a week listening to speeches in languages which no one other than the speaker and his or her compatriots understood; translation posed an enormous problem. Somehow they managed to agree on two issues. They opposed colonialism, and they wanted a holy war, a *jihad*, against the infidel. Communist delegates, however, lumped the mullahs together with feudal exploiters and urged Muslims to extend the proposed

holy war to an attack on their own faith. The posturing of Zinoviev, Radek, and others of Lenin's men compromised the communist cause in the Near East.

A few weeks after the fiasco in Baku, a less spectacular but more successful meeting was held in the foothills of the Caucasus: the Extraordinary Congress of the Peoples of Dagestan, directed by Stalin and Ordzhonikidze. The Muslim minorities of the Caucasus figured prominently in political calculations because the communists were determined to spread the revolution to the Islamic lands. Most of the peoples of Dagestan were Sunni Muslims, and it would obviously be difficult for an atheistic party to win their allegiance. Stalin, however, persuaded the Dagestani Muslims to refrain from joining the anti-Soviet movements in Trans-Caucasia. In the longer term he would try to educate the young generation away from the religion of their fathers.

On November 13, 1920, Stalin proclaimed the creation of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Dagestan to 300 delegates assembled in the market town of Temir-Khan-Shura (Buinaksk). He vigorously denied the rumor that the government would ban the *shariat*, the canonical law of Islam which governed not only religious but also secular life in Dagestan. The Kremlin would not shrink from a head-on collision with Russian Orthodoxy, but it would proceed cautiously with the Muslim peoples of the mountains. Stalin went on to assure his listeners that the Kremlin would grant them the same autonomy already enjoyed by the "Turkestan, Kirgiz, and Tatar republics." He urged the delegates to recognize Moscow's authority.

Ordzhonikidze gave a short speech praising the mountaineers for not joining Imam Gotsinsky (Nazhmutdin of Gotzo) or Colonel Alikhanov, anticommunist military leaders supported by the Georgian Menshevik state. Several of the delegates interrogated Stalin and Ordzhonikidze about their intentions

with regard to religion. The congress ended with organizers and delegates proclaiming the unbreakable union of the peoples of Dagestan and workers of the Soviet state. Dagestan was incorporated into the RSFSR on January 20, 1921.

## TREATY OF RAPALLO

The matter of the Imperial Russian debt, calculated in 1918 at 18.496 billion gold rubles, complicated the new regime's relations with the West. Europe had failed to restore a smooth-functioning economic system after the war, and some politicians believed that repayment of the tsarist debt could finance reconstruction.

France and Great Britain desperately sought ways to shore up their faltering economies. Politicians in those countries even began to consider the wisdom of excluding the two largest and most populous continental states, Germany and Russia, from the European economic system. Both countries had been good customers, and Russia had been a reliable supplier of raw materials.

In January 1922 French and British officials issued invitations to Germany and Russia to attend a general economic and financial conference in Genoa in April. The Soviet government immediately accepted, regarding the invitation as tantamount to diplomatic recognition. It was not that, but it was a sign that a break in the West's efforts to isolate Russia was in the offing.

The Soviets sent a delegation headed by Commissar of Foreign Affairs Georgi Chicherin. On their way to Genoa the delegates stopped off in Berlin. In secret negotiations with the German government, they agreed on almost all points of a diplomatic bombshell to be hurled a few days later.

At the first session in Genoa, Chicherin declared that before there could be any talk of

economic recovery, the conference should determine how to bring about disarmament. French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou objected strenuously to this attempt to introduce a subject not on the official agenda, and at Lloyd George's urging Chicherin abandoned his efforts.

The conference settled into a battle of claim and counterclaim. The Allies demanded that the communists settle past accounts; only then could they expect the normalization of relations. Chicherin replied that the Soviet government would indeed acknowledge the tsarist debt and pay compensation for nationalized foreign property. First, however, it would be necessary for the West to pay the bill, which the Soviets reckoned at 39 billion gold rubles, for the blockade and Intervention.

For a week the conference was bogged down. Then, on April 16, Easter Sunday, the German and Soviet delegations announced they had concluded a treaty at Rapallo, a nearby resort town. Under the terms of the agreement, diplomatic and consular relations were to be restored immediately. Germany renounced all claims on the Soviet government, and the most-favored-nation principle was to rule in all commercial relations. The two countries were to give each other "mutual assistance for the alleviation of their economic difficulties."

The Treaty of Rapallo, definitive cancellation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, surprised and divided the Western Allies. Barthou signed a note condemning Germany but refused to go along with a virtually identical note to Russia. His accounting if not his logic was impeccable: France and her ally Belgium were tsarist Russia's two biggest creditors. France had tried and failed to recoup her losses through force of arms; now she would try diplomacy. After a week of bickering the Allies finally agreed that the new treaty was acceptable insofar as it did not violate existing agreements.

Having come together at Genoa to try to get another pound of flesh from Russia, the Western Allies were outmaneuvered by the German and Russian delegations. The only sensible comment from the Allied camp was Lloyd George's warning of the danger posed by a "hungry Russia equipped by an angry Germany." Military collaboration between the two countries, however, did not figure in the Treaty of Rapallo, although the agreement did lay the groundwork for German-Soviet cooperation in many fields, and the Germans would soon obtain Soviet assistance in surreptitiously building up their armed forces. In the 1920s the Germans both developed and tested on Soviet territory weapons forbidden them by the Versailles settlement; they also trained military cadres in Russia.

## RECOGNITION

Rapallo ended the isolation of Germany and Russia and made potential enemies, especially France, think twice about attacking either nation. When the French occupied the Ruhr in 1923, they were forced to prepare contingency plans in case the Soviets sent troops to assist Germany. There was never any possibility of Moscow doing that, but Paris could not take chances. The French alliance system was anchored in the East by the *cordon sanitaire* around Russia's western frontiers; the Quai d'Orsay now moved to bolster its Polish, Czechoslovak, and Romanian allies.

One crisis followed another in 1923. There were communist uprisings in Hamburg, Berlin, and other cities as the Germans struggled and failed to cope with an inflation of incredible dimensions. It was widely suspected that the Comintern had a hand in the affairs, which were quickly suppressed. There was indeed some such involvement, but Moscow was keeping the Comintern on a fairly short leash in this period. With Lenin weakening and the fight to succeed him intensifying, there was lit-

the enthusiasm for extensive foreign adventures. Moreover, the Kremlin was not willing to put its recently restored relations with Germany at too great a risk.

Chicherin had negotiated a commercial agreement with the British in 1921, but it did not involve formal recognition of the Soviet regime. In 1924 the first Labour government in British history took that step. Mussolini's Italy followed London's lead on February 7; France held out until the end of October. Japan recognized the Soviet Union in January 1925 and agreed to withdraw its forces from the northern half of Sakhalin Island. Of the major countries, only the United States refused to establish normal diplomatic ties.

The curbing of the Comintern after 1921 made it easier for European nations to recognize Moscow. In the early 1920s Soviet leaders concluded that the extreme right-wing parties such as the Italian Fascists and the German National Socialists (nazis) were less dangerous than the Marxist Social Democrats, Mussolini's success in Italy notwithstanding. Watching a German government dominated by the Social-Democratic party crush communist uprisings with great ferocity, the Soviets decided that they would deal with that government because they had no choice, but would fight the ruling party to the death.

In the wake of a scandal, diplomatic relations between the USSR and Great Britain collapsed within months of their birth. Four days before the October 29, 1924, British elections, the Conservative party published what it claimed were instructions from Zinoviev and the Comintern to the British Communist party. Zinoviev allegedly directed that party to step up its revolutionary activity and to infiltrate the British Army. There was no time for the Labour government, which had been severely criticized for recognizing the USSR, to mount a defense against this sensational "disclosure." The Conservatives won by a large margin.

The "Zinoviev letter" was a forgery con-

cocted by officials of the British foreign office with ties to the Conservative party; they were aided by Russian émigrés. Britain's master spy Sidney Reilly, in reality a Russian named Sigmund Georgievich Rozenblum (one of the models for Ian Fleming's James Bond), acted as agent for the émigrés. In 1928 Sir Eyre Crowe of the foreign office collected £5,000 "on behalf of X" (Reilly-Rozenblum) from the Conservative party. The Conservatives had earlier financed the spy's scheme to overthrow the Bolsheviks by humiliating Lenin and Trotsky, whom he proposed to parade through the streets of Moscow without their trousers. Although it was not clear how he would organize such a procession, the Tories paid him handsomely for the idea.

Two weeks after taking office the Conservative government denounced the diplomatic and commercial treaties which its Labour predecessor had negotiated with Moscow. Relations remained suspended for several years; there was even a war scare in 1927, when Stalin's government overreacted to some bombast from London concerning Soviet interference in British internal affairs. Labour returned to office in 1929 and reestablished ties.

## DISARMAMENT AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY

The Versailles settlement had not ushered in an era of harmony in Europe. There was enormous tension between France and Germany, almost every state feared and hated Soviet Russia, and the successor states of Eastern Europe all had grievances with one or more of their neighbors. The Genoa Conference recognized that economic recovery had not come. No nation was prepared to lay down its arms, but none could afford to maintain its forces at existing levels, let alone increase them.

In 1922 the Kremlin began an effort to negotiate arms control agreements. On its way to

Italy, the Soviet delegation to the Genoa Conference visited Riga, where Chicherin obtained the signatures of Latvian, Estonian, and Polish officials to the Riga Protocol, a rather innocuous document which simply called on all nations to agree to arms reductions. Chicherin referred to the protocol at Genoa in his unsuccessful attempt to discuss disarmament.

The Kremlin next tried to obtain a disarmament agreement at the Moscow Conference of December 1922. Representatives of Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Poland joined Soviet diplomats in a search for a formula for negotiations. The Baltic states were deeply suspicious of their gigantic neighbor, however, and both Poles and Finns had claims on Soviet territory. The Poles, especially, were not interested in an arms control agreement that would require them to reduce the large military forces they kept poised on their eastern borders.

The Moscow Conference thus ended in failure, with Warsaw charging that the Soviets had convened it merely as a propaganda exercise. There was some truth to that accusation: Lenin and his colleagues knew that the Poles would not disarm. Nevertheless the Soviets strengthened their moral position in some quarters by presenting themselves as the only nation sincerely interested in disarmament.

Europe's search for collective security involved lengthy talks in Paris, Berlin, and London in 1925. The negotiations seemed to bear fruit at the Locarno Conference held October 5–16. France, Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia signed a series of agreements in the Swiss resort town which effectively guaranteed Germany's western frontiers and gave Poland and Czechoslovakia assurances that France would come to their aid if either were attacked by Germany.

The press promptly gave birth to a "spirit of Locarno," which seduced public opinion in central and western Europe and for a few years sustained the illusion that goodwill

would henceforth rule relations between states. So desperate was the desire for peace that millions of people believed in a paper guarantee that Germany would not again march westward. It did not matter, their politicians said, what happened in the faraway East.

Excluded from the Locarno Conference, the Soviet Union denounced the agreements. Moscow pointed out that the failure to declare Germany's *eastern* frontiers fixed and inviolable indicated the indifference of France and Great Britain toward German aggression in the East. In the Kremlin's view, the Locarno accords represented an attempt to create a united anti-Soviet front, to contain Germany in the West and offer her a free hand against the USSR.

Although Germany became a member in 1926, Soviet Russia was not permitted to join the League of Nations or allowed to participate on the Preparatory Commission for a Disarmament Conference, the first meeting of which took place in May 1926. Established by the League, the Commission included even the United States, which had previously rejected cooperation with League agencies. The United States joined Britain and France in opposing Soviet participation.

That opposition finally softened in November 1927, and Maksim Litvinov, Chicherin's deputy, came to Geneva to represent the Soviet Union on the Commission and act as an observer at the League. In his first speech in the Palace of Nations, Litvinov called on the member delegations to declare their governments in favor of complete and immediate disarmament. The Western diplomats dismissed this proposal as a trick. Litvinov pointed in vain to the Soviet record in this area: the Riga Protocol, the Moscow Conference, the treaties of nonaggression and neutrality with Turkey (1925) and Iran (1927).

France and Great Britain had no interest in any disarmament proposals which threatened either their hegemony in Europe or

their overseas possessions, and they declined to be instructed by communists in the ways of peace. Litvinov's proposal, the Western diplomats charged, was absurd: no nation could simply lay down its arms against the unverifiable assurance that all other nations would do likewise.

The Westerners knew little of Marxist-Leninist political philosophy and could not conceive that the Soviets might be sincere. Believing that time and history were on their side, the communists calculated that they had nothing to lose from disarmament. The development of capitalism would, in their view, inexorably deepen class contradictions and eventually produce proletarian revolution. Disarmament was thus ultimately irrelevant, but the Soviets would work for it in the short term.

The West rejected the Soviet proposals but could not ignore the clamor for peace. In the summer of 1928 Secretary of State Frank Kellogg of the United States and Foreign Minister Aristide Briand of France negotiated the Pact of Paris Concerning the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy (Kellogg-Briand Pact). Representatives of 15 nations signed the pact on August 27, 1928; the USSR was not invited. The agreement simply called on nations to renounce war; it had no provision for sanctions. The Kremlin first denounced the pact as an attempt to isolate the Soviet Union, but two days after the document was signed in Paris the Soviet Union ratified it.

The original agreement would not become operative until ratified by a majority of the original signatories, but again the Kremlin tried to seize the initiative in the search for peace and security. In the Moscow, or Litvinov, Protocol of February 9, 1929, the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, Estonia, and Latvia agreed to put the Kellogg-Briand Pact into force immediately. Turkey adhered to the protocol on February 27, Iran on April 3,

Lithuania on April 5. At the League of Nations later in the year, Litvinov's proposal to implement the Kellogg-Briand Pact by providing for conciliation and arbitration was accepted by a majority of member nations.

## CHINA

Shortly after the communists seized power in Russia they renounced tsarist concessions in China, declared their implacable hostility toward imperialism, and pledged support of Chinese independence. They hinted willingness to renegotiate the treaties through which the tsars had seized enormous tracts of territory historically part of the Chinese Empire. The Soviet gestures were warmly welcomed in China, especially by the educated urban youth who bitterly resented the West's arrogant treatment of their country. The Western allies had announced at Versailles that Germany's colonial holdings in Shandong (Shantung) would not be returned to China but would be given to Japan.

In January 1922 the Comintern sponsored the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East in Moscow. (English-language accounts referred to the meeting as the Congress of Oppressed Far Eastern Peoples; German sources called it the First Congress of Communist and Revolutionary Organizations of the Far East.) There were about 150 delegates, including a 16-member Japanese contingent consisting of 9 communists, 4 anarchists, and 3 without specific party affiliation. More than 80 Chinese and Korean delegates attended, as did several Mongolians and some Yakuts and Kalmyks from Russia.

As president of the Comintern, Zinoviev delivered the opening address. Mikhail Kalinin, titular head of state, also spoke, as did Sen Katayama, leader of the Japanese delegation. All three insisted on the need for peoples of the Far East to overthrow Western and Japanese imperialism. Zinoviev and Kalinin

proclaimed support for all national independence movements, even bourgeois ones, throughout Asia.

The attempt to reconcile proletarian internationalism with nationalism made sense to some Soviet communists but seemed preposterous to others. In any event it became official Comintern policy. This was the chief result of the Moscow meeting, which also led to the formation a few months later of the Japanese Communist party.

A. A. Joffe, a negotiator at Brest-Litovsk and one of the ablest Soviet diplomats, went to Beijing (Peking) in August 1922 to establish relations with the Chinese government. The difficulty was, however, that Beijing's writ did not run very far, and nothing substantive came from his efforts in the old capital. A secessionist regime in Guangzhou (Canton) had a broader if still limited mandate; Joffe journeyed south to meet its leader, Sun Yatsen. The Soviet diplomat had some success, and Sun sent a delegation to Moscow a year later. It was still not possible, however, to conclude a meaningful accord.

In September 1923 the Soviet government and the Comintern sent one of their political organizers, Michael Borodin (Gruzenberg), to Guangzhou to help Sun prepare a political-military offensive aimed at seizing control of all China. Early the following year General Vasili Blücher of the Red Army was sent to head the Soviet military mission. Borodin—who had lived in Chicago for several years—and Blücher reorganized both the Chinese Communist party and the Nationalist party, the Guomintang (Kuomintang). They also helped raise and train an army. The Soviet military mission established the famous Whampoa Military Academy, headed by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek). The deputy head of the Academy's political department was a brilliant young communist, Zhou Enlai.

After long negotiations with Joffe, in January 1924 Sun urged the Guomintang to unite

with the infant Chinese Communist party. This was an example of the Comintern's "united front" policy in action. The merger was based on Sun's Three Principles of the People: nationalism, livelihood, and democracy. This meant essentially that the two parties would fight for the national liberation and unification of China, for the independence of the country, and for the raising of China's economic and educational level. Sun also advocated the reorganization and revitalization of rural life to end the timeless misery of the Chinese peasant.

The China policy of the Soviet government and the Comintern reflected the quarrel between Stalin and his rivals. Stalin knew little about foreign affairs and next to nothing about China; his chief source of information about the country was the self-taught Sinologist Pavel Mif. Nevertheless, basing his views on Lenin's oft-repeated observation that China was on the verge of a bourgeois revolution, Stalin declared that it was necessary to support a united front policy in China, allying the Chinese Communists with the bourgeois Guomintang. Such a policy seemed to make sense for the Guomintang, which at its first All-China Congress in January 1924 accepted Sun's proposal for an alliance with the Chinese Communist party and proclaimed itself in favor of close ties with Soviet Russia.

Trotsky was skeptical of a communist-bourgeois alliance. In his view, cooperation with the Guomintang would lead to disaster. Further, he insisted that China in 1924 was where Russia had been in 1917. The time was ripe for a proletarian revolution.

Stalin won on this issue, as on all others in which he faced Trotsky. As Sun's health declined in late 1924, Stalin and the man who was then his ally, Nikolai Bukharin, backed Jiang Jieshi as the new Guomintang leader. Opposing cooperation with Jiang, Trotsky urged the establishment of a soviet political system in China.

On May 31, 1924, the Soviet plenipotentiary in Beijing, L. M. Karakhan, signed an agreement "On the General Principles for the Regulation of Questions Between the USSR and the Chinese Republic." The accord provided for the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations on a new basis, all "conventions, agreements, accords, contracts and so forth" between tsarist Russia and China being annulled (Article 3). The Soviets declared "null and void and without force" all agreements infringing on the rights and sovereignty of China concluded by the tsarist regime with any third party or parties (Article 4). The Kremlin recognized Outer Mongolia as part of China. The Soviets and Chinese agreed not to interfere in each other's internal affairs and to regulate navigation on waterways constituting part of the international frontier. The complicated matter of the Chinese Eastern Railway, in which the tsarist government had part ownership, was to be the subject of further negotiation. The Soviets renounced the right of extraterritoriality, the Russian share of the Boxer Rebellion indemnity, and "all special rights and privileges" won by the tsarist regime through unequal treaties.

Articles 3 and 4 of the agreement seemed to annul the unequal treaties, and Article 7 provided for the "examination" of the frontiers between the two countries, pending which were to remain valid. Did this mean that the Soviets would renegotiate the treaties and restore to China the territories seized by the tsars? When the Sino-Soviet accord was signed a few months after Lenin's death, this was vaguely the intention of some Soviet officials. The situation in China was unstable, however, and Russian nationalism had already begun to assert itself after the failure of communist revolutions in Europe. The frontier dispute was to continue for decades.

Karakhan also signed a series of bilateral declarations on May 31 that further defined the basic accord, provided for the disposition of

tsarist and Russian Orthodox Church property in China, and regulated the position of Soviet citizens on Chinese soil. On the same day, a separate agreement established a ten-member board (five Soviet and five Chinese) to oversee the joint operation of the Chinese Eastern Railway until the dispute over ownership was resolved.

In July 1929 the Chinese authorities seized control of the railway and imprisoned thousands of Soviet citizens who were its employees. The Soviet Union broke diplomatic relations. Late in July a Soviet-Chinese protocol signed at Khabarovsk restored joint ownership of the railway and reaffirmed the international frontiers; diplomatic relations were not restored until December 1932.

Sun died early in 1925 and Jiang succeeded him. The following year Jiang confounded Borodin, then on some secret mission to Beijing, by swooping down on Chinese Communist headquarters in Guangzhou and arresting party leaders. Isolated and denied access to the highest councils of the Guomindang, Borodin went back to Moscow for consultations. General Blücher, however, remained the Guomindang's chief military adviser. Jiang needed his expertise for the Northern Expedition, the July–October 1926 military campaign in which Guomindang forces conquered and united most of China south of the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River.

Developments in China stunned Moscow, and there were those in Stalin's own entourage who shared Trotsky's distrust of Jiang. Stalin did not, however, change his mind, and the united front policy remained in effect. Moreover, he sent Borodin back to China to ensure that the Chinese communists followed Comintern orders.

By the spring of 1927 Jiang Jieshi had extended his control still farther north. He established a capital at Nanjiang (Nanking), defeated some of the most powerful warlords, and with Soviet assistance created one of the

largest armies in Chinese history. Having made use of the communists, Jiang turned on them. At his order Guomindang street fighters—the Blue Shirts—struck in the communist stronghold of Shanghai on April 12, 1927, slaughtering every communist they could find. At least 300 and perhaps as many as 1,000 were killed in one day. According to Soviet sources, about 337,000 Chinese revolutionaries, including 18,000 of the 58,000 members of the Chinese Communist party, were massacred between April 1927 and June 1928.

Stalin's response to the Shanghai massacre was to radio some bizarre instructions to Borodin, who was to arm and equip 20,000 members of the Chinese Communist party, create a 50,000-man army in Hunan and Hupeh provinces, confiscate all landlord land in those provinces, pack the Guomindang central committee, and put "reactionary" officers of Jiang's army on trial. He might as well have ordered the construction of a new Great Wall by the end of the month. His commands bore no relation to reality, and indeed he did not intend them to. He was speaking to his own party, which knew that he had erred disastrously in his China policy and that Trotsky had been a better judge of Jiang and the Guomindang.

Soviet policy in China was in shambles. The Soviet composer Reinhold Glière's *Red Poppy* ballet celebrating Soviet-Chinese friendship opened at the Bolshoi Theatre in June 1927, at once a modest artistic success and a bad political joke.

In China itself the decimated communists struck back in three unsuccessful attempts in 1927 to challenge the growing might of the Guomindang. Zhou Enlai and Zhu Deh were among the leaders of the Nanchang Uprising in August and September. Mao Zedong was one of the commanders in the Autumn Harvest Uprising in September in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area, which saw the birth of the first division of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Revo-

lutionary Army. A minor communist revolt took place in Guangzhou in December.

The Communist-Guomindang alliance had been a "right" (conservative) policy from the Comintern point of view, and it reflected the temporary cooperation between Stalin and Bukharin. After the 1927 disasters the Chinese communists moved toward the "left"; that is, they began to lay the groundwork for the seizure of political power by the revolutionary peasantry. A meeting of the party's Central Committee on August 7, 1927, decided on this policy.

The Sixth Congress of the Chinese Communist party met in Moscow in June-July 1928 and reaffirmed the leftward reorientation. Increasingly preoccupied with domestic Soviet policy, Stalin had even less time to devote to Chinese affairs, but he seems to have accepted the practical necessity of protracted guerrilla warfare.

## A DECADE OF PROLETARIAN DIPLOMACY

The new leaders of the Soviet Union had not learned to distinguish between an ideological and a pragmatic foreign policy. They saw no contradiction between supporting communist parties dedicated to the overthrow of governments and conducting more or less normal diplomatic relations with these same governments. Soviet leaders clung to the fiction that the Comintern was a wholly independent agency with headquarters in Moscow and, by sheer coincidence, several Soviet leaders among its top officers.

Soviet foreign policy remained officially predicated on world revolution throughout most of the decade after 1917, and no real change could take place until Stalin elaborated the theory of "socialism in one country." He had first hinted at it in 1917 but no one took him seriously; he was not regarded as one

of the party's thinkers. By December 1924, however, enormous changes in Soviet politics and Stalin's personal fortunes had taken place. Lenin was dead, and Stalin, allied with Kamenev and Zinoviev, had defeated Trotsky in the first round of the struggle for power. Trotsky was still a threat, however, and Stalin kept up his attack, shifting the battle to the realm of theory and temporarily allying himself with Bukharin and the right.

In an essay entitled "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists," Stalin struck at Trotsky's "permanent revolution" as theoretically flawed and politically seditious. Why had Trotsky so little faith in the communists' ability to construct a socialist society in Russia without the help of the proletariat of other countries? Relying on arguments developed by Bukharin, Stalin had earlier begun to argue that capitalism had stabilized and that revolution could no longer be considered imminent. To preserve and eventually expand the gains of October throughout the world, he now argued, it was necessary to build "socialism in one country." A portion of the world proletariat was already committed to the defense of the Soviet Union through the Comintern. It was the duty of communists, Stalin declared, temporarily to shelve their hopes for world revolution and concentrate on strengthening their own country.

These arguments prevailed in the party and helped bury Trotsky. Even people who detested Stalin admitted that he had made excellent use of Bukharin's theories and in so doing had bested his adversary in the very area where he—Trotsky—had always excelled. Vindication in China could not redeem Trotsky.

The great fear of Soviet leaders in the 1920s was that the USSR would be attacked by a cap-

italist power or group of powers before the country had had time to build a strong industrial and military base. Because the state was so weak, Soviet foreign policy after 1924 was by and large conciliatory and defensive. The Soviets supported the concept of collective security and adhered to pacts aimed at establishing it. From 1927 on they acted as spokesmen for immediate, universal, and complete disarmament. This was Moscow's policy. It would be wrong to dismiss it as mere propaganda even though the Soviets knew that there was no chance it would be accepted.

The Soviet stance on disarmament and impassioned defense of collective security made a favorable impression on millions of people around the world. In the titanic clash between communism and fascism that loomed on the European horizon, the Soviets would have friends among the populations of many countries—but not a single ally among states.

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## chapter 8

# STALIN'S REVOLUTION, 1924–1932

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Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin carved a dictatorship out of a bureaucracy. As dictator, he became “mankind’s greatest genius,” a fairly restrained encomium employed by his army of sycophants. He had proved himself incompetent on the battlefield. His widely revered predecessor had suggested that he be removed from his key post in the party. Many high party officials considered him unfit to lead.

We have the testimony of Lenin that Stalin was rude, and from a variety of sources we know that his humor was coarse, unsophisticated, frequently scatological. He smiled little, laughed less, took offense easily, is not known ever to have forgiven a real or imagined slight. He was physically unimposing, standing only 1 m 62 cm (about 5' 4"), but he was taller than Napoleon, Attila the Hun, and Julius Caesar. He had a slightly withered left arm. According to archival evidence, he treated women brutally. Acne or perhaps chicken pox had

scarred his face in adolescence. Among his favorite music was a recording of a coloratura singing against a background of howling dogs.

Moody, surly, forever on the defensive, Stalin did not make friends easily. Few people liked him, but he loved himself enough, party members said, to make up the difference. He was personally close only to Vyacheslav Molotov and Kliment Voroshilov among the Old Bolsheviks. These two men were the prototypes of hundreds of humorless, amoral, blindly loyal mediocrities at the heart of the bureaucratic machine.

### **CONSOLIDATION OF THE STALIN DICTATORSHIP**

When Trotsky ignored Lenin’s instructions to move against Stalin at the Twelfth Party Congress, for all practical purposes the struggle

for succession ended. This blunder meant that the existing bureaucratic structure under Stalin's control took on unassailable legitimacy. It would be too late to raise Lenin's attack on Stalin after Lenin was dead.

In the summer of 1924 Stalin moved against his erstwhile fellow triumvirs, Kamenev and Zinoviev, purging their supporters in Moscow and Leningrad. He seemed to draw close to the right wing of the party in this period. An August 1924 uprising in Georgia was, he declared, sparked by dissatisfaction among the peasants, and he urged conciliation; this translated into a call for the extension of the new economic policy. This was the position of Bukharin (promoted to Lenin's seat on the Politburo), Rykov, Tomsky, and their followers on the right.

Trotsky returned to the attack in the autumn of 1924, only to stumble anew. He published a collection of essays entitled *1917*; one, "Lessons of October," assailed Kamenev and Zinoviev for wavering during the revolutionary year. He was correct, but there was no point in raising the matter now. His attack drove the two men back into Stalin's arms.

Stalin mobilized his forces; accepted help from Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Bukharin; and isolated his opponent. Early in 1925 Trotsky lost his post as commissar of military and naval affairs. Again he submitted meekly, believing he would no longer face the charge of "Bonapartism." Ever the opportunists, Kamenev and Zinoviev proposed in January 1925 to expel Trotsky from the party. The champion of reason and moderation, Stalin, objected that this would set a dangerous precedent: today Trotsky's head, tomorrow whose?

In the winter of 1924–1925 a suddenly alarmed Zinoviev decided to make his own move against Stalin. He had a strong base in Leningrad, directed the Comintern, and could often manipulate Kamenev. Perhaps—he apparently thought—he could sway Trotsky and Krupskaya as well. He made a series of

speeches advocating a left position, attacking the new economic policy's concessions to the peasantry. This made sense in proletarian Leningrad. It was madness in the rest of the country, where the economic recovery had blunted desires for further radical experimentation on the model of war communism.

Stalin moved quickly. He removed some of Zinoviev's key aides in the Leningrad party and Komsomol organizations and undercut his power in the Comintern. Stalin's friends of the moment, the rightists Bukharin and Rykov, vigorously defended the NEP against Zinoviev. Most party members believed that this defense was also Stalin's position; but Stalin generally let Bukharin and Rykov do the talking.

As a British authority on the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) observed, the Fourteenth Party Congress in December 1925 "marked the lowest ebb of political morality . . . the party had yet reached." Stalin and his allies had selected all the delegates save those from Leningrad. Jeers and catcalls greeted Zinoviev every time he spoke. Knowing he would be defeated, he pleaded to be heard. Anastas Mikoyan, an astute Armenian Stalinist, mocked him: "When Zinoviev is in the majority, he is for iron discipline; when he is in the minority, he is against it." The Stalinists shouted Zinoviev down and insulted Krupskaya. Trotsky did not even try to speak. Kamenev behaved with courage: "I have come," he said, "to the conclusion that Comrade Stalin cannot fulfill the role of unifier. . . . We are against the doctrine of one-man rule, we are against the creation of a leader." The congress erupted into a cacophony of shouts, curses, whistling, and general disorder orchestrated by Stalin's henchmen.

Stalin spoke reassuringly. Of course we must have collective leadership, he said. The party could not possibly do without leaders of the stature of Rykov, Bukharin, Tomsky, Kalinin, Molotov. "It is impossible," he declared, "to lead the party other than collec-

tively. It is stupid to think of any other way after Lenin." But he added that "antiparty" activities and positions could not be tolerated: Kamenev and Zinoviev lost their major posts.

Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev patched up their quarrels in 1926. Trotsky invoked the precedent of the French Revolution and argued that the forces of "Thermidor," represented by the Stalinist bureaucracy, were leading the truly revolutionary forces, the masses, to defeat. For fear of being charged with violating the ban on factionalism, he did not assert that "Thermidor" already existed, nor did he call on the masses to revolt.

This was fine theory, ridiculous politics. By 1926 Stalin was firmly in control of the bureaucracy, and to attack him and his support system at their strongest point was folly. To counterattack, he had only to quote Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev against each other and indeed against Lenin. The three men had made enough mistakes to fill a large textbook on how *not* to play politics. As for Lenin's "testament," which some oppositionists now began to mention, Stalin pointed out that both Krupskaya and Trotsky had denounced it as a "malicious invention."

In October 1926 Trotsky and Zinoviev sponsored a series of street demonstrations and meetings in which they demanded restoration of democracy in the party. The bureaucracy responded with a counterattack aimed at isolating and destroying them. They were forbidden to address workers in the factories and shops and denied access to the media, which subjected them to vicious assault. Suddenly aware of the danger, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev made the astonishing gesture of publicly denouncing their own activities. They admitted violating the ban on factionalism and swore to refrain from such behavior. This was an empty, even cowardly gesture. The leaders could not save themselves, and their statement deprived their followers of all hope of protection. The OGPU, as the secret police

was now called, could now move against these followers with impunity.

The upshot of all this was Trotsky's ouster from the Politburo. Zinoviev lost the presidency of the Comintern, Kamenev was removed as a candidate member of the Politburo. A few months later the Central Committee expelled both Trotsky and Zinoviev. Around the time of the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Trotsky and his followers tried to take their case against Stalin and the bureaucracy to the workers in a series of illegal factory meetings and street demonstrations. To their dismay, labor did not respond. The workers in Moscow and Leningrad looked on with indifference as the Trotskyites put forward this last feeble challenge to the Stalinist bureaucratic machine.

In November 1927 Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev were expelled from the party. The latter two swallowed their pride and begged for reinstatement. Trotsky was exiled to Alma Ata in Soviet Central Asia early in 1928; a year later the OGPU threw him across the border into Turkey. Kamenev and Zinoviev, formally readmitted to the party in 1928 after humiliating confessions of error, vigorously applauded his fate.

## THE SITUATION IN AGRICULTURE

The party struggles directly involved only the few score top officials who held the reins of power. The only spectators who really cared, the rank-and-file party members, numbered 1,236,190 (including 348,957 candidates) in December 1927. In a population of about 148 million, only they had anything at all to do with politics, and most of them merely tried to interpret and carry out orders from Moscow. The vast majority of the population was more concerned about the crisis in agriculture.

The communists had not abandoned their dream of creating a planned, crisis-free eco-

conomic system. They acknowledged that the free market in agriculture under NEP was largely responsible for the restoration of economic health but insisted that the "tyranny" of the market could not be tolerated.

There were serious problems in agriculture in the 1920s despite outward signs of good health. First, the historic backwardness of Russian farming remained unremedied. Second, even though production had regained pre-1914 levels, the peasants were not participating in the market as much as they had prior to the Great War; more food was remaining in the countryside. Supplies in the cities, though adequate, were precarious. Third, there were wide variations in "patterns of peasant agriculture" around the huge country. Muslim areas were prime for development, while major grain-producing regions—the middle Volga Valley, North Caucasus, Ukraine—had not fully recovered. Fourth, the restoration of agriculture had taken place on a capitalistic basis.

The survival of communal land tenure and the strip system had a negative effect on food production. The village commune periodically redistributed the land among the peasants; determined which crops to sow on which parcels; set the dates for plowing, sowing, and harvesting. The strip system granted each peasant a strip of good land here, a strip of mediocre land there; the ancient custom took different forms in different regions. After the revolution, however, it was more or less standardized throughout European Russia.

A further problem was the lack of animal power, not to speak of machinery. In the Russian Republic, 28.3 percent of peasant households had no draft animals in 1927; 31.6 percent *had no plows*. Only about 15.2 percent had horse-drawn agricultural implements.

Kulak farms constituted only 4 to 5 percent of the total in 1927, but their owners had about a third of all agricultural machinery in the country. As the leading British expert on So-

viet agricultural policy in the 1920s has pointed out, perhaps the most startling statistic was this: the yields of wheat and rye per hectare in Russia (7 to 9 centners, where one c. = 100 kg) were lower than those of fourteenth-century French estates and only marginally greater than those of fourteenth-century English estates. Russian yields in the 1920s were less than half those of Germany. Millions of peasants could not subsist on their own plots and had to hire themselves out.

Between 1928 and 1939 the urban population increased by 18.5 million; much of the increase came as peasants left the farms and came to the cities to work in the factories. Thus fewer peasant producers had to feed more mouths. Barring drastic changes, a major crisis seemed certain to develop.

## INDUSTRIALIZATION DEBATE

The short-range problem involved the feeding of the Red Army and the cities. The long-range one concerned the transformation of agricultural Russia into a modern industrial society. How was that to be accomplished? How was Russia to solve the problem of the accumulation of capital? Factories could not be built nor foreign machinery purchased with copies of Lenin's tracts. Where was the money to come from? How was the rate of economic growth to be increased to the point where Russia could catch up with capitalist states? How could the people, living reasonably well only because they spent everything and saved nothing, be made to tighten their belts as the state undertook a massive savings campaign to finance industrialization?

These were the problems that confronted planners and party officials in the mid-1920s. Several solutions were advanced by bourgeois economists employed by the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) and the Supreme Economic Council. The only consensus that

emerged was that Russia would have to squeeze agriculture to finance industrialization. The peasants would have to produce as much food as possible, and the people would have to consume less in order for the state to sell the agricultural surplus on the world market. In that market, Soviet grain would be competing with the more efficiently produced, therefore cheaper, American, Canadian, and other foreign grain.

The Soviet Union might be obliged to sell at a loss because it desperately needed Western (“hard”) currency to purchase machines, certain raw materials, and technical expertise abroad; the Communist ruble was never a convertible currency and had no value outside the USSR. Who would absorb the loss? Domestic producers and consumers. The peasants would not get a fair reward for their labor; there would be less food for consumers and it would cost more because of artificial shortages.

Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky, and the right argued in favor of maintaining NEP, and Stalin sided with them. They believed that the free agricultural market, a distasteful long-term necessity, could eventually produce the surplus needed to finance industrialization. Industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture would have to wait; this was the price the country had to pay for its historic lag behind advanced capitalist societies. Trotsky and the left had insisted that the Soviet Union could not postpone industrialization if it was to survive. The only way to control the peasantry, the left argued, was to collectivize private farms.

But even Trotsky, Preobrazhensky, and their followers shrank from forcing the peasants into collectives. Despite their differences both left and right supported NEP and neither anticipated its early demise. The Fifteenth Party Congress (December 2–19, 1927) adopted a Bukharinist scheme for the first Five-Year Plan, calling for the collectivization of agriculture on a partial, voluntary basis. This amalgam enjoyed the full support

of Stalin, whose sudden reversal of the Bukharinist-Trotskyist program would produce the great revolution.

## 1928 CRISIS

The party's most formidable foe was the backward economy. In the mid-1920s the proletariat was employed, well fed, and largely—so long as it did not meddle in politics—left alone by the authorities. If it was not wholly on the party's side, it was not against it. The proletariat cared only about bread and the good life.

That life was suddenly jeopardized in the autumn of 1927, when for a variety of reasons—a minor war scare and rumors of the government's intention to resume forced requisitions—the peasants sold the state only about half as much grain as they had during the same period in 1926, the year of the best harvest of the decade. This happened again in 1928, when weather conditions that occur only once in 30–40 years drastically reduced the harvest; the state was indeed obliged to step in to force deliveries in many districts. Beyond that the peasants were planting more industrial crops and less grain because the state kept grain prices artificially low. This produced a major crisis: there would not be enough bread to feed the cities at pre-1927 levels.

Early in 1929 the government introduced bread rationing in Leningrad and Moscow, then in all cities. Inferior grains were mixed with wheat and rye to make flour; the milling standard was lowered.

What else was Stalin to do? He had repeatedly said that the very idea of forced collectivization was so absurd as to be beneath discussion. The small private farm, he declared publicly in April 1929, would continue as the mainstay of agriculture for an indefinite period. But in a startling reversal, he privately attacked the Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky group, which was de-

manding that the party maintain NEP and stick to strictly voluntary collectivization.

In April 1929 the sixteenth party conference approved the Five-Year Plan drawn up by Gosplan. The optimum variant called for collectivization of 20 percent of peasant households by 1933. Approving this variant, the party swung into action. By the summer of 1929, there were about 57,000 collective farms, formed by amalgamating more than a million private farms, 3.9 percent of the total. By and large this was accomplished peacefully.

These first few kolhozes—a handful was left over from war communism—were put together out of marginal farmsteads and lands that already belonged to the state. A great deal of money was expended in this period to make them attractive to the poorest peasants; this effort was more successful than Western critics have allowed. The communists cosseted people on the lowest rungs of the economic and social ladders.

After the 1929 harvest, again inferior, Stalin and his associates made the decision that was to cost millions of people their lives: they would launch a drive for all-out collectivization. The decision was not publicly announced. The leadership would use party cadres, the Red Army, and where necessary OGPU troops to force the remainder of the peasantry into collective farms.

The decision was predicated on the belief that the acute grain shortage was artificial, the work of peasants infected with a “kulak mentality.” These peasants, the Stalinists suspected, were deliberately withholding grain to force the regime to raise prices.

On November 7, 1929, *Pravda* carried Stalin's article, “The Year of the Great Change,” which claimed that socialism had made a “great breakthrough” in the countryside. He called collectivization a huge success; the grain deliveries would solve the problem of accumulating capital. All this had come about, he claimed, because millions of middle

peasants were flocking enthusiastically into collective farms. These claims were intended not to inform but to warn that collectivization would succeed—or else.

Five days later Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky publicly accepted Stalin's figures and admitted that collectivization had been successful. With his opponents taking this stand, Stalin was more convinced than ever of the validity of his policies. The November 1929 Central Committee plenum noted the right's capitulation but nevertheless expelled Bukharin from the Politburo. It endorsed some fairly modest goals concerning the rate at which collectivization was to be achieved.

The published resolutions of this plenum were not intended as guides for local officials. Those officials took their cues from Molotov's speeches, which were, as a British expert has noted, “undoubtedly designed to persuade local party officials to press ahead with collectivization at breakneck speed.” Soviet historians of the post-Stalin period have occasionally tried to shift blame for the terrible excesses of the winter of 1929–1930 to Molotov, but this will not do: Molotov did not open his umbrella, contemporaries said, until Stalin confirmed rain. Officials around the country read his speeches and interpreted them as Stalin's instructions.

This “great change” constituted a “radical act of revolution from above.” It marked the beginning of the Stalinist nightmare. There was no warning, and despite the experience of war communism no real precedent: Stalin undertook a military-police campaign against the people.

## **PUSH FOR TOTAL COLLECTIVIZATION**

A nightmare ensued. The party moved against the peasants with brutal, overwhelming force, herding them like cattle into the kolhozes.

Any peasants so identified by the party were kulaks. Their property was seized and they were thrown into an unheated, overcrowded railroad freight car destined eventually for the forced-labor camps of the Arctic or eastern Siberia.

There was panic, disorder, armed resistance. The peasants attacked the collectivizers with pitchforks, axes, clubs, rocks. The officials called in the Red Army, a cross section of peasants and workers and effective only up to a point. When the party deemed it necessary to use violence against women and children, OGPU troops were employed.

In the last weeks of 1929 and the first two and a half months of 1930, resistance took on extreme forms. In the USSR (excluding Ukraine) there were 1,678 armed attacks on collectivization in the first ten weeks of 1930. The peasants buried their grain when they thought they had a chance to preserve it, burned it when they did not. In February and March 1930 they slaughtered 14 million head of cattle, and in the Russian Republic alone they killed 4 million horses. The slaughtered animals were left to rot in the barns and fields. Stalin published these figures in January 1934:

Millions of Live Animals

	1929	1933
Horses	34.0	16.6
Cattle	68.1	38.6
Sheep and goats	147.2	50.6
Swine	20.9	12.2

This unprecedented killing had a ripple effect. In 1929 about 85 percent of the land was plowed with animal power. With a substantial reduction in the amount of that power available, the fields were left untilled. Moreover, the slaughter reduced drastically the amount of organic fertilizer available.

Were they not documented by the authorities themselves the excesses would be unbelievable. Squads of “dekulakizers” swarmed into

villages in the Smolensk region west of Moscow and tore the clothing off the backs of people. Alcohol was “nationalized” on the spot; drunken orgies were commonplace. Food was confiscated, of course, and not just grain stocks. The expropriators frequently took the kasha off the stove and ate it or smeared it on the family’s icons. Eyeglasses were no safer from confiscation than homes or cows.

Peasants who survived the initial swoop were herded to the railroad, where cattle cars awaited. In January–February 1930 the trains frequently remained on sidings for days or even weeks at a time. The authorities had failed to foresee, let alone plan for, the problems of transporting millions of people to distant, uninhabitable regions. Families were separated, and uncounted numbers of helpless peasants perished in the trains, often within sight of their villages.

The authorities had never spelled out a precise definition of “kulak”; each local boss could define the term as he or she liked. As the pressure from the Central Committee to speed collectivization became more intense, the definition became broader and more inclusive. Officials who failed to produce their quotas were themselves liable to arrest, expropriation, and deportation. This process continued, as Stalin admitted, for four years, with only a brief respite in 1930.

Those cattle trains on the sidings full of screaming, freezing, starving, fear-crazed people left no doubt in anyone’s mind about the fate of “enemies of the people.” As early as 1928 the better-off peasants began to sell their grain surpluses, agriculture implements, livestock, and other movable property. This “self-dekulakization” became a legal offense; people were to wait for the state to destroy them.

Agriculture was on the brink of disaster. Stalin’s war against the peasantry produced the result achieved by Lenin’s war communism—catastrophe. In the absence of some surcease the country would collapse.

### “DIZZY WITH SUCCESS”

A break came with the publication in *Pravda* on March 2, 1930, of Stalin's article “Dizzy with Success: Problems of the Kolhoz Movement.” To the consternation of local party officials Stalin blamed *them* for the excesses. What kind of lunatics, he asked, began collectivizing agriculture by removing the bells from a village church? Collectivization had to be voluntary. He roundly condemned the zealots and called their shenanigans “grist for the mill of right opportunism.”

In the countryside people regarded Stalin's article as commutation of a death sentence. Peasants paid high prices for that issue of *Pravda*, gathering in the rutted village streets to read it aloud and getting drunk to celebrate the reprieve. Again, the timing was no accident. It was already the optimum period for the spring plowing in the southernmost grain districts, and plowing would have to commence immediately in Ukraine and the Volga valley if there were to be any crop at all in 1930.

There ensued a mass exodus from the collective farms. Of 14 million households—70 million people—forced into kolhozes by March 1930, only 5 million remained in May. To save face the party declared that the farms that had been established on a “healthy” basis—those formed by the poorest peasants—had survived. By the summer of 1930, only 24.6 percent of all peasant farms remained collectivized. This represented, however, a great increase over the 4 percent of June 1929.

Party cadres were in an awkward situation. They had carried out the Central Committee's orders only to be denounced. Moreover, top party officials came from Moscow to investigate and set things right; in the spring of 1930 there were hundreds of trials of “left deviationists” and wholesale dismissals and demotions of local officials. Party members and reliable workers from the cities were sent to the countryside in 1930 to help clean up the mess.

The press paid special attention to a contingent of 25,000 workers (two-thirds communists, and about 7.5 percent women), but that group was only the vanguard. The number of party workers temporarily assigned to the villages nearly tripled, to around 700,000, between 1927 and 1930; most of the increase came in the spring and summer of 1930.

Spring plowing took place a little behind schedule, but as events proved, no harm had been done. Peasants rejoiced in the restoration of their farms. The Sixteenth Party Congress (June–July 1930) noted the tranquillity in the countryside, blamed the winter excesses on local cadres, and called for increased state aid to kolhozes. About this time the last article critical of Stalin and the Central Committee appeared in *Pravda*.

### RESUMPTION OF COLLECTIVIZATION

Incredibly, the harvest of 1930 produced record grain deliveries to the state—22 million tons—6 million more than the previous year and more than double the 1928 deliveries. This was something of a miracle and should have been so regarded. The dislocations and turmoil of the early collectivization drive had threatened to ruin agriculture. The farms recovered more quickly than anyone could have foreseen, and the spring weather in 1930 was unusually good.

The party regarded the harvest as indicative of what the peasants could do *every* year. Party leaders were more convinced than ever that the withholding of grain by kulaks had created the dangerous shortages of 1927–1929 and that collectivization would ultimately be successful.

In the autumn of 1930 the Central Committee ordered the resumption of collectivization on a massive if less frantic scale. The spring and summer respite was no longer considered

a retreat but merely a temporary consolidation. The new drive marched forward at a steady pace: 26.1 percent of all peasant households were collectivized by January 1931; 42.0 percent by April; 52.7 percent by June, when 13 million peasant households (65 million people) lived on 211,000 collective farms.

Class warfare resumed as doomed peasants fought Red Army and OGPU troops ferociously. Again the villages were aflame. Like the *muzhiks* who burned their homes in 1812 to deny them to Napoleón, peasants set fire to fields, grain stores, and even homes to keep them out of Stalin's hands. They poisoned wells, slit their animals' throats, and lynched officials when they caught them alone and unprotected.

The party overpowered the kulaks, forced the peasants into collective farms, and surveyed the damage. It spoke bravely of building tractors and mechanizing agriculture to make up for the loss of animals, but by 1933 it still could put only about 200,000 tractors, with an aggregate horse-power of 3.1 million, into the countryside. This was only a small fraction of the power provided by horses and oxen before the slaughter.

The 1931 harvest produced nearly 17 percent less grain than that of 1930. The shortfall outraged the party; more grain was needed for sale abroad. And export the Soviet Union did: 2.6 million centners in 1929; 48.4 million in 1930; 51.8 million in 1931. These deliveries to foreign countries, at the cost of reducing the amount of food available for domestic consumption, enabled the state to purchase a considerable amount of heavy machinery. They also led to starvation in some areas.

It did not occur to Stalin and his colleagues to enquire whether the quotas were unrealistically high or whether unfavorable weather conditions in 1931 might have had anything to do with the shortfall. They again blamed the kulaks for sabotaging the harvest, and party officials fanned out into the countryside to

seize reserves (including seed grain), reorganize local party organizations, purge official cadres, and direct "mass repressions" against "enemies of the people."

Agricultural output declined throughout the first Five-Year Plan. Where 1928 equals 100, production stood at 81.5 in 1933. Nevertheless, the state made money, for example, by charging consumers up to 40 times the procurement price for wheat flour. By the end of the first plan, 61.5 percent of all peasant households, representing 70 percent of the crop area, had been collectivized. In the major grain-producing areas the percentage of collectivized households was greater, ranging from 68 to 90 percent. Private farming in Russia had come to an end. In this manner the Bolshevik Revolution came at last to the Russian village.

In the spring of 1988 a member of the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences published official statistics that indicated the "repression" of 10 million peasants. Accepting this figure for the sake of illustration, we note that if foreign invaders had killed the entire 1935 populations of Norway, Denmark, and Finland, they would have shed less blood than the communists did in Russia during the collectivization of agriculture. And when Stalin and his henchmen had finished off the "kulaks," they began the killing in earnest.

In October 1988 the Soviet press reported the discovery of mass graves at a place called Kuropaty, near Minsk in Byelorussia. An archaeologist estimated that at *least* 102,000 people, mostly peasants, were murdered there in 1937-1941. This was only one of many "killing fields."

## FIVE-YEAR PLAN IN INDUSTRY

The Stalinists could to some extent conceal their political bankruptcy behind strident propaganda and military weakness behind the

façade of a large standing army, but there could be no denying industrial and technological backwardness. Not only did Russia lag behind the United States, Britain, and Germany; she was also inferior to France, Belgium, and even Holland in many important areas. In 1926 Russia had no machine-tool industry, only a very small chemical industry, no turbine or generator factories, no high-grade steel, no ferrous alloys, no aircraft-manufacturing plants—the list goes on.

Much of this stemmed from tsarist times, but the past could not be changed. Russia had to industrialize or perish; the twentieth century offered no alternative.

Where was the money to come from? Foreign credits and loans were out of the question. Russia's only friend, Weimar Germany, had enough problems of its own, and other capitalist states were not about to help the communists. Russia had no colonies, no war booty; Marxism-Leninism forbade the plundering of the people. The only conceivable solution was to abandon Marxism-Leninism.

Gosplan produced both a baseline and an optimum variant of the Five-Year Plan, and the party opted for the optimum. The first Five-Year Plan provided for the investment of 24.8 billion rubles in industry. Of that amount, 21.3 billion was to go to *heavy* industry. Prospects seemed favorable at the outset, but the sudden push for complete collectivization of agriculture disrupted both countryside and city by putting ever greater pressure on the food supply and taking workers out of the factories to enforce collectivization.

There was another factor. The Great Depression that began in 1929 and struck one capitalist country after another inevitably had repercussions in the world's only socialist state. The Depression debased the price of raw materials on world markets, and grain was already selling below the cost of production. In the post-1929 market, it was necessary to export more of a given commodity to bring the

same returns; but the world market could not absorb a significant increase in the chief export, grain. The fact that imported machinery and other goods now cost less did not offset the reduction in income from the sale of grain and raw materials.

About 45 percent of the budget for industry was expended on 60 giant projects. The Soviets declared that they would build gigantic hydroelectric complexes, huge automotive factories, enormous new cities. A notorious example was the White Sea–Baltic Canal, which stretched 227 kilometers from the northern end of Lake Onega to the White Sea. Swamps, bogs, marshes, creeks, rivers, lakes, and forests constituted tremendous obstacles. The task was awesome; what better agency to carry it out than the OGPU, which had a vast reservoir of cheap labor? This labor came from concentration camps, and it was better than cheap: It was free and inexhaustible; they had only to arrest more people. Because there was almost no machinery available for the job, the government called in the OGPU with its human resources.

The canal was literally built by hand. It opened with great fanfare in 1933, Stalin and some of his associates cruising along it like a pharaoh and his court on the Nile. They only went part of the way, however, in a shallow-draft vessel; the waterway was neither deep nor wide enough for commercial craft. Virtually useless economically, it would be rebuilt in the 1960s. Until the Gorbachev era not one word was published in the Soviet press about the 300,000 OGPU prisoners, 15 percent of them women, who died building Stalin's folly with their bare hands in the northern cold.

The regime built the Turksib Railway to link Central Asia with Siberia. The gigantic Lenin hydroelectric complex on the Dnepr at Zaporozhe proved successful despite its incredibly high cost. The metallurgical complexes at Magnitorgorsk and Kuznetsk aided the drive to industrialize, as did the tractor fac-



"Greetings to the factory's shock-workers from us, the little children!"  
Young Pioneer demonstration, 1931. (National Archives)

tories at Stalingrad, Harkov, and Cheliabinsk. The list could be expanded a hundredfold.

There was to be no "Dizzy with Success" call for easing the tempo of industrialization. On the contrary, at the Sixteenth Party Congress Stalin proposed to *raise* the optimum goals of the plan: 17 million tons of pig iron instead of 10 million, 170,000 tractors instead of 55,000, a 100 percent increase in agricultural machinery other than tractors, and so on. In practical terms these new goals were simply unachievable. Not only that: a party hack dreamed up a new slogan, "Let's fulfill the Five-Year Plan in four years!" The exhortation, shortened to "Five in four!" in party propaganda, "came from the masses" in the same manner as did the welcome accorded food shortages.

Young people by the hundreds of thousands flocked to the industrial centers. They lived in shacks or tents while they built new dormitories in the old cities, and they lived outdoors while they built new cities such as Magnitogorsk. Their pay was as meager as their diet. From 1928 to 1930, the nominal wages of workers in industry rose 18 percent, but the cost of food rose 89 percent. They worked overtime without extra pay, worked Saturdays (the "subbotniks") for no pay, suffered deprivations. They grumbled when the government moved the clocks ahead permanently one hour ("decree time") in 1930, but there were no overt protests. Stalin's attempt to emulate the French Revolution and introduce a new ten-day week, however, encountered opposition and was dropped.

In 1929 the government introduced rationing for all basic foods and for many industrial goods. There were, to be sure, “commercial” stores where one could buy scarce goods at high prices, but these were available only to the privileged few. The decline in real wages for both blue- and white-collar workers was not reversed during the first Five-Year Plan. They rose only during the second plan, stood at about 60 percent of the 1928 level in 1940, and regained the 1928 level only in 1955—or according to some Western specialists, in 1963.

All the shortcomings, blunders, and brutality notwithstanding, the people by and large achieved the goals of the first plan. The claimed growth rate of about 18 percent does not stand up under investigation: the “shock-brigade” tactics—throwing large numbers of workers into a project on a round-the-clock basis—helped in some instances, proved a hindrance in others, but labor productivity did increase.

## RESULTS OF THE FIRST PLAN

The Supreme Economic Council and Gosplan had foreseen a 280 percent increase in gross industrial output between 1928 and 1933. As it happened, output had just about doubled by the end of 1932; but heavy industry increased by 270 percent. The overall performance of the economy was good, if short of the planner’s goals. The following figures reflect the performance of the economy during the first plan:

There was a net decline in agricultural production. Moreover, this decline came at a time when the urban population was growing (17.9 percent of total population in 1928; 24 percent in 1932) and when the state was exporting large amounts of grain. All this added up to the imposition by the state of immense hardships on a population whose standard of living was already the lowest of any industrialized nation.

In January 1933 Stalin announced that the plan had been fulfilled after four years and three months. This declaration bore no resemblance to the facts, but there had to be some dramatic marking of the stages of that extraordinary journey on which the country had embarked. What had begun as an overly ambitious plan became in 1930–1931 a crash program in which the rational allocation of scarce resources—a hallmark of planning—was totally ignored. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union had created a powerful industrial-technological base, and Stalin’s announcement embodied a significant general truth.

For a brief moment it appeared that the leader, now master of the largest country in the world, would not be around to broadcast this announcement. A domestic crisis provided an opportunity for a no-confidence vote in his leadership. On November 9, 1932, at a private dinner in Stalin’s apartment in the Kremlin, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, the dictator’s wife, brought up the forbidden subject of the awful

	1928	1932	[planned]
Pig iron	3.3 million tons	6.2	[10]
Steel	4.3 million tons	5.9	[10.4]
Rolled metal	3.4 million tons	4.4	[8.0]
Tractors (units)	1,300	50,600	[170,000]
Cement (barrels)	11 million	22.4	[41]
Superphosphates (tons)	182,000	612,000	[8–8.5 million]
Cotton cloth (meters)	2.678 billion	2.694	[4,588]
Woolen cloth (meters)	86.8 billion	88.7	[270–300]
Electricity (kwh)	5.0 billion	13.5	[22]
Automobiles (units)	800	23,900	—
Leather shoes (pairs)	58 million	86.9	—



May Day in Red Square, 1932. (National Archives)

famine then raging across Ukraine and South Russia. She spoke, too, of the terror that was tightening its grip on the country. This was not the first time Alliluyeva had embarrassed her husband in front of his guests, but her bitter comments provoked him to a violent outburst that caused her to flee the room.

The rumor immediately circulated that Stalin had strangled his wife. Avel Yenukidze, a longtime associate who was present at that fateful dinner, allegedly found Nadezhda's body with the marks of Stalin's fingers still on her throat. This naturally was not the version given out by the party, which informed the public that she had committed suicide while of unsound mind.

Whatever the circumstances, Stalin was shaken. He offered his resignation to the Central Committee. There was a moment of uncomfortable silence, and then the chief lackey, Molotov, assured him that he still had the

confidence of the party. Stalin continued in office. He had Avel Yenukidze shot in 1937.

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## chapter 9

# THE GREAT TERROR

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Late in December 1917 Feliks Dzerzhinsky, head of the newly established Cheka, asked the Sovnarkom to establish concentration camps to hold “violators of labor discipline, parasites, and people we suspect of counter-revolutionary activity but against whom we do not have sufficient evidence to punish through the legal process and whom even the strictest court would almost certainly acquit.” Lenin wholeheartedly backed this proposal. Coupled with the outlawing of the Kadet party the same month, the dissolution of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly in January 1918, and the formation of the savage food requisition detachments to steal food from the peasantry, this marked the beginning of communist terror.

Lenin ordered the terror and rejoiced in its success. The blood of Russia’s innocent millions is on his hands.

Lenin ordered the first “show,” or public,

trial of Bolshevik political opponents; in June and July 1922 several members of the SR party stood trial on charges of counterrevolution. European socialists came to Moscow to assist in the defense, and Western public opinion pressured the Kremlin to acquit, but a kangaroo court returned a guilty verdict and sentenced 15 defendants to death. The Cheka arrested their families, charging them with “being related to enemies of the people.”

The grotesque farce took place shortly after Soviet Russia’s bid for respectability at the Genoa Conference; this perhaps explains the state’s failure to execute the sentences promptly. The doomed men sat in Moscow’s Butyrka Prison until 1925, when they were shot on Stalin’s personal order. So far as is known, their families never emerged from the Gulag Archipelago.

The trial of the SRs represented the first of a series of public spectacles. Several highly pub-

licized affairs in the 1920s and early 1930s included the 1928 Shakhty trial of alleged “wreckers” in the mines; the 1929 case of purported saboteurs in the transportation system; the 1930 trial of “members” of the nonexistent Industrial party; and the 1933 case of the Metro-Vickers engineers, British subjects working in the USSR.

## SEVENTEENTH PARTY CONGRESS

The Seventeenth Party Congress met in Moscow January 26–February 10, 1934, billed as the Congress of Victors. Stalin declared in his report on the Central Committee’s (CC) work that there was no one left to fight. Two of his closest collaborators, Molotov and Valeri Kuibyshev, gave glowing accounts of the first Five-Year Plan and presented recommendations for the second, covering the years 1933–1937. The new plan was approved unanimously. No one spoke publicly of the mass starvation in Ukraine in 1932–1933.\*

The fact that Hitler had been in power in Germany for a year disturbed these communists no more than did the famine. Stalin reigned in the Kremlin and all seemed right with the world. But it was not, and Stalin knew it, for there was talk of replacing him as general secretary. The human cost of collectivization and of the famine, both of which were his doing, had been enormous; the delegates knew the truth behind the lies. In conversations in the corridors, they spoke of replacing Stalin with Sergei Kirov, Leningrad party leader. With Kirov they would call a halt to the disastrous policies of the preceding six years and initiate sweeping reforms, perhaps even return to something like the NEP.

There was more to this than idle talk. At a meeting at Ordzhonikidze’s apartment several top communists urged Kirov to put forward his

candidacy for the post of general secretary. Kirov not only refused but at the next session moved to accept Stalin’s report as a resolution. The delegates agreed unanimously.

All was not lost for Stalin’s opponents. When the votes for the new CC were counted, 292 delegates had voted against the general secretary. This was slightly less than a quarter of the total 1,225, and it meant that Stalin had received fewer positive votes than any other member of the committee. The 41 nervous members of the electoral commission consulted Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, secretaries of the CC. Kaganovich burned all the negative ballots except 3. There had been 3 votes against Kirov; it was unthinkable that there should be more against Stalin.

There was, however, another problem: destruction of 289 ballots made it impossible to announce a total of 1,225. The credentials committee and the electoral commission simply reported that 936 delegates had voted. Because nearly 300 delegates had voted against Stalin and because at least 43 (the electoral commission, plus Molotov and Kaganovich) knew the extent of the protest, it was impossible to keep the secret. Stalin quickly learned what had happened. He could not, at that time, hold a trial and find the 292 guilty of treason; still less could he shoot all the delegates. But he could lay his plans.

Of the 1,961 delegates (736 nonvoting), 1,108 were to perish in the purges of 1936–1938. Nearly all electoral commission members were executed. By early 1939, 110 of the 139 members and candidate members of the CC elected at this congress had been arrested; about 70 percent had been or would shortly be shot. Many more would never emerge alive from the Gulag. Among the victims were Nikolai Krylenko; G. K. Ordzhonikidze; Valeri Kuibyshev; V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko; A. I. Rykov; and the military commanders Yan Gamarnik, M. N. Tukhachevsky, and V. K. Blücher. Nikolai Bukharin was a member of

\*See Chapter 10.

this doomed “Class of 1934,” and Mikhail Tomsky committed suicide on the eve of his arrest. Two infamous chiefs of the secret police, Genrikh Yagoda and Nikolai Yezhov, would also go to their graves with the distinction of having served on the CC elected at the 1934 congress.

## THE KIROV MURDER

The first and most famous victim was Sergei Kirov, by now the clear choice of the party as heir to Stalin. Rightly or wrongly, many members saw him as a potential reformer through whom they would call a halt to the terrible excesses of Stalin’s rule. Born in 1886, Kirov was orphaned in infancy. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1904 and quickly established a reputation as a labor organizer. Handsome, cocky, and flamboyant, he was the kind of individual on whom the Bolshevik leadership of the day pinned its hopes for the future.

Kirov participated in the October Revolution and fought in the Civil War. Made a full member of the CC in 1923, he succeeded Zinoviev as Leningrad party leader in 1926. He owed his rapid rise to power chiefly to Joseph Stalin.

Kirov was not intellectually gifted, but the orphan’s cynicism had honed his innate peasant shrewdness to a fine point. He knew how to make the best of his talents and understood that his workingman’s approach to politics was the key to his popularity: He associated with working-class people even after he rose to power. He drank vodka with the uncomplicated enthusiasm of the *muzhik*; liked women and did not care who knew it; loved to be around machines and workers. He was also a Russian (his real name was Kostrikov) and that counted for much in a party chafing under the yoke of the Ossete, Stalin.

Kirov was the prototype of the man the Five-Year Plan was built by and for. But he had the

misfortune to have had only three delegates vote against him at the Seventeenth Congress, and to have become identified—quite possibly erroneously—as a reformer. He was doomed.

Arranging the murder of the second most powerful man in the country was no easy task, even for Stalin. Kirov resisted persistent entreaties to move to Moscow; he was happy in Leningrad. The first known attempt on his life came in the spring of 1934, not long after the congress. Two criminals were taken from prison, driven by OGPU agents to Kirov’s apartment building, and told that their freedom depended on murdering the party leader. They failed and were executed—a fate that would also have awaited them had they succeeded. A second attempt likewise miscarried. Stalin began to lose patience.

Apparently without consulting the man in question, the Gensek—the acronym by which General Secretary Stalin was now known—announced that Kirov’s move to Moscow would take place early in December 1934. It seemed Kirov would have to submit and come to the capital.

The move never took place: on December 1, 1934, a disgruntled Communist party member shot and killed Kirov. The assassin, Leonid Nikolayev, had publicly expressed grievances against the party and was known to the police. Moreover, he had been apprehended near Kirov with a loaded revolver in his briefcase twice in the two months preceding the assassination. On both occasions he went free.

No country had stricter firearms-control laws or guarded its top officials more closely. Kirov never went anywhere without at least two bodyguards, but he was unguarded at the time he was murdered. Contrary to standard procedure there were no guards above the ground floor of party headquarters; the murder took place on the third floor. These lapses indicate that higher authority had ordered the removal of the guards; only one man outranked Kirov.

At the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, Nikita Khrushchev declared that the Kirov murder needed a full investigation, and at the Twenty-second Congress (1961) he indicated that an enquiry was under way. Khrushchev fell in 1964. Nothing more was heard of the investigation until August 1988, when a Politburo member informed *Pravda* that it had been reopened.

A great deal of evidence suggesting Stalin's complicity in the "crime of the century" is in the public domain, but the archives have not produced a "smoking gun." Contemporaries, however, had no doubts. A famous *chastushka*—humorous verse—of the day went like this:

Oh my cukes,  
And tomatoes evermore,  
Stalin nipped Kirov  
Down by the cor-ri-dor.\*

## GREAT TERROR: FIRST PHASE

Informed within minutes of Kirov's death, Stalin, accompanied by Molotov, Voroshilov, and the newest member of the inner circle, A. A. Zhdanov, immediately left for Leningrad to conduct the investigation. Before his departure he announced a decree instituting a new procedure for the "adjudication" and disposition of "political" crimes. The timing indicates that it was in place and ready before Kirov's death. It ordered the speeding-up of the investigation of persons accused of preparing or perpetrating terrorist acts and declared that the Central Executive Committee Presidium would not consider petitions to pardon individuals sentenced to death for political terrorism. Finally, the decree directed the secret police (now called the NKVD) to carry out death

sentences in cases of this type immediately after the verdict.

This decree had no constitutional validity, no standing in law. It was Stalin's personal order, and he held no government position. Nevertheless, an authority on the Great Terror has correctly called the decree a "Charter of Terror." Only later did the party and government "approve" it.

Within hours of Kirov's murder the chief of his bodyguard was beaten to death by NKVD agents. It was officially reported that the man died in a traffic accident, but in 1956 pathologists who had assisted at the autopsy indicated that he had been beaten on the head with a blunt metallic object. Khrushchev released this news at the Twenty-second Congress and also revealed that the men who had killed the chief of the guard were shot a few months later.

The interrogation of Nikolayev, the assassin, was perfunctory and according to some accounts even gentle. Stalin allegedly asked, "Why did you kill such a nice man?" Nikolayev and 13 NKVD agents who had allegedly failed to protect Kirov were tried *in camera* on December 28, convicted, and shot the next day.

Even before the execution of Nikolayev, the NKVD shot 37 "White Guards" in Leningrad, 33 in Moscow, 28 in Kiev. Mass deportations to Arctic camps and to Kolyma in the far northeast began almost as quickly. Within a few months 30,000 to 40,000 inhabitants of Leningrad went to their doom, accused only of some vague connection with Kirov's murder. The press reported that they were "Trotskyites" and "rotten liberals."

The time had come to settle old accounts. In January 1935 Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other "members" of what the NKVD styled the "Moscow Center" were tried in secret on charges of complicity in the Kirov murder. Led by former Menshevik Andrei Vyshinsky, who orchestrated the judicial persecution of Mensheviks and others in the 1920s and who as a Kerensky regime official ordered the

\*From *Nepodtsenzurnaia russkaia chastushka* (New York: Russica Publishers, 1978). Used with the permission of Russica Publishers. English translation by W.M.

Moscow police to “arrest and bring to trial the German spy Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov,” the prosecution could not prove its case. Kamenev declared on the witness stand that he had never heard of a “Moscow Center” but agreed that, insofar as it might have existed, he was responsible for it.

The press carried only a truncated version of the trial record; the mild sentences proved that the state’s case was made of whole cloth. Zinoviev received a ten-year sentence, Kamenev five years. Similar punishment befell the other defendants.

### THE OMINOUS LULL OF 1935–1936

The execution of Nikolayev and the Leningrad NKVD agents, the shooting of the “White Guards” in the three largest cities, the mass deportations, the trial of the “Moscow Center”—all this brought to an end the first phase of the Great Terror. It was not planned that way. There would have been no respite had Vyshinsky and Vasili Ulrikh, who later presided at the Kamenev-Zinoviev trial, been able to make a better case for the existence of a “Moscow Center.” Their failure necessitated reevaluation of NKVD procedures.

Some sort of rationale had to be constructed for what Stalin had in mind. It was not yet possible to deport millions of people to the slave labor camps without explanation. The wave of public revulsion over Kirov’s murder that Stalin had anticipated did not materialize. Kirov was popular, but he was not Lenin. The demand for a gigantic purge would have to be manufactured.

The foreign situation complicated matters. Initially contemptuous of Hitler and the nazis, the Soviet communists had actually welcomed their accession to power in Germany in the belief that Germany would soon turn away from such gangsters in the direction of the communists: “After Hitler, us!” the German communists

predicted. That did not happen, and German domestic and foreign policy had taken an increasingly menacing direction. This too had to be taken into account when preparing the next stage of the Terror.

Finally, the economic miracle that was the industrialization of Russia was proceeding satisfactorily under the second Five-Year Plan, and according to official propaganda it was all due to Stalin’s genius. He basked in the adulation and decided he could wait a little longer to settle accounts with enemies. Behind the scenes a special security commission was writing the next act of the drama.

### TRIAL OF THE “TROTSKYITE-ZINOVIEVITE UNITED CENTER”

The commission consisted of Stalin, Zhdanov, Vyshinsky, Nikolai Yezhov (who would become head of the NKVD in September 1936), and Matvei Shkiryatov. These men did their work neither thoroughly nor well, but the prisoners they intended to put on trial had been held incommunicado for months or even years and denied access to legal counsel. And Stalin and his men controlled the courts and the secret police.

Zinoviev, Kamenev, and 14 others went on trial in Moscow on August 19, 1936, charged with complicity in the Kirov murder, plotting to kill Stalin and other Soviet leaders, conspiring with foreign powers, and other crimes. The trial was open in the sense that some independent foreign observers were present; most spectators were NKVD employees. Denied the right to have counsel or cross-examine witnesses, the defendants were badgered and humiliated by prosecutor and judge. They could communicate only with interrogators and jailors.

The “evidence” consisted of the defendants’ pretrial depositions and their confessions in open court; hence, there were only

minor obstacles in Vyshinsky's smooth progress toward convictions. I. N. Smirnov, a former Trotskyite, did put up some semblance of a defense, denying membership in an organization that did not exist. The other defendants quickly contradicted him.

Except for the prosecution and the defendants, everyone who followed the course of events in that Moscow courtroom was shocked by the apparently uncoerced admissions of guilt. Most Soviet citizens and many gullible foreigners believed the confessions genuine. Millions more suspected that although the facts were not quite in accordance with the testimony, the defendants were probably guilty of *something* and were confessing to grave crimes in order to earn lighter sentences. A third, perhaps excessively sophisticated, view was that the confessions constituted a last service to the party.

In reality, various forms of torture obtained the desired results. Khrushchev admitted in 1956 that NKVD interrogators had deprived the defendants of sleep for days, even weeks. This treatment was invariably effective and left no visible marks; the jailers were not to blame if the prisoners refused to sleep. Other psychological torture involved threats against families; this almost always produced the desired results. Finally, the secret police had perfected its own special techniques in the field of pharmacology and used drugs to break the victims. Will suppressants came into use in 1936, when Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their codefendants jumped through Vyshinsky's hoops with robotlike obedience.

The trial ended on August 24. Guilty verdicts were returned against all defendants. Within hours, the 16 condemned men had been shot in the back of the head—an NKVD trademark—in the cellars of the Lubyanka. A ghoulis chorus of approval greeted the news of the convictions and executions; many foreign apologists for Stalin joined in.

## TRIAL OF THE "PARALLEL CENTER"

In the second of the three great "show" trials 17 "members" of a "Parallel Center" (also called Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Center) stood in the prisoners' dock in January 1937. From the state's point of view this was the least significant of the trials, designed to maintain momentum rather than to cover any new ground.

The best-known figure among the accused, Karl Radek, had published a denunciation of Zinoviev and Kamenev during their trial, and at his own he implicated many people in an attempt to save himself. After Radek came Grigory Sokolnikov, a Trotskyite who had accepted Trotsky's defeat and had gone on to serve in a number of posts. The third chief defendant was Grigory Pyatakov, director of the State Bank, who had also sided with Trotsky and been expelled from the party. He had recanted and was readmitted in 1928. Another defendant, Leonid Serebryakov, once a secretary of the Central Committee, was likewise a former Trotskyite.

The accused were charged with the usual crimes: sabotage, "wrecking," conspiracy to assassinate Soviet leaders, plotting with foreign governments, and so on. The prominent 4 had no defense counsel, but the 13 others did. It was understood that all would testify against themselves. The star witness-defendant in January 1937, Radek had been promised lenient treatment in return for his cooperation. He confessed to all charges and added new details, not one of which was true. He thus strengthened the case against himself and the other defendants, not to mention people still at liberty.

With the eager cooperation of Radek and Pyatakov, Vyshinsky claimed the existence of a "link" between Trotsky and Rudolf Hess, a high-ranking nazi. This was supposed to prove that the two men had conspired to divide the USSR among Germany, Japan, and other powers. Vyshinsky demonstrated to the satisfaction of the court that the defendants had orga-

nized acts of “wrecking” and sabotage; after all, they had confessed. He introduced into “evidence” a letter to the editor from a young female railway switch operator published in *Pravda* on January 28, the next to last day of the trial. The young woman said that at age 20 she had lost both legs averting a train wreck organized by the defendants.

At 7:15 P.M. on the evening of January 29, the judges retired to “deliberate.” They returned to the October Hall at 3:00 the next morning. Pyatakov, Serebryakov, and 11 “junior” defendants were sentenced to death. Sokolnikov, Radek, and 1 other received ten-year sentences, while the last of the small fry was given eight years. On hearing the verdict, Radek glanced at his fellow defendants, grinned foolishly, and shrugged his shoulders as if to say, “You never know!”

Radek’s feelings concerning the arrest of his daughter shortly before his trial began remain unknown. She was sent to the camps as a “ChSR,” a member of the family of a “repressed” person. Radek’s own term in an Arctic camp ended in 1939 when he died in unexplained circumstances.

## DESTRUCTION OF THE MILITARY

On June 1, 1937, the Red Army reported the suicide the previous day of one of its most distinguished officers, Yan Gamarnik, member of the party’s CC, head of the army political administration, editor of the army newspaper *Red Star*. He had been ousted on May 11, 1937, however, as first deputy commissar of defense, and *Pravda* claimed he killed himself because he had become “entangled . . . with anti-Soviet elements and evidently feared that he would be arrested.”

On June 11 the Kremlin announced that eight senior commanders had been arrested on charges of treason. The next day, the press

published the news that they had been tried, convicted, and shot.

These unprecedented actions heralded a purge of the military. The dimensions of the massacre gradually became clear with the revelation that 55 percent of the officers in the uniformed services were imprisoned during the terror and that many were killed in 1937 and 1938. The purges slacked off after that, but the killing did not end until June 1941, the month Germany invaded the USSR.

It had been one thing for Stalin to settle accounts with former rivals. It appeared that he had gone mad when he tore the heart out of the Soviet military.

The dictator believed himself threatened by the senior officers, especially Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky. The military leaders who fell in the 1937 purge had distinguished Civil War records that stood in stark contrast to Stalin’s blunders and insubordination. The commanders were popular in the Red Army, the country at large, and the party; Stalin was feared and respected but never popular. Further, some of them were brilliant military thinkers.

The official rationale for gutting the military was that the officers had conspired with the Wehrmacht to sell the Soviet Union to Germany. Documents forged in Berlin with the complicity of Stalin’s agents were passed through the culpably naive Czechoslovak government to Moscow. Stalin had them by early May 1937 and moved at once to demote and isolate Gamarnik and Tukhachevsky. The documents “proved” the existence of a plot in which Soviet commanders had conspired with Trotsky to weaken the defenses of the USSR to pave the way for a German invasion.

Stalin had been conducting secret negotiations with the Germans since the autumn of 1936. He had belatedly seen that Hitler would not fall under the weight of his own bizarre policies, and he now realized that every day that Hitler remained in power increased the



Marshal Tukhachevsky and his wife, Nina. (Tukhachevsky family archives)

risk of an armed conflict between the USSR and Germany. How could this be avoided? Stalin resolved to negotiate a peaceful agreement and to this end sent a personal envoy to Berlin in December 1936.

The military commanders objected to Stalin's plan to reach an accord with Germany on what they considered a dangerously unsound basis. Stalin was proposing a high-risk game that would see the Soviet Union (1) supply Germany with raw materials at low cost, further strengthening a nation that was rearming and becoming ominously aggressive, and (2) refrain from undertaking any defense measures that might appear to threaten Germany. Thus the USSR could not build up its western defenses sufficiently to halt or slow down a German invasion. The Red Army officers opposed Stalin's policy, which could only have disastrous consequences. The dictator saw only one foolproof way to overcome their objections: fabricate a conspiracy and execute

the "conspirators." In so doing he very nearly destroyed the country.

### TRIAL OF THE "RIGHT TROTSKYITE CENTER"

The last great show trial took place on March 2–13, 1938. The first had featured the pathetic ex-leaders Zinoviev and Kamenev; the second, the buffoon Radek. The third offered up stars of the greatest magnitude: Nikolai Bukharin, Aleksei Rykov, and Nikolai Krestinsky, all of whom had served on the Politburo with Lenin. Also in the prisoners' dock was Yagoda, the former head of the NKVD, and Christian Rakovsky, a communist of Bulgarian-Romanian origin who had served the Soviet Union as a diplomat. Eight obscure senior officials were included in the trial, as were 5 minor functionaries. Three civilian physicians rounded out the group of 21.

The trial saw Stalin and his henchmen jam together the last major pieces of their great puzzle. Bukharin and Rykov, synonymous with the former right opposition, at one time had made common cause with Trotsky and the left. They were also tainted with the brush of the Tukhachevsky-Nazi “plot” by the public testimony of Radek and others. Two of the senior officials were Uzbeks, leaders of the Uzbek republic. This was the first time non-Europeans had been tried publicly. One of the minor defendants who worked for the commissariat of agriculture was charged with “wrecking” in the food industry. The three physicians, who alone had defense counsel, had allegedly murdered several top officials as well as Maksim Gorky and his son.

When it was disclosed that Yagoda was among the defendants, people recalled Stalin’s remark about the secret police being four years behind in its work. Yagoda had been in office at the time of Kirov’s assassination and was responsible for carrying out the mass reprisals of 1935. Now he was in the dock.

One after another the accused faced the judges of the military collegium and pleaded guilty. When Krestinsky’s turn came, however, he startled everyone with “I plead not guilty.” This was not according to the text that Vyshinsky and Chief Judge Ulrikh had written with the direct assistance of Stalin. Asked about his earlier confession, Krestinsky admitted that he had made it; he was now withdrawing it. Prosecutor and judges agreed that a recess was in order.

When the proceedings resumed 20 minutes later Vyshinsky turned to one of the minor defendants and elicited testimony incriminating Krestinsky, who promptly reaffirmed his innocence. His admission that he had lied during the interrogation damaged the prosecution: “I simply considered that if I were to say what I am saying today—that . . . [my confession] was not in accordance with the facts—

my declaration would not reach the leaders of the party and the government.” Vyshinsky turned to another defendant.

On the second day of the trial, March 3, Vyshinsky altered the schedule to postpone Krestinsky’s testimony until evening. When the proceedings resumed after an afternoon break, Krestinsky was again subjected to cross-examination. Would he now, the prosecutor asked, cease to play games and tell the truth, reaffirm the confession he made during the pretrial investigation? He would, and he did. Why had he lied in court? He had “mechanically” declared his innocence, he now said, because he was so ashamed of his guilt. He had seen the error of his ways and was ready to proclaim his “treason and treachery.”

Krestinsky seemed unmarked when he returned to the October Hall on March 3, although the Westerners who observed the trial thought him listless. He had probably been warned that he had placed his family in grave jeopardy, and he may have been drugged. In any event he was now tame.

Rykov confessed to most charges against him, lulling Prosecutor Vyshinsky into a false sense of security. By accident or design, however, Lenin’s successor as head of the Sovnarkom began to confuse a number of details, throwing the prosecution off stride. Rykov denied, for example, knowing anything about “wrecking” in the livestock industry and refused to admit to specific acts of espionage or sabotage.

Bukharin faced Vyshinsky on March 5. The man whom Lenin had once called the “favorite of the whole party” was physically unmarked. Here was an actor in the great drama who did not need physical inducement to cooperate. He believed he had understood the madness.

Bukharin had lost control of *Izvestiya* in January 1937, his liberty a month later. Just before his arrest he wrote a letter asking his comrades to remember that a drop of his blood would be on the banner they would carry on the

victorious march toward communism. He said nothing about his own role in creating the martyrs who had already been sacrificed.

Before the trial Bukharin had agreed to plead guilty to all charges, but he changed his mind when he saw the script. He would not admit to having plotted to assassinate Lenin or having committed sabotage and espionage. Like Rykov he would accept general responsibility for the opposition to Stalin, opposition which his own political record seemed to justify and encourage. In effect, he agreed to say that by failing to commit himself totally and without reservation to Stalin, he had encouraged various opposition movements and lent them respectability.

Like Rykov, Bukharin sparred with the prosecution and denied any knowledge of Kirov's assassination. A confused Vyshinsky turned to Yagoda, former head of the NKVD, hoping to implicate Bukharin. That was a major blunder. Yagoda admitted that he had given "instructions" about the Kirov affair. To whom? To a high-ranking NKVD official in Leningrad. Had this anything to do with the Bukharin-Rykov "bloc"? Yagoda asked that he be permitted not to answer. This whole line of questioning had not been rehearsed; Vyshinsky dropped it, but it was too late. Yagoda had shed the first light on the Kirov murder. He had indeed given "instructions," and he could not have done so without Stalin's orders.

The prosecution tried to resurrect the charges against Bukharin of plotting to kill Lenin. Vyshinsky brought in two witnesses, members of the SR party; they proved unreliable. Not everyone could master the techniques of these farces, and noncommunists were at a greater disadvantage because they had never been subject to party discipline. The two SRs kept stumbling over the truth as they remembered it; there had indeed been a left SR plot to kill Lenin, but no one ever mentioned Bukharin's name.

The Bukharin-Rykov-Krestinsky trial involved so many alleged crimes and defendants

that Solomon himself would have been hard-pressed to sort them out. Espionage, "wrecking," treason, plots to murder officials, and other fantastic allegations were mixed in with murder charges. The three physicians were charged with the murders of Kuibyshev, Menzhinsky (head of the OGPU until his death in 1934), Gorky, and his son, all on the orders of Yagoda.

There was much more to this satanic circus that passed for a trial, but the difficulty with flinging sensational disclosures at the public is that the public is quickly numbed. The trial came to a close. Vyshinsky called for the defendants (two minor ones excepted) to be "shot like dirty dogs!" This concluded the state's case.

It was not enough, the satirists Ilf and Petrov wrote, to love Soviet power. *It had to love you.*

Stalin was in the habit of working at night; that explains why the verdicts were announced at ungodly hours. At 4:00 A.M. on March 13, 1938, the judges returned to the October Hall. All 21 defendants were found guilty on all counts. Eighteen, including Lenin's old comrades-in-arms Bukharin, Rykov, and Krestinsky, were sentenced to death. *Pravda* announced on March 15 that the death sentences had been carried out. The party of Lenin was dead.

## THE GREAT TERROR IN RETROSPECT

Wrapped in his carapace of insecurity, Stalin fashioned bits and pieces of reality into a distorted image that only he understood. In his world, accidents simply could not happen: a crop failure, a factory breakdown, a derailment, a tank gunner's miss, a typographical error, an inadvertent cough at an inopportune moment—all had hidden meanings that only he could interpret.

Incapable of surrounding himself with psychologically healthy people, he sought out individuals whose pathology enabled them to

bear his excesses, even take pleasure in them, then suffer gladly whatever fate he decreed. He arrested the relatives of his closest colleagues, whose reactions he watched carefully for signs of disloyalty. The former seminary student put his disciples to the test of Abraham: would they flinch when ordered to slit the throats of their nearest and dearest? To a man they did not. And because they stood by without protest—even applauded—while their own wives and children were seized, would they not also betray him at the first opportunity? Of course they would. He knew that, and he detested them. Sooner or later he turned on them all, and only his own mortality saved the mediocrities who flocked to his deathbed in March 1953.

Those nonentities had carried out the Terror, and with the exception of Khrushchev—whose hands were, however, as bloody as anyone’s—they continued to defend it even after February 1956. The historical record refutes the efforts of relatives, aides, and others to exonerate them: the summer 1937 annotated orders for mass executions in Armenia and Georgia signed by Mikoyan; the 1937 death lists for Ukraine bearing the signatures of Khrushchev, Molotov, and Yezhov; Kaganovich’s written advance approval of the Katyn atrocity; Voroshilov’s macabre joke concern-

ing the execution of Marshal Blücher. Archives opened in the early 1990s revealed this documentary evidence and of course much more. Stalin marched at the head of this awful parade, but his faithful henchmen kept the pace out of conviction as well as fear.

The specter of that procession will ever haunt the collective memory of the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Kazakhs, and all the other tormented peoples of what was once the Soviet Union.

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# chapter 10

## RUSSIA IN THE 1930s

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According to a quip of the time, there were three categories of citizens in the 1930s: those who had been in prison, those currently in prison, and those who would soon go to prison. It was a time of terror that struck both the workers who did their jobs and kept their doubts to themselves and the peasants who went docilely into the kolhoz. These were the people in whose name the Bolsheviks had made their revolution, the people who were building the new society. They were not immune from “repression,” but they were less insecure than other citizens if only because there were so many of them. They were exalted by the propaganda of their new masters, who also forced them to work long hours for low wages. People whispered that the initials VKP (Vsesoyuznaya Kommunisticheskaya Partiya, All-Union Communist party) really stood for Vtoroye Krepostnoye Pravo—“second serf-

dom.” No one said this aloud. It was a time, Anna Akhmatova wrote, when they would interrogate your shadow.

### FAMINE OF 1932–1933

There were no jokes about the second famine in 11 years. It struck in 1932, and weather conditions were only partly responsible. The summer harvest of 1931 had been inadequate, that of spring 1932 still worse. In the summer of 1932 the situation in parts of the country—Ukraine, North Caucasus, parts of the Volga Valley—approached catastrophe. Once again there was hunger, but prompt intervention could have prevented mass starvation. Some grain-producing areas were affected only slightly or not at all by the drought, and state reserves could have compensated for the shortfall. Stalin and the party refused to intervene. Far

from reducing the quotas for the affected areas, they *increased* them and refused to send aid to the worst-hit sections.

Failure to meet the quotas became “wrecking” and sabotage. Molotov, Kaganovich, and other high-ranking officials conducted punitive expeditions into the affected regions; scores of local party bosses and kolhoz managers were summarily executed by the OGPU. Peasants singled out by informers and local secret police agents as troublemakers were also shot.

The rationale for increasing quotas in a time of famine involved the problem of foreign exchange. The government had contracted to supply foreign purchasers with grain. Failure to deliver would mean loss of substantial hard-currency revenues, and that would slow the drive for industrialization.

Stalin and his associates made a conscious decision to let the people starve. They understood the dimensions of the problem and could forecast its duration. Had this threatened to become a disaster on the 1921 scale, Stalin would have realized he could not keep it secret. Once the news got out, foreign markets for Soviet grain would surely have softened.

The regime saw to it that no foreigners learned anything concrete until the worst of the crisis had passed. The OGPU clamped restrictions on travel into the famine-stricken areas; only citizens who had legitimate business were allowed in. There was virtually nothing in the foreign press about the catastrophe. An American correspondent who visited the Ukraine shortly after the travel restrictions were eased in October 1933 estimated the death toll from starvation at 5 to 6 million. Foreigners began to ask questions; Kalinin vigorously denied there had been a famine. The lie was repeated by all official spokesmen, but a famine there was, especially in the Ukraine, and millions died.

Stalin bet on a recovery in 1934 and won.

The first spring vegetables eased the crisis, and there was a good harvest that summer. Once again the Gensek had been proved right; his reputation for infallibility soared higher. No one dared pay tribute to the victims in the first man-made famine in recorded history.

## SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The seventeenth party conference (January–February 1932) laid down the fundamental political principle that was to guide Gosplan and other agencies as they put together the second Five-Year Plan: The planners were to administer the coup de grâce to capitalism. This meant that collectivization of agriculture was to be completed. The basic economic tasks of the plan involved the continuation of the technological revolution and the further development of industry, particularly heavy industry. The plan, which was to cover the years 1933–1937, was approved by the Seventeenth Congress early in 1934.

Building new industries and reconstructing old constituted a monumental assignment for both management and labor. By and large it was carried out successfully; by 1937, more than 80 percent of industrial production came from factories and enterprises either totally new or completely overhauled during the first two plans. Investment in capital projects of all types jumped from 50.5 billion rubles in the first plan to 137.5 billion in the second. The figures are even more impressive when we consider investment only in industry: 25 billion rubles in the first plan, 65.8 billion in the second. Refining the data still further, we note that in the second Five-Year Plan the state invested 53.4 billion rubles in heavy industry; approximately 4,500 new factories went into production. According to Soviet statistics, massive investment brought impressive results:

	1932	1937	percentage increase 1932–1937
Pig iron (millions of tons)	6.2	14.5	235
Steel (millions of tons)	5.9	17.7	300
Rolled metal (millions of tons)	4.4	13.0	295
Coal (millions of tons)	64.4	128.0	199
Hydroelectric energy (billions of kwh)	13.5	36.2	270

There was, people said, all the steel you could eat. The consumer-goods sector received short shrift in both first and second Five-Year Plans. The government insisted that the international situation dictated this order of priorities, and to a considerable extent this explanation was valid. The Soviet Union had undertaken the plans in order to industrialize; it was literally necessary to begin from scratch. Usable resources were scarce, capital limited, skilled labor short supply, technology inferior to that of the West.

To compete, the USSR had to concentrate on heavy industry. The country had to produce steel and other metals; build machine-tool, armaments, chemical, and automotive industries, and manufacture agricultural implements. There would be little left over for food-processing, textiles, or housing. Russia might go hungry, clothe her people in rags, and live in terribly crowded cities, but she would produce steel or die.

Collectivization proceeded apace and was 93 percent complete by 1937. This was called a great victory although the gross annual yields of crops were substantially lower than those obtained during the first plan and far below 1913 yields. Grain production declined, meat production remained at low levels, and it was difficult to find vegetables and fruits in the cities.

On April 1, 1937, Stalin declared the second plan fulfilled. Despite all the hardships, Russia had in most important respects fulfilled the goals and tasks laid down by the party. The country was well on its way to becoming a great industrial power.

## STAKHANOVISM

During a 5-hour, 45-minute work shift at a Donbas coal mine on the night of August 30–31, 1935, a miner named Aleksei Stakhanov allegedly mined 102 tons of coal, 14 times the standard output. Because the Soviet Union was in the middle of the second Five-Year Plan, the success of which was predicated on a dramatic increase in labor productivity, government and party seized on Stakhanov's feat as proof that the quotas were realistic.

There were widespread rumors that the record was rigged. Stakhanov used the new OM-5 pneumatic drill, he had several helpers, and party officials and the press were present to witness and record his feat. But no matter what the circumstances, Stalin used the publicity to launch a campaign to increase labor productivity. A "Stakhanovite movement" took shape overnight (one indication that there was less to the exploits than met the eye), and a conference of "Stakhanovite workers" was held in Moscow in November 1935. Addressing the participants, Stalin ordered Soviet workers to raise production levels. He accused "bureaucrats" of stifling worker initiative—a terribly ominous comment in 1935—and the planning agencies of setting industrial goals too low. Gosplan revised its quotas upward.

The party's aggressive support of Stakhanovism gave further proof that the revolution was dead. The Bolsheviks had come to power on a wave of leveling and egalitarianism; that was abandoned as competition and rewards came back into vogue. Stakhanovite

collective farmers raised more crops, locomotive engineers increased the average speed of their trains, steelworkers produced more steel, teachers taught more students better, fishermen caught more fish—at least, that was the way it appeared in the media, which exhorted the work force to emulate the super-achievers. Now there were material incentives; the press publicized the shopping sprees of the Stakhanovites, who received cash awards for their prodigious feats.

The propaganda machine claimed that these enthusiastic workers were the examples of the “new Soviet man,” that unselfish, heroic worker in the service of socialism. Soon, *Pravda* and the other newspapers declared, all Soviet workers would be like them. In actual fact many industrial zealots were beaten up and even killed by their fellow workers. A famous joke involves an awards ceremony at a kolhoz. For exemplary service a milkmaid wins a trip to Moscow. Polite applause from the assembled kolhozniks. A tractor driver gets a new suit for a series of 102-hour workweeks during the harvest. More applause. The kolhoz manager who directed these efforts receives an autographed set of Stalin’s works. Silence. Then a voice calls out, “Serves the sonofabitch right!”

There were real and bogus Stakhanovites, and there were “shock workers” who “stormed” jobs and accomplished them at superhuman speed. One of Zoshchenko’s characters demands, “Sleep quickly—somebody else needs the pillow!”

Some sham in the Stakhanovite movement notwithstanding, labor productivity increased significantly during the second plan. To be sure, the figures were juggled to show that over the four years and three months of the plan, productivity increased by 82 percent instead of the projected 63 percent. Western experts have established that the projected increase, far from being surpassed, was not even achieved and that the true annual growth rate

was probably between 8 and 10 percent. This was itself an impressive figure, one not matched in the capitalist economies of the day.

### THIRD FIVE-YEAR PLAN

In March 1939 the Eighteenth Party Congress approved the third Five-Year Plan for 1938–1942. Party propaganda claimed that the foundations of a socialist economy had been fully laid. The world would soon learn what Stalin meant when he declared, “Life has become better, comrades, life has become merrier.”

Communists lost no opportunity to contrast the situation in the Soviet Union with that in the West, where the Great Depression had seized capitalist economies in a savage grip that was to be broken only by war. The Soviet government advertised in the West for technicians, engineers, skilled and even unskilled workers. A special effort was made to reach American blacks, a few hundred of whom actually went to the Soviet Union to settle. Of their number, several score went to Abkhazia in the Caucasus to join small communities of descendants of African slaves brought to Russia in the eighteenth century. There was no unemployment in the land of communism, the advertisements declared, no bread lines. There was no plowing under of crops or slaughtering of animals to raise farm prices as in the United States. The advertisements said nothing about the famine.

The Eighteenth Congress promised that the new plan would invest more heavily in the consumer-goods sector. The achievements of the first two plans had made this possible, the party declared; the people deserved some rewards. Special attention would be paid to housing. The plan provided for construction of 35 million square meters of living space. Even if that had been achieved and doubled, the Soviet people would have remained the worst-housed of any industrialized nation. Osip

Mandelstam's wife, Nadezhda, recalled how people would commit crimes for those "wonderful, precious twelve and a half square meters of living space." That was the minimum Lenin had decreed. In Moscow in the 1930s people had less than half that.

The population of the capital almost doubled between 1926 and 1939, to 4,542,000. Overcrowded at the start of the period, by the end half of Moscow was sleeping in shifts in dormitories. Between January 1933 and January 1939 the number of inhabitants increased by 878,000. According to official statistics, 1.8 million square meters of living space were constructed in the period 1935–1940. No one has ever claimed that 1933–1934 witnessed the construction of housing on a massive scale; thus, only fractionally more than 2 square meters of living space were provided for each new inhabitant 1935–1940. What this did to existing conditions is obvious. Moscow was far and away the most favored city.

The third Five-Year Plan provided for a modest increase in funds allocated to the consumer-goods sector, but the overwhelming emphasis continued to be on heavy industry. The production of pig iron and steel once again increased dramatically as new plants were brought into production. The mining operations that produced raw ores also registered substantial gains. The chemical and automotive industries developed in a series of great leaps, but because they had started at nearly zero the country remained undersupplied in these areas.

The armaments industry took precedence over all others, but even in this vitally important sector the terror undermined achievements. Key engineers, designers, production managers, technicians, and others were frequently imprisoned and sometimes executed. A few prominent prisoners, among them the aircraft designer Andrei Tupolev, managed to continue their work in special places of confinement (*sharashkas*).

The increasingly menacing international situation diverted funds and resources from the civilian to the military sector of the economy from 1936 onward. It was surprising, all things considered, that this did not take place on a larger scale. The outbreak of war in 1941 interrupted the third plan.

## 1936 CONSTITUTION

By the middle of the 1930s the public sector had almost totally replaced the private. The number of private farms still in operation was statistically insignificant. Nonagricultural private enterprise had almost ceased to exist: one would have been hard pressed to find anyone who did not work for the state.

Because the public sector now enjoyed a near-total monopoly of production and because the "exploiting classes" had been liquidated, the rulers of the country decided to replace the existing constitution with one that would reflect the victory of socialism. A 31-member Constitutional Commission was appointed in February 1935. Stalin was a nominal director; the document the commission produced is known as the Stalin Constitution. Bukharin, already under unpublished sentence of death, wrote the section on civil rights. The commission prepared a draft and presented it to party officials in the spring of 1936. After some changes, public discussion was invited. An enormous charade was played out as more than 55 percent—according to party propaganda—of the adult population debated the project.

The Eighth (Extraordinary) Congress of Soviets unanimously approved the new constitution on December 5, 1936. In the midst of the Great Terror, Stalin announced the promulgation of the "most democratic Constitution in the world."

The bicameral legislature remained. The Supreme Soviet was divided into coequal

houses, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. The Supreme Soviet alone had legislative powers; it was elected directly, by secret ballot.

A socialist bill of rights guaranteed employment; vacations; education; and support in old age, sickness, and disability. Communist spokesmen have long maintained that these guarantees prove the superiority of their system over “bourgeois democracy.” Among the 146 articles was one (Article 133) proclaiming defense of the country the “holy obligation of every citizen.” Universal military service became the law of the land.

In 1936 there were 11 Union republics: Russian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Byelorussian, Tajik, Kazakh, Georgian, Armenian, Turkmenian, Kirghiz, Azerbaijanian. Five new ones were added in 1940–1941, reflecting Soviet conquests: Karelo-Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, and Moldavian. The new constitution guaranteed all the right to secede from the Union.

The 1936 constitution also spelled out (Article 126) the “leading role” of the Communist party. That organization was of course the sole political group permitted. Any attempt to create or advocate creation of another party was a criminal act.

On paper the Stalin Constitution was the most democratic in the world. In practice the party exercised its dictatorship over a dragooned population.

### MISSING CENSUS OF 1937

The first Soviet census was taken in 1920 as the civil war was winding down; the figures were unreliable. In 1926 a second count showed a population of 147,028,000. According to the estimates of Soviet demographers, the January 1937 census should have shown a population in excess of 180 million. In fact, it fell about 30 million short of that. No juggling of the figures could conceal this fact. No one had ques-

tioned the 1926 census, but if the 1937 figures were released everyone would know that the rumors of millions of deaths during collectivization, the famine of 1932–1933, and the Great Terror were true. Stalin could not have survived such a disclosure. Had he fallen, the party would have fallen with him.

The easiest way out of the dilemma was to suppress the census results and arrest the census directors. On September 26, 1937, *Pravda* charged that “extremely crude violations of the most elementary principles of statistical science” invalidated the January headcount. The highest officials of the Central Statistical Bureau disappeared into the Gulag.

In 1939 a new census reported a population of 170.2 million, but an increase of 18–20 million in two years was not, in the normal course of events, possible. Not even Stalin could orchestrate that kind of activity. The real count, never released, was apparently on the order of 162–165 million. The published figures had far more to do with the dictates of foreign policy and national defense than the actual number of people. The Germans and Japanese had to be shown that a mighty nation had a large, rapidly growing population.

It was by no means certain that Stalin and his men could make the world believe their statistics. It was within their power, however, to take steps to counter the low birthrate. The state had legalized abortion in 1920; no one thought of the effect on industrialization and national defense. An analysis of the 1926 census data, however, showed that trouble lay ahead, and this was before anyone had any inkling of the horrors of 1929–1938. Certain annoying but not insurmountable restrictions were imposed. Women had to fill out a more detailed and meddlesome questionnaire and pay a small fee for the abortion. The birthrate did not rise.

In May 1936 *Pravda* published the draft text of a law banning all save therapeutic abortions and called for a nationwide discussion. Letters came in criticizing women who regarded “the

issue of child-bearing as a personal matter.” There were other objections of both a political and moral nature. Many women, however, called attention to the difficulties of raising children in the pioneering days of the Five-Year Plans: Housing was almost impossible to find, there were only a few day-care centers, and the mobility of the urban population made it easy for husbands and fathers who tired of a relationship to skip town.

The party had not anticipated objections. The discussion was therefore terminated and the law promulgated on June 9, 1936. The birthrate soared in 1937 and remained high until the war. There was also a sharp increase in illegal abortions, which in turn led to a dangerous rise in the number of women suffering from chronic diseases and secondary sterility.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

In the realm of education, including special efforts to liquidate illiteracy, the communists made great progress. The aggregate literacy rate stood at 81 percent in 1939, up from 51 percent in 1926. The increase in literacy among females was particularly striking; it reflected the special attention paid to the Muslim lands and to rural Russia and Ukraine.

By the mid-1930s the teachers' colleges had produced thousands of young teachers thoroughly indoctrinated in Marxism-Leninism. In the natural and physical sciences and mathematics this generally involved no more than a perfunctory nod toward official ideology. In the humanities and social sciences, however, textbooks were rewritten to reflect party policy, teachers were closely observed, strict hiring procedures followed.

There was a shortage of teachers, which the colleges only slowly reduced. Primary and secondary education was not a glamorous field; only a small minority of graduates from the universities, which enjoyed much greater prestige than the teachers' colleges, entered

it. For example, 55 percent of Moscow University graduates in the 1934–1938 period went into industry; 10 percent, into the commissariat of agriculture and other agencies in that field; and 17 percent, into primary and secondary education. The remainder went elsewhere in the bureaucracy, higher education, and research.

The Great Terror struck the universities and institutes with terrible force. A commission to review higher education was established under A. A. Zhdanov in May 1935; it supervised a massive purge which swept thousands of people into the Gulag. Many institutes and laboratories were closed.

The year 1935 marked a turning point in scientific research in the Soviet Union. Until then the government had given far more support to genuine scientists than to impostors distinguished only for their obedience to Stalin. The Academy of Sciences, one of the most prestigious institutions in the world and the least “bolshevized” professional group in the USSR, won a 676 percent increase in its budget in the second Five-Year Plan. These funds, 63.765 million rubles, were allocated to genuine research. In 1935, however, the purgers began to apply an ideological test not only to individuals but to their disciplines as well.

The most notorious and devastating attacks of the pseudoscientists and their backers in the party came in biology, the agricultural sciences, and genetics. The attacks caused enormous damage in the first two fields and destroyed Soviet genetics. Many prominent scientists, some of world caliber, disappeared into the Gulag.

The main culprit—never forgetting, however, who captained the ship—was Trofim Lysenko, a Ukrainian crackpot with a spotty education, surpassing ignorance in the fields in which he claimed expertise, and the good fortune to be available when the party needed someone to argue for lunatic theories. Lysenko stood in the same relationship to science that Vyshinsky did to justice. He argued

that acquired characteristics are heritable. If the environment produces a change, the offspring of the species in question will reproduce that change. For example, properly controlled vernalization could turn winter wheat into spring wheat. Lysenko declared that he could turn a baser grain such as rye into wheat, a pine into a spruce.

The genetic theories of heredity worked out by Gregor Mendel, August Weismann, and T. H. Morgan were jettisoned in a return to the theories of J.-B. Lamarck, who had insisted that changes undergone by an individual—the result of its habits or its environment—could be passed on to that individual's offspring over time. Lamarckism claims, for example, that the giraffe's long neck and forelegs come from ancestors who stretched to feed on the leaves of trees.

Scientists around the world had long since abandoned this position, but Lysenko, in the service of a political movement bent on demonstrating communism's ability to control the environment and shape humankind, tried to enshrine it in the USSR in the 1930s and 1940s. He was not uniformly successful: some of his supporters went into the Gulag, and not all of his critics were silenced. His most prominent adversary, however, suffered a tragic fate: Nikolai Vavilov, director of the Genetics Institute and a world-class scientist, lost his position, then his freedom. Vavilov died in the Gulag in 1943.

## THE ARTS

At the height of the Great Terror in 1937, Dmitri Shostakovich composed his somber Fifth Symphony. The first performance took place the same year in Leningrad, the city that had suffered more than any other from Stalin's purges. Many people in the audience openly wept. A few were perhaps thinking of Kafka's words, "There is infinite hope, but not for us."

The most gifted of the twentieth-century Russian composers (excluding from consideration the émigré genius Stravinsky), Shostakovich was fortunate to be alive to compose that musical tribute—as he later acknowledged—to the victims of the Great Terror. Early in 1936, Stalin attended a performance of his new opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and did not like what he heard. On January 28 a *Pravda* editorial called "Muddle Instead of Music" attacked the opera and branded Shostakovich an "enemy of the people."

In those days people so labeled disappeared. Fortunately Shostakovich survived, even after his friend Marshal Tukhachevsky was condemned and shot. The party inquisitors hurled the charge of "bourgeois formalism" at Shostakovich and other composers and accused them of "insincerity." These terms had no meaning.

In literature, which the party called for "socialist realism" which seemed to mean that literature had to glorify socialism. It had to tell not the literal truth—people were shot for that—but Stalinist-communist truth. All heroes had to be communists or occasionally nonparty people who owed their good qualities and good fortune to "soviet power." Unacceptable behavior had to be depicted as the relic of tsarist times or evidence of the penetration of foreign ideas.

Few novels of lasting merit appeared in the USSR in the 1930s, and the situation was worse in poetry. Boris Pasternak was silent, Anna Akhmatova could not write, Marina Tsvetayeva was starving in Paris. Osip Mandelstam went to prison in 1934 for writing a poem savagely critical of Stalin.

It is necessary to stress the point that Mandelstam did not *publish* the poem; that would have occasioned as much consternation as an offer from Stalin to abdicate in Trotsky's favor. He read it at a private gathering of friends, and it quickly made its way around Moscow and Leningrad in typescript. Mandelstam was arrested, then on Bukharin's intervention re-

leased under surveillance. He and his wife spent the next few years in exile in Voronezh, forbidden to go anywhere without police permission. On May 1, 1938, they arrested him again. The man many critics consider the greatest Russian poet of the century was swallowed up by the Gulag. He died in eastern Siberia on December 27, 1938. Nadezhda Mandelstam eventually received his death certificate. So far as she knew, no other prisoner's spouse ever received such a document.

The party demanded conformity and many people loosely called writers obeyed. The most popular was Nikolai Ostrovsky, a personally decent fellow of modest talent. His *The Tempering of the Steel* (1932–1934) sold 5 million copies. Confined to bed with polyarthrititis, Ostrovsky created a hero, Pavel Korchagin, who overcomes wounds and illness to play a socially useful role in the creation of soviet society. As his native Ukrainian town fights the ravages of war, foreign invasion, civil war, and the banditry of nationalist gangs, so Korchagin triumphs over the forces that threaten to destroy him. His exploits were designed not to feather his own nest but to contribute to the betterment of society.

One of the best novels dealing with the collectivization of agriculture was Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Uplifted*, originally called *With Blood and Sweat*. Although not on an artistic par with *Quiet Flows the Don*, the new work caught the spirit of the revolution's spread to the countryside. Other popular novels about collectivization were Fyodor Panferov's *Whetstone* and Vladimir Stavsky's *Running Start*.

A novel dealing with the Five-Year Plans was Leonid Leonov's *Soviet River*, which revolves around attempts to construct lumber camps and paper mills on the banks of a pristine northern river. Struggling against the hostility and obscurantism of the local inhabitants and against the elements, idealistic young communists emerge victorious over considerable odds.

A capable writer was Valentin Katayev, whose *Time, Forward!* tried to integrate technology into fiction in the way "rural" prose sought to make the land a major element in the story line. An underequipped, badly housed, wretchedly fed labor brigade trying to build a steel plant in the Urals undertakes a crash program to set a new construction record. The race is ostensibly against a Harkov brigade, but readers did not fail to grasp the real message: Russia must catch up with potential enemies.

Few artistically commendable films appeared in the USSR between 1930 and 1957. An art form that had flourished in the 1920s found itself forced to produce works that generally amounted to little more than *Pravda* on film. One of the first films with sound was Nikolai Ekk's *Road to Life* (1931), which dealt in a technically interesting but excessively sentimental manner with the homeless waifs (*besprizorniki*) of the postwar era. The first real commercial success of the Soviet cinema was *Chapayev* (1934), a fictionalized biography of a minor Civil War hero.

Each of the three major state film companies produced one better than average propaganda film in this period. Moscow Film released *We Are from Kronstadt* in 1936, Leningrad Film did *Baltic Deputy* in 1937, and Kiev Studio produced *Shchors* in 1939. Moscow Film did the major work for the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, *Lenin in October*, which represented a quantum leap backward in comparison with Sergei Eisenstein's classic *October* (1927). Stalin was nowhere to be seen in the Eisenstein film, while in the 1937 work his role loomed larger than that of Lenin.

In no small measure because of Stalin's personal interference, the two-part *Peter the First* (1937, 1939) was merely an interesting failure. But in 1938 Eisenstein produced *Aleksandr Nevsky*, the story of the thirteenth-century Russian triumph over the invading Teutonic knights. Like *Professor Mamlock* of the same

year, it was meant as a warning to the Germans. *Newsky*, however, for which Sergei Prokofiev wrote a fine score, went beyond propaganda to win recognition as a film classic. Other first-rate films were *Volga Volga!* and *The Circus*.

The chief critic, Stalin, ordered destruction of one of the decade's more provocative films, Sergei Eisenstein's *Bezhin Meadow*. In 1932, when the drive to complete the collectivization of agriculture was at its peak, a 14-year-old boy, Pavlik Morozov, denounced his father to the authorities, accusing him of sabotaging the harvest. The father went to prison. Outraged, his friends and neighbors lynched Pavlik, about whom the party promptly commissioned a film. An honest man in the service of a tyrant, Eisenstein tried and failed to depict Pavlik as an heroic, Christ-like figure, a new-age martyr. Evidently because he realized the public would not stomach such blasphemy, Stalin decided not only to forbid release of the film but indeed to destroy all copies. Only in the summer of 1989, at the Sixteenth Moscow International Film Festival, did the public see a print partially reconstructed from fragments Eisenstein's widow had preserved. The film has little artistic merit, but it stands as a monument to the tightening grip of Stalinism.

This was not the decade of the artist, or perhaps in a perverted sense it was. We have recorded the tragic fate of Osip Mandelstam. Maksim Gorky died in 1936 undergoing "medical treatment" at party orders. Anna Akhmatova's son, Lev Gumilyov, whose father was shot as a White Guard in 1921, was arrested several times and finally sent to the Gulag. His only crime was to be the son of poets the communists detested. Akhmatova wrote the first poem in the cycle *Requiem* on her son's first arrest in 1935; these poems expressed the agony of the millions of women whose sons, husbands, and fathers disappeared into the Gulag. The writer Lidiya Chukovskaya's husband was arrested and shot, apparently be-

cause he had the same surname (Bronstein) as Trotsky. Vsevolod Meyerhold saw his theatre closed down in 1938 and his world collapse around him. He was tried in 1940, convicted, and shot as an agent of Japan. His wife was murdered by the NKVD.

## LIFE IN THE 1930S

The huge granite and marble Lenin Mausoleum on Red Square was opened to the public in 1930. The dead founder's embalmed corpse, under glass and bathed in an odd orange-blue light, would be seen by millions of people over the next half-century. It is communism's holiest shrine.

In 1931 the communists dynamited the Cathedral of Christ the Savior near the Kremlin, destroying the view from the apartment of Boris Pasternak's parents. Built a century earlier to commemorate the victory over Napoleon, it was leveled to make way for a proposed Palace of Soviets, a gigantic, 320-meter tall structure atop which a 100-meter statue of Lenin was to perch.\* Fortunately for the city's skyline the structure was never built. A swimming pool now occupies the site.

Plans materialized in 1931 for the Moscow subway. Because there was only one interest group, the party, whose views had to be taken into account, municipal officials had no difficulty in agreeing on underground transportation as the best way to move a huge population from one point to another.

Work began in 1932; one of the directors was Nikita Khrushchev. In May 1935 the initial 11.5-kilometer line opened: the Soviets trumpeted this achievement as a great victory and proof of the superiority of socialism. The 11-kilometer Berlin subway took six years to build; 20 kilometers in New York took seven

\*The Swiss-French architect Charles le Corbusier won the 1932 design competition, but the structure Stalin approved did not follow his project.



L. M. Kaganovich (second from the right) and N. S. Khrushchev (third from the right) with workers tunneling for the Moscow Subway, 1935. (ITAR-TASS)

years; and the 4-kilometer Tokyo subway took four years. The people of the capital were badly housed and fed in the 1930s, but after the subway was built they went about the city in comfort and style.

The subway was originally named after Kaganovich, one of Stalin's closest associates. Private citizens could show love for the leaders who gave them the subway and all good things in life by naming their children after them, and millions did. It became the fashion to name girls Oktyabrina (from *October*) and Stalinka, boys Vladlen and Vilen (acronyms), sometimes Vil (Lenin's initials), and sometimes Ninel (Lenin backward). This fad seemed to grow in direct proportion to the development of Stalin's dictatorship after 1924. No one knows how many male infants were named Melsor: *Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, October Revolution*. When Khrushchev demythologized Stalin this name became Melor. One colorful coinage was Parlikder, an acronym

for a communist slogan, "The party face-to-face with the countryside," and Redema stood for revolutionary youth day. In the period of the Five-Year Plans, many parents named their children Traktor, Turbina, and Renat, for *revolutsiya, nauka, trud* (revolution, science, labor). Some children were saddled with the name Five-Year-Plan-in-Four. In Armenia some parents, evidently uneducated people who misunderstood party slogans, called children by such names as Embrion (Embryo), Vinegret (Vinaigrette), and even in one case Dizenteriya (Dysentery).

This mania extended to the towns. Municipalities were renamed Stalinabad, Stalinograd, Stalingradsky, Staliniri, Stalinka, Stalino (seven of these), Stalinsk, Stalinsky, Stalin-skoye, Stalinogorsk. There were others: Zinovievsk proved to be an embarrassment and had to revert to the original Yelizavetgrad, only to be renamed Kirovgrad to demonstrate

Stalin's love for his late deputy. Kamenevsk and Yezhovsk had to go, as did the names of many other towns. Ordzhonikidze, Frunze, Kuibyshev, and other municipalities kept their new names even after Stalin engineered the murders of his former friends. All 16 cities named after Stalin, along with those called Molotov and Voroshilovgrad, would bear their names until the last, Stalingrad, became Volgograd in 1961.

An internal passport system went into effect in December 1932. Urban dwellers had to obtain a passport, an identification document valid only for domestic purposes, at the age of 16 and renew it at five-year intervals. It was mandatory for interurban travel and had to be presented on the demand of the authorities, the management of a workplace, and in certain other situations. Each time a citizen went to the militia (regular police) to obtain the five-year stamp, he or she was subject to scrutiny. Nadezhda Mandelstam renewed her passport in 1938 and lost the right to live in Moscow; the militia simply refused to validate the document for residence in the city. She waited 28 years for a new stamp for Moscow.

The largest and most important category of people exempt from passport regulations, the peasantry, could not leave the kolhozes or sovhozes without special permission. To ensure a stable agricultural labor force, that permission was rarely granted. Only in 1974 did the government consent to give peasants passports and thus the right to travel freely and change their place of residence. The issuance of new passports actually began in 1976 and was completed early in 1982.

The Romanov doubled-headed eagles did not come down from the Kremlin spires until 1937. On the twentieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, they gave way to heavy glass, illuminated red stars. The change of public symbols was accompanied by innova-

tions in private homes. Devout communists and people who hoped to stay out of trouble replaced the ancient icon corner with the Lenin or red corner. A photograph of Lenin, in the 1930s often replaced by one of Stalin, stood in place of the icons on a small table covered by a red cloth. A candle was lit near the photograph when guests were expected, or feared. A volume of the works of one or the other of the leaders also lay on the table, passages underlined to demonstrate close attention to the text. It is inconceivable that the NKVD was ever deterred by these displays of piety.

The Soviet people withdrew into themselves in the 1930s. One could not trust neighbors; they might be plotting a denunciation to the secret police in the hope of obtaining one's apartment. That happened to hundreds of thousands of people. Nor could one always trust one's children, who were taught in the schools and Young Pioneer meetings to sing songs of praise to Lenin and Stalin, and to recite every day, "Thank you, dear Stalin, for our happy childhood."

People protected themselves from listening devices and against the possibility that there was an informer in the group by offering the first toast at parties "To those who have given us such a happy life!" It was the only joke that could be told in public. The wonder is that there were any jokes at all; life was so very grim. One was assailed on all sides by fear—thick, sticky fear that never went away. The party's motto was "Persuade by propaganda, coerce by terror." What hope could there be for a regime that winked when schoolchildren chanted hate ditties?

A bad kulak, *he's* our foe,  
A good kulak?—The *same*, don'cha know!

Hope was for others. Only fear and work were left to the citizens of the USSR. Above the gates of some of the Gulag's camps were

the words "Work is honorable, glorious, valiant, and heroic." This had the same ring as the inscription over the gates of Nazi concentration camps: "*Arbeit macht frei!*" (Work liberates!). A German communist poet, Erich Mühsam, who was in one of Hitler's camps at the same time that his wife was in the Gulag, observed that Stalin was just "Hitler plus Asia."

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## chapter 11

# FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1930s

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The dream of a worldwide proletarian revolution receded as the Soviet Union proceeded along the path of constructing “socialism in one country,” the great issue on which Stalin had defeated Trotsky. The Stalinists declared “proletarian internationalism” devoid of practical significance until the socialist mother country built an invulnerable military and industrial base.

When the Great Depression struck the industrialized countries in 1929, stock markets collapsed, governments fell, factories closed, unemployment reached unprecedented levels. Predictions of capitalism’s collapse suddenly appeared frighteningly accurate. Countries which had weathered the revolutionary uprisings—aftershocks of the October Revolution—of the post-World War I period now braced for a new onslaught of demands for radical economic and social change, change that could only come after the transfer by

whatever means of power to a party offering radical alternatives.

Only in Germany did this happen. Great Britain weathered the crisis with its political institutions intact; France’s Third Republic managed to get through the 1930s in relatively good health; Italy had been fascist since 1922 and remained the poorest of the major nations. The United States undertook a series of economic and social innovations radical only when measured against the unbridled capitalism of the past.

Their predictions notwithstanding, the 1929 collapse caught the communists by surprise. Preoccupied with internal problems, the Soviet Union failed to exploit capitalism’s most severe crisis. This could not be helped, but no amount of rationalizing could conceal the fact that the most propitious moment in history for the communist cause had passed Stalin’s party by.

## SIXTH COMINTERN CONGRESS

After the 1927 fiasco in China the Kremlin was obliged to review its foreign policy, the premises of which had proved false. There would be no worldwide uprising of the proletariat. Cooperation with bourgeois parties such as the Chinese Guomindang represented an exceedingly dangerous gamble. The USSR had no reliable friends.

The fruits of the reevaluation were revealed at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in July 1928. Present were 515 delegates from 57 countries representing 50 active Communist parties and 15 unofficial Communist groups and organizations. It is difficult to estimate the number of party members and sympathizers these delegates represented; excluding the Soviet party the total cannot have been more than a few hundred thousand.

This was the first Comintern Congress since 1924 and the settling of the Soviet succession question. It came soon after the disaster in China produced by Stalin's insistence on cooperation with the Guomindang, a policy Trotsky condemned. But as Stalin had defeated Trotsky only to reverse himself and adopt a superindustrialization policy, so he now turned the Comintern sharply to the left, declaring there would be no more cooperation with bourgeois parties.

The new Comintern policy called for a "united front from below." Communists would ally with the rank and file of other leftist parties but would not cooperate with the leadership. The Kremlin insisted there was no significant difference between fascist dictatorship and bourgeois democracy. No democratic regime was worth defending, even against the threat of a fascist takeover.

In 1928 there seemed little likelihood that any major country would be threatened by fascism. Some smaller nations were headed in that direction, but no one sensed a general

threat. The Comintern virtually ignored the German National Socialist Workers' Party (nazis) of Adolf Hitler, which then held only 12 of the nearly 500 seats in the Reichstag. The main enemy of the German working class, the Comintern declared, was the German Social Democrats, the world's oldest Marxist party.

## GERMANY

From 1930 on, Soviet propaganda insisted that "the road to a Soviet Germany lay through Hitler." The Soviets were convinced that the crisis of capitalism had finally spewed forth the dregs of that system, the Nazis. Once Hitler and his thugs came to power, the universal disgust they would inspire would leave Germany no one to turn to but the communists.

This naive reading of German politics arose from the same assumption that had already produced disaster in China, namely, that every nation's history followed Russian patterns. Believing one pervert pretty much like another, Stalin saw Hitler as a kind of German Rasputin, his party as the analogue of the jaded Russian gentry. He fatally underestimated the revolutionary nature of nazism.

Stalin and his associates needed a year to come to their senses about Hitler; the process took considerably longer for many Western politicians. In the interim the Soviet leader was not as concerned about the Nazis as about the Japanese menace in the Far East, and to a lesser extent about winning diplomatic recognition from the new Roosevelt administration. These two apparently unrelated phenomena were in fact closely linked; the United States was also concerned about Japanese expansion in Asia.

The German-Polish nonaggression pact of January 1934 made reexamination of Moscow's Germany policy imperative. (The agreement also stunned France, whose eastern alliance system began to collapse.) The Soviets

themselves had signed a similar pact with Poland in 1932, but their fears were genuine.

The agreement between Germany and Poland raised the distinct possibility that the bitter dispute over the Polish Corridor, a strip through German territory giving Poland access to the Baltic, would be resolved peacefully. That, in turn, raised the specter of German-Polish cooperation against the USSR. Poland was then governed by a military junta about as anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic as Hitler's nazis. No nonaggression pact between Poland and the Soviet Union would stand in the way of a joint Warsaw-Berlin decision to settle old scores with the communists.

The Soviet Union's leaders now labeled Germany the major threat. Great Britain no longer held that position and was indeed a potential ally. The Soviets redoubled their efforts to achieve collective security.

## THE LEAGUE AND THE APPEASERS

The new Soviet state had been excluded from the League of Nations at its founding; later, when the organization offered admission in return for concessions, Moscow spurned the overture, calling the League merely another capitalist alliance, the goal of which was the overthrow of the Soviet regime. Hitler's accession to power changed both Soviet and league attitudes.

Japan withdrew from the League of Nations after being branded an aggressor for the 1931 invasion of the Chinese province of Manchuria. Hitler took Germany out of the organization in the autumn of 1933. The Soviet Union became a member in September 1934.

The League was then in the midst of an International Disarmament Conference. Initially, 63 nations participated; 9, including the Soviet Union and the United States, were not league members. When he pulled out of the international organization in 1933, Hitler also

left the Disarmament Conference, ensuring its failure.

Represented by Commissar of Foreign Affairs (since 1930) Litvinov, the Soviet Union called on the Conference and the League to persuade nations to undertake immediate and total disarmament. The other delegations rejected this proposal out of hand. Litvinov then proposed that the League at least define the term *aggression*. That proposal also failed; but in October 1935 the other delegations joined the Soviets in denouncing the Italian attack on defenseless Ethiopia. The Western nations, however, refused to impose an oil embargo against Italy and successfully emasculated other sanctions voted by the League. Italy proclaimed the annexation of Ethiopia in May 1936, and two months later the League abandoned any pretense of indignation.

An organization powerless to stop Mussolini was paralyzed when confronted with the necessity of disciplining Germany. In March 1936 Hitler took his greatest gamble in sending troops into the demilitarized Rhineland. He claimed that Germany's security was threatened by the mutual assistance treaty the USSR and France had just negotiated. The League of Nations and the world in general looked on with indifference as Hitler's soldiers trampled the Versailles settlement into the dust. Many people argued that Germany had been dealt with harshly at Versailles—no one mentioned the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk—and that she had legitimate security needs. Who could reasonably expect Germany not to post armed forces along the great river that was her main economic artery?

Alone among the leaders of major nations, Stalin regarded the reoccupation of the Rhineland as a grave threat to peace. He knew that this action was indeed Hitler's last demand geographically and psychologically centered in the West. The Nazi dictator's remaining objectives lay in central and eastern Europe, in the direction of the USSR.

The idea of striking a deal with Hitler had been germinating in the Gensek's mind for some time, and now it took definite shape. The West had not responded to calls for disarmament and collective security; Stalin would have to try something else.

Passively accepting the reoccupation of the Rhineland, Western politicians passed the point of no return on the road to appeasement. Moreover, the appeasers did not admit, to the public or to themselves, that the policy was a gamble. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and the French leaders Pierre Laval and Edouard Daladier made the mistake of banking everything on appeasement; they had no alternative to offer. If this course failed, disaster loomed.

The Soviets have always claimed that the appeasers wanted Hitler to satisfy his appetite at the expense of the USSR. Some Western observers have scoffed at this, arguing that the West was contemptuous of Soviet power in the 1930s and had no reason to work for its destruction. That presumably means that the West was no more interested in overthrowing the Soviet regime than it had been in 1918–1920.

Few conservatives—Churchill was the major exception—saw any danger even after the Rhineland episode. Hitler had coped with the Depression more successfully than anyone else; he had restored Germany's dignity and brutally suppressed the Communist party. No amount of second thoughts generated by World War II can conceal the fact that Hitler was almost as popular in the West as he was in Germany 1933–1939.

The European left detested Hitler and the Nazis, but it was disunited. The Soviet Union was partly to blame; the myopic Comintern policy toward the German Social Democrats helped pave the way for Hitler's accession to power as surely as did the considerable support—just how much is a matter of intense historical debate—the German industrialists gave the Nazi

party. When the Soviets finally recognized the dimensions of the Nazi threat, they called for an alliance of all anti-Nazi and anti-fascist parties. The union that resulted became known as the Popular Front.

## THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The Spanish Popular Front of socialists, syndicalists, republicans, and communists came to power in the February 1936 elections. This was the first Popular Front government; the French version appeared four months later. The conservative Spanish parties, the military, and the Catholic Church united against the leftist alliance in Madrid. A number of army commanders rebelled in July; their revolt quickly spread, and a Junta of National Defense was established at Burgos.

Spain quickly became the testing ground for the rival dictatorial systems. In October–November 1936 the German, Italian, and Japanese governments concluded a series of bilateral agreements known collectively as the Anti-Comintern Pact. The three “Axis” powers pledged themselves to combat communism at home and abroad; to Germany and Italy, that meant sending aid to the Spanish Falange (fascists). Hitler and Mussolini dispatched thousands of “volunteers” to fight for insurgents led by Generals Francisco Franco and Emilio Mola.

Britain and France banned the shipment of war material to Spain's democratically elected government on the grounds that they wished to limit the conflict—which had already spread as far as Berlin, Rome, and Moscow. Whitehall and the Quai d'Orsay seemed to signal preference for the fascists.

Beset with domestic problems, the Soviets would have preferred to stay out of Spain, but the actions of Germany and Italy and the prejudicial inaction of France and Britain gave them little choice. The Soviet Union did not

permit its citizens to fight in Spain, but it did send arms, ammunition, and several thousand military-political advisers.

Such key operations as counterintelligence, censorship, and communications quickly came under Soviet control. Arms and ammunition poured in by ship from Odessa; the Spanish gold reserve was sent to the USSR for safekeeping and to pay for the aid. In the beginning all this was done in good faith. In 1936 and early 1937 Soviet intervention saved Madrid. It also cost the Spanish Republic all 500 tons of its gold.

Soviet aid to the Spanish Loyalists tapered off toward the end of February 1937; Stalin evidently changed his policy chiefly because of overwhelming problems at home. It was in this period that Bukharin was arrested and the decision made to try him at an appropriate time.

All the prominent victims of the Terror and uncounted others were linked by the secret police to Trotsky and "foreign imperialism." Many Western Trotskyites fought in Spain in the volunteer brigades that came from several countries; the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was largely composed of American supporters of Trotsky. Stalin could not be sure that the virus had not infected Soviet advisers. The NKVD conducted a savage purge on Spanish soil and in the USSR after the men were recalled; thousands were shot. The Spanish Republic was powerless to halt the bloody process.

Some observers have maintained that Stalin backed away from the Loyalist cause because he saw as early as the winter of 1936–1937 that it was doomed. Whether the dictator was so prescient is open to question; dictates of the purge were probably foremost in his calculations. Nearly all the advisers who served in Spain perished at the hands of the NKVD.

Stalin backed off, Hitler and Mussolini pressed forward. Democracy and socialism disappeared from Spain for more than three decades when Franco and the Falange triumphed in the spring of 1939.

## MUNICH

In part because he had begun to construct an alliance system in the West, Stalin believed he could afford to let the Spanish Republic fall and not suffer irreparable harm. In 1936 the French parliament ratified the Franco-Soviet mutual assistance pact of May 5, 1935, encouraged because the Soviets had signed a similar one with Czechoslovakia. That pact had one special provision: Moscow would come to Prague's aid only jointly with France.

There seemed no doubt in 1936 that France would honor her commitment in Eastern Europe; the Popular Front government was solidly anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist. France might have acquiesced in the reoccupation of the Rhineland, but she would not let Czechoslovakia, a democratic island in eastern Europe, go under without a fight.

Czechoslovakia was menaced by Germany on several fronts. Publicly, Hitler spoke loudest about the need to unite all Germans into the new Reich; nearly 3 million ethnic Germans lived in the western part of Czechoslovakia. Those Germans had been included in the Czechoslovak state established in 1919 to give the country a defensible frontier along the ridge of the Sudeten Mountains (hence "Sudeten Germans"). This also had the intended effect of weakening Germany. But now Hitler was in power.

Hitler knew that because of her alliances with France and the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia would have to be handled with care. Austria was less of a problem. After years of Nazi subversion, propaganda, and violence, Germany annexed that country on March 13, 1938. In an April 10 plebiscite, 99.75 percent of the Austrian voters approved *Anschluss* (annexation).

Hitler seemed invincible, having repeatedly violated solemn treaty obligations without penalty. European politicians were mesmerized by his moves; the more recklessly he

acted, the louder the applause. In the summer of 1938 he demanded the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. There was little doubt that he would get it. The only question was, What will Stalin do?

At the time of the *Anschluss* Stalin had been preoccupied; the last great “show” trial ended on March 15, 1938. Of course, he would not have intervened in the Austrian situation anyway. Russia had been excluded from the Versailles accords that established Austria, and beyond that, Stalin believed that Hitler had a right to unite all German-speaking people.

Czechoslovakia was another matter. Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier (French premier from April 1938) actually believed that the proposed annexation of the Sudetenland would be Hitler’s “last territorial demand in Europe,” but Stalin knew better. There were many ethnic Germans in Poland or surrounded by Polish territory (e.g., in the Free City of Danzig and the Corridor); the nazis had railed about this injustice for years. Hitler was certain to turn to Poland after he settled his quarrel with Czechoslovakia. And after Poland? There were 2.3 million ethnic Germans in the USSR, descendants of colonists invited to Russia in the eighteenth century by Peter the Great and Catherine the Great.

Neither Stalin nor anyone else expected Hitler to declare war on the Soviet Union for the sake of these Volga Germans. Hitler would attack because the Reich needed room for expansion, food and raw materials, cheap labor. The Volga Germans would merely serve as a pretext.

Preoccupied with the Terror and with reorganization of party, government, military, and economic cadres, Stalin could not devote his full attention to the nazi menace. He could only hope that the Western democracies would deal more forcefully with Hitler. This did not happen. In the spring of 1938 Hitler told the Sudeten Germans to increase their demands.

Mindful of their treaty obligations but fearful of having to fight alone, the French asked the

British to extend a guarantee of aid to Prague. Neville Chamberlain declared that his government neither knew nor wanted to know anything about Czechoslovakia, and that in any event it did not have enough aircraft to intervene. Great Britain’s pro-nazi ambassador in Berlin, Neville Henderson, urged his government to pressure the Czechoslovaks into accepting Hitler’s demands. A British mediator went to Prague in August to convey that message to Prime Minister Eduard Beneš. Beneš continued to hope for support from Paris and Moscow but received only expressions of concern.

The French government did call up about a million reservists in September 1938 in response to large-scale German maneuvers west of the Rhine, and the British admiralty prepared a massive display of naval power. Stalin bided his time, faced with the necessity of rebuilding the officer corps he had decimated.

Under orders from Berlin the Sudeten Germans broke off negotiations with Beneš early in September. In a speech at Nürnberg on September 12 Hitler demanded that those Germans be given the right of self-determination. Immediately after he spoke nazi-orchestrated street violence erupted all over Czechoslovakia. The moment of decision was at hand.

The risk of a general war in Europe was greater than it had been since 1918. Hitler had made it clear that he would fight if his demands were not met. Beneš’s government, knowing that Czechoslovakia’s strong western defense line could hold the Germans long enough to give France and the USSR time to enter the conflict, was not inclined to cooperate in the liquidation of the country. The Czechoslovaks found it hard to believe that if the survival of their state were in question, the French and British would still insist on appeasing Hitler. And if France and Britain stood up to the nazi dictator, the USSR was treaty-bound to follow suit.

On September 29 Chamberlain and Daladier flew to Munich to meet with Hitler and his foreign minister, Joachim "von" Ribbentrop. Mussolini was also present. Czechoslovakia was not represented. The politicians met at Munich to hear Hitler pronounce sentence; the Reichskanzler was both judge and jury. He knew that the British and French would not fight, and he was aware that French refusal to honor treaty commitments allowed the USSR to stay out of the whole affair. The agreement was signed shortly after midnight. Germany's demands were satisfied in full, and Poland and Hungary were to receive most of the Czech territory they coveted. Rump Czechoslovakia's frontiers would be indefensible.

Back in London, Chamberlain informed the world that the Munich agreement spelled "peace in our time." Let Czechoslovakia go under, he said; the rest of us will remain at peace. By an overwhelming margin the British public agreed with him. The voters in the London suburb of Woodford very nearly recalled their MP, Winston Churchill, for opposing the agreement. Public opinion in France was no less enthusiastic about the appeasers.

Stalin was less impressed. To him, "Munich" (the word became a synonym for appeasement) meant that the Western democracies were relentlessly pursuing their policy of giving Hitler *carte blanche* where the Soviet Union was concerned. Contemptuous of Western weakness, Stalin pointed to the USSR's own willingness to come to the aid of a small country in danger. He implied that he would have sent troops to Czechoslovakia despite France's refusal to honor her own treaty obligations had it not been for the refusal of the Polish and Romanian governments to permit the passage of Soviet troops across their countries.

Historians who insist that Stalin was not sincere, that this was mere grandstanding, miss the point. The West, no less than Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Romania, denied the

USSR even the possibility of defending Czechoslovakia. Stalin knew that in the short run at least, the Soviet Union had more to lose from Nazi aggression than any Western nation. It seems clear that had France honored her obligations to Czechoslovakia and had Stalin obtained permission for his troops to cross Romania or Poland, he would have sent them. But the French defaulted, Britain rejoiced that the Nazi tiger would prowl the streets of Prague rather than those of London, and the myopic Polish and Romanian governments believed that Hitler could provide them with some insurance against the detested Soviets. Stalin would not forget this.

## JAPAN

Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s largely concentrated on developments in Europe. Given the fact that most of the population and industry were located in the Cisuralian part of the state territory, this was inevitable. By far the larger part of the territory itself, however, was in Asia, not Europe. And in Asia, the Soviets faced an aggressive, militaristic Japan.

Along with the Western powers, Russia, and the United States, Japan had won wide concessions in China at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth and had annexed Korea in 1910. The Japanese intervened with large forces in the Soviet Maritime Provinces after the Bolshevik Revolution; they evacuated Vladivostok only late in October 1922 under American pressure. Japan extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union in January 1925; ten weeks later, the last Japanese forces on Soviet soil left the northern half of Sakhalin Island.

The apparently peaceful resolution of the conflict between Tokyo and Moscow could not mask Japanese determination to carve out an empire on the Asian mainland. Manchuria, rich in minerals and with the largest concen-

tration of industry in China, was the first objective; any move against the province would lead to conflict with the USSR.

The tsarist government had built the Chinese Eastern Railway across Manchuria in the period 1897–1903; it gave the Russians direct access to the port of Vladivostok and saved greatly in time and distance. After the Intervention the European powers and the United States attempted to force Moscow and Beijing to internationalize the railway. The Soviets and Chinese successfully resisted this pressure and agreed to operate the line jointly. The Beijing government that signed the agreement, however, was only nominally in control of Manchuria, where a constantly shifting coalition of warlords actually held power.

In October 1929 the warlords attacked the Chinese Eastern Railway in force, hoping to seize control of the line from the Russians. They had about 300,000 troops augmented by a White Guard force of Russian émigrés estimated at 70,000 men.

In anticipation of trouble the Soviets had created a Special Far Eastern Army in August 1929 under General Blücher, who had helped Jiang Jieshi build the Chinese army. Blücher had only about 100,000 men to send into Manchuria, but he was far better equipped than the warlords. Moreover, his trained and disciplined soldiers faced not a regular army but a rabble that excelled chiefly at plunder and rapine. Soviet forces routed the Manchurian–White Guard force by November 20 and reestablished security along the more than 1,000 kilometers of the railway.

What the warlords could not accomplish, the Japanese could. Japan attacked Manchuria in September 1931, and by the following February her forces were in control of the huge province. The Japanese proclaimed the independence of Manchuria and renamed it Manchukuo.

The Japanese at first permitted the Soviet Union, theoretically still in partnership with

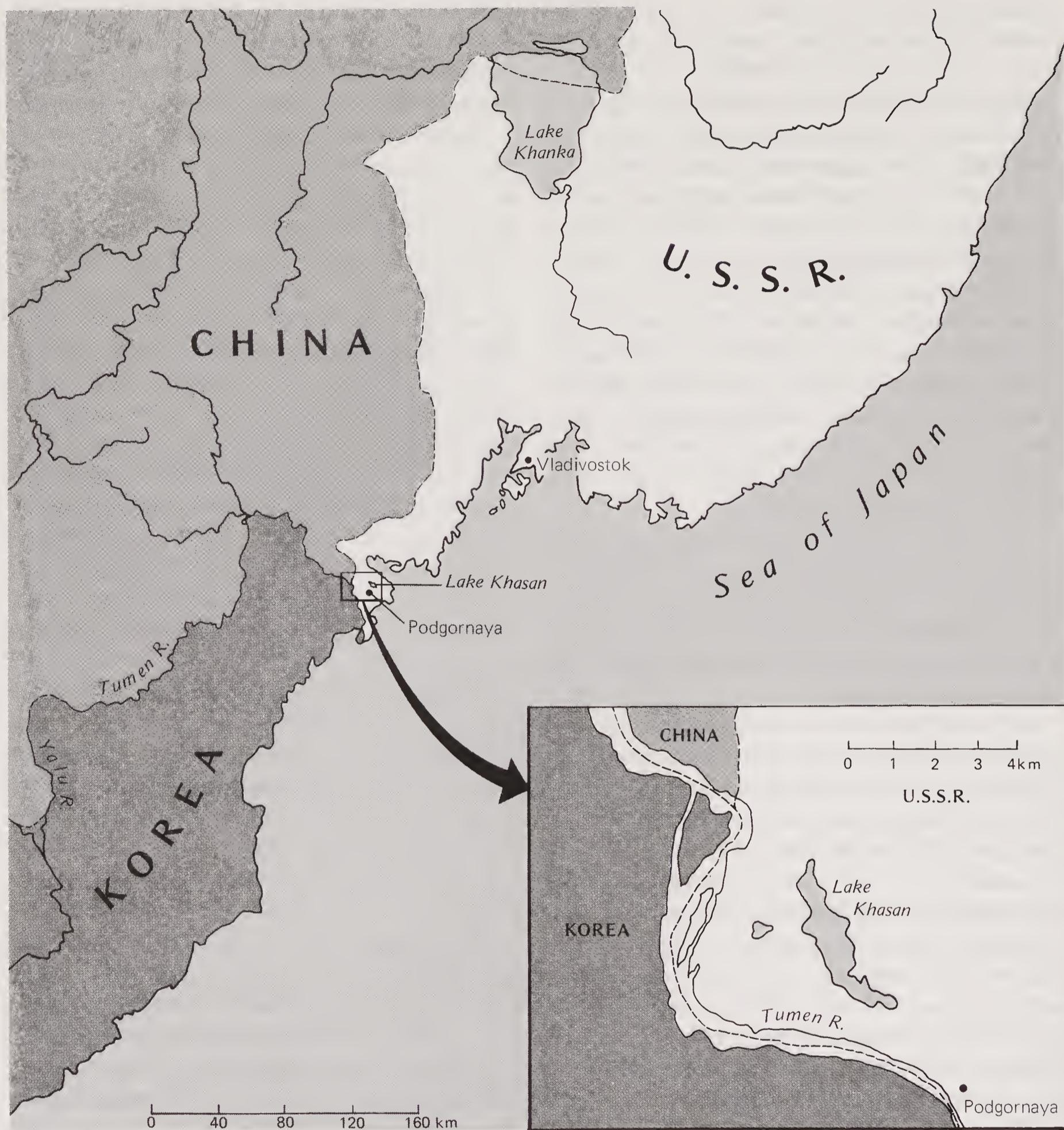
China, to continue to operate the Chinese Eastern Railway. Negotiations for the transfer of the line began in May 1933; in March 1935 the Soviet government sold its interest to Japan.

Three serious Soviet-Japanese clashes occurred toward the end of the decade. The first two took place in July–August 1938 at Lake Khasan and at Changkufeng Hill in the Soviet Maritime Provinces south of Vladivostok, at the point where the frontiers of Manchuria, Korea, and the USSR meet on the Tumen River. Apparently testing Soviet frontier defenses, the Japanese attacked with a small force toward the end of July. The Special Far Eastern Army under Blücher, now a marshal of the Soviet Union, repulsed the attacks; the fighting ended on August 11. Blücher was arrested by the NKVD three months later, charged with being an “agent of Japanese imperialism,” and shot on November 9, 1938. This did not strengthen the Soviet defense posture.

The third major conflict took place in Mongolia: Japanese forces stormed across the Khalkha River on May 28, 1939, again to test Soviet reactions. Mongolia had been virtually a Soviet protectorate since the mid-1920s, and Soviet troops were stationed in the country under the terms of a 1936 mutual defense treaty.

The Japanese drove deep into Mongolia without encountering much resistance. Had their supply lines not been overextended, they might well have reached the capital of Ulan-Bator. Late in July the Soviets placed Georgi Zhukov, then a corps commander, in charge of the two Red Army groups rushed to Mongolia. At Zhukov’s disposal were 35 rifle battalions, 500 tanks, about 500 aircraft, 350 armored cars, and heavy artillery. Almost the entire Mongolian army was thrown into the battle against the Japanese, but it was small, badly equipped, and untrained for modern warfare.

The Japanese attack centered on the tiny settlement of Nomon-Khan-Burd-Obo on the

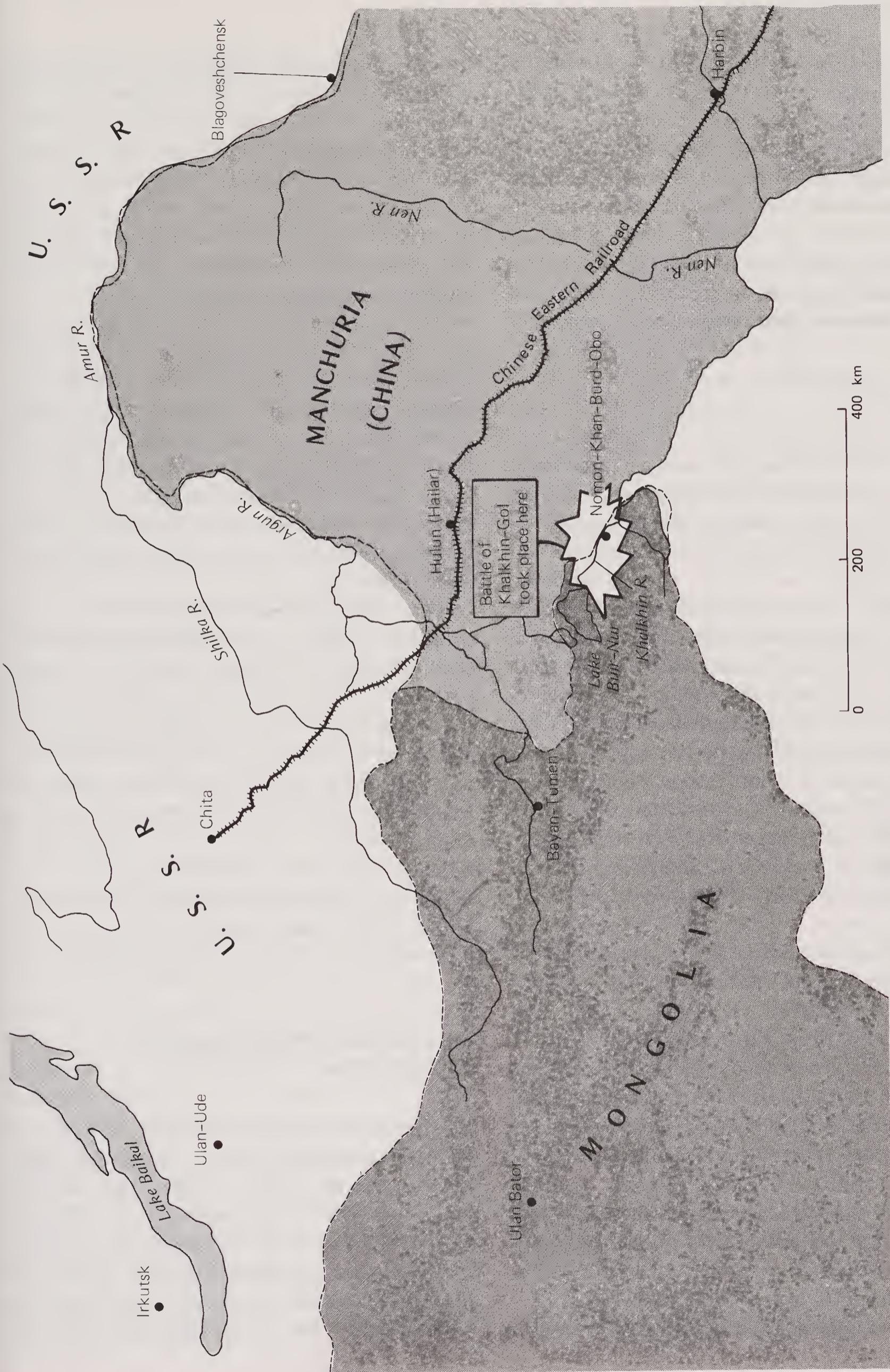


Lake Khasan.

Khalkhin Gol (Khalkha River), which marked the Mongolian-Manchurian frontier in the area. It involved substantial forces. The Japanese struck along a 70-kilometer front with 182 tanks, 500 heavy artillery guns, 300 to 350 airplanes, and about 12 infantry divisions. This

was, as an American specialist has written, “one of the major undeclared wars of recent times.”

The battle of Khalkhin Gol lasted from August 20 to August 31, 1939. Zhukov’s forces routed the Japanese, driving them back across the Khalkha into Manchuria. The invaders



Khalkhin Gol.

suffered enormous casualties. According to Soviet figures, 25,000 Japanese and Manchurian (i.e., Chinese) troops were killed in action in 1939, and another 27,000 to 30,000 were wounded. The Soviet-Mongolian casualty rate was only one-fifth that of the enemy.

An armistice was signed in Moscow on September 16, 1939. In June 1940, a joint Soviet-Mongolian-Japanese commission fixed the frontier between Manchuria and Mongolia.

## CHINA

After the 1927 Shanghai massacre the small Chinese Communist party split into two camps. One was oriented toward Moscow; the other advocated a uniquely Chinese approach to revolution. The former was led by Wang Ming and Po Ku, members of "Stalin's China Section," a group of 28 communists loyal to the Soviet General Secretary. In 1930 these two men and several associates secretly returned to the safety of the International Settlement in Shanghai, where Jiang Jieshi's men could not touch them. Under Comintern orders, they worked to prepare an uprising of the urban proletariat. Such a strategy was sheer folly in peasant China, but Stalin insisted that the Chinese revolution follow the Russian pattern.

A Soviet Republic of Ruijin was established in Jiangxi province in 1931. The first Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies took place there on November 7, a self-conscious attempt to emulate the Russians. Mao Zedong and other "peasantists" among the communist leadership, however, insisted that the Chinese revolution would be decided in the countryside. In the bitter quarrels within the party, Mao began to prevail over Wang Ming and others later described as "left adventurists," advocates of urban insurrection—the Stalin line.

The Jiang Jieshi regime undertook a series of

"encirclement and suppression" campaigns against the communists in Jiangxi. The fifth campaign in 1933–1934 succeeded in dislodging the Soviet Republic at Ruijin. The communists began the famous Long March to the northwest, which covered 10,000 kilometers and lasted 368 days. The marchers crossed 18 mountain ranges and 24 rivers in 12 provinces before reaching sanctuary in Shaanxi.

The experience of the Soviet Republic and the Long March convinced the Chinese communists that agrarian revolution was the correct line. An enlarged conference of the party Politburo in January 1935 recognized Mao's leadership. The eclipse of the Stalinists ensured that the Chinese revolution would come from the countryside and not from the cities; China would follow its own path without reference to Moscow.

The "years of confrontation" between communists and the Guomindang that began with the 1927 Shanghai Massacre came to a temporary halt in 1937, when the two parties shifted their attention to the struggle against the Japanese. Imperial Japan had suspended military operations after the 1931–1932 conquest of Manchuria, but in 1937 the drive to conquer all China resumed. The Chinese Communist Army undertook a protracted guerrilla campaign in north China, which saw the emergence of the communists as the most likely heirs to postwar political power in Beijing.

## PRELUDE TO THE DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION

The Japanese did not break off their August 1939 incursion into Soviet-supported Mongolia because of the heavy losses they suffered. Japan would normally have been willing to fight to the last citizen of puppet Manchukuo, and Japanese commanders had never displayed excessive concern over casualties among their own troops. Japan terminated

the Mongolian conflict because of startling news that came from Moscow on August 24, 1939.

The Munich agreement safely tucked away, Hitler declared that he was satisfied. The Nazi dictator and the Western appeasers who fed his appetite had apparently preserved the peace over the corpse of Czechoslovakia. There was a great deal of goodwill and cooperation; Great Britain entered into negotiations aimed at granting a huge loan to Hitler.

Only two clouds dimmed the horizon. Mussolini decided that he too needed some territory in Europe, his Ethiopian conquest having proved less of an economic and theatrical success than he had hoped. The question of where he would strike obscured the diplomatic landscape. That artificially peaceful landscape was also marred by the pen and tongue of Winston Churchill. Then merely a member of parliament, Churchill had good press contacts and a gift for making people wonder whether the appeasers had been quite so clever after all. He had earlier expressed admiration for Hitler's economic performance, but after the 1936 Rhineland episode he had consistently warned that the dictator was not to be trusted.

In March 1939 Hitler suddenly marched into and occupied what was left of Czechoslovakia. Thus, less than six months after Munich he flagrantly broke his pledge to refrain from further expansion, and he showed that the German drive to acquire new territories would not be limited to lands inhabited by Germans. A few Westerners began to take Churchill's warnings seriously.

Later the same month the Spanish Civil War came to an end. It had cost approximately a million lives, a toll to which Nazi, fascist, and communist intervention had contributed mightily. Francisco Franco and his Falange movement emerged victorious. A delighted Hitler offered his warmest congratulations, and Spain joined the Anti-Comintern alliance.

Mussolini annexed Albania on Good Friday, April 7, 1939. Albania had been an Italian satellite for some time, the move did not have much practical significance. In a world where internationally sanctioned violence bred still more violence, however, the action added fuel to the flames.

As Hitler made final preparations to invade the rump Czechoslovak state, the Eighteenth Congress of the Soviet Communist party met in Moscow March 10–21. Stalin and Voroshilov asked the more than 2,000 delegates to believe that the massive purge of the military had strengthened the Soviet Union; the delegates roared agreement. The two leaders declared to thunderous applause that the judicial murder of Tukhachevsky, Blücher, Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, Putna, and others had been good for morale.

Given the way the Gensek and his men thought and operated, these comments were fairly predictable. Both Soviet and foreign observers were startled, however, by Stalin's jeers and taunts in a March 10 speech warning that the Soviet Union would not be drawn into a conflict with Germany in order to "pull Western chestnuts out of the fire." These comments were directed at politicians like Churchill who had begun to hint that perhaps a pact with Stalin was the best way to stop Hitler and Mussolini.

At the time Stalin spoke there seemed no danger that those who were rather tentatively advocating alliance with the Soviet Union would be in a position to make policy. Neville Chamberlain, still firmly ensconced at No. 10 Downing Street, had often declared that he would resign before seeking an alliance with the Soviets.

Hitler sent his troops into Bohemia and Moravia on March 15, 1939. Native fascists friendly to Germany took control of Slovakia. A week later, Hitler brazenly took the Baltic port of Klaipeda (Memel) from Lithuania.

On March 31, 1939, Chamberlain told a hushed House of Commons that the British

government was extending a unilateral guarantee of aid to Poland. Should that country be attacked by Germany, Britain would go to its aid. A similar guarantee went to Romania. After assisting in the liquidation of democratic Czechoslovakia, Britain suddenly found it expedient to make sweeping commitments to the reactionary military junta in Poland and to monarchic Romania.

All this was of immense potential importance to the Soviet Union. If Germany were to attack Poland, Great Britain would go to war against Germany. The British commitment thus constituted an assurance to the Soviets that if Germany attacked Poland *and* the USSR she would face the nightmare Bismarck had warned against: a two-front war.

Although the convoluted diplomatic ramifications of Chamberlain's March 31 declaration were immediately apparent, Stalin remained suspicious. What about the January 1934 German-Polish nonaggression pact? Was it not entirely possible, in view of the cozy relationship between the Polish junta and the Nazis, that the Poles might permit German forces to cross their territory to attack the Soviet Union? Stalin knew that German-Polish amicability was rapidly cooling, but hatred of the USSR had a way of reconciling differences between Central European nations.

On April 28, 1939, Hitler unilaterally abrogated the German-Polish nonaggression treaty. Moreover, announcing the decision, he departed from custom and did not refer to the Bolshevik menace.

Chamberlain had asked Stalin to extend his own unilateral guarantee to Poland. The Soviets, however, demanded a two-way pact; if they were attacked by Germany they wanted Poland to come in on their side. The Poles and later the Romanians rejected this proposal. Warsaw and Bucarest would welcome a Soviet declaration of war on Germany should that country attack either of them, but that was as far as they would go. Later in 1939,

when the Soviet government asked whether Warsaw would permit the Red Army to cross Polish territory to fight Germany, the answer was again negative. The Poles refused to make any commitment and would promise only to examine the question of troop passage *after war came*. The Soviets broke off negotiations.

The chief of the German High Command issued a secret order on April 3, 1939, calling for an attack on Poland to begin September 1. The British guarantee to Poland *preceded* this order by three days. Any doubt the Germans had as to whether their attack on Poland would lead to war with Britain arose from a faulty reading of information available to them. Some Western historians have charged the USSR with precipitating the Second World War by signing a nonaggression pact with Germany, but war was certain no matter what the Soviets did or did not do.

## NAZI-SOVIET PACT

The ouster of Litvinov as commissar of foreign affairs on May 3, 1939, constituted Stalin's most unsubtle signal that he was ready to deal with Hitler. A talented diplomat who had served with distinction for nearly two decades, Litvinov fell because he was Jewish. Short of publicly beheading the man in Red Square, Stalin could not have sent a clearer message to the Führer, who understood and applauded. Molotov, chairman of the Sovnarkom and a Russian, took over foreign affairs.

Other signals flashed back and forth between Berlin and Moscow. Hitler was anxious to sabotage the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations; he did not know that Chamberlain was already doing a splendid job. He had plans that could be compromised by an alliance among those three states, and he had to assume—as Chamberlain refused to do—that Stalin was negotiating with the French and British in good faith. Hitler, however, detested the com-

munists and resisted the temptation to deal with them, confident that he could bring about his next great *coup*, the conquest of Poland, without reference to Moscow. But the persistence of Soviet signals and the machinations of Foreign Minister Ribbentrop brought him around to accepting the idea of an agreement with Stalin.

August 1939 was a tense month in an anxious year. The Soviet Union and Japan were fighting a major battle in Mongolia. Already in control of vast areas of China, the Japanese were extending their domination south and west. Great Britain and France were frantically rebuilding their arsenals.

The Soviets had asked for transit rights across Poland; no one could blame the Poles for not wanting the Red Army on their territory. But the colonels who governed Poland were guilty of criminally irresponsible judgment in believing that they could hold out against a German attack long enough for the British to enter the conflict and tip the balance in their favor. They should have known what the rest of the world knew: Britain had nothing with which to enter. The Poles kept the Red Army out, ensuring that the Wehrmacht and the SS would come in. The regime's hatred of the communists blinded it to the nazi threat.

On April 17, 1939, Soviet diplomats proposed a tripartite treaty among the USSR, Great Britain, and France. The contracting parties would provide aid, including military assistance, to any of their number attacked by Germany. Two months later the Soviets proposed to extend this agreement to Belgium, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Romania, and Turkey.

After pondering this initiative for some time, Neville Chamberlain dispatched a low-ranking mission on a slow boat to Leningrad. These junior diplomats and officers were at sea for nearly three weeks. When they finally arrived in the USSR, they lined up with a nervous group of Red Army colonels for some

photographs. One can read the apprehension in the faces of the Soviet officers: what better evidence of collaboration with foreign agents?

The British officials, none of whom knew exactly what he was doing in the Soviet Union, did not receive a cordial welcome. It was too late: Another delegation had come to town.

August 20 saw three crucial developments. The battle at Khalkhin-Gol got under way. The Soviet Union and Germany announced a trade and credit agreement. The nazi leader of Danzig declared that the city's hour of deliverance from the Polish oppressor was at hand.

Rumors that Germany and the USSR were about to conclude a nonaggression treaty spread around the world the next day. Someone in the German government leaked the news that Berlin had accepted in principle a Soviet draft of an agreement. Ribbentrop would fly to Moscow for important talks. Ribbentrop and his aides met with Stalin and Molotov for three hours late in the afternoon of August 23 and negotiated a compromise. They took a recess around 7:00 P.M. and returned to the German embassy. Before returning to the Kremlin, Ribbentrop cabled Hitler for final instructions.

At dinner on the night of August 23–24, 1939, the pact was sealed. Ribbentrop declared that the Anti-Comintern Pact was directed not at the Soviet Union but at the Western democracies (sic). Stalin agreed that this was so and noted that it had frightened The City (London's Wall Street) more than anyone else. Ribbentrop told his hosts a current Berlin joke: "Stalin will yet *join* the Anti-Comintern Pact!" Stalin responded with a toast: "I know how much the German nation loves its Führer. I should therefore like to drink his health." Molotov complimented the German guests on their keen understanding of Stalin's March 10 "no chestnuts" speech.

The terms of the pact were published on August 24. The six-article Treaty of Non-Aggression was to remain in effect for ten

years. The two High Contracting Parties would not attack each other nor “participate in any grouping of powers whatsoever that is directly or indirectly aimed at the other party.” Should either state be attacked by a third, the other would “in no manner lend its support to this third power.”

The astonishment with which this news was greeted around the world would have been even greater had the Secret Additional Protocol leaked out: Germany and the USSR had agreed to divide up eastern Europe. The Soviets would take Estonia, Latvia, and Bessarabia; the pact was subsequently altered to permit them to seize Lithuania as well. The two parties would divide Poland along the line described by the rivers Narew, Vistula, and San. Whether there would be any Polish state at all after this new partition was left for later discussion.

Thus did Hitler and Stalin contrive to partition Poland and eastern Europe. Hitler could now carry out his own solution to the Polish question, certain Russia would not interfere because Stalin was going to take a huge chunk of Polish territory for himself. The Soviets could strengthen their position on the Baltic, push the Finnish frontier back from Leningrad, and take Bessarabia from Romania. Nor was this all. Stalin’s “no chestnuts” speech and the history of the relations between the USSR and the Western democracies in 1938–1939 made it clear that the Soviet dictator would raise no objections to whatever Hitler did in Western Europe. Hitler could rest assured that his eastern flank was not threatened.

Bent as they were on giving Hitler everything he wanted, the Western appeasers had arrogantly excluded the USSR from their calculations. The cry of anguish that rose from London and Paris on August 24, 1939, rang false.

Western politicians faced a cruel dilemma, a choice between evil and evil. They regarded

Stalin as likely to reduce the world to barbarism. Hitler, on the other hand, was—whether one liked it or not—a son of the Western world. He believed in capitalism and at least tolerated Christianity, hated “non-Aryans,” and pledged to wipe “Jewish Bolshevism” off the face of the earth.

At Munich in 1938, the West chose Hitler, and revisionist historians’ attacks on Stalin’s alleged “insincerity” in pursuit of collective security come to grief on that indisputable fact. The Western powers ignored the overtures of the Soviet dictator, who desperately sought to shore up his own country’s security, and with little subtlety they suggested Hitler look east for future conquests.

Stalin himself ordered the mass murder of the Soviet officer corps, and he alone bears responsibility for the resulting catastrophic state of Soviet defenses. In a frantic attempt to buy time, he entered into the surpassingly cynical agreement of August 23, 1939, propelled not only by his own monstrous crimes but also by the actions of the Western appeasers.

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## chapter 12

# THE GREAT FATHERLAND WAR

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Twenty-one years after Imperial Germany forced the infant Soviet state to accept the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Stalin and Molotov received Foreign Minister Ribbentrop in the Kremlin. So far as the world knew, it was a meeting of equals; in fact the Soviets were desperate supplicants.

The most urgent problem facing the USSR in the late summer of 1939 was the weak state of its defenses. The third Five-Year Plan (1938–1942) took that into account by doubling defense spending. Factories, smelters, refineries, mills, and shops in European Russia were obviously vulnerable to attack from the West; the new plan provided for the relocation of a substantial portion of the industrial plant to the Ural Mountains and Siberia. Strengthening the western military defense system, however, had a relatively low priority, for Stalin did not wish to offend Germany.

### THE WAR BEGINS

German troops crossed into Poland all along the frontier at dawn on September 1, 1939: the European phase of World War II had begun. Poland fell in less than a month, and Germany and the USSR partitioned the country. Moving quickly to implement the Secret Additional Protocol to the Non-Aggression Pact, the Kremlin made puppet states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Finland, the next objective, would side with Germany in any Soviet-German conflict; and in 1939 the Finnish frontier was only 32 kilometers from Leningrad. The Soviet government asked Helsinki to exchange some territory on the Karelian Isthmus for a much larger territory in the north; this would have pushed the frontier 20–30 kilometers farther away from Leningrad. The Finnish government refused even to consider this, and the talks col-



Molotov signing documents incorporating Finnish territory into the USSR, December 1939. Standing from left: Zhdanov, Voroshilov, Stalin, Otto Kuusinen. (National Archives)

lapsed. On November 30, 1939, 15 divisions of the Red Army attacked Finnish positions along the 1,500-kilometer frontier.

The Finns resisted valiantly. Overwhelming Red Army numerical superiority, however, wore down the defenders. A peace treaty was signed on March 12, 1940. Finland lost more territory than it would have had it accepted Moscow's October proposals.

Then came Romania's turn. On June 26, 1940, Molotov summoned that country's ambassador and presented an ultimatum: Bucharest would cede the province of Bessarabia and the northern part of the Bukovina. An answer would be expected the following day. Because the British could not possibly honor their commitment to come to their aid, the Romanians capitulated. Molotov said on Au-

gust 1 that Bessarabia and the Bukovina had "obtained the opportunity" to become part of the Soviet Union, and he declared, "We now know with what tremendous joy the population . . . joined the ranks of Soviet citizens."

The government moved to increase production and tighten labor discipline. Factories operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; the Red Army frantically trained officers and enlisted men; fear hung in the air. Stalin, hoping for a miracle, continued to send raw materials and food to Germany and refused to strengthen the western defense line.

Japan appeared to be removed as an immediate threat by the Neutrality Pact, which Foreign Ministers Matsuoka and Molotov signed in Moscow on April 13, 1941. Tokyo was pressing ahead with the conquest of China and

Southeast Asia in order to construct a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The USSR presented no obstacle to those plans. Imperial Japanese forces kept the Soviets off balance, however, by repeatedly mounting raids and feints (more than 100 in 1942 alone) into Soviet territory, and Stalin was forced to keep sizable military units in the Far East. Between June 1941 and the end of 1944 the Japanese navy sank or detained more than 170 Soviet merchant vessels.

In February 1941 British intelligence learned that the Germans would invade the USSR in the spring. The Americans obtained the same information; both Washington and London passed it along to Moscow. Stalin's chief spy in Japan, Richard Sorge, pried the details of the invasion plans out of the German ambassador and relayed them to Moscow in March and April. From the middle of March, ominous troop movements occurred in German-occupied Poland and in the Nazi satellite states of Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Between April 10 and June 21 German reconnaissance aircraft violated Soviet airspace along the German-Soviet frontier at least 180 times, often to a depth of 150 kilometers.

On May 6, 1941, Stalin replaced Molotov—who remained commissar of foreign affairs—as chairman of the Sovnarkom. This was the first time in many years that he had held a government post.

A communiqué issued by the Soviet news agency on June 14 sought to calm fears. TASS denounced rumors of an impending German attack on the USSR and stated that the Germans were adhering to the pact between the two countries. Certain German troop movements in the vicinity of the Soviet frontier were, “one must suppose, prompted by motives which have no bearing on Soviet-German relations.” The Soviet Union itself was not preparing for

war, the statement concluded, and Red Army training maneuvers then under way reflected no hostility toward Germany. Stalin personally edited this statement.

At 5:30 A.M. on June 22, 1941, the German ambassador, having requested an urgent meeting with Molotov, came to the commissariat of foreign affairs and read a statement from Hitler accusing the Soviet Union of gross and repeated violations of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. It was a declaration of war, and it was late. The war was already 90 minutes old.

### **JUNE 22, 1941**

At 0400 hours Moscow time on June 22, 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. The two largest and most powerful armies ever assembled confronted each other along a 3,000-kilometer line from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. Hitler threw 183 divisions into the assault. Facing them were 170 divisions, 54 percent of the Red Army's total strength. The outnumbered Soviet forces had quantitative superiority in tanks and aircraft, but much of their equipment was inferior to that of the Germans. The tanks were old and insufficiently armored; only 27 percent were in working order. Many tank crews had only 90 to 120 minutes of actual experience inside the vehicles. The Soviet Union's military aircraft were outmoded, pilots sometimes had as few as four hours training in the air (the Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force required 135 to 150 hours), and maintenance was badly organized. Airfields near the German frontier lay virtually unprotected. Within three days the Germans had control of the skies, having obliterated three-fourths of the Soviet Air Force on the ground.

When officers radioed that they were under attack, their superiors accused them of halluci-

### European and Mediterranean Theaters, in World War II, 1939-1945



European Theatre of World War II.

nating and demanded to know why they had not transmitted in code. Stalin's wishful thinking extended all the way down the chain of command. It was, however, quickly established that an invasion was indeed taking place. At 6:00 A.M., Radio Moscow's chief announcer, Yuri Levitan, read the brief official announcement of the outbreak of hostilities.

The Soviet people were startled to hear not Stalin but Molotov broadcast a more detailed statement at noon. Stalin was not publicly heard from for 11 days: he had lost his nerve. No one knew better than he the price now to be paid for what he had done to the Red Army, the Red Fleet, and the air force. The Germans advanced more than 150 kilometers in the first 11 days.

Stalin finally addressed the nation on July 3. His opening words differed strikingly from his customary style: "Comrades! Citizens! Brothers and sisters! Warriors of our army and navy! I turn to you, my friends!" The enemy was advancing, he said, and losses had been severe. Although the Red Army was putting up an heroic resistance, the country was in mortal danger—but Stalin reminded his listeners of the fate of Napoleon and Kaiser Wilhelm.

He justified the pact with the Germans on the grounds that it had given the country time to build its defenses, saying nothing of how those defenses had collapsed. He ordered the destruction of everything of potential use to the enemy in all sectors where Soviet forces were forced to retreat and called for the creation of partisan (guerrilla) units behind enemy lines. A State Defense Council with himself at the head had been established to manage the war effort. Stalin noted offers of aid from Great Britain and the United States and exhorted the nation, "All the strength of the people must be used to destroy the enemy! Forward, to our victory!"

By the end of July the Germans controlled an area of Soviet territory more than twice the size of France.

## BATTLE OF MOSCOW

The Germans mounted a three-pronged offensive. Field Marshal Leeb's Army Group North marched on Leningrad. Army Group Center, under Field Marshal Bock, had Moscow as its primary objective. Field Marshal Rundstedt's Army Group South pushed initially toward Kiev, then toward the Crimea and the North Caucasus. Romania struck northward in the direction of Odessa; Finland retook the territory lost in 1939–1940; Hungarian, Slovak, and Hungarian units fought with Bock and Rundstedt. Franco, Spain later sent a division.

German planes bombed Moscow early in the summer, but Muscovites did not hear artillery fire until October. Some of the capital's factories had already been moved by rail to various locations east of the Volga, and about half—more than 2 million—the city's inhabitants had been evacuated. The government ordered the removal of many defense laboratories and institutes in October and transferred most government offices to Kuibyshev.

The flight of the bureaucrats weakened civilian morale. Something approaching panic ensued, peaking on October 16. The authorities went to extraordinary lengths to reassure the Muscovites, pointing out that the State Defense Council, the *Stavka* (General Headquarters) of the Supreme Command, and a core cadre of officials remained in the capital. Stalin was there; he would not abandon them again. Red Army reinforcements rushed to the city. Air Force pilots performed as heroically as their RAF counterparts a year earlier, often simply ramming enemy planes when out of ammunition.

The Germans almost took Moscow, striking to within 50 kilometers of the western outskirts by late October before halting to regroup. The Wehrmacht invested the city along a semicircular, 300-kilometer front from the city of Kalinin on the Volga north of Moscow to the headwaters of the Don River in

the south. Reinforcements detached from Army Group North (Leeb) permitted Bock to resume his advance; by November 23, 1941, Nazi forces were poised within 23 kilometers of the Kremlin.

On December 6, 1941, 100 divisions under General Georgi Zhukov counterattacked. Hitler had not known of the existence of this force, which was equipped with far better tanks than the ones that had failed to hold the western frontiers in June. Thrown off stride, the Germans never fully recovered.

Having succeeded Marshal Semyon Timoshenko as commander of the central front only six weeks earlier, Zhukov built a force of regular units rushed from the Far East and reserves from European Russia and Central Asia; he was aided by unusually cold weather. Armed with weapons designed to function in the cold, Soviet troops were outfitted with heavy coats, mittens, felt boots. German equipment frequently malfunctioned at low temperatures, lengthy supply lines were vulnerable to partisan attack, and the troops were dressed for the West European climate.

The Soviets had regrouped psychologically as well as physically. On the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution Stalin had spoken to army units in Red Square, invoking the great military heroes of Russia's past—Nevsky, Donskoy, Suvorov, Kutuzov—and calling on soldiers to be worthy of their great heritage. The previous evening he had referred to Pushkin, Tolstoi, Tchaikovsky, Glinka, Chekhov. His appeal to Russian national pride was a new departure; he called on the people to defend not communism but Russia. Coupled with his easing of restrictions on the Orthodox Church, this appeal embodied a glorification of the old values: Russian nationalism and patriotism, Orthodoxy, *sobornost* (sense of community). No one was asked to die for communism.

From this time forward the Red Army went into battle with the cry "For the motherland and Stalin!" Stalin was the chief defender, in-

deed the embodiment, of the nation. He made his peace with the church and thus became—this required an additional leap of the imagination—chief defender of the faith. Asking the church to support the war effort by rallying the people to defend the Orthodox homeland, he temporarily ended the harassment of religion.

## SIEGE OF LENINGRAD

On August 28, 1941, Nazi forces severed the rail line to Mga, 40 kilometers *east* of Leningrad, now virtually cut off from the outside world. Zhukov's arrival on September 11 saved the city from annihilation. He took over from the criminally incompetent Voroshilov, reorganized the defenses, shored up morale.

The first air raid came on September 9 and destroyed the food warehouses—a heavier blow to the city than knocking out a hundred anti-aircraft guns. Hitler now had Leningrad in a stranglehold.

Hundreds of thousands of people, including almost all the children, were evacuated in the autumn of 1941, and more followed later. About 2 million of the 1939 population of 3.85 million remained, however, and soon began to feel the effects of the bombing. Rationing was instituted at the start of the siege, and on November 20, the daily bread ration was reduced to 250 grams for people in the highest category (manual workers), 125 grams for the lowest (white-collar workers).

By Christmas, supplies dropped by air made it possible to increase this to 350 and 200 grams—but still people starved. There were no vegetables or fruit. A foreign journalist who was there mentions a jelly made from 2,000 tons of sheep intestines; when the food supplies were at their lowest in winter, this was issued instead of meat.

From November 1941 to October 1942, about 630,000 people in Leningrad starved

to death. This was equivalent to the entire population of San Francisco. People died in the streets; at their jobs; in darkened, unheated apartments. Often survivors lacked the strength to put the corpse on a sled and tow it to a collecting station. And as the ordeal deepened, often there were no survivors. Toward the end of the winter the authorities ordered a meticulous search to collect unburied corpses.

When the ice on Lake Ladoga east of the city froze to a thickness of about 2 meters the Red Army and the civil defense authorities built a “road to life” across to the eastern shore. This road was always under artillery fire and German aircraft bombed it whenever weather permitted. Trucks made two round trips across the ice every day; many were destroyed. There would be an explosion and a gaping black hole would open up. Military police marked the spot quickly with flags on long poles, then rerouted traffic. The “road to life”—actually three separate routes—came to resemble a 37-kilometer slalom course. Civilians who made the run described how drivers would dodge the holes and try to stay between the flags. They would curse Hitler and erupt into maniacal laughter when a shell or bomb burst nearby and showered their vehicles with ice but did not impede their progress toward the starving Leningrad shore. The last convoy before the spring thaw made it safely across on April 8, 1942.

A million people died in the siege of Leningrad, which lasted nearly 900 days. More than a million survived, and their collective heroism has no equal in the annals of warfare. Never in history had a city of that size been under siege for so long or paid such a terrible price for its refusal to capitulate.

The siege and blockade officially did not end until January 27, 1944. The lovely city had seen the last of the nazis, if not of Stalin. Anatoli Sobchak, mayor of postcommunist St. Petersburg, revealed in 1992 that party officials had received regular shipments of fresh fruit and other food throughout the siege.

## BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

Despite their failure to take either Moscow or Leningrad, in the spring of 1942 German forces appeared to be in command of the Eastern Front. They had established fortified positions 135 kilometers east of Leningrad; controlled the northern, western, and southern approaches to Moscow; and held the Ukraine. The Crimea would fall in July. These vast territories had given the Soviet Union two-thirds of its coal and pig iron before the war, 60 percent of its steel and aluminum.

In reality, the war had not gone the way the Führer had anticipated. The promised blitzkrieg had degenerated into a protracted campaign. The problem of supply was becoming increasingly critical as partisans blew up train after train and harassed truck convoys. Industries in the occupied territories were working at about 10 percent of capacity. The food grown in the Ukrainian “breadbasket” was used to feed German forces on the Eastern Front; very little got to Germany.

The defenses along the Leningrad-Moscow line had not broken, but south of Moscow the line was less secure. After liquidating the last remnants of resistance in the Crimea, the Germans made final preparations for an assault on Stalingrad. Code-named “Kremlin,” the plan contained a “disinformation” scheme designed to convince the Soviet leadership that the chief German thrust in 1942 would involve a renewed assault on Moscow. Several generals expressed great skepticism about reports of an offensive against the capital, but Stalin overruled them and transferred men and matériel to the Moscow region.

The Wehrmacht struck at Stalingrad, as Zhukov, Chuikov, and several other Soviet commanders had warned. Not until 1987 did the Kremlin admit that the dictator had made yet another colossal blunder.

Stalingrad is situated on the west bank of the Volga where the great river is closest to the

Don, which flows into the Sea of Azov. Originally called Tsaritsyn, it was renamed in 1925. The government began to develop Stalingrad during the Five-Year Plans. The gigantic Stalin Tractor Works, largest in the world, was located there, and on the eve of the war it converted to tank production. The 1939 population was almost half a million.

The Germans attacked on June 28, 1942, aiming to drive the Soviets out of the territory west of the Don inside that river's huge loop. In four weeks the Germans advanced 150–400 kilometers; by August 23 they were approaching the Volga north of Stalingrad. That same day the Luftwaffe bombed the city, causing thousands of casualties. By September 4 there was fighting in the suburbs, and nine days later the battle inside the city began.

The authorities had proclaimed a state of siege in Stalingrad on August 25. All non-essential personnel were evacuated across the Volga. On September 12 the 62nd Army under General V. I. Chuikov and the 64th Army under General M. S. Shumilov were assigned to defend the city. Stalin had given orders that the city named for him was to be held at all costs; Hitler had told his commanders to take it.

Stalingrad in 1942 stretched about 28 kilometers along the Volga along the north-south axis but only about 5 kilometers wide on the east-west axis. The peculiar layout presented special problems for both attacker and defender, but the Soviets were able to position their artillery on the eastern bank of the river, affording themselves an enormous advantage. The guns were protected, as was the rear; the Nazis could not encircle the city.

On September 13 the greatest battle ever fought inside a major city began. The Germans dictated the course of the fighting for nine weeks, but on November 19 the tide of battle suddenly changed. The Soviets mounted an offensive as troops under Generals Nikolai Vatutin and Konstantin Rokossovsky broke through German lines northwest of the city. On November 20 another army under General An-

drei Yeremenko tore a hole in the German lines south of Stalingrad. The jaws of the pincers began to close. Several encircled Romanian divisions surrendered; but the commander of the doomed German Sixth Army, Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus, was forbidden by Hitler even to consider negotiating with the Soviets. There were fortified German positions only about 40 kilometers west of Stalingrad, but Paulus did not try to break out.

The Soviets kept up an incessant artillery and aerial bombardment. After the battle ended, the center of the city lay in rubble. Fresh troops under some of the best Soviet generals bore down relentlessly on the Germans. On the shortwave frequencies used by the Nazi forces the Soviets broadcast a monotonous, terrifying message in German: "Stalingrad—[tick, tock, tick, tock]—Massengrab!" ("Stalingrad—is a mass grave!—Stalingrad—"). The ticking of a clock added a dimension that helped destroy whatever German morale was left.

The battle ended on February 2, 1943. Paulus and 24 generals, plus 91,000 of their troops, were taken prisoner. Nearly 50,000 wounded—and some Romanians who had lost their taste for battle—had been evacuated earlier. The Soviets buried 147,000 enemy dead. Red Army and civilian casualties slightly exceeded the German total.

## BATTLE OF KURSK

After Stalingrad the Red Army raced westward and seized the industrial center of Harkov, capital of Ukraine until 1934. His prestige having suffered a calamitous blow on the Volga, Hitler ordered the city retaken. The Germans dislodged the Soviet forces on March 15, 1943, a hollow victory. There was no sound military reason to hold the city if the Germans wanted it badly enough to stake everything on its recapture, for it had been devastated by repeated attacks and like Stalingrad was in ruins.



German soldiers surprised by a survivor, South Russia, 1942. (National Archives)

Because Harkov represented so little compensation for Stalingrad, Hitler searched for another theatre in which to stage one of his grand spectacles. He settled on Kursk, 330 kilometers south and slightly west of Moscow. An important rail center on the Moscow-Simferopol line, the city had about 120,000 inhabitants in 1939; its major industry was food processing. It had little intrinsic strategic importance; the railway could easily have been cut at some other point. The Soviets had reoccupied the city during their post-Stalingrad counteroffensive. Expecting the Germans to attack in the summer, Zhukov and Vasilevsky prepared strong, partially disguised defensive positions in the area.

Hitler knew that the defenses were strong at Kursk and reasoned that the Soviets would not expect him to strike there. He decided to do just that and snip off the Kursk salient. Powerful new Tiger and Panther tanks, Focke-Wulf 190 and Henschel 129 fighters, and the huge “Ferdinand” mobile gun would pound the Red Army to dust. Operation Citadel would be under two of his new field marshals, Kluge and Manstein. The old aristocratic officers had failed him; now Hitler would show the world what real nazi commanders could do.

What they could do was lose. One of the largest engagements of the war began on July 5 with a massive nazi assault on the Soviet defense line, now converted into a gigantic trap.

At the start of the battle the balance of forces favored the Soviets, who had ample reserves. The Germans broke through the defenses but could not penetrate the salient deeply on any side. The Soviet lines held, and reserves were not needed.

This was the largest tank battle ever fought: 2,700 German, 3,598 Soviet. On the evening of the first day, Yuri Levitan announced on Radio Moscow that the Red Army had destroyed 586 tanks. The destruction of so many in one day convinced the Soviet people as nothing before, not even the victory at Stalingrad, they they could not lose the war. The T-34 medium tank was as good as the Soviet generals said it was, and with it the Slavs had beaten the Germans at their own technological game. The

T-34 took its place alongside the *katyusha* (multirail rocket projector) as one of the two most feared Soviet weapons.

The Battle of Kursk ended on August 23. Once again German losses were staggering. The Red Army also paid a high price, but the battle shattered the myth that the Germans were invincible in the summer. This proved to be Hitler's last major attempt to recapture the initiative in the East.

### WARTIME DIPLOMACY

The Soviets pressed the British and Americans to open a second front. Stalin did not care that the British had fought alone from the fall

Soviet Women's Land Army, 1943. (National Archives)



of France to the Nazi invasion of the USSR, was unimpressed by the Allied campaigns in North Africa and Italy, and had no interest in American problems in the Pacific: the Soviet Union was bearing the brunt of the war against Hitler.

There were high-level discussions on this issue in 1942 and 1943. Roosevelt and Churchill informed Stalin that it was physically impossible to mount a successful invasion of the European continent until they had built up an enormous force in Great Britain. The agony of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Stalingrad, and thousands of villages and towns, however, did not inspire a sober appreciation of the technical difficulties of invading the continent. It seemed to Stalin and his advisers, and to millions of Soviet citizens, that the West hoped Hitler would bleed the USSR to death.

Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt met at Tehran from November 28 to December 1, 1943, to discuss the proposed Allied landing in France and problems of postwar cooperation. The invasion was scheduled for May 1944; it actually began on June 6. Stalin expressed satisfaction that a second front would at last take shape. The leaders took the measure of each other; Stalin concluded that he liked Roosevelt better than Churchill. For his part Roosevelt conceived a certain admiration for the Soviet dictator, who was now styling himself marshal of the Soviet Union. He and Stalin agreed in principle that Germany should be divided into occupation zones after the war to ensure against future aggression on her part. Churchill preferred to isolate Prussia and to allow the South German states to join with Austria and even Hungary in a "peaceful confederation." Such a confederation would certainly have been hostile to the Soviet Union—as would, of course, an "isolated" and independent Prussia.

The Tehran conferees also discussed aid to the USSR. The Western Allies had provided huge amounts of military supplies in 1942 and 1943, unquestionably contributing in a major

way to the Soviet victories. By the end of 1943 the American Lend-Lease program had shipped more than 7,000 airplanes; approximately 215,000 motor vehicles; and huge quantities of steel, machinery, and food.

## KATYN

Because the interwar Polish government had so resolutely opposed any sort of decent *modus vivendi* with the USSR, and because Soviet security depended heavily on developments in Poland, it was clear from the first day of World War II that some sort of showdown between Moscow and the Poles would follow the conclusion of hostilities.

In April 1943 the Germans reported finding the graves of 4,143 murdered Polish officers near Smolensk. They claimed that documents found on the corpses proved that the men had been murdered in 1940, when the Soviets controlled the part of Poland where the officers had been stationed. A team of forensic scientists assembled by the International Red Cross examined the bodies and confirmed the German account.

Eleven thousand soldiers were also missing; the Free Poles in London had long been trying to learn their fate. The officers and enlisted men had simply disappeared when the Soviets invaded in 1939, but the Kremlin had ignored all requests for information. When news of the mass murder was published in April 1943, Moscow declared that the *Germans* had committed the atrocity when they invaded in 1941. The Polish officers had been interned at Katyn, near Smolensk; the area had fallen to the Germans in September 1941. The attempt to blame the atrocity on the Soviet Union two years later, TASS said, was an attempt to split the wartime Allies.

Smolensk was retaken by the Red Army in September 1943 and a Soviet enquiry initiated. Four months later, Soviet forensic specialists claimed that the Germans were guilty.

Moscow did not permit independent experts to view the evidence.

The evidence in the public domain allowed only one conclusion: the NKVD murdered the Polish officers. When the Red Army seized Eastern Poland in 1939 the officers were first interned in Poland, then moved several hundred kilometers east, to Katyn Forest near Smolensk, sometime early in 1940. In the summer of 1940, special NKVD death squads personally directed by the psychopathic Lavrenti Beria, commissar of state security, executed the officers one by one with a bullet in the back of the head.

When in April 1943 the Nazis broadcast news of finding the mass grave at Katyn, the West assumed another Hitler trick. On direct orders from Churchill and Roosevelt, however, the military authorities refused to discuss the matter with the press. Neither leader knew what to make of the atrocity; neither would permit anything to interfere with the war effort.

Stalin seized on the controversy as an excuse to break relations with the London Poles, the conservative government-in-exile. His own candidates for postwar Polish leadership, the Lublin group, included many communists and pro-Soviet socialists. The martyrs of Katyn slept in their uneasy graves, and the ancient hostility between Russia and Poland grew ever more intractable.

The Kremlin's lies about Katyn, which the Polish communists slavishly repeated, survived the ouster and execution of Beria, the shattering of the Stalin myth, and naturally the neo-Stalinist Troika-Brezhnev period. But with Mikhail Gorbachev and glasnost hope sprang to life. In April 1985 the Polish government, having four years earlier destroyed a Solidarity memorial to the victims of Katyn, erected a monument in Warsaw. The inscription reads, TO THE POLISH SOLDIERS-VICTIMS OF HITLERITE FASCISM ON THE SOIL OF KATYN. No date appears; but all Poland knows that the Soviets controlled the area at the time of the atrocity.

Poland's communists, having defended the Soviet version of the massacre for more than four decades, finally reversed themselves in February 1989 and publicly admitted that the Soviet secret police murdered 4,443 Polish officers whose bodies were found at Katyn. This admission came more than a year after the establishment of a bilateral commission to investigate what Gorbachev called "blank spots" in Soviet-Polish relations. In April 1990 the Kremlin acknowledged Soviet responsibility for the atrocity, which it called "one of the gravest crimes of Stalinism." Over the following year and a half, the Gorbachev regime released a series of documents to the Polish government and the world detailing the planning and execution of the atrocity. Moreover, it erected a monument at Katyn and permitted pilgrimages to the site. The wound would never heal; but it could begin to close.

## BABI YAR

When the Red Army retook Kiev on November 6, 1943, it discovered still another wartime outrage, one the Kremlin did not publicize for nearly 18 years. Most of the victims were Jews.

Kiev had fallen to the Germans on September 19, 1941. The conquerors had virtually completed their organization of the new municipal administration when delayed-action mines and bombs went off on September 25, destroying the central district. The day after the explosions, *Einsatzgruppe* (special-duty troops) C, elements of which had been arriving for two or three days, reached full strength. The commander, after conferring with the German military governor, blamed Kiev's Jews for the destruction.

Placards went up all over the city ordering the 100,000 remaining Jews—75,000 had fled—to assemble near the Jewish cemetery at 8:00 A.M. on September 29, 1941, bringing personal documents, money, valuables, warm clothing.

Those who did not obey would be shot. The rumor went around that the Nazis were sending all Jews to Palestine.

The cemetery lay near a gash in the earth known as Babi Yar (Old Woman Ravine). Kiev's Jews assembled there as ordered. Troops of *Sonderkommando* (special commando) 4A, a division of *Einsatzgruppe C*, herded the women, children, and elderly men into several narrow lanes. At a place where the lanes turned, the soldiers ordered the people to strip and place their clothes and belongings on one pile, the food they had brought for their journey on another. Those who balked were savagely beaten and stripped by the *Sonderkommando's* Ukrainian helpers. As the naked, bleeding, terrified people were shoved rapidly into ever narrower lines, many went into shock and began screaming, laughing, jumping up and down, befouling themselves. The behavior of the doomed people, the shouts of the guards and their helpers, the barking of the police dogs, the sound of wooden truncheons and rifle butts striking human flesh—pandemonium.

Soldiers despatched small groups up a slope and around to the other side of the hill, where a ledge overlooked Babi Yar. People were shoved onto the ledge until there was no more room. Then the machine guns opened fire from across the narrow ravine. The murdered people fell, and at regular intervals the Germans and their helpers would descend into the ravine to make sure that no one survived. In two days *Einsatzgruppe C* killed 33,771 Jews, setting a record. Even at Auschwitz the Germans could kill only 6,000 people a day. The murders at Babi Yar continued throughout the Nazi occupation. In all, more than 100,000 people were murdered there during the 750 days that the swastika flew over Kiev.

Not until 1976 was a war memorial erected at Babi Yar. The inscription at the foot of the monument reads, "Here in 1941–43 the German fascist invaders executed more than

100,000 citizens of the city of Kiev and Soviet prisoners of war." There is no mention of the fact that the overwhelming majority were Jews.

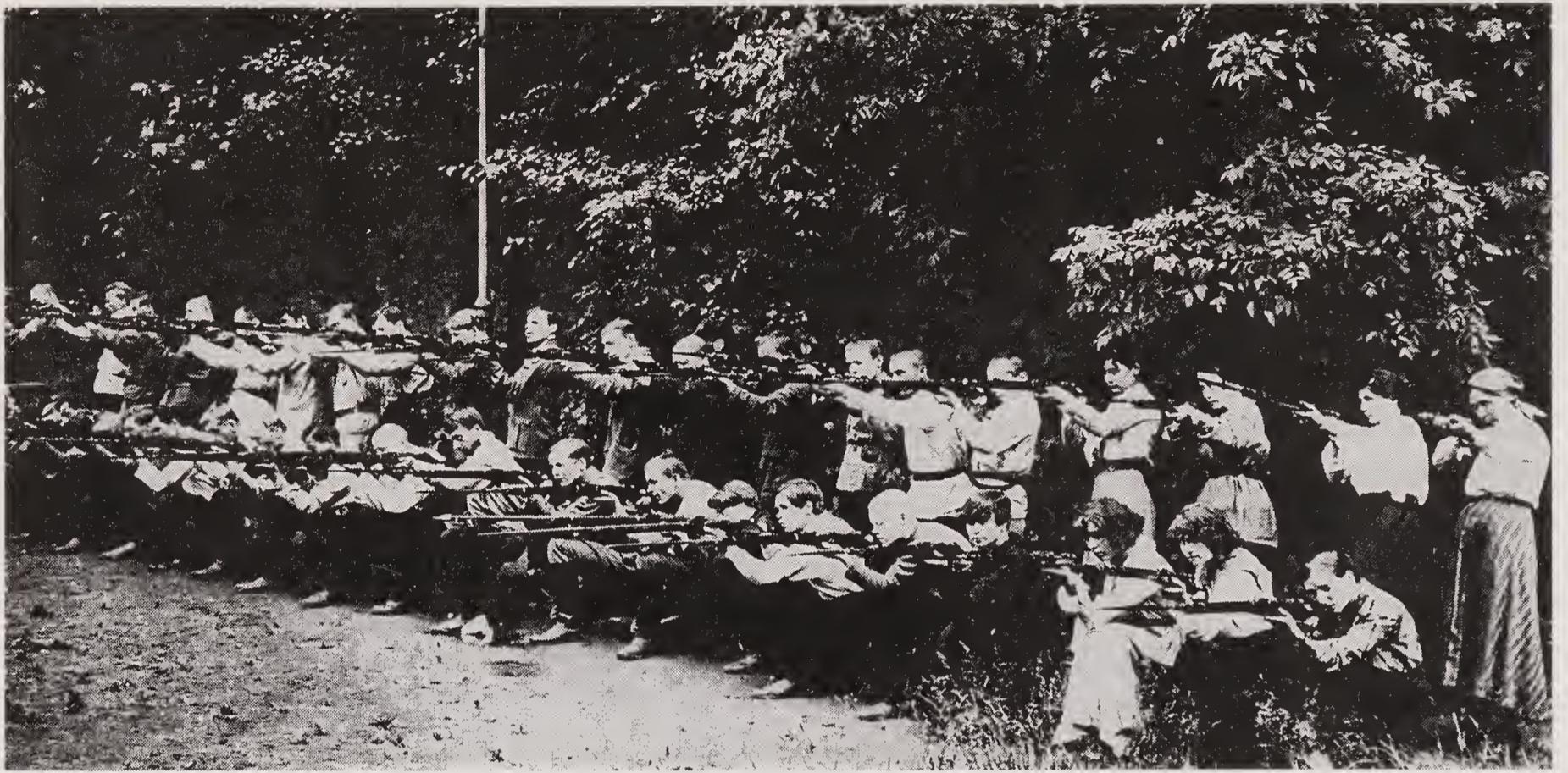
## CAMPAIGNS OF 1944–1945

Every piece of liberated Soviet territory was a monument to the Red Army. Novgorod was recaptured in January 1944, and by the end of February the Soviets stood at the prewar Polish frontier. In early spring they reached the Romanian border. Those units halted operations while the reconquest of the Black Sea coast and the Crimea was completed. Odessa was liberated on April 10; a month later the entire Crimea and Ukraine were again in Soviet hands.

By August 1 the Red Army had cut through Byelorussia and the eastern part of interwar Poland and came to a halt about 60 kilometers east of Warsaw; some small advance parties had moved to a position much closer to the Polish capital. The Polish underground and the Western Allies believed the Soviets in a position to take Warsaw.

The Polish underground had long planned an uprising against the German occupiers, wanting to liberate as much Polish territory as possible on their own and thus win the right to deal with the Soviets as equals in the postwar period. The Poles launched the uprising on August 1, 1944. If Polish underground leaders genuinely believed they could overthrow the Nazis on their own they were suffering from a tragic delusion. The Germans had five divisions in Warsaw, and their supply lines were intact. Although the Poles claimed to have several divisions of their own, in fact they could assemble only about 2,000 armed men when the uprising began. The Germans launched a systematic slaughter.

The Red Army did not move, and Stalin refused to let British and American planes use his airfields to make supply drops to the Poles.



On the home front: teaching high school students to shoot. (National Archives)

Denied those supplies and the support of the Red Army, the uprising collapsed after 63 days. On October 11, 1944, Hitler ordered Warsaw razed to the ground. That part of the city that had not been destroyed during the great Jewish uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943 was now reduced to rubble.

The Poles have never ceased to blame the Red Army for this tragedy, which cost about 200,000 Polish lives, mostly civilian. Once again the unhappy Polish nation poured new rivers of blood into the already sodden soil.

The Soviets saw the Warsaw uprising differently. The Red Army had advanced 600–700 kilometers in the 40 days preceding August 1. It needed to rest, regroup, and resupply. It anticipated a German counterattack. Further, the Polish underground had not made a serious effort to coordinate with the Soviets; the implication that the Red Army either was not needed or would simply come without being called did not win friends in Moscow. Moreover, the Katyn story had broken the previous year. The anticommunist Poles had used that terrible stick to beat the Russians at every op-

portunity; Churchill was obliged to restrain them. This was another instance when the Poles were right, at the wrong time. Nothing would bring the Katyn dead back; only the Red Army could drive the Germans out of Poland. Too late did the Poles realize that the Soviets, who had earlier suggested that an uprising might be in order, never had any intention of coming to their assistance.

The anticommunist Poles miscalculated badly. There was not the remotest chance that the Soviets would agree to the restoration of the interwar Polish-Soviet frontier or to the establishment of a truly independent government in Warsaw. If Stalin were to do nothing else in this war, he would make sure that postwar Poland was no threat to the USSR.

The Red Army finally marched through the ruins of Warsaw on January 17, 1945. The fact that liberation did not come until five and a half months after the beginning of the uprising indicates that those who thought the Soviets could have waltzed into the city in August 1944 erred.

## YALTA AND THE END OF THE WAR

The Polish question loomed large at the Yalta Conference of February 4–11, 1945. The controversy over the Yalta “sellout” was to poison American domestic politics for more than a decade; repercussions are still felt in the 1990s.

The end of the war within sight, Stalin demanded and received the consent of Roosevelt and Churchill to what amounted to the shifting of Poland 200–300 kilometers to the west. The postwar Soviet-Polish frontier would closely follow the old Curzon Line, more or less the linguistic line. Those to the west spoke Polish, those to the east Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian, Russian, or Yiddish. The Poles had rejected that line and had fought in 1920 to push it east. Now the Soviets pushed back. Poland would be compensated with German territory in the west.

The idea of shifting Poland to the west did not originate with Stalin. One of the Polish leaders, General Wladyslaw Sikorski, foresaw

early in the war that in the event of a Soviet victory Poland would pay a price for its hostility toward Moscow. Sikorski therefore proposed substantially what Stalin demanded in 1945, reconstitution of the Curzon Line. He received little support from his compatriots.

So far as the postwar government of Poland was concerned, Stalin won the grudging approval of the Western leaders for his plan to make the communist-dominated Lublin Poles the nucleus of the future regime. He promised “free and unfettered elections,” and the London Poles would be allowed to participate.

No other Allied agreement with Stalin was to generate such anger and pain; for decades European and American conservatives have charged that Roosevelt sold Poland to Stalin for small and sordid coin. The critics decline to attach real significance to the fact that the Red Army totally controlled Poland and never indicate precisely who could have dislodged it, or how. In 1945 no detectable sentiment existed in the West for fighting the Soviet Union

Molotov and Soviet officers greeting President Roosevelt on his arrival in the Crimea, February 1945. (Department of Defense)



to ensure Poland's liberty. Under the circumstances, Roosevelt and Churchill simply got the best deal they could.

Germany was almost a secondary issue, given the explosiveness of the Polish question. The Allies did however agree on the occupation zones, one of which, at Churchill's insistence, was to go to France. Germany would remain divided indefinitely, and steps were taken to ensure that it would never again present a threat to peace. The major Nazi leaders would be tried as war criminals.

The Soviets agreed to enter the war against Japan within weeks of the victory in Europe. In return, they would be granted territory—the southern half of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands—at Japan's expense. The Allies recognized the Soviet sphere of interest in Manchuria.

In February 1945, the best estimate of the American military establishment was that the

war against Japan would go on for about 18 months after the defeat of Germany. Only a few generals knew of the frantic attempts to develop the atomic bomb, and those who did were uncertain it would prove to be the awesomely destructive weapon the scientists claimed. No one could foresee Japan's capitulation in August 1945; American officers calculated the invasion of the home islands would cost many thousands of casualties. The diplomats at Yalta, therefore, were only doing their duty in making a deal with Stalin to bring the Soviet Union into the Far East war and thus help assure a rapid conclusion with as few casualties as possible.

Finally, the three leaders agreed to establish a United Nations. Woodrow Wilson's old dream of international cooperation would at last become a reality. Stalin won the right to have three votes—the USSR, Ukraine, Byelorussia—in the United Nations. That made no

Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin at Yalta, February 3, 1945. Standing behind them are Eden, Stettinius, Molotov, and Harriman. (Department of Defense)



sense; the United States might have claimed 48 votes, one for each state in the Union at the time. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that Stalin's two extra votes have altered the course of history.

It seemed odd that the British and Americans were conducting some of the heaviest bombing raids of the war at about the time of the Yalta Conference. Dresden in particular suffered an attack so intense as to dwarf all other air raids of the war: about 135,000 people perished in the old German city in the blasts and the flames. (The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki took 114,000 lives.) The raid made little strategic sense. The war in Europe was just about over, and although Dresden did have defense industries, there were other targets the Allies could have hit to cripple the German war effort much more severely. The Soviets have repeatedly pointed out that the cities hardest hit in the winter and spring of 1945 were in their intended zone of occupation. In bombing relatively unimportant targets in the eastern part of Germany, the Allies were brandishing their air arm as a warning to Stalin.

The Allied landings in Normandy in June 1944 created the second front the Soviets had been calling for since 1941. One after another, the Nazi positions crumbled and fell in the West and in the East: France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia.

On March 7, 1945, the American First Army crossed the Rhine at Remagen. There was henceforth little organized German defense in the West. A little over a month later American forces reached the Elbe River and linked up with Red Army units on April 25.

Advance parties of the Red Army fought their way into the German capital on April 20; the Battle of Berlin began in earnest on May 1. The last act of the cycle of death was played out in a week of intense house-to-house fighting. Only the fanatics were left now, the ones who

would not dream of trying to conceal their past or their beliefs. The Führer had set the stage for the *Götterdämmerung* but lacked the courage to stay for the finale. He did not want to be put in a cage and exhibited in London and New York, he said. With his wife, Eva Braun, he committed suicide in a bunker beneath the *Reichskanzlei* on April 30.

Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. Harry Truman, his successor, and Prime Minister Churchill proclaimed the end of the war in Europe on May 8. Stalin waited another day, until the German generals had completed the formalities of surrender, before announcing victory to the Soviet people on May 9.

The Soviet Union entered the Pacific war on August 8, two days after the Americans dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The Japanese surrendered on August 14, but the USSR had already moved to secure its Yalta concessions in the Far East.

## THE WAR AND THE SOVIET PEOPLE

Approximately 58 million people were killed or died of causes directly related to the fighting in World War II. Roughly half were civilians. At least 27 million of the dead were citizens of the Soviet Union, almost one-eighth of the entire population. The family untouched by tragedy was a rarity. Everyone lost someone; many lost everyone.

In addition to the dead there were the physically and psychologically wounded in such number that no count was possible. No nation in history has ever had so many mutilated veterans as living reminders of its agony. The last of these fragmented human beings will not die until well into the twenty-first century, and even the death of the last Soviet veteran of World War II sometime around the year 2025 will not close the book of suffering.

The material damage, which unlike the human could be repaired, was on a monu-

mental scale. West of the Leningrad-Moscow-Stalingrad line, destruction was almost total. Cities, towns, and villages lay in ruins. The peasants had lost their homes, barns, and sheds. The invaders had destroyed dams and canals, blown up bridges, clogged waterways, poisoned wells. The USSR lost 31,850 factories and other industrial enterprises, not counting small plants; 1,876 sovkhozes; 2,890 machine-tractor stations (MTS); and 98,000 of 200,000 kolhozes, the great majority in the most fertile part of the country. No one who saw European Russia, Ukraine, or Byelorussia in 1945 could dread Hell.

The Soviet people drew several conclusions from the war, the most important of which was that there must never be another one. The government expressed this national craving for peace in these terms: No power or combination of powers would be permitted to threaten the security of the USSR. The Soviet Union had proved itself a great power, but the atomic bomb threw the postwar military-political equation into confusion. Poised in the spring and summer of 1945 to dominate Eastern Europe and Northern and Eastern Asia, the USSR, along with the rest of the world, suddenly had to contend with weapons of mass destruction on a scale where "mass" had a hitherto undreamed-of meaning. The development of those weapons would soon

make it possible to pack into just one bomb an explosive force greater than that of all the firepower on all fronts in the Second World War. Warfare, diplomacy, and human psychology would never be the same.

The Soviet people learned from the war that suffering is indeed infinite. Even Time, they learned, did not have enough time to heal the wounds of what they would always call the Great Fatherland War.

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# chapter 13

## THE COLD WAR

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On August 6, 1945, an American military aircraft dropped history's first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Two days later the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo (Manchuria). A second American nuclear weapon destroyed Nagasaki on August 9; Japan sued for peace the following day.

The formal surrender came on September 2; there would be no invasion of the Japanese home islands. It seemed that the Second World War had at last come to an end.

This was the Western interpretation of events, not Stalin's. In the Soviet view, the capitalist states had fought among themselves for 22 months until June 1941, when one of them, Germany, struck to attain a goal that all held in common: destruction of the world's only socialist state. In attacking the USSR, Stalin believed, Hitler was doing the work of all capitalists. Great Britain and the United States

declared themselves allies of the Soviet Union, but in fact, the communists argued, they had worked for a German victory by refusing for three years to open a second front. Only when the Germans proved unable to crush the USSR did the Western powers jump into the fray with massive forces. And even then, Moscow charged, they did so to establish a base from which to attack the Soviet Union.

Although the Western public had seen the war as a titanic struggle between good and evil, there were many politicians whose publicly expressed admiration for Hitler and Mussolini lent substance to Soviet suspicions. Almost all those politicians detested Stalin and the Soviet Union and several had called for a Western crusade, led if need be by Hitler, to crush the Communists; this posture left the West open to the shock of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet deal. When Hitler attacked the Western democracies, however, there was no choice

but to resist him, even if that meant making an alliance with Stalin.

Although Roosevelt believed Stalin could be persuaded to join the search for a *modus vivendi*, Churchill's views were more typical of Western thinking. The prime minister saw the wartime alliance with the USSR as at best a disagreeable necessity. He called during the war for an Anglo-American invasion of the "soft underbelly" of Europe at the head of the Adriatic, for a drive into the European heartland to defeat Hitler and deny the Soviets territory west of the Warsaw-Budapest-Bucarest line.

An alliance whose chief architect was, after all, Adolph Hitler could not survive the defeat of Germany and Japan: A postwar confrontation between communist East and capitalist West was all but inevitable. The West soon began to speak of a "Cold War," a condition of intense and worsening hostility between two heavily armed camps, the opening stage of World War III. The Soviets, on the other hand, saw post-1945 developments as a new

phase of the conflict between socialism and capitalism.

## THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE

The "Big Three" leaders—France was not represented—met in the relatively undamaged Berlin suburb of Postdam on July 17, 1945, to work out a German settlement and refine the Yalta agreements. Some American leaders feared that the untried Truman would be no match for either Stalin or Churchill. In the midst of the talks the Labour party won the British election of July 26, and Clement Attlee, the Labour leader, immediately came to Potsdam to replace Churchill. That made Western political and military strategists all the more apprehensive; Stalin, they feared, would prevail.

Midway through the conference, Truman informed Stalin and Attlee that the United States had successfully tested a weapon of awe-

Stalin, Truman, and Churchill at Potsdam, July 1945. Visible over Truman's left shoulder is Clement Attlee, Churchill's successor.  
(Department of Defense)



some destructive power. The Soviet dictator seemed strangely indifferent. Early in 1945 Secretary of War Stimson had told Roosevelt that the Soviets were probably aware of the general nature of the American effort to develop the atomic bomb. Detailed reports from Soviet spies in the United States had reached Stalin before the Potsdam Conference, and the Soviet leader's noncommittal reaction to Truman's announcement indicated that he knew even more than Stimson feared he did. Donald Maclean, a British diplomat and Soviet spy, had relayed information on the American Manhattan Project—development of the atomic bomb—to Moscow.

The Potsdam meeting confirmed the division of Germany into American, British, French, and Soviet occupation zones. The occupation was to be under the control of an Allied Control Council with headquarters in Berlin. The powers of the council were deliberately left vague; each occupying power was free to do as it wished in its own sector. The Allies declared themselves in favor of reunifying Germany after a suitable period of punishment and purge. The Soviets demanded that the German nation should be so reconstructed as never again to be capable of threatening peace in Europe; the British and the French had no quarrel with this. Germany would have to pay about \$20 billion in war reparations. Half the sum was to go to the USSR, which was also to receive at least 10 percent of the military industrial equipment of the Western occupation zones, where the bulk of German industry was located.

The Allies pledged to eradicate nazism and militarism and authorized the trial on charges of crimes against humanity ("war crimes") of the surviving members of the Nazi leadership. Berlin, 150 kilometers inside the Soviet occupation zone, was to be under four-power administration pending a final German settlement. That settlement, the ostensible goal of the Potsdam conferees, was left to a Council of

Foreign Ministers, which was to work out peace treaties with Italy and the Balkan states before dealing with Germany.

The Potsdam Conference tacitly established a fifth, Polish, occupation zone. Stalin had proposed that the new Polish-German frontier follow the line of the Oder and Neisse rivers; thus the pre-1939 frontier was to be moved far to the west. The Western powers did not formally accept this new frontier but did agree to Polish "administration" of historically German territory *east* of it. They did not raise serious objections to Polish plans to expel about 9 million German citizens from that territory.

Polish administration quickly passed from occupation to outright annexation, Stalin having given Poland some German areas as "compensation" for Polish territories he had seized in the east. The Soviets also took part of old East Prussia, including the city of Königsberg (renamed Kaliningrad), and Poland received the German cities of Danzig and Stettin.

Although the sudden surrender of Japan obviated the need for a military campaign in Asia, it did not prevent the Soviets from occupying or annexing the areas assigned them at Potsdam. The United States did, however, deny Stalin the right to participate in either the occupation of Japan or the determination of that country's future.

The Yalta Conference had established the principle that military and civilian prisoners of war were to be repatriated to their homelands. The Potsdam talks confirmed this decision. The Western Allies had liberated about a million Soviet prisoners of war and civilians employed in German slave-labor enterprises. Another million or so Red Army officers and men in prisoner-of-war camps had gone over to the German side to fight in the "Russian Liberation Army" under the command of General A. A. Vlasov, who had defected to the Germans. Further, roughly 10 million "displaced persons" from Eastern Europe, including the residents of the

Polish “occupation zone” of Germany, were in areas controlled by the West.

There was no question as to the fate of Red Army soldiers who had fought under Vlasov as Wehrmacht auxiliaries; they would have to face Stalin’s justice. The civilians, soldiers who stayed in the POW camps, and refugees were another matter. Moscow demanded the return of all save the Germans who fled from the territory now part of Poland. Most of the “displaced persons,” especially the Soviet citizens, wanted to remain in the West; the Soviets faced long terms in the Gulag or even execution. In Stalin’s view, there were no Soviet prisoners because Red Army soldiers fought to the death. Soviet wounded were often shot to prevent their falling into German hands. Likewise, civilians forcibly dragooned into German service found no mercy at home after the war: their failure to resist constituted “proof,” in Stalin’s eyes, of collaboration with the Nazis.

In an action ominously code-named “Keelhaul,” the Western Allies forcibly repatriated almost 2 million citizens of the USSR. The Soviets interpreted “citizen” in an aggressive manner to include Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Poles whose homes were east of the Soviet-Polish frontier fixed in 1945. Very few of these people wished to live under Soviet rule, but the Allies sent them back in order to ensure humane treatment of their own prisoners—about 25,000, mostly British—liberated by the Red Army. Another factor was the necessity of obtaining Stalin’s cooperation in the postwar settlement. The forced repatriations, during which hundreds of terrified prisoners were killed in clashes with American and British troops, compounded the horror of war.

Many Soviet and other East European citizens who had collaborated with the nazis found refuge in the West, where some were recruited to help fight the Cold War against the USSR. Among them were a number of genuine war criminals who were to escape prosecution for several decades, in many cases forever.

## EASTERN EUROPE

By the time the war in Europe ended the Red Army had gained control of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and the eastern third of Germany. Soviet troops in Yugoslavia were quickly withdrawn because that country was under the control of an ardent Stalinist, Josip Broz—Tito. Another Stalin disciple, Enver Hoxha, was master of Albania. In the Near East, Soviet forces pulled out of the areas of northeastern Turkey they had occupied since late 1941, but the Red Army remained in the northern part of Iran and even established a puppet government.

After the defeat of Nazi Germany the USSR had one overwhelming national goal: ironclad security. Never again, Stalin and his advisers vowed, would Eastern Europe provide a jumping-off point for an invasion of Soviet territory. In a future land war, the first battles would be fought not on the Dnepr but on the Elbe, Danube, or Rhine.

The only new areas in Europe physically absorbed into the USSR were some nickel-mining districts in northern Finland, the Carpatho-Ukraine (formerly part of Czechoslovakia), and parts of East Prussia. The “regained” territories included the Baltic states, the eastern part of Poland, Bessarabia, and Bukovina.

Given postwar realities, Soviet actions were more restrained than might have been expected. Moscow could not permit the reestablishment of independent anticommunist regimes in the strategically important Baltic states. The territory taken from Poland had been disputed between Moscow and Warsaw for centuries and was inhabited not only by Poles but also by Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Russians, and Jews. About 200,000 Polish Jews, the largest group to survive the Holocaust, were natives of the areas seized by the Soviets in September 1939. The Soviets were not willing to relinquish Bessarabia or Bukovina.



Soviet territorial gains in Europe, 1939–1945.

The Western world correctly saw the communist seizure of power in Eastern Europe as the artificial triumph of parties commanding the allegiance of only a small minority of the population. Westerners erred, however, in viewing the postwar political contest in the region as one between totalitarianism and democracy.

Democracy had never existed anywhere in Eastern Europe save Czechoslovakia, and even there the Slovak minority had legitimate grievances against the dominant Czechs. Parties paid lip service to democratic principles but proved in the interwar period that they would oppress to the point of physically destroying all

who opposed them. Corrupt politics ran the gamut from military dictatorship to degenerate monarchy. In Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, there had been a great deal of sympathy for fascism throughout the interwar period and much enthusiastic collaboration with the Nazis during the war.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of East European populations opposed the establishment of Soviet-sponsored communist regimes. Only in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria was there some genuine friendship for the USSR in the initial postwar period, and that soon faded.

The political agents who rode into eastern Europe in the baggage train of the Red Army generally initiated the process of bringing a country under Soviet control by directing the domestic communist parties, whose ranks had been purged repeatedly on Moscow's orders, to enter coalition governments of "national unity." Those governments held elections in 1946 and 1947. Western observers were occasionally permitted to monitor the balloting, but the only real supervising came from the Red Army and Soviet political agents. Nevertheless, nowhere did a communist party even come close to winning a parliamentary majority.

Confirmed by the elections as a minority party, the communists nevertheless demanded and received such key ministerial posts as interior (which had control of national police forces), justice, and communications. Noncommunists often held the premiership and the ministry of foreign affairs, but the presence of Soviet occupying forces rendered those offices largely ceremonial.

Once in control of the police, the courts, and mass communications, the communists isolated and discredited popular noncommunist political figures by any means available. Pre-war politicians, Resistance heroes, intellectuals, and professional people were subjected to harassment that often included physical violence. They were usually charged with having

collaborated with the Nazis or, after 1946, with "Western imperialism."

Having eliminated most noncommunist political figures and other prominent people from public life, a third step frequently involved holding new elections under a bloc system. Each political party was assigned a percentage of seats in parliament based on a complicated formula weighted in favor of urban working-class constituencies and other voter concentrations (poor peasants, bureaucrats, the military) deemed friendly. Under this system, the communists would take a majority of the seats no matter what the size of their vote—which never rose above 34 percent in any uncontrolled election in Europe.

In the now-docile parliaments, the communists proceeded to pass legislation at the pleasure of their Soviet masters. This usually consisted of a series of enabling acts that gave the government, now composed almost exclusively of communists, *carte blanche* to carry out its program. Thus, the legislature, like the courts and press, became an arm of the executive power.

This pattern was not universal, but it was typical. By early 1948 every country in Eastern Europe save Yugoslavia lay under Soviet control. And Yugoslavia differed from the puppet states only in that Tito and his associates insisted that they, loyal Stalinists, have charge of their own country.

In the spring of 1947 the United States attempted to meet the Soviet challenge with the Truman Doctrine. Congress granted the president's request for massive economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey to enable those countries to withstand communist pressure. Washington accepted the role of policeman in areas deemed vital to American national security and promised to send money, arms, military advisers, and even troops to any threatened country.

The economic aid was still more vital than the military. The Truman Doctrine offered a de-

fense against armed aggression but was useless against economic chaos. American leaders reasoned that the abysmal state of the European economy made communism attractive. Put Europe on its feet, they argued, and the threat will diminish. In June 1947 Secretary of State George C. Marshall proposed that the United States finance Europe's economic recovery with a program of loans, capital investment, grants, and other forms of aid.

A few days later the Soviet delegation walked out of a Paris meeting of foreign ministers of the USSR, Britain, and France called to respond to the tentative American offer. There is evidence that Stalin considered accepting assistance, but when the conditions the Americans would impose became known he rejected them and compelled Czechoslovakia to abandon its announced intention to apply for American aid. Washington insisted on maintaining direct supervision over the use of loan funds.

By mid-1951 western Europe had surpassed 1939 industrial production levels by almost 45 percent. There was virtually full employment, the standard of living was rising, and food rationing had ended everywhere except in Great Britain. The leftward drift in Europe had ceased. Communist strength among French and Italian voters appeared to have peaked at 30–33 percent, much less in other countries.

East and West accused each other of the basest conduct. The Soviets tried to subvert legitimate governments and institutions in the West, while the United States supported resistance in Eastern Europe with money, propaganda, and night parachute drops of arms, equipment, and Western-trained agents. The Soviet Union assured potential sympathizers that the “world proletariat” marched at their side in every confrontation with “American imperialists.”

## GERMANY AND YUGOSLAVIA

Tensions mounted rapidly after March 1946. Stalin responded to Churchill's “Iron Curtain” speech by comparing the former prime minister to Hitler. On July 13, 1949, Pope Pius XII, who had failed to speak out forcefully against Germany's extermination of the Jews, excommunicated all Catholics who voted for communists or supported them in any way. The same decree denied the sacraments to those who read Marxist or communist literature. The pope's action was the first such mass malediction since the twelfth century.

In 1947 the Soviets sought to counter the Truman Doctrine and the proposed Marshall Plan by establishing a Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform, with headquarters in Belgrade. This organization replaced the Comintern, dissolved in 1943 as a wartime goodwill gesture. It included representatives from the USSR, its East European puppet states, and the communist parties of Italy and France. Further, a Molotov Plan began to take shape as a structural framework for the integration of the economies of the USSR and its satellites; this was the forerunner of the Council on Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, or Comecon), which came into existence in January 1949.

Molotov's scheme merely confirmed Soviet exploitation of eastern Europe. The Kremlin's view of economic cooperation envisaged the importation of satellite countries' raw materials into the USSR, which would export manufactured goods in return. The Poles explained the system this way: Poland supplies the Soviet Union with coal, and in return the Soviet Union takes Poland's steel. The Soviets set the prices they would pay for the raw materials and those they would charge for manufactured goods, which in fact they frequently could not provide.

Under intense Western pressure the USSR withdrew its forces from northern Iran in the

spring of 1946. Until the Austrian peace treaty was signed in 1955, that represented Moscow's only postwar retreat.

Worsening relations with the USSR dimmed the West's memories of the war more rapidly than anyone could have expected. This process was particularly true in the United States, which had suffered relatively little at German hands and which now assumed the responsibility for defending the West against what most political leaders saw as a grave Soviet menace. Germany was crucial both in that defense and in the psychological-political war. Soviet rule in the eastern third of the country, and Anglo-American-French rule in the west, provided the world with an unobstructed opportunity to view and evaluate the two competing systems.

In 1946 the United States formally rejected various schemes—notably the Morgenthau Plan of the American secretary of the treasury—for transforming Germany into an agrarian nation with no war-making potential. That had been the Soviet objective, and American rejection of such a course in favor of rebuilding and rearming Germany exacerbated East-West animosities. Secretary of State James Byrnes, Marshall's predecessor, pledged American support for rebuilding Germany and announced the determination of the United States to defend the country against aggression. In December the Americans and British decided to fuse their occupation zones as a first step toward German reunification. France and the Soviet Union were invited to follow suit and bring their sectors into the Anglo-American "Bizonia."

Paris hesitated to cooperate with London and Washington because anti-German feeling, fueled by communist propaganda, ran high in France. Moscow refused to go along, insisting instead on the \$10 billion in reparations promised at Potsdam. It was still the public Soviet position that Germany should be reunited, but Stalin was unwilling to permit free

elections in his zone of Germany or anywhere else. The Soviets rightly regarded each step toward unifying the Western sectors as a threat to their rule not only in East Germany but throughout eastern Europe.

Tensions in Germany were temporarily overshadowed by developments in Yugoslavia, where the Tito regime continued to resist the Kremlin's attempts to make the country a colony. No East European communist was a more devout Stalinist than Tito, who however saw no contradiction between Yugoslav independence and loyalty to Moscow. In 1947 the Yugoslav communists purged their ranks of thousands of Stalinists. Moscow protested, but the purge continued as Tito found some top Yugoslav officials plotting to sell the country to Stalin. In March 1948 the Soviets angrily recalled their military and technical advisers. The quarrel burst into the open on June 28, 1948, when the Cominform expelled the Yugoslav party. The myth of a monolithic communist bloc lay in ruins.

## **BERLIN BLOCKADE**

The 1948 Yugoslav crisis, which seemed to portend a Soviet invasion to overthrow Tito, gave way to a new one in Germany. To bring additional pressure to bear on France to stay out of "Bizonia," protest the West's plan to reform the currency in its occupation zones, and force the West out of the old German capital, the Soviet Union manufactured a confrontation in Berlin. Stalin's goal was not to absorb Berlin but to prevent the creation of a unified West German state that would unquestionably be hostile to the USSR.

On June 15, 1948, Soviet authorities closed one of the Autobahns leading from the west into East Germany and Berlin, ostensibly for repairs. Within a week, however, all highway, rail, and river communication ceased. Only three 30-kilometer-wide air corridors linked

Berlin to West Germany. The Western sectors of the city contained a population of more than 2 million, for whose support about 3,000 tons of supplies in summer, 4,000 in winter, were needed each day.

On June 26, an American C-47 transport aircraft landed at West Berlin's Tempelhof airfield with its maximum load of food, milk, and medicines: 3 tons. Four days later the first of the 10-ton capacity C-54s landed at Tempelhof; eventually 225 of these planes, plus RAF and French transport craft, were to provide the Berlin Airlift. On July 26, the three air forces landed 3,028 tons of supplies.

The Western Allies were to make more than a quarter million flights. They ferried more than 2.3 million tons of supplies into West Berlin, including hundreds of thousands of tons of coal.

The Soviets harassed the flights by "buzzing" the Western planes with fighter aircraft, flashing spotlights to blind the pilots, and raising barrage balloons along the air corridors. They invariably stopped just short of violence. Eventually 39 British, 31 American, and 5 West German pilots were killed in air accidents, nearly all due to foul weather or pilot error.

In the first few weeks of the Berlin blockade the West considered and rejected a plan to send an armored column into East Germany; this would have amounted to an invasion. Truman calculated that the airlift could achieve Allied objectives. The gamble succeeded. Unable to force the West out of Berlin, the Soviets abandoned the blockade on May 12, 1949, and reopened the surface corridors. The West appeared to have won an impressive victory. Berlin remained under four-power control. France decided to link her occupation zone to "Bizonia," setting the stage for the creation of an independent West German state. The currency reform went forward as planned.

It seemed clear that Stalin had lost face. Only later, when East-West relations deteriorated still further, did some Western political ob-

servers suggest that the Soviet dictator also might have gained something from the Berlin crisis: the West apparently would not go to war even when provoked.

There was more than this alleged failure to react properly in Berlin that outraged many anti-communists. The Vietnamese communists under Ho Chi Minh began a guerilla war against French colonial rule in 1947. The French resisted fiercely, but a divided public opinion at home sapped military morale. As France's position in Southeast Asia deteriorated, the United States stepped in rather tentatively; some in the West again lamented the failure to mount effective opposition. For his part, Stalin provided little but moral support to Ho.

## NATO, CHINA, KOREA

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) came into existence in April 1949, proving the ancient maxim that nothing unites like a common enemy. Scarcely four years after the end of World War II, the United States and 11 allies joined in a mutual defense pact. In any future war in Europe, the USSR would face a united West. The Soviets recognized the threat posed by NATO and tried unsuccessfully to block its formation. The Italian and French communist parties kept those countries in an uproar during the parliamentary debates over the treaty, and Moscow brought intense pressure to bear in several countries in an effort to sabotage the negotiations.

The impasse worsened. The West could not accept Stalin's assurances that he had no territorial ambitions in Europe; no government could afford to repeat the mistakes of the appeasers. But Stalin did not believe that NATO was a purely defensive alliance.

In May 1949 the Western occupation zones were fused to form the quasi-independent Federal Republic of Germany. The Soviets protested vehemently, fearing that West Germany would become a member of the West-

ern alliance. Stalin continued to call for the reunification and neutralization of the whole German nation. The West, however, insisted on free elections and on renegotiation of the temporary frontiers established at Potsdam.

The Soviets rejected both demands. The establishment of a West German state with a strong industrial base and an implacably anti-communist population swollen by the influx of refugees from the East posed a major threat to the USSR. Unable to prevent its creation, the Soviets sought to disrupt it from within and thwart the plans to make it a cornerstone of the Western military alliance. The puppet German Democratic Republic was created in the Soviet zone in October 1949.

In September 1949 TASS announced that Soviet scientists had successfully tested a nuclear weapon. The American monopoly collapsed; Stalin was well on the way to building the kind of military might he believed necessary to ensure the security of the USSR. The power balance, which had seemed to shift to the West, was again in doubt. The West still had a vastly superior delivery capability in the U.S. Air Force, and of course the American lead in nuclear weapons remained an enormous advantage. The British were to produce their own atomic bomb in 1952, the French in 1960. But only a concerted, sustained effort could maintain that lead. If the predictions of some Western politicians of an imminent Soviet surge in military might were exaggerated, there was certainly reason to believe that Western superiority would not last forever.

An even greater shock to the West, especially the United States, was the fall of China to the communists. On October 1, 1949, the People's Republic of China officially came into being. Having defeated the forces of the American favorite, Jiang Jieshi, the communists of Mao Zedong established a strong central government in Beijing.

The Soviet Union had provided very little aid to Mao. The reconstruction of the USSR

had first priority after 1945; moreover, Stalin, whose record as a China expert was dismal, badly miscalculated the Chinese communists' chances of taking power. Mao and his deputy, Zhou Enlai, had nothing but contempt for Stalin's China policy but admired him as leader of the Soviet Union. In any event they desperately needed his aid. In February 1950 Mao flew to Moscow to sign a 30-year Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.

Powerful as they were, the Western democracies, allied in NATO and about to bring West Germany into their circle, felt threatened by the new Sino-Soviet alliance. More than a third of the world was now ruled by communists, and the Soviet Union had the atomic bomb and the Red Army. An armed clash, most likely in Berlin, seemed inevitable.

Fighting erupted not in Europe but in Korea. On June 25, 1950, communist North Korea sent its armed forces south into the Western-backed Republic of Korea. There had been fighting along the border for some months as the two halves of the divided nation tested each other. Negotiations for reunification had broken down, and the country plunged into civil war.

Inspired by Mao's victory, communists throughout Asia had redoubled their efforts to seize power. Moreover, Washington had declared South Korea outside the American defense perimeter, and the American puppet there, Syngman Rhee, suffered a setback in the May 1950 elections. North Korea's Kim Il Sung may therefore have decided independently to grasp the advantage and attack; the political background of the decision has not yet come to light. Recently released archives have proved, however, that Moscow played a substantial role in the conflict itself, supplying the North Koreans and participating in air and ground operations.

The North Koreans drove the South Korean forces and their American advisers to the sea; by

early September their triumph seemed imminent. Then American, South Korean, and other U.N. forces (the United Nations had branded North Korea the aggressor) counter-attacked and drove the North Koreans to the Yalu River, the frontier between Korea and China. That brought hundreds of thousands of Chinese “volunteers” into the conflict, which in the spring of 1951 stabilized into a war of attrition along the thirty-eighth parallel.

In March 1951 the United States conducted thermonuclear tests at Eniwetok and Bikini in the Pacific; the hydrogen bomb would soon be in the American arsenal. The Soviets called for a cease-fire and armistice negotiations in Korea. The talks began on July 8, 1951, and continued with many interruptions for two years. An armistice was finally signed in July 1953. The North Koreans and Chinese came to terms after the new American president, Dwight Eisenhower, bluntly informed them that he was prepared to use nuclear weapons in Korea.

Stalin persuaded North Korea and China to make peace. Mao and his lieutenants had repeatedly denounced the United States as a “paper tiger,” but Stalin had a healthy respect for the American atomic bomb and knew that Eisenhower was serious in his threat. In December 1952 the Soviet dictator told an American journalist he would welcome a meeting with the president-elect and stood ready to help bring peace to Korea. The meeting never took place. Stalin died on March 5, 1953.

## THE WEST AND SOVIET SECURITY

Stalin had defined the political and philosophical conflict of the postwar period in terms and categories more pragmatic Westerners found impossible to fathom. He denounced Western “imperialists” and “warmongers,” threatened to annihilate anyone who opposed him, and insisted that the future

belonged to communism. Yet he regularly proclaimed his hope for peaceful cooperation with the West “in spite of the difference of economic systems and ideologies” and declared such cooperation “unconditionally necessary in the interests of general peace.”

The Soviet dictator perplexed and sometimes frightened the West, but the confusion was mutual. American leaders tended to threaten nuclear destruction of the USSR rather casually. Their conduct in the Berlin crisis of 1948–1949 proved that they did not necessarily mean what they said, and *that* made it more difficult for Eisenhower to end the crisis in Korea.

Attempts to fix blame for the Cold War persuade only the already convinced and inflict today’s politics on yesterday’s dilemmas. Both East and West contributed to the tensions; neither side had a monopoly on virtue or perfidy.

The Soviets made a monumental error in not capitalizing on Western goodwill after World War II. Public opinion in most Western countries was warmly pro-Soviet in 1945; the sufferings and heroic resistance of the Soviet people were universally acknowledged. It is unlikely that any anti-Soviet politician could have survived an election in 1945: Churchill’s defeat was due in considerable measure to the electorate’s conviction that he could not get along with the Russians.

When the Soviet Union failed to respond to signals that the West was ready to continue the wartime cooperation and opted instead for a policy of confrontation, Truman had no choice but to pursue a harsh policy toward the USSR. Stalin had backed him into a corner.

It is also true, however, that the West all too quickly forgot the enormity of the human damage the war inflicted on the USSR. The West, too, knew the sorrow of the death of young soldiers and of defenseless civilians, but the sheer scale of bloodshed in the Soviet Union loomed so very large: for every Western victim of the war, there were 32 Soviet dead.

The Soviet obsession with security was not negotiable. The formulation of a kind of "Stalin Doctrine" in eastern Europe was the inevitable result of the suffering, and it reflected the national resolve to build an invincible military and political defense system.

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## chapter 14

# THE LATE STALIN YEARS

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The Red Army commanders had shaped a brilliant victory. The names of Bagramyan, Chuikov, Konev, Rokossovsky, Tolbukhin, Vasilevsky, Sokolovsky, Vatutin, and Zhukov were now inscribed in the temple of war heroes alongside those of Nevsky and Donskoi, Suvorov and Kutuzov. The prestige of the Red Army eclipsed that of the party and its leader.

That was the trouble: the Communist party had always feared the military. Trotsky had begun the practice of placing “political advisers” throughout the ranks in 1918–1920. Political indoctrination had the same priority as weapons training, and every effort was made to monitor loyalty. The massive purge of 1937 had removed a potential challenge to party leadership. In 1946 Stalin moved to cut the soldiers down to size once more. In February the Worker-Peasant Red Army, which since its birth had defeated all enemies, foreign and

domestic, was renamed the Soviet Army. In March Stalin relieved Marshal Zhukov as commander of Soviet occupation forces in Germany and made him head of ground forces. Zhukov fell still further in June 1946, when he became commander of the Odessa-Ural military region.

### **FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN**

Nine million demobilized Red Army soldiers joined the urban work force, which in 1950 numbered almost 39 million people. In the initial postwar period, production inevitably fell. The 1946 gross industrial product was 17 percent less than that of 1945, only 75 percent of 1940 levels; in 1947 the situation began to improve. Coal production was 57 percent higher in 1950 than in 1940, 75 percent above that of 1945. New natural gas pipelines into Lenin-

grad, Moscow, and Kiev made possible the expansion of industry. Hydroelectric power again flowed from the giant Dneproges station in 1947 after capital repairs; in 1950 that station alone produced more electricity annually than prerevolutionary Russia had consumed.

In all, 6,200 major industrial enterprises were established during the plan, and by 1950 there were some 400,000 engineers in the work force. Those engineers undertook to restore, for example, the chemical industry, in which Russia had always lagged far behind the West. In 1937 the total Soviet production of chemicals was about one-tenth the American; by 1950 the gap had been closed to one-sixth.

Considerable progress came in the machine tool industry. Production had fallen to 38,400 units in 1945 compared with 58,400 in 1940. By 1950 the figure stood at 70,600. The early postwar period saw very little innovation in this field, as in most of Soviet industry; Soviet engineers simply copied or adapted foreign models. Lend-Lease had provided American machine tools during the war, and more or less normal trade continued through most of 1946. When the Cold War took hold, contracts were canceled, trade virtually ceased, and the Soviets were left on their own.

Because production was much more important than innovation, continued reliance on old, foreign machine tools as a starting point for design and development could be tolerated. In a competitive world undergoing the greatest technological revolution in history, this portended disaster, but as long as Stalin was alive, innovation in any field remained risky. The Gensek had initially opposed research into jet propulsion and rocketry and had been slow to approve a crash program to develop atomic energy. There was always the danger he would brand pure research "anti-Soviet."

The persistent industrial-technological lag behind the West dictated that the USSR must continue to give priority to heavy industry.

Light (consumer goods) industry accordingly received short shift from the planners, although in 1946 (and in that year only), because it could reconvert more easily than heavy industry, it actually grew at a faster pace.

The state managed to build or restore 100 million square meters of living space in the cities and to provide 1,119,000 new or restored dwellings in the devastated countryside. This impressive achievement was only a fraction of what was needed.

The new plan aimed at a 27 percent increase over prewar production levels for grain crops and 25 percent for industrial crops, not realistic goals. By 1953, production barely reached 1928 levels (the highest ever), in part because fewer people were engaged in food production. At the beginning of 1946 there were 33 percent fewer collective farmers than in 1940, and the number of able-bodied *men* had declined by 60 percent. Most of the decline was attributable to war deaths and to the return of 9 million demobilized peasant-soldiers not to the farms but to the cities.

The mediocre 1945 harvest yielded 40 percent less than that of 1940. In some important respects this could be blamed on the war, but the 1946 disaster in agriculture had purely natural causes: The worst drought in 50 years struck grain-growing districts from the lower Volga to the Romanian frontier.

Once again the party blamed men for nature's caprice. Kolhoz managers and regional party officials were accused of "inept management" and dismissed. This may have had a certain effect on public opinion, but something concrete had to be done. The party sent thousands of urban communists into the countryside to help with the 1947 planting, released about 2.5 million peasants working in the cities to return to the kolhozes, established a Collective Farm Council, and revised the Collective Farm Statutes. A. A. Andreyev was officially in charge, but he reported to Nikita Khrushchev and Georgi Malenkov. Khrushchev, in particu-

lar, emerged as an agricultural expert in this period. As a result of the reforms he initiated, the number of privately owned cattle reached 30 million in 1949; not since the NEP had the figure been anywhere near that. In the same year peasants and others owned 26.5 million sheep and goats, 7.2 million hogs, about 350 million

1937	1940	1950 (Dec.)	1953	1959	1962
243,500	236,900	126,000 (approx.)	93,300	54,600	40,500

Khrushchev assumed that a bigger farm was more efficient. He merged many failing or marginal kolхозes with more successful ones, rewarded good managers and demoted or otherwise punished unsuccessful ones, and shuffled party cadres in the attempt to find the right combinations.

The larger farms, however, produced less. Peasants who had never been happy as members of a collective were still more alienated as cogs in a bigger organization. The mergers broke up teams in which the members, for better or for worse, knew each other and had worked out a *modus operandi*. Crop rotations were changed after the amalgamations; this, too, had an adverse impact on production. Finally, the state continued to impose an enormous tax burden on the kolхозes in order to finance reconstruction.

The state gouged agriculture to build industry. The farms naturally had to sell their produce to earn money to pay taxes, set at a high level. There was only one buyer for agricultural produce, the state, which paid artificially low prices. On the retail market the state kept prices for staples—flour, bread, cabbage, potatoes, milk—low, but meat, dairy products (except milk), fruit, and other items were sold at high markups that constituted a tax on consumers.

The kolhozniks were poorly paid, badly housed, their medical and educational services inadequate. Already in deep psychological shock because of the loss of so many millions of

fowl. Conservatives attacked this trend and accused Khrushchev of heresy. As long as Stalin was satisfied with the pace of recovery in the countryside, however, he was safe.

A second, less successful innovation involved a drastic reduction in the number of collective farms, as these figures indicate:

young men during the war, morale in the countryside plummeted still lower in the difficult postwar years.

By 1950 agricultural production had barely reached prewar levels; the state always hoped for miracles, which never materialized. The 1946 drought, the confiscatory tax policy, and low morale kept agriculture in an inefficient morass from which it seemed incapable of escaping.

## POSTWAR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Not even their enemies could accuse the communists of cowardice; the party lost about 3 million members during World War II. They regularly volunteered for the most dangerous missions and paid a heavy price. Because of the slaughter, conditions for membership were relaxed early in the war. The party grew from 3.87 million in February 1941 to 5.8 million at the end of the war. More than 75 percent of the July 1945 roster had joined since 1941; between a third and a half were under 35, and three-quarters were under 45. The percentage of women in the party increased from 14.9 in 1941 to 19.2 in October 1952.

The membership was young and the leadership was far from old. Excluding Kalinin, who died in 1946, and Stalin, the average age of Politburo members was only 51.7 in June

1945. The same clique was in power, however—the lackies and toadies who had been with Stalin for at least two decades and the newcomers Khrushchev and Malenkov. The most ambitious courtier, Zhdanov, returned to Moscow after the war to resume work as a secretary of the party Central Committee. Quickly determining that only another CC secretary, Malenkov, stood between him and Stalin, Zhdanov undertook to discredit his rival. He claimed that Malenkov, who had supervised the party and government apparatuses during the war, had neglected ideology.

Early in 1946 Stalin removed Malenkov from the Secretariat and authorized Zhdanov to proceed with an ideological housecleaning. By the middle of the year, Zhdanov controlled the entire ideological network; his position as heir apparent seemed secure. He used his power to put men he trusted into positions on the party's chief ideological journal, *Bolshevik*; the party newspaper, *Pravda*; and the Propaganda and Agitation Administration (Agitprop), formed in 1938.

In March 1946 the Council of People's Commissars was renamed Council of Ministers. Coming a month after Stalin had done away with the name Red Army, this jettison of another symbol of the revolutionary heritage further indicated Stalin's determination to break with the Leninist past. It would not be long before "Politburo" and "Bolshevik" would have to go, too. In the 1946 reorganization, the NKVD, which had been divided into two commissariats in 1943, became the MVD, or ministry of internal affairs. The NKGB, as the secret police had been known 1943–1946, now became the MGB, or ministry of state security.

## ZHDANOVSHCHINA

Stalin himself initiated the postwar cultural-ideological purge known as *Zhdanovshchina* (Zhdanov time) and directed his chief lackey to

pounce on writers and literary journals. The humorist Mikhail Zoshchenko and the poet Anna Akhmatova came under heavy fire as Zhdanov pronounced their works "ideologically harmful" and "steeped in the venom of savage enmity toward Soviet power." The Writers' Union expelled both; they could no longer publish or earn a living.

Zhdanov accused the film directors Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Leonid Trauberg, Leonid Lukov, and Grigori Kozintsev of ideological shortcomings and forced Eisenstein to sign a humiliating confession of "error." Stalin preferred such directors as M. E. Chiaureli, in whose *The Vow* (1946) the actor playing the dictator appeared with a halo.

Composers also felt the sting of Stalin's fury, and Zhdanov denounced Shostakovich, Khachaturyan, Prokofiev, and others for "bourgeois decadence," a concept previously unknown in musicology. The Gensek wanted folk music translated into the classical idiom. He declared in 1935 that he wanted music he could hum; his tastes never changed.

Stalin surprised Zhdanov late in 1946 by criticizing G. F. Aleksandrov's *A History of Western European Philosophy*. Aleksandrov, one of Zhdanov's lieutenants, headed Agitprop, supervised the Writers' Union, and was the leading authority in philosophy. Stalin attacked him for failing to condemn Western philosophy and for taking the "un-Marxist and anti-Soviet" position that Russian philosophers had profited from the works of Western philosophers.

In this period of extreme nationalism, Stalinists put forward the claim that Russians had invented the radio, the light bulb, the airplane, the steam engine, and so forth. Aleksandrov was one of the first condemned for "toadyism toward the West." He had further made the mistake, according to Stalin, of calling Marxism the culmination of Western philosophical thought.

Zhdanov's enemies, notably Beria and Malenkov, now declared that it was *he* who

had become ideologically lax. In June 1947 Zhdanov unleashed a scathing assault on Aleksandrov, but it was too late; the conservative ideologue M. A. Suslov replaced Aleksandrov at Agitprop. Suslov's top two deputies, D. T. Shepilov and L. F. Ilichev, were to play major roles as spokesmen for the conservatives. Suslov reigned supreme in the realm of ideology from 1953 until his death in 1982.

The course of the philosophy debate, more extensive than this account indicates, proved that Zhdanov was not invulnerable. A similar debate in economics had even more serious repercussions. The leading Soviet economist was then Yevgeni Varga, whose 1946 *Changes in the Economy of Capitalism as a Result of the Second World War* became the focal point of a controversy pitting the Zhdanovites against the conservatives. Varga had argued that capitalist governments had acquired a great deal of control over their economies during the war and continued to intervene in them after 1945. Varga implied that the capitalist states, moving in a socialist direction, were less of a threat to the USSR. He also suggested that capitalism might not always suffer periodic crises.

In October 1947, Varga lost his job as the director of a major research institute; two months later the economics journal with which he had been associated ceased to exist. N. A. Voznesensky, a Zhdanov protégé promoted to full member of the Politburo in 1947, directed these moves. Zhdanov died in August 1948 and thus did not witness the end of the economics debate. The following spring, Varga was forced to admit "errors of a cosmopolitan" character, and it seemed that Zhdanov's man had triumphed. But in March 1949 Voznesensky suddenly lost his government and party posts.

## THE LENINGRAD CASE

The spectacular reversal in the fortunes of Zhdanov and his men astonished everyone but those who engineered it. The former heir-

apparent lost control of Agitprop to Mikhail Suslov, now also secretary for ideology on the CC. Aloof from the Beria-Malenkov faction, Suslov stood still further away from the Zhdanov camp, and his rise spelled Zhdanov's fall.

Zhdanov suffered another setback in the break between Stalin and Yugoslavia's Tito. Along with Malenkov he had represented the USSR at the founding of the Cominform in 1947. Although Stalin already regarded Tito with great suspicion, the organization had its headquarters in Belgrade, where the Soviet delegation kept an eye on the Yugoslavs.

The Tito-Stalin quarrel approached the critical stage early in 1948, when delegations from Yugoslavia and Bulgaria came to Moscow. The Bulgarian leader, Georgi Dimitrov, had proposed a merger between his country and Yugoslavia into a Balkan federation; Stalin vigorously opposed the scheme, which had Tito's tentative approval. Tension over this issue arose in Moscow and worsened when the Yugoslav negotiators made it clear that their country would no longer permit Soviet exploitation of its natural resources.

In the midst of the talks the Yugoslav delegates visited Leningrad. Some of them later remarked on the freer atmosphere there, where Zhdanov partisans controlled the party organization.

After the public break with Tito, Stalin accused his erstwhile heir-apparent of having been overly friendly with the Yugoslavs. On June 28, 1948, the Cominform expelled Yugoslavia. Suslov, chief Soviet representative at the meeting, wrote the resolution; Malenkov and Zhdanov also attended, and Zhdanov was never seen in public again.

Zhdanov supporters abounded; scores of high-level officials and hundreds of lesser bureaucrats had tied their careers to his. Their patron's fall from grace left them stranded. Early in 1949 Minister of State Security V. S. Abakumov, a Beria protégé, secretly indicted Zhdanov's chief associates on various trumped-up charges, including treason.

Having abolished the death penalty in May 1947, in January 1950 the rubber-stamp Supreme Soviet, acting on Stalin's direct order, restored it for "spies and traitors." With the new law designed expressly for them in place, the principal victims in what became known as the Leningrad Case were shot.

In the first of a series of disclosures from the Kremlin over the past several decades, Khrushchev revealed in 1954 that Beria, Abakumov, and Malenkov had concocted the entire affair. They sold it to Stalin, who, as still later revelations indicated, proved an eager buyer.

The most prominent victim, Voznesensky, had won a Stalin Prize in 1948. By early the next year, however, the anti-Zhdanov conspirators had persuaded Stalin of the man's disloyalty. Voznesensky's crime was to have cautiously suggested a modest economic reform. Stalin stripped him of his posts in March 1949; shortly thereafter Beria brought him to trial on a charge of mishandling state secrets. Various "leaks" about the absurdity of the case reached high-ranking officials—including Khrushchev—who detested Beria and Malenkov; those officials demanded and won dismissal of the charges.

Voznesensky remained at liberty, worked on a new book, even dined with Stalin in the Kremlin in October 1949. The day after the dinner, the secret police arrested him. Held incommunicado for nearly a year, he was executed without trial on September 30, 1950.

The second chief victim, A. A. Kuznetsov, had been deputy chief of the Leningrad party organization. When Zhdanov went to Moscow in 1946, Kuznetsov went along and became a CC secretary; he also served on the Orgburo and in his two jobs oversaw the work of the security organs—Beria's special fief. Beria obviously would not willingly tolerate any interference, least of all from Zhdanov's men, but Stalin himself had appointed Kuznetsov. Not until

February 1949 did Beria succeed in removing him. He too was shot without a trial.

Aleksei Kosygin, who had held several important Leningrad, RSFSR, and national posts and later became chairman of the Council of Ministers (premier) in the troika and Brezhnev years, was related to Kuznetsov by marriage. A full member of the Politburo since 1948, he served as both deputy premier and minister of finance. Somehow he survived Kuznetsov's fall.

Partial "rehabilitation" of the innocent victims began in the Khrushchev era and continued, at a greatly reduced pace, even after Khrushchev's fall. Not until the spring of 1988, however, did the party officially reinstate—posthumously, of course—Voznesensky, Kuznetsov, and two dozen other leading Zhdanovites.

## TROFIM LYSENKO

One of the most sinister scientific discussions of modern times took place in August 1948 at the Lenin Agricultural Academy in Moscow. The president of the academy, Trofim Lyenko, brought a decade-long debate over biology and genetics to a head at a meeting of the membership. The controversy had not been conducted in scientific journals or in meetings among genuine scientists, for Lyenko had no standing in reputable circles. It was played out instead in *Literaturnaya gazeta* (*Literary Gazette*), the voice of the Writers' Union, and in philosophical publications. The Beria-Malenkov faction had taken over this publication, which frequently intervened in matters far removed from belles lettres.

The philosopher B. M. Kedrov, a vigorous opponent of the dogmatists, had published a book on Engels and natural science. Party mystagogues attacked him for failing to recognize a "Soviet science" distinct from and superior to that of the West.

At a time when Western scientists were on the verge of unlocking the mysteries of DNA, their Soviet counterparts were mired in an absurd dispute over Lamarckism and the “political significance” of the discoveries of the Russian plant breeder Ivan Michurin. Lysenko correctly read the postwar political climate and put forward a “two biologies” position. The Weismannist-Mendelist-Morganist, “bourgeois” variety stood in opposition to “Michurinist, soviet”—therefore, proletarian—biology. Soviet scientists who believed in the existence of genes or in the chromosome theory of heredity were unpatriotic and pro-Western.

At the 1948 Lenin Agricultural Academy meeting, Lysenko delivered his report and waited patiently for his opponents to declare themselves. Most of the real scientists attacked him. Then he sprung his trap, revealing that the party CC had already sided with him. He had Stalin’s support; no one could be against him and survive. His opponents capitulated.

In 1948 Lysenko was content to have his opponents dismissed from their positions and denied the right to work in their specialties. There was no blood purge, and only two leading scientists were arrested, but hundreds of professors, senior researchers, and graduate students lost their jobs. Genetics research came to a complete halt and the field collapsed; even the fruit flies used in research were destroyed. The purge also swept through biology, and in related fields such as medicine, anti-Lysenkoites were hounded from their jobs. Agricultural institutes endured rigorous ideological inspection.

## THE DEPORTATIONS

The Russians gave Stalin relatively little trouble; his worst problems involved peoples on the frontiers. The further an ethnic group lived from Moscow or the more recently it had become a member of the Soviet family, the more problems it seemed to pose.

In the early 1930s several minorities were resettled far from their homelands, but the most extensive deportations came as World War II was winding down. In November 1943 the entire population (70,000) of the Karachai Autonomous Region was deported to Kazakhstan and Central Asia because some of the Karachai (a Turkic-speaking people of the northern Caucasus) had collaborated with the Germans. But 9,000 Karachai civilians had been killed in the first five days of the Nazi occupation of their homeland, and at the time of the 1943 deportations virtually all able-bodied adult males were in the Red Army.

At the end of December 1943 the population (about 95,000) of the Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) in the northeastern Caucasus was deported to Central Asia and Siberia. Some Kalmyks, a Mongol, Buddhist people, had worked for the Germans, but most were loyal to the Soviet state. That did not save them.

The most controversial deportation took place in the Crimea. The Crimean Tatars, a Turkic-Mongol people, had lived on the peninsula since the thirteenth century. They had their own ASSR, and they numbered about 250,000 in 1939. In World War II a few Crimean Tatars collaborated with the Germans, some because they hated the communists, others out of fear. Still others hoped that German flirtation with the pan-Turkic movement would lead to the establishment of an independent Crimean state.

In the Crimea, as everywhere, the overwhelming majority of the population was loyal. Nevertheless, in May 1944 about 200,000 Crimean Tatars were deported to “special settlements” in Central Asia and Kazakhstan and their ASSR was abolished. The government sent thousands of new settlers, mostly Russians and Ukrainians, into the peninsula, which became part of the RSFSR until February 1954, when Khrushchev transferred it to the Ukrainian SSR.

The Chechens and Ingush, Caucasian-

speaking peoples of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR in the southeastern Caucasus, were deported in 1944; together they numbered about 400,000. The same fate befell most of the 145,000 Kabardinians (Caucasian-speaking) and 38,000 Balkars (Turkic-speaking) of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR in the south Caucasus.

In 1956 Nikita Khrushchev admitted that none of the deportations was motivated by military considerations. At the time they took place, the Germans were in retreat and Soviet lines secure. Khrushchev called the treatment of the Karachai, Balkars, and Kalmyks “crude violations of the basic Leninist principles of the nationality policy of the Soviet Union.” Between 1956 and 1967 the government withdrew the charge of treason and collaboration from the deported peoples, most of whom were allowed to return to their homelands. The Volga Germans and Crimean Tatars, however, have never fully regained their prewar civil rights.

### **LIFE IN THE LATE STALIN ERA**

The 1945 and 1946 harvests proved inadequate and shortages continued. Good weather came in 1947, bringing excellent crops. Food rationing ended in December, as did rationing of a variety of other consumer items, most of which, however, remained in short supply. A currency reform the same month exchanged old rubles for new at the rate of 10:1. The reasons given for the reform were superficially plausible: to wipe out the ill-gotten gains of speculators, reduce the amount of money in circulation, and eliminate nazi counterfeit money. It was indeed desirable to reduce the money supply and curb inflation, but no one could explain how speculators could have flourished under Stalin, and the amount of counterfeit money in circulation was insignificant. The “reform” wiped out the savings of millions of people. To sweeten the bitter pill

the government granted price reductions averaging 10 percent on food. The cost of basic foodstuffs was set artificially low as the state subsidized the urban consumer at the expense of the kolhozniiks.

The 1947–1950 price reductions appeared to confirm the government’s claim that the national income had risen 64 percent between 1940 and 1950 and that productivity under the fourth Five-Year Plan had increased substantially. Even more dramatic “confirmation” came with the February 18, 1950, decree putting the USSR on the gold standard: the ruble would henceforth be worth 0.22168 grams of pure gold. This had no meaning outside the realm of propaganda; the ruble did not become a convertible currency.

Except for the steel mills, the Moscow subway, and the secret police, it was difficult to find anything that functioned efficiently. Retail stores were a nightmare, with insufficient supplies of poor-quality merchandise served up by surly clerks; old apartments badly needed repair, and new ones were so poorly constructed as to constitute instant slums; the clothing industry turned out garments suitable for storing potatoes; shoes sometimes disintegrated after a few wearings; even in Moscow and Leningrad it was almost impossible to find a laundry. Restaurants provided merely a warm place to eat unappetizing food.

There were few private automobiles. Only high-ranking civilian and military officials and a few privileged people in the arts and the scientific establishment had them. The state began to produce a small Volkswagen-like Pobeda (Victory) after the war; plant managers, kolhoz managers, and other minor functionaries drove it. Middle-level officials drove the ZiM (Molotov Factory), and at the top, the “servants of the people” rode in splendid comfort in the ZiS (Stalin Factory) limousine, styled after American Packards of the 1930s.

Consumer goods in general received short shrift under the fourth plan, and there was no

provision for significant change in the fifth (1951–1955). The party was of course aware of the regime's shortcomings in providing for the material well-being of the citizenry. The overwhelming majority of members had the same low standard of living as the population at large; only promotion to middle-level positions enabled party officials to enjoy the good life. There was little run-of-the-mill venality in Stalin's Russia; even petty thievery was severely punished.

The urban population increased from 60.6 million in 1941 to 71.4 million in 1951. To house it, the plan provided about 102 million square meters of living space (9.5 m<sup>2</sup> per person). But because the prewar housing shortage had been so great and so many dwellings destroyed or damaged in the war, the situation remained desperate. Three generations often lived together in cramped quarters; divorced couples frequently continued to share a room because there was nowhere to go.

A massive construction program in Moscow alleviated the situation there only slightly. Several enormous structures in "Stalin gothic" style went up in the capital. One housed Moscow University, another the ministry of foreign affairs; some were used as apartment houses. The government newspaper *Izvestiya* compared these buildings to those in the United States:

Our tall buildings have nothing in common with foreign skyscrapers. The American skyscraper is the unnatural grimace of a capitalist city, the monstrous expression of hopeless contradictions, the naked symbol of private, animal egoism. On the other hand, the multiple-storied buildings of Moscow are the highest expression of our planned city construction and the free, rational development of our cities.

The people who lived in those tall buildings, like everyone else in the USSR, were subject to laws and regulations that sought to direct every aspect of their lives. To spur population

growth, replace wartime losses, and provide the labor force of the future, a July 1944 decree nullified common-law marriages and made divorce more difficult. This was intended to strengthen the family; the state assumed that couples who were merely living together would, as good citizens, comply with the law. In fact, however, many males—both married and unmarried—seized the confusion of the war years and the period right after the war to abandon their families. In 1950 the press discussed the worsening problem of fathers who successfully avoided paying child support—25 percent of the father's wages for the first child, 50 percent for two or more children.

Labor was exceedingly scarce, and factory managers often hired workers whose personal documents were open to a variety of interpretations. (The law stipulated that one's entire work record, entered in a special document mandatory for all adults, had to be inspected at each change of jobs.) As the postwar economy stabilized, and as party and government cracked down on managers who failed to enforce labor regulations, the problem slowly began to abate.

A complicating factor was the tax placed on single adults and childless married couples after the war. The state wanted to encourage marriage and childbearing; unhappy couples sought divorce. Mothers—almost always granted custody—demanded financial support from ex-husbands, who resented child-support payments and tried to avoid them. Many fathers were caught when they presented their children's birth certificates at the workplace to avoid paying the "childless" tax.

In 1943 the state abolished coeducation in primary and secondary schools. This was intended to improve discipline, which had eased during the war; it also reflected the Victorian prudery of Stalinist Russia. The new system was not popular. Ninety-eight percent of the letters to *Literaturnaya gazeta* on the subject in

1950 favored a return to coeducation, which in practice most schools had kept. The schools were terribly overcrowded; most operated two shifts, and except in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, few even tried segregation by sex. Separate education ended in 1954.

Special education for the handicapped, neglected in the first three decades of Soviet rule, improved only slowly after the war, which added several million people to the ranks of the blind, the deaf, the physically mutilated, the psychologically tormented. The government's inability to help the war-wounded and the handicapped adequately reflected not a lack of goodwill but rather inexperience and lack of funds.

Especially tragic was the fate of those who came out of the war with shattered minds. Those who could not cope with life on their own and did not have families were simply warehoused in hospitals around the country. Psychologically damaged people who lived with their families often proved an unbearable burden.

The state did not make sufficient provision for damaged minds and did not always move quickly to restore shattered bodies. A September 1949 letter to *Pravda* complained that artificial legs did not fit. Many double amputees affixed casters to a small wooden platform on which they propelled themselves by pushing against the ground—a common sight for three decades after the war.

The plight of the handicapped received almost no attention in the media, which had the task of reporting only good news, the sort the state wanted people to read and hear. The media did, however, report the “crimes” of Stalin's victims as a heavy-handed warning to the citizenry.

In 1950, 7,700 newspapers had a combined circulation of more than 33 million. They, like radio and television, did not employ journalists in the Western sense but rather publicists who reported official propaganda.

In the infancy of television, in May 1950 Moscow had service to the 7,845 sets in the city, and then only a few hours a day, four days a week. Television came to Leningrad in 1951, Kiev the following year. By 1963 the number of stations had grown to 418, and the sets more reliable and widely available.

## WOMEN IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

The state only slowly came to the aid of women, on whom enormous practical—to say nothing of psychological—burdens fell as a result of the death of millions of young men in the war. In 1949 the government proudly revealed that more than 100,000 women in kolhozes were brigade (team) leaders and managers. Behind this statistic, however, lay the brutal truth that many kolhozes were run exclusively by women because the men had not returned from the war. Lack of machinery forced women to perform backbreaking labor.

The same situation existed in urban areas. Female construction gangs and road crews remained a common sight into the 1990s. Women performed heavy labor in the factories, drove trucks, laid bricks, and worked in the mines. Most urban employed women, whether blue- or white-collar, worked the same hours as men, 48 per week. Those who were married had to do housework, shop, and care for the children in their “spare” time; Russian men traditionally shunned these tasks.

By 1949, 700 women had won the title of Hero of Socialist Labor, the highest civilian award. Another 237 had won Stalin Prizes in various fields. About 44 percent of all white-collar workers with a higher education were women; the percentage was much higher among those who had only a secondary education. Women continued to dominate the medical profession, at least in numerical terms; 75–80 percent of general practitioners

were women. Men remained in control of prestigious branches such as surgery, they dominated research institutes, and on the political side of the profession (certification boards, hospital and research administration, the ministry of health) women had limited influence.

Male domination of medical power centers accounts only in part for the failure to address the matter of birth control in an enlightened manner. More significant was the state's desire to increase the population. Women who did not wish to carry a pregnancy to term were left to their own devices. Contraception was an area most physicians ignored, as did the state. The population rose slowly after the war, but not at the rate the state desired.

Women's needs in the consumer area were frequently ignored. Dresses were badly cut and the colors drab; it was almost impossible to find an attractive pair of shoes. Underwear of coarse fabric usually came in two sizes, small and extremely large. Sanitary napkins were unknown. Cosmetics were few and of poor quality. After Stalin's death, the black market manufacture and sale of cosmetics became profitable.

Of the 1,339 delegates elected to the Supreme Soviet in February 1946, 177 were women. By 1949, 1,700 women were serving in the supreme soviets of the constituent republics and autonomous republics; half a million were members of local soviets. Women deputies had no more power than their male counterparts. Real power lay in the party hierarchy, where women occupied only a few token positions.

A handful of women married foreigners stationed in the USSR during World War II. After the victory such marriages were still tolerated, although the state discouraged them. In February 1947, however, a decree forbade Soviet citizens to marry foreigners, even foreign communists. Citizens who saw foreigners socially were liable to arrest and deportation to the

Gulag under Section 6 of Article 58 of the Criminal Code: Contacts Leading to Suspicion of Espionage.

### **"ROOTLESS COSMOPOLITANS" AND THE "DOCTORS' PLOT"**

Drawing on the anti-Semitism that had long flourished in eastern Europe, Stalin decided that the time had come to turn on the Jews. In the United Nations in 1947–1948 his representatives had backed the creation of Israel, but as the Cold War hardened he came to see this as a mistake.

In 1948 the secret police murdered the director (and noted actor) of the Moscow Jewish Theatre, Shlomo Mikhoels (Vovsi), on Stalin's personal order. Beria claimed that he had consorted with enemies of the USSR. During the war, as one of the leaders of the government-sponsored Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Mikhoels had visited the United States to raise funds. In 1948 the secret police declared that he had become an agent of the Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish organization whose mission was to resettle the surviving European Jews after the war. Mikhoels and several other innocent victims won posthumous "rehabilitation" in April 1953.

Early in 1949 the Soviet press attacked an "anti-patriotic group of theatre critics," describing them as "rootless cosmopolitans." This term immediately became a code phrase for Jews in general and Zionists in particular. In August 1952, 24 Jewish poets, writers, actors, and intellectuals were sentenced to 25 years in the Gulag after a secret "trial" convicted them of treason. These talented young men were the flower of Soviet Jewish culture: Itzik Feffer, David Hofshateyn, Leyb Kvitko, Peretz Markish. Their crime was to be Jewish. Ministry of State Security (MGB) executioners shot them all in the Lubyanka cellars. In his poem "Day Grows Darker," Kvitko had written,

Let him at least note,  
That my heart was bloody young,  
That strong, like fear, was my will to live,  
Strong and crazed,  
Like my final day.

Not content to decimate the cultural intelligentsia, the Stalinists turned on Jews in the medical profession. M. D. Ryumin, deputy head of the MGB, concocted what became known as the “Doctors’ Plot.”

In the autumn of 1952, Lydia Timashuk, an obscure radiologist in the Kremlin Clinic, accused two superiors of having deliberately misread Zhdanov’s electrocardiogram, thus hastening his death. With Zhdanov long dead, the secret police could safely lament his passing—like that of Kirov, Gorky, Ordzhonikidze, and many others—and even use it to settle new accounts.

Unquestionably with the approval of higher authority, Ryumin used Timashuk’s belated testimony to arrest a number of Kremlin Clinic physicians on grounds of having plotted the medical murder of senior officials including Stalin. The spouses of the accused also went to prison, and their children lost their jobs and their standing in party and Komsomol. Seven of the nine who were originally accused were Jewish; the security organs claimed that the Joint Distribution Committee and American intelligence had masterminded the plot.

MGB inquisitioners obtained several “confessions” through torture. In January 1953 Timashuk received the Order of Lenin and a 100,000-ruble cash award.

The USSR broke diplomatic relations with Israel in February 1953. An “anti-Zionist” campaign that clings to life in the 1990s had begun.

## NINETEENTH PARTY CONGRESS

In an ominous rebuke to Beria, who retained control over the MGB although he technically did not head it, *Pravda* criticized the secret po-

lice for not exposing the Doctors’ Plot earlier. Other top leaders felt Stalin’s cold breath: Molotov could not prevent the arrest of his wife on trumped-up spy charges; Kalinin; Andreyev; Budyonny; Mikoyan; and Aleksandr Poskrebyshev, chief of Stalin’s personal secretariat, were equally powerless in similar situations. Malenkov suffered a setback in late 1949, when Stalin transferred Khrushchev from Kiev to Moscow and made him a secretary of the CC and leader of the Moscow party organization.

The Nineteenth CPSU Congress, the first in 13 years, met in Moscow in October 1952, a dispirited meeting that reflected anxiety over the anticipated purge. Two-thirds of the delegates were over 40, people who had risen to power over the bodies of the Great Terror’s victims; now they too might find their own way to the Gulag.

Stalin had delivered the main report at every congress since 1924. But this time, at 73 a mere shadow of his former self, he merely sat alone in the first row behind the rostrum, a small, gray-haired old man on whom every eye focused.

Despite his reverses, Malenkov remained the only man at Stalin’s right hand in both party and government and thus he gave the main speech outlining the party’s accomplishments since the 1939 meeting and its plans for the future. Malenkov pronounced the grain problem solved, the perennial agricultural crisis ended; Stalin alone could have sanctioned such fanciful claims.

The Nineteenth Congress rid the party of most reminders of a Bolshevik heritage Stalin detested because his role in it had been, all things considered, less than heroic. The name All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) now gave way to Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Having executed so many members of the old party, Stalin erased the word *Bolshevik* from the Soviet political lexicon.

Khrushchev revealed new party statutes which inter alia renamed the Politburo the

Presidium and provided for its fourfold increase to 25 full members and 11 candidates. Newcomers would swamp Stalin's old cronies, who could be made to disappear.

An enlarged CC was to have 125 full members and 111 candidates. The new statutes abolished the Orgburo and transferred its functions to the Central Committee Secretariat, which henceforth became the second most powerful—after the Presidium—party body. The Control Commission, the Rabkrin successor, which monitored compliance with party directives and generally acted as a watchdog agency, would report directly to the CC. Party conferences were abolished, and the general secretary was redesignated first secretary.

Stalin spoke only at the last session to welcome the delegates of foreign communist and worker parties. He offered his opinion that the world bourgeoisie had abandoned the fictions of democratic freedoms and national independence; thus, there now existed just two camps in the world, the socialist and the monopoly-capitalist.

The ex-seminary student had always seen politics and life in general in stark terms. As he neared his end, the forces of darkness loomed ever larger, the one threat with which he could not contend. All his life he had sought isolation; now, we may suppose, he realized that fate had cursed him by granting his wish. He could only lash out at the traitors and take them down with him.

## DEATH OF A GENSEK

On December 21, 1952, Stalin celebrated or at least pondered his seventy-third birthday privately. Only a brief mention appeared in the press, nothing like the sickening adulation three years earlier.

Rumors of an impending purge filled the air as Muscovites speculated on the longevity of Beria, many of whose hirelings in Geor-

gia—his homeland—had fallen from grace earlier in the year. January 1953 saw the arrest of Aleksandr Poskrebyshev, and in February Beria told Molotov of his fear that Stalin would kill them all.

On February 7 the Argentinian ambassador met with Stalin and afterward reported nothing out of the ordinary about the dictator's appearance or manner. Ten days later the Indian envoy found the Gensek sketching wolves. Russian peasants, Stalin said, knew how to deal with wolves: they killed them. The wolves knew this and conducted themselves appropriately.

Three daily shifts of several hundred men each guarded Stalin's dacha at Kuntsevo, a Moscow suburb. When the Gensek was alone in his rooms there, no one had the authority to disturb him. Late Sunday evening, March 1, 1953, the chief of the guard called Presidium members to report that Generalissimo had not rung for his dinner. Several leaders rushed to Kuntsevo and found Stalin unconscious on the floor. The new Kremlin physicians were summoned; they decided to treat the patient at the dacha rather than try to move him.

The first public mention of Stalin's illness came on March 4, when TASS announced that the leader had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. The prognosis was uncertain. The team of ten physicians led by the minister of public health twice applied leeches to draw blood. The ministrations were in vain. Although he regained consciousness a couple of times, Stalin was paralyzed and could not speak. According to the official version, he died on March 5 at 9:50 P.M.

All ten attending physicians—the fate of other Kremlin doctors very much on their minds—signed the death certificate. The Presidium's Secretariat telephoned political and military leaders around the country. Only then, at 4:00 A.M. on March 6, did the second best-known voice in the USSR, that of Radio

Moscow's Yuri Levitan, broadcast the news that the dictator was dead.

The party issued a communiqué short on grief. The Presidium insisted on "high political vigilance" in the "irreconcilable struggle against domestic and foreign enemies." The leaders decreed three days of mourning; there had been five for Lenin. State radio played funeral music constantly, interrupting it only to broadcast tributes.

The body was removed to Moscow, embalmed, then taken to the Hall of Columns in Union House. Here Lenin had lain in state 29 years earlier, here his colleagues had been condemned to death on Stalin's orders.

The communiqué had warned against "disorder and panic," but only Beria among the top officials had any plan for controlling crowds and incidentally for positioning himself to seize power. He moved several secret police divisions—including tank units—into striking distance of Red Square.

Thousands of regular police and army troops were no match for the millions of citizens who tried to reach the center of the city. Many people were sobbing uncontrollably; hundreds were trampled to death in the densely packed throngs that stretched 10–15 kilometers in all directions from Union House.

Khrushchev organized the funeral. He had Stalin's body, which would be placed on permanent (until 1961) exhibition in the mausoleum next to Lenin, dressed in a military uniform bedecked with medals, and placed on a raised bier surrounded by flowers. An honor guard stood at attention.

On March 9 pallbearers Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Nikolai Bulganin (appointed to the Politburo in 1948), and Mikoyan carried the body the few hundred meters to the Lenin Mausoleum. The first three delivered funeral orations; only Molotov displayed emotion.

Stalin was laid to rest beside the man whose legacy he had claimed nearly three decades earlier. For nearly two of those decades he had wielded more power than anyone in history. No one would ever be able to count his victims. He was the greatest mass murderer of all time, yet even in the Gulag there were prisoners who mourned him, convinced that he had not known of the horrors perpetrated in his name. Stalin took the uncertainty out of life, and millions of people praised him for replacing their many little worries with one big fear.

For a variety of complex historical reasons, Russian society had failed to evolve a constitutional system that could calm the collective fear of chaos, a fear regarded as irrational only by peoples whose own untidy origins have been banished to the outermost corners of the collective memory. In the centuries after the disintegration of the Kievan state, a catastrophe followed by the still greater horror of the Mongol invasion and 250-year occupation, Russia equated salvation with the rule of a powerful prince. None was more powerful, none more terrible, than the Russified Georgian Ossete who held a great nation in thrall for a quarter of a century.

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# chapter 15

## THE THAW

No healthy political organism could grow in Stalin's awesome shadow. After Stalin came nothingness—hence the mediocrity of most of his heirs-apparent.

On March 10, 1953, *Pravda* featured a photograph of Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Malenkov on page one, an old photo altered to crop out other officials. This crude attempt to place Malenkov on equal footing with the giants of the international communist movement backfired. Four days later Malenkov “requested” relief from his major party assignments “in order to concentrate on governmental duties.” He remained chairman of the Council of Ministers, but Khrushchev replaced him as first secretary of the party. It seemed that a new troika was in place: Malenkov in charge of the government, Beria of security, Khrushchev as party leader.

The emergence of Khrushchev occasioned some surprise because he was known to have

sharp differences with several members of the new Presidium. That he nevertheless became party leader, the post from which Lenin and Stalin had derived their power, indicated that he had substantial support in the Central Committee and the party apparatus.

With Malenkov as head of government and Voroshilov titular head of state, the high-visibility posts remained in the hands of Stalinist party regulars; political cadres around the country were reassured. No one anticipated innovations. The Presidium proclaimed collectivity the “highest principle of party leadership.” Few people took this seriously; Stalin had said the same thing in 1924.

The sudden ouster of Malenkov from his party post confused the issue. Khrushchev did not appear to be of dictator caliber. As for Beria, when he failed to mount a coup d'état immediately after Stalin's death he was finished. Molotov deserved the “finest file clerk in Russia” label

Lenin had pinned on him in 1920; Kaganovich seemed unlikely to step into Stalin's shoes, not least because he was Jewish; Voroshilov richly merited his reputation as a drunken fool; no one considered the other members of the Presidium—Mikoyan, Bulganin, Saburov, Perukhin—anything but run-of-the-mill lackeys.

## FIRST STEPS OF THE NEW REGIME

The niggardliness of the "Voroshilov amnesty" of March 27, 1953, marking the changing of the guard, reflected the new leaders' devotion to Stalinism: of the 10–12 million people then in prisons and the Gulag, only about 4,000 received their liberty. The amnesty did not extend to political prisoners. The sole well-known "political" among those released, Polina Zhemchuzhina, owed her good fortune to the fact that Vyacheslav Molotov was her husband. Molotov and Beria met her at the railway station on her return to Moscow. Beria gave her a bouquet of flowers and a box of chocolates, and her husband cried.

Price reductions on consumer items had a far greater impact on the Soviet people than the amnesty. On April 1 the state reduced prices for potatoes, cabbage, and fruit by 50 percent; bread, flour, cereals, rice, and legumes dropped 10 percent; meat and meat products, 15 percent. The Council of Ministers also announced cuts in the prices for clothing, shoes, and other consumer goods and declared that Soviet citizens would save 46 billion rubles annually. Unlike previous selective and relatively meaningless price reductions, this one, directed by Malenkov, had substance. Conscious of his tenuous position, Malenkov gambled on the virtually unknown tactic of appealing to public opinion.

Stalin had denied the people any rewards after the war and had continued to emphasize defense spending and heavy industry. His last published work, *Economic Problems of Socialism*

*in the USSR*, had defended this policy, and he had executed the would-be reformer Voznesensky. Malenkov could hardly go against Stalin's teachings, but he could try to carve out a position between Stalinist priorities and those of younger, reform-minded communists who called for improvement in the standard of living. With this "middle way," he claimed the country could maintain the pace in heavy industry and defense and still put more consumer goods on the market.

A so-called "steel eater" (priority to heavy industry), Nikita Khrushchev did not at first challenge Malenkov. In the economic sphere, Khrushchev devoted himself to agriculture, the area in which he was allegedly an expert. The price cuts of April 1953 had his support and indeed that of every Presidium member except Molotov.

One of the strongest advocates of courting public opinion was Beria. Keenly aware of his security-organs stigma and unable to seize power by force, he took up Malenkov's economic arguments and attempted to make them his own. Now head of the recombined (March 1953) ministry of internal affairs and state security, he sought to emphasize his non-police functions and reassure party members that he was a decent fellow.

The act fooled no one. On April 4 the government branded the Doctors' Plot a fabrication, released and reinstated the doctors, and denounced Timashuk for her false testimony. This signaled to party cadres that there would be no general purge and constituted a warning to Beria and Malenkov—the anti-Zhdanovites—that other manufactured scandals, certainly including the Leningrad Case, would come under scrutiny.

## FALL OF BERIA

On April 6 a *Pravda* editorial blamed the Doctors' Plot on former Minister of State Security S. D. Ignatyev and his deputy, M. D. Ryumin.

These were Stalin's men, not Beria's; Beria may well have breathed a sigh of relief. And he probably convinced himself that this ominous notice in the same issue of the party newspaper did not apply to him:

Nobody will be permitted to violate Soviet law. Every worker, every collective farmer, and every Soviet intellectual can work confidently and in peace, knowing that his civil rights are reliably guarded by Soviet socialist law.

The citizen of the great Soviet state can be confident that his rights, guaranteed by the USSR constitution, will be solemnly preserved and defended by the Soviet government.

Pious assurances of the sanctity of the infamous 1936 "Stalin" constitution had appeared with great regularity over the years. This one, however, alongside the admission that a recent "conspiracy" had been concocted by the secret police, indicated that a purge of the *purgers* was in the offing. Exposure of the Doctors' Plot would not satisfy the party's determination to seek out and punish at least some of those who had tormented its members. The admission that the Kremlin physicians had been framed by the secret police indicated that the party intended to take control of the organization.

Beria applauded the arrest of Ignatyev and Ryumin, confident his own tracks were hidden. He was further lulled into a sense of security by his success in restoring some of his friends to their posts in the Georgian party and secret police bureaucracies.

On June 28, 1953, *Izvestiya* mentioned Beria's name in a routine dispatch that gave no hint of any change in his status. That same evening he was arrested.

The news was not immediately made public. For several days the Presidium waited, fearing that Beria's disappearance might automatically trigger a secret police attempt to free him and install him as dictator. No such attempt materialized.

On July 9 a meeting of about 2,000 key party workers took place in Union House in Moscow. Khrushchev and other officials denounced Beria as an "enemy of the party and the state" and revealed that he had been arrested and relieved of all official functions. The party faithful learned that the deposed minister had acted illegally and arbitrarily, sabotaged the food supply, tried to place his ministry above the party and government, and interfered detrimentally in the economy. The Presidium also called Beria a "bourgeois-nationalist deviationist" who had tried to pit nationality against nationality in the USSR and a "bourgeois degenerate and agent of international imperialism." This indictment of a man who had been exceptionally close to Stalin for nearly 15 years was published on July 10.

Several high-ranking officials in Beria's ministry went to prison, as did some of their counterparts in the republics. A five-month investigation uncovered a record of Beria's personal crimes, of a sexual nature, as well as an avalanche of information about the operation of the Gulag system. Khrushchev and other top officials, like Germans who claimed never to have heard of the SS or the death camps, professed shock. The indictment did not cite Beria's orchestration of the Katyn atrocity.

The state tried Beria and five of his closest associates on December 17–22 under the Kirov Law—really Stalin's personal decree—of December 1, 1934, that is, without being present or represented by counsel. Marshal I. S. Konev presided. The press reported only that the accused had made use of "strictly forbidden methods of conducting investigations" and had "falsified court proceedings and accused completely innocent persons of state crimes." Communist party complicity was not mentioned. On Christmas Day, 1953, the nation learned that the defendants had been convicted and shot.

## AFTER BERIA

Because the Presidium believed them implicated to some extent in Beria's crimes, the commandant of the Kremlin, the military commandant of Moscow, and the commander-in-chief of the Moscow military district were all dismissed. It was not clear where the purge would end.

One of his most notorious henchmen and a few underlings were gone, but the dead Stalin remained a presence in Soviet politics. His name appeared regularly in the press, which hailed him as the "great continuer of Lenin's cause." On the first anniversary of his death *Pravda* praised his war record and leadership in the purges. No one seemed to have noticed that six weeks earlier, speaking on the anniversary of *Lenin's* death, Khrushchev had not mentioned Stalin.

In July 1954 M. D. Ryumin was tried and shot for his role in fabricating the Doctors' Plot. In December 1954 former Minister of State Security V. S. Abakumov and five of his associates went on trial for concocting the Leningrad Case. Abakumov and three others were convicted and shot; two defendants received sentences of 25 and 15 years.

Testimony in the Abakumov trial implicated only the late Beria among the higher-ups, but Malenkov's role in the affair could not remain hidden. The party had repeatedly been decimated by purges, of which the Leningrad Case was the last, during the Stalin years. Unfortunately for Malenkov, Stalin had died soon after that episode. Survivors among Zhdanov's friends were free to seek vengeance.

Nikita Khrushchev led the Central Committee faction that successfully argued for putting Ryumin and Abakumov on trial. The Malenkov-Molotov "wing," a very loose coalition on this issue, took the opposite line, pleading the shopworn case against washing dirty linen in public. This argument prevailed in

the Presidium, but Khrushchev won a majority in the CC.

At the funeral of Andrei Vyshinsky in November 1954, Molotov spoke for party conservatives. Over the corpse of the chief inquisitor, he said,

His brilliant speeches in defense of Soviet legality and his accusations, which we all remember, against the enemies of the Soviet state, against saboteurs and subversive foreign agents and against traitorous groups of Trotskyites and right-wingers, were a great and unforgettable service to the soviet people.

Vyshinsky would indeed long be remembered, but not in the way Molotov suggested. The Abakumov trial, the very existence of which constituted an indictment of all that Vyshinsky and Molotov stood for, went forward as Khrushchev and his supporters on the CC had demanded.

## AGRICULTURE AND POLITICS

In the spring of 1953 Khrushchev fought successfully to change the way the peasants were taxed. Taxes replaced levies in kind on privately owned cattle and other farm animals, fruit trees, beehives, and so forth, and the state agreed to purchase the products of the private sector at favorable prices. The party thus gave the peasants some incentives, and they responded dramatically. The agricultural situation improved, as did peasant morale.

At a special plenum on agriculture in September 1953, Khrushchev persuaded his CC colleagues to reduce taxes on individual gardens and farm animals still further. The tax on cows and pigs was abolished altogether, and the state encouraged blue- and white-collar workers to keep animals and maintain small gardens where possible. These gardens and the household plots of the peasants were limited to 0.25 hectare (0.6 acre), on which the owner

could keep a cow, two pigs, a goat, fowl, beehives, and so on. This private sector flourished and supplied the cities with fresh vegetables and other products which they otherwise would have had difficulty obtaining. The relaxation of controls on the peasants helped avert a crisis in 1954. The private plots (less than 2 percent of the arable land was involved) alone could not, however, solve the agricultural problems that had plagued the country since the birth of the Soviet regime.

In an attempt to deal with these problems the September plenum injected large sums of money into the countryside. The state raised the prices paid kolхозes for their products, agreed to increase purchases, and canceled old debts. The income of the average peasant family increased almost 400 percent between 1953 and 1954. This brought the peasants up to the level of the lowest-paid industrial workers for the first time since the NEP.

Kolhoz managers used the infusion of funds not only to increase wages but also to provide disguised incentive bonuses. The party did not like this practice but tolerated it. Production rose substantially: meat by 32 percent; milk, 61 percent; eggs, 44 percent; wool, 36 percent. The production of sugar beets more than doubled. Grain yields increased an average of 7 to 11 centners per hectare.

These achievements enhanced Khrushchev's stature. He was unable, however, to make any headway in establishing "agrotowns," large rural population centers from which the peasants would commute each day into the fields. He had advanced this scheme in 1951 as the logical outcome of his amalgamation of the kolхозes. Malenkov and Beria had opposed him; Stalin had sided with them. There was also a great deal of hostility within the CC and among party committeemen after 1953.

Khrushchev had more success with the development of the "virgin lands" in northern Kazakhstan and the Altai. A December 1953 *Pravda* editorial noted that at least 6 million

hectares of arable land in the Altai were used as pasture and for hay. Why should this land not be sown to wheat? Intensive public discussion resulted in the CC's March 5, 1954, "Decree on Virgin and Idle Lands." About 2.3 million hectares would be brought under the plow in 1954, 10.7 million in 1955. By 1958 more than 30 million hectares were sown to grain, principally wheat and corn.

Hundreds of thousands of volunteers came from the old agricultural regions and the cities to develop the new lands. In 1954 almost the entire production of the agricultural implements industry went to the virgin lands: 50,000 15-horsepower tractors, more than 6,000 trucks, 10,000 mower-threshers, and thousands of other implements were rushed to the area.

The first results were not encouraging. Only about 3 million tons of grain came from the new lands in 1954. The verdict on the scheme, however, was postponed pending more systematic development.

Because the party refused to cut defense spending, the Khrushchev faction's attempt to reform the agricultural sector inevitably had political repercussions. Committing vast sums to revitalize the kolхозes and develop the virgin lands made it impossible to provide the consumer goods that Malenkov and his supporters wanted. Khrushchev met this reality squarely and fell back on the time-tested "hard" line that called for primary attention to defense and heavy industry. Marshal Zhukov and the military supported him, as did Bulganin and Saburov. Taking the opposite tack were Malenkov, Mikoyan, Kosygin, and Minister of Agriculture Ivan Benediktov.

An acrimonious debate in the Presidium and the Central Committee ended with Malenkov's defeat late in 1954, on the eve of the Abakumov trial. The timing suggests that Khrushchev, confident of a majority in the CC, gave Malenkov an ultimatum: accept defeat on the "guns versus butter" issue and resign as premier or face exposure as architect of the

Leningrad Case. Malenkov resigned, confessing that he had failed to grasp the rationale behind the party's emphasis on heavy industry and that his attention to party work had left him confused by the complexities of running the government. He accepted blame for the agricultural failures of 1950–1953.

The resignation was not publicly announced until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Supreme Soviet two months later, in February 1955; the outside world thus received the impression of an orderly transfer of power. Malenkov retained his seat on the Presidium, but he would no longer play a significant role in politics.

Bulganin became premier. A colorless party hack, he had been a member of the CC for 20 years, of the Presidium for 6. He had worked with Khrushchev in Moscow in the 1930s, and the two men had remained friendly. Khrushchev engineered Bulganin's appointment as premier and placed men loyal to himself in other ministries, notably interior and agriculture. For his support in the conspiracy that toppled Beria, Marshal Zhukov received the ministry of defense.

The government changes accompanied an even more important if less publicly visible reorganization of the party apparatus as Khrushchev installed his supporters in key posts and thus consolidated his position. He had become the most powerful man in the USSR without resorting to violence.

Strong as Khrushchev was, he was no Stalin, and it appeared in the summer of 1955 that he might lose everything. Weather conditions in the virgin lands were miserable; the harvest failed. Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, and others blamed the first secretary for the disaster and argued that the funds and manpower committed to the new lands might better have been applied in the traditional grain-growing districts.

Despite dry conditions in the Ukraine and the Volga valley, the 1956 harvest was the best

ever. Kazakhstan alone produced 16 million tons of grain, outstripping the Ukraine. In all, the collective and state farms produced 125 million tons, about half in the eastern part of the country that included the new lands. Khrushchev was saved.

## NEW LOOK IN FOREIGN POLICY

The leaders who succeeded Stalin proclaimed Soviet foreign policy fixed and immutable. In practice they immediately began to alter it. In May 1953 they abolished the control commission through which they had ruled their sector of Germany and appointed a single high commissioner. This system had earlier proved effective in the Western sectors and had simplified efforts to form an independent West German state. The East German puppet regime instituted a series of reforms, including the right to engage in public demonstrations. The new regulations were accompanied, however, by the tightening of labor discipline and a 10 percent rise in production quotas. A disguised form of reparations, the quotas were already high by Soviet standards. On June 16 thousands of East Berlin residents took to the streets to protest harsh new labor rules and to call for a general strike. The following day Soviet military authorities sent tanks against the demonstrators. Wire services flashed photographs around the world of Berliners attacking tanks with rocks and fists.

The East Berlin events helped galvanize the anti-Beria conspiracy in Moscow. Many Central Committee and Presidium members blamed Beria for letting the situation in Germany, where the Soviet secret police was present in force, get out of hand. In 1963 Khrushchev revealed that on Stalin's death, Beria and Malenkov had urged German Democratic Republic leaders to renounce their socialist policies so as not to offend the West.

The German protests were quelled, but the

authorities rescinded the increase in production quotas and made other concessions. They removed travel restrictions between East and West Berlin and on July 11 lifted martial law. The first of the foreign tremors in part traceable to the struggle for power in the Kremlin ended in partial victory for the East Germans. That would have been unthinkable under Stalin, and it foreshadowed further upheavals.

Stalin's major postwar defeat had come at the hands of Marshal Tito, who had defied the USSR and made Yugoslavia a second capital of world communism. The Chinese communist seizure of power in 1949 added a third, further diluting the Soviet role in the movement. Stalin was infuriated; the last thing he wanted was for strong communist leaders to come to power. After his death, the world waited to see how the new leaders in Moscow would deal with Tito and Mao.

The first public indication of a thaw in Soviet-Yugoslav relations came on November 7, 1953, when Soviet newspapers published Tito's congratulatory message on the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Several months of steady improvement in the diplomatic climate followed. In September 1954 *Pravda* and other newspapers published extracts from a Tito speech, and in October the press marked the tenth anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade with a number of interpretive articles. The following January a modest trade agreement was signed.

Stalin had misjudged Tito and the Yugoslavs almost as badly as he had the Chinese communists in the 1920s. He had backed Jiang Jieshi, who to express his gratitude had slaughtered every communist he could find. The Chinese communists never forgave Stalin, but in 1949 they needed allies.

In December 1949, two months after he seized power, Mao flew to Moscow for talks with Stalin. No longer a guerrilla chieftain living in filthy caves in Shaanxi but leader of a nation of 600 million, Mao had reason to hope

he would be treated as an equal. He erred. Behind the public embraces and expressions of respect, the Soviets dealt with him condescendingly, dragging out the negotiations for nine weeks before finally, in February 1950, giving him a mere tip: \$60 million in economic assistance annually for five years.

Not only was the amount insultingly small, but China had to agree to a number of minor border rectifications in favor of the USSR and to recognize the independence of Outer Mongolia, a territory formerly subject to China but for two decades a Soviet puppet. Further, Stalin made it clear that he would expect concessions in return for helping develop China's natural resources. Mao later said that getting anything at all out of the Soviet dictator was "like taking meat from the mouth of a tiger."

Mao signed the humiliating agreement; a desperately poor, politically isolated China had no hope of economic aid from any other source. Beyond that, an American-backed invasion by Jiang's forces—now on Taiwan—seemed a strong possibility, and China had to build her defenses. Stalin sent 3,000 military advisers to begin modernizing the People's Liberation Army. The Chinese invested the tiny Soviet credits in the armaments industry.

Stalin's demise occasioned no mourning in China. Mao read a statement describing the Soviet leader as the "greatest genius of the present age" who was "known for his ardent love of the Chinese people." That said, it was business as usual.

There was a marked improvement in Soviet-Chinese relations after Stalin's death. In September 1953 the Kremlin agreed to undertake 141 major construction projects in China, providing not only the money but also equipment and technology. The just-ended Korean War had exposed more painfully than ever China's weaknesses, and the new projects would enable the country to emulate the Soviet pattern of development, building a socialist economy based on heavy industry. Soviet

technicians and trainloads of machines and supplies poured into China.

The Soviets had supported the People's Republic of China in the United Nations since October 1949, arguing that the communists should replace the Nationalist Chinese. Because of the opposition of the United States those efforts were unavailing. At the Geneva Conference on Far Eastern Affairs in April–July 1954, the Soviets again vigorously backed the Chinese. The conference formalized the Korean Armistice and reviewed the agreement by which France had abandoned her colonial position in Vietnam.

Stalin had promised to withdraw his forces from Port Arthur, Manchuria, by 1952. Sent as part of the agreement under which the Soviets had entered the war against Japan, the troops had remained ostensibly to protect the Liaodong Peninsula against the possibility of an American invasion during the Korean War. When Khrushchev went to Beijing for the fifth-anniversary celebration of the People's Republic, he and Mao announced on October 11, 1954, that Soviet forces would be withdrawn from Port Arthur by the end of May 1955.

Welcoming Khrushchev to Beijing, Mao naturally had no inkling that 17 months later his visitor would begin to dismantle the Stalinist system. Mao offered him a thousand divisions to crush the Americans; Khrushchev retorted that American atomic bombs would incinerate them and asked instead for a million lumberjacks. A deeply offended Mao replied that he should not look to China as a source of cheap labor.

Khrushchev tried to atone for his blunder with offers of increased military and economic aid calculated to win Mao's support in the impending showdown with Malenkov. Mao accepted the aid but never forgave the insult. When Khrushchev, victorious over Malenkov, began to speak in 1955 of the possibility of "peaceful coexistence" between communist and capitalist states, Mao abandoned hope of cooperation.

The Khrushchev regime carried its campaign for the relaxation of international tension to the West in 1955. In April it suddenly agreed to sign a peace treaty with Austria, a step resisted for nearly a decade. Only Molotov among the post-Stalin leaders opposed the treaty. Two months later Marshal Zhukov sent a warm message to his former comrades-in-arms in the United States, and in July Khrushchev and Bulganin traveled to Geneva to meet President Eisenhower, Prime Minister Anthony Eden of Great Britain, and Premier Edgar Faure of France. Because of the peculiar nature of the Soviet system, Khrushchev, who held no government post, was merely "attached" to a delegation led by Bulganin.

The Geneva summit conference, the first since Potsdam, dealt with German reunification, arms control and disarmament, and European security. The two sides had sparred over the German issue for a decade with no result; hopes for German reunification had plunged in May 1955 when the West German Federal Republic gained its independence and joined NATO. The Soviets responded by creating the Warsaw Pact, a 20-year military alliance with their East European satellites.

East and West had debated arms control since the 1920s. Both sides presented proposals to the United Nations in the spring of 1955, and there was substantial agreement on the size of conventional forces that could be permitted the major powers: 1.5 million each for the United States, the USSR, and China, and 650,000 each for Britain and France. In the matter of atomic and thermonuclear weapons, however, there was no movement. Both sides professed a horror of nuclear war and insisted that some means of control be found; neither would make concessions. Confident of the huge American lead in nuclear weapons and delivery systems (the B-52 bomber), Eisenhower put forward an "open skies" proposal that would have allowed each side to photograph the other's territory from the air to verify an agreement prohibiting the de-

ployment of new weapons of mass destruction. Existing weapons would remain in place pending further negotiation.

Painfully conscious of their nuclear inferiority, the Soviets would not agree to halt development of new weapons. In rejecting the proposal, Khrushchev charged that Eisenhower's "open skies" was a scheme to legalize American spying.

Despite the negotiators' failure to make progress on substantive issues, journalists invented a "spirit of Geneva." Khrushchev and Bulganin, with their ill-fitting suits and awkward public manners, seemed far more approachable than Stalin, and they trusted Eisenhower more than they had Truman. They had fought with him against a common enemy and considered him more reasonable than his predecessor. The Soviets and the Americans did agree at Geneva to initiate cultural and commercial contacts. To the extent that these contributed to better understanding the Geneva Conference was not a failure.

Rarely had the world seen such a traveling diplomatic show as Khrushchev and Bulganin staged in 1955. In addition to Belgrade—where they apologized for Stalin's errors—and Geneva, they journeyed to India, Burma, and Afghanistan late in the year. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India and Prime Minister U Nu of Burma had impeccable anti-imperialist credentials, which could be useful to the Kremlin.

In the mid-1950s the United States and its allies continued to maintain an overwhelming military superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact nations; the communist seizure of power in China had not significantly altered this imbalance. The post-Stalin Soviet commitment of substantial sums to help the Chinese modernize might lead to the strengthening of the communist "bloc," but Khrushchev knew what the West did not, namely, that a monolithic bloc did not exist.

The national interests of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China were in

many areas diametrically opposed. The Chinese historically had detested the Russians as imperialists who had helped dismember the Celestial Kingdom. The Soviets feared an aggressive China with unmatched man-power reserves. All this made it virtually certain that the fragile alliance of February 1950 would not endure.

India, Burma, Arab lands, Latin American nations, and African territories began to figure prominently in Soviet geopolitical thinking. The peoples of these lands could theoretically be wooed and won through an anti-imperialist, anticolonialist campaign led by Moscow. As strong as the United States and its allies were, and as powerful as China one day would be, neither would be able to counter a Soviet-led coalition of previously nonaligned nations. The Khrushchev-Bulganin tour of Southeast Asia and Afghanistan in late 1955 marked the beginning of a protracted attempt to establish that coalition.

## HARBINGERS OF DE-STALINIZATION

The conduct of foreign policy hinged on the unresolved situation within the party, which was apprehensive about its future. No one knew how far the regime would pursue the dismantling of the Stalinist system.

The sword Khrushchev held over Malenkov's head had two edges, and the party leader did not have a sure grip on it. He could at any time reveal what all top party officials knew, namely, that Malenkov had played a major role in the events of 1949–1951 that had swept away so many Zhdanov supporters. The Doctors' Plot could be explained away as the criminal scheme of some secret police officials—no one yet dared say it was Stalin's doing—and Beria's crimes as the unholy work of a psychopath, but the purge of the Zhdanovites had been an internal party fight. The decision to try Abakumov had opened Pandora's box.

Fewer references to Stalin appeared in the press in 1955. In part because of the publication lead time involved for monthly and quarterly journals, the late dictator had been prominently featured throughout 1953 and well into 1954, but now it was difficult to find references even in the party's house organs, *Kommunist* and *Partiinaya Zhizn* (*Party Life*).

In June 1955 a Supreme Soviet decree confirmed new regulations for the office of public prosecutor. Article 4 stated, "The USSR Prosecutor General and the prosecutors subordinate to him . . . must take prompt measures to eliminate all violations of laws, regardless from whom these violations proceed." This reaffirmed the new spirit of legality proclaimed in April 1953, and other articles carried a warning to those who directed and maintained the forced-labor camps. Article 33 obliged the prosecutor to visit all places of detention regularly for purposes of inspection and required him to halt illegal practices and bring those responsible for them before a court or administrative board. Article 34, if honored, promised to bring about a truly revolutionary change: "The prosecutor is required to free immediately all those unlawfully arrested or detained illegally in places of detention."

There were at least 10 million people in the camps; the consequences of releasing them were incalculable. Admitting that not only these people but also the millions who had died in the Gulag had been criminally abused by the state would constitute an incredible indictment of Stalin's regime and of the Communist party. The Gulag and the Terror could not be blamed on Beria or Yezhov or Dzerzhinsky. The late Gensek himself would have to be brought to account. Would Lenin be next in the dock?

Party leaders recoiled in horror. History offered no precedent for the step that loomed before them, attesting to their own illegitimacy. The revolution had devoured its young in the 1930s; now history was presenting the bill.

All of the older party leaders had been deeply involved in the Terror, and the careers of younger men like Kosygin, Brezhnev, and Suslov had advanced because of the vacancies it had created.

It was unthinkable that thousands of officials would suddenly ask to be relieved of their posts and indicted. It appeared in the latter half of 1955 that the new regulations for the prosecutor's office would be no more meaningful than the 1936 constitution; only a small number of people were released from the Gulag. The new leaders seemed content with the modest steps they had taken to punish a few secret police officials and to relax the conditions of life in the post-Stalin USSR.

## THAW

In 1953 Ilya Ehrenburg, a journalist and author of several works of fiction, published a landmark novel entitled *The Thaw*. The plant manager-protagonist is a basically decent fellow who loses his best qualities trying to meet the demands of the Stalinist system. His only real concerns are fulfilling the plan and increasing production, even at the expense of the workers' welfare. He loses touch with normal people and surrounds himself with sycophants, one of whom tries to frame a senior engineer by spreading the rumor that he has a daughter in capitalist Belgium. The manager connives in this plot out of habit rather than conviction, but the scheme backfires when the sympathies of the people favor the innocent engineer. Disgusted by her husband's callous behavior, the manager's wife leaves him; the engineer remains secure in his job, but there is change in the air. One minor character, an artist, finally admits to himself that he has wasted his talent painting "socialist realist" works throughout his career. Another artist, who had suffered for insisting on his own standards, is finally recognized and rewarded. The novel ends on a

positive, optimistic note; the thaw is coming after the long winter.

This political journalism thinly disguised as fiction had an immediate impact. Reform-minded officials praised it, while conservatives attacked Ehrenburg for his portrait of Stalinist corruption. Was he advocating “bourgeois” values, placing the individual ahead of the state and the society?

Barely six weeks after Stalin’s death, Olga Berggolts defended personal expression in lyric poetry; others had been sent to the Gulag for articulating that view. If Berggolts, a minor poet, could get away with this, no one could foresee what Anna Akhmatova and Boris Pasternak might produce. Vera Panova’s novel *The Seasons* dealt in part with the negative side of Soviet life and attacked plump party functionaries who lived in luxury. Leonid Sorin’s play *The Guests* depicted the political and moral corruption of Stalinism. In December 1953 the writer and critic Vladimir Pomerantsev’s essay “On Sincerity in Literature” assailed the Communist party’s attempt to dictate Soviet literature through the Writers’ Union.

The party struck back. Aleksei Surkov, mediocre poet, secretary of the Writers’ Union, and party member since 1925, lashed out at Pomerantsev and attacked Ehrenburg, Panova, and Sorin. *The Guests*, which had played to shocked, packed houses for months, suddenly closed down. Surkov called for the reimposition of strict party control over literature; by the time his article appeared in *Pravda* in May 1954, it had already taken place. The following December the second All-Union Congress of Writers mounted a vicious attack on Ehrenburg and the others who had sought to escape from the constraints of socialist realism. Again it appeared that the party had flirted with a retreat from Stalinism only to be terrified by its own audacity.

## LIFE WITHOUT STALIN

In 1953 a newspaper reported that a toy rabbit manufactured by the Moscow Haberdashery Cooperative was black, made of coarse material, and had the head of a hippopotamus. Such a toy, the writer noted, “excites only fear and aversion.” *Izvestiya* later declared that a certain doll carriage could also be used to grate cabbage, or perhaps hew logs, and that a poorly constructed metal doll for sale in state stores could easily double as a wolf trap. A cartoon in one of the humor magazines showed a mother warning her child, “Behave or I’ll buy you a toy!”

In July 1953 a Moscow newspaper claimed that ordinary working people were buying ZiM automobiles in considerable numbers. This was the vehicle assigned to middle-level officials; honest workers had no hope of buying one. A month later, a *Pravda* reader reported that in March he had ordered spare parts for his bicycle and some film from Mail Order House; he had sent 160 rubles with his order. In July he received the film and 131 rubles’ worth of phonograph records. A note informed him that since the bicycle parts were not available, the management had decided he would like records instead. A July 1954 letter to the same newspaper reported that Persian thread (imitation silk) stockings made by Aurora Mills (Riga) and the Leninakan Stocking and Knitwear Mills (Armenia) tore on the second or third wearing. They came in one size, “very large,” in an “unpleasant yellow color” and cost 20–25 rubles; nothing else was available.

The revelation of petty inconveniences indicated a cautious willingness to allow examination of a few of the system’s shortcomings. More startling was the attention paid to crime, alcoholism, and juvenile delinquency. By 1954 the press was frankly admitting that these phenomena constituted major social problems. A letter to *Literary Gazette* in July stated, “You go into one of these dives and all around there is dirt and drunken people rolling on the floor in

their own vomit.” The writer also charged that many officials could be bribed with vodka.

Early in 1954 *Kommunist* called for a new discussion of the theories of Lysenko, whom it charged with attempting to suppress all criticism. This followed a letter to *Pravda* from a Moscow University biology professor who accused Lysenko of forcing his department to grant a doctoral degree to a candidate who knew nothing of biology or botany. The professor noted, “Academician Lysenko, with his customary sharpness, called all reviewers who had spoken negatively of the dissertation . . . Weismannists.” *Pravda* reported that the degree was rescinded after the party investigated; this was one of the first instances in which the party had intervened on the side of scientific truth. In 1955 the *Botanical Journal* revealed that Lysenko’s “engendering” of soft wheat into hard was “nothing but the result of hybridization and the subsequent branching out in the descendants of hybrid individuals.” Further, Lysenko’s claim that a hornbeam tree had “engendered” a hazelnut tree collapsed under investigation. Lysenko retained considerable authority in the party, if not in scientific circles. For the moment, however, it appeared that genuine science was again in vogue.

It began to dawn on increasing numbers of officials that backing such charlatans as Lysenko had cost them dearly. Soviet science and technology lagged far behind those of the West and the gap was widening. The way to improve production and raise labor productivity, Premier Bulganin declared, was to “raise the level of party guidance of industry.”

This call for increased supervision characterized the defensive, contradictory nature of many policies of the post-Stalin leadership. There was on the one hand frank recognition that the party had not always intervened to good advantage; this was the unmistakable import of the partial dethroning of Lysenko. But the party that tacitly acknowledged mistakes often sought to remedy them by increasing

CPSU authority and by allowing errant officials to correct themselves.

While permitting publication of *The Thaw* and the staging—at least briefly—of *The Guests*, the party also commissioned a symphonic poem, “Pavlik Morozov,” based on the life of the boy who had betrayed his father during collectivization. The party had allowed publication of some appeals for a free art, yet it condemned vaudeville artist Ruzhena Sikora for singing such “vulgar and even fascist” songs as “Besamé mucho.” It savagely attacked the “obscene witticisms” of comedians such as Arkady Raikin, whose routines never went beyond mildly suggestive commentary. And the party smiled with satisfaction when a journal of the arts published a stupefying comment to the effect that the “constantly rising culture of Soviet man is setting lofty standards in love.”

For all its vacillation and indecision and confusion, the party was changing. Some change was forced on the party by circumstances; some it initiated itself. The leaders patched up some old quarrels, began to speak cautiously of the possibility of an accommodation with the West, did away with some of the shackles on society. If they did not open the gates of the Gulag, they were sending it fewer new victims. Reform was in the air.

## SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READING

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- ROTHENBERG, ABRAHAM. *The Heirs of Stalin: Literary Dissidence and the Soviet Regime, 1953–1970*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972.
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## chapter 16

# THE GREAT REFORM

## Khrushchev and De-Stalinization

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It appeared to inveterate Stalinists that their own party would succeed where nearly four decades of anticommunist efforts had failed. Nikita Khrushchev and his allies, they believed, would destroy the regime. The Stalinists had grudgingly accepted some modest reforms and condemned Beria; that, in their view, was enough. If there had been errors, if Stalin had sometimes acted harshly, there was no need to review all that now. Like Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, they maintained that the party could not survive the dismantling of its myths.

Sensing distant tremors of reform, the Stalinists feared a major test of political faith. The principle of party infallibility had not been challenged for decades. With Stalin gone, no one could be certain whether it would survive a crisis.

### TWENTIETH PARTY CONGRESS

The first post-Stalin Party Congress convened in Moscow on February 14, 1956. So far as the majority of the 1,349 voting delegates and the foreign communist guests knew, its main purpose was to approve the Sixth Five-Year Plan, covering 1956–1960. That mission was accomplished, unanimously as always, after the delegates had listened to a series of glowing reports on the performance of industry and agriculture. Khrushchev spoke on foreign policy and stressed the Soviet Union's adherence to "peaceful coexistence." Wars were no longer inevitable, he said, but the ideological struggle would continue until the victory of communism.

There were a few hints of the explosion to come. Reporting on the work of the Central Committee, Khrushchev mentioned Stalin only once, noting that he was dead; most people

already knew that. The chief ideologist, Suslov, spoke of the “restoration of the norms of party life and principles of party leadership worked out by Lenin and frequently violated prior to the 20th Congress.” Still more disturbing to the Stalinists, who had correctly counted him in their ranks, he used a phrase not heard since Marx had coined it nearly 80 years earlier: the “cult of the individual,” Suslov declared, had flourished for too long.

One of the architects of the Terror, Anastas Mikoyan, now a member of the Presidium and vice premier, still more bluntly observed, “Collective leadership has been [re]established in our party.” The “cult” had existed for “about 20 years” with “an extremely negative effect.” Mikoyan attacked Stalin’s *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* and condemned the late dictator’s disdain for the “treasury of Leninist ideas.” These were heretical comments, and Mikoyan spoke Stalin’s name. When he went on to claim that Soviet jurisprudence, legislation, and trial procedures had suffered under the dictator, the reactionaries on the Presidium—who had known the purges would be discussed but not the extent—sensed trouble of enormous dimensions and tried to deflect it. One of their number, Molotov, admitted that the “cult,” the instantly established euphemism for Stalin’s dictatorship, had not been helpful in conducting foreign policy.

Everyone waited for Khrushchev to speak, but he did not address this issue during the regularly scheduled sessions, which were to end with the election of party officers. Khrushchev was reelected party leader on February 24. It was his prerogative to move the adoption of the party’s list of candidates for the CC Presidium, but the congress adjourned before he could do so that day. The motion and the voting were mere formalities; until they took place, however, he was technically the sole leader in office. At this point he struck.

Shortly before midnight on February 24, couriers dashed around Moscow collecting

delegates and bringing them back to the Kremlin for a special secret session. Once they were assembled (foreign guests and press excluded), Khrushchev delivered a somber report “On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences.” The worst fears of the Stalinists came true.

He told of the illegal arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution of thousands of innocent party members, saying nothing of the *millions* of nonparty victims. Stalin himself, the new leader revealed, had signed many orders for these acts, which thus could not be blamed solely on the secret police. Khrushchev also held Stalin responsible for the battlefield reversals of 1941–1942, adding that he had taken credit for all the later victories, belittling the role of the army and the nation at large. Stalin had ordered the mass deportation of whole peoples falsely accused of collaborating with the Germans; “violated the norms of revolutionary legality and ignored all norms of party life,” originated the concept of “enemy of the people,” elevated himself “above party and nation”; caused the senseless conflict with Yugoslavia. Never again could reasonable men call reports of the Great Terror mere anticommunist propaganda. But no one could guarantee that Stalinism would not resurface, and Khrushchev’s failure to mention the nonparty victims indicated that the new leadership hoped to limit the consequences of opening the cult issue.

The speech lasted four hours; there was no debate. Six years later Khrushchev revealed that party leaders had discussed whether to place the matter of Stalin’s crimes on the agenda. Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, and Voroshilov had been “categorically opposed.” Molotov justified Stalin’s actions and predicted that reprisals against innocent persons might unavoidably recur as the party pursued “enemies of the people.”

The stunned delegates went back to their hotels for a few hours early in the morning of

February 25, then returned to the Kremlin to elect party officers and wind up the congress. Before the day was over the “secret” speech was the talk of Moscow; within weeks its general outlines were known all over the world. It was published in English that spring; a Polish delegate obtained a transcript and passed it to the West.

Riots erupted in Tbilisi on March 9 as Georgians protested the assault on Stalin. There was violence in many Soviet cities and in some of the Gulag camps in the spring and early summer; both free citizens and convicts seized on the condemnation of Stalin to vent grievances. The Tbilisi riots were apparently the only disturbances in which the mobs defended the late dictator.

The demonstrations were quickly suppressed; security forces had gone on “ready alert” status at the start of the Twentieth Party Congress. This was standard procedure, but the alert had a special urgency in 1956. Because of unrest at home and tension abroad, especially in Poland and Hungary, the CC considered it too dangerous to publish Khrushchev’s indictment. The document was, however, read aloud at thousands of public meetings.

## DE-STALINIZATION

When monthly and quarterly journals attacked the “cult” shortly after the congress, it became clear that a carefully planned campaign was underway. The “secret speech” had signaled the beginning; there would apparently be no turning back. The leading history journal indicated in March that several executed military commanders would soon be cleared of all charges. Beginning the “rehabilitations” with the military was partial repayment for Marshal Zhukov’s backing of Khrushchev at the congress. At the end of March *Pravda* declared that although Stalin had “rendered great ser-

vices to our party,” in the latter part of his life the “cult of the individual and the leadership practices which developed under its influence . . . did much harm.” The newspaper went on to disavow both the official party history (*Short Course*) and the official biography of Stalin and to admit that “many of our films, books, and paintings, especially those dealing with the war, are dedicated chiefly to the praise and glorification of Stalin.”

The first public mention in 32 years of Lenin’s “testament,” in which the founder had urged the removal of Stalin as general secretary, appeared in the Komsomol newspaper on May 18; it was published in full in the party theoretical journal on June 30. The “testament” now assumed a potentially more explosive character than it had had when it was written. It included praise of Bukharin, Trotsky, and other early party leaders whom Stalin had liquidated. Stalin’s mistreatment of Lenin’s wife would not be revealed until 1964.

In June 1956 the Soviet press published the CC resolution “On Overcoming the Cult of the Individual and Its Consequences.” Written by Suslov, the resolution indicated that the party would limit criticism. Complaining that Western political circles were exploiting the revelation of Stalin’s crimes, the resolution paid tribute to the Gensek’s services and seemed to retreat, calling his less commendable acts mere mistakes. The party insisted that its “Leninist core” had remained intact during the Stalin years.

Addressing the question of party responsibility, the resolution declared that it would have been impossible to remove the dictator “under the conditions then prevailing,” not least because the Soviet people would not have supported anyone who spoke or acted against him. Finally, the document advanced the claim that party leaders had simply “not known” the full extent of the abuses until the arrest of Beria. The CPSU leadership was composed exclusively of Stalinists until March

1953, but now of Stalin's former admirers only Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, and Voroshilov remained publicly faithful.

The liberation of innocent people from the Gulag constituted the most urgent task facing the party. The cautious, mostly unpublicized "rehabilitations" of 1953–1955 had resulted in the liberation of a mere handful of communists, and even the "secret speech" had implied that reviews of questionable legal proceedings would in the beginning affect only party members. De-Stalinization, however, generated its own logic and momentum.

In the spring and summer of 1956 the leadership bowed to enormous public pressure and began to free nonparty prisoners en masse, about 8 million by the end of 1957. A year later only a relative handful of "politicals" remained in the camps.

The state gave special treatment to former Soviet POWs whom Stalin had sent into the Gulag after the war. Marshal Zhukov announced that military personnel who had died in the Gulag—of whatever cause—had in effect fallen on the battlefield; their widows and orphans would receive monetary "compensation," preferential treatment for housing and jobs, and the widows—lifetime pensions. The state exonerated citizens coerced into working for the Germans and restored them to full citizenship. With the tragic exception of the Crimean Tatars, the minority peoples brutally uprooted as "collaborators" returned to their homes, cleared of all charges.

The return of millions of innocent victims of Stalin's terror had an enormous impact on society. Broken in body and spirit, some returnees simply lived out their days quietly, but their very presence affected the community deeply. Diehard Stalinists, refusing to hold the Gensek responsible for their misery, found their fellow citizens no longer afraid to debate his rule. And millions of liberated *zeks* demanded the restoration of their honor, punishment of those who had taken it and their

freedom from them, and ironclad assurances against a repetition.

The leadership could not meet these demands and remain in office. Accountability for Stalin-era crimes would sooner rather than later come to rest at the doorsteps of those who had served in high posts and survived: *Khrushchev himself*—both in Ukraine and in the Moscow party organization—had been part of the terror apparatus, and blood was on his hands. The reformist regime tried and shot one of Beria's cronies and several of his subordinates in April 1956 and quietly removed an unknown number of Gulag and secret police functionaries from their jobs. That was as far as Khrushchev and his allies would go.

## FURTHER REFORMS

This did not mean the end of the reforms. Local, regional, and even republic courts had been little more than moribund appendages of the power-mad center in the Stalin era. In an attempt to break the grotesque centralization of judicial powers, in June 1956 the government simply abolished the All-Union (i.e., federal) Ministry of Justice, transferring its functions to the ministries of the constituent republics.

Justice by administrative fiat came to an end, at least on paper, in a revised Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 7 specified that "No person may be considered guilty of having committed a crime and subjected to criminal punishment save by the sentence of a court." Not a writ of habeas corpus, this proviso would, if honored, constitute a major step forward. In April 1956 a legal journal assailed the Stalinist theory of evidence, according to which a confession constituted proof of guilt. In April 1957 police and prosecutor were forbidden to trick suspects into incriminating themselves.

In 1962 the chief prosecutor declared that his office was strictly observing the new Criminal Code, specifically the prohibition against non-

judicial arrest and punishment. The same year, however, a Moscow prosecutor publicly reasserted the validity of Vyshinsky's contention that anyone bound over to a court for trial was guilty. The court's sole function, in this reading of legal principles, was to determine the "objectivity" of police conclusions. In practice this interpretation prevailed in all "political" cases, the number of which was however only a fraction of what it had been under Stalin. No longer were masses of citizens accused of "anti-Soviet" behavior; but those accused were invariably found guilty.

The public welcomed Khrushchev's assurance that the secret police would no longer be allowed to run amok. But even though some shuffling of personnel took place, by and large even the most notorious of the interrogators, guards, and administrators merely retired on comfortable pensions. Ivan Serov, a loyal Beria aide who had become head of the KGB in 1954, continued in office.

Serov had won his post and now retained it because he knew where skeletons were buried, including some connected with Khrushchev's prewar service in Ukraine. He had also earned a reputation for his brutal supervision of the wartime deportations, and because he was vulnerable he was obliged to cooperate with Khrushchev in dismantling the Gulag. By December 1958 the population of the Archipelago had dwindled to about a million. The acronym *Gulag* disappeared from the official lexicon, but no one could erase it from history.

After completing this work, Serov transferred to military intelligence. Aleksandr Shelepin, a career party bureaucrat, succeeded him at the helm of the KGB; the CPSU thus regained control of the secret police. In 1963 Khrushchev stripped a number of present and former high-ranking KGB officials, including Serov, of the medals Stalin had given them in 1944 for their role in the deportations.

Only a few days after Serov's ouster as head of the KGB, new laws were passed (December

25, 1958) providing safeguards against extrajudicial punishment and curbing the powers of the secret police. Six months later, the Supreme Court directed courts to deemphasize punishment in favor of reeducation and preventive measures and to work for the eradication of the social causes of criminal behavior.

Dealing with Stalin in the schools and in the writing and teaching of history posed a special problem. *Kommunist* admitted in April 1956 that the official encyclopedia was replete with errors; the leading history journal confessed in August that the story of the Russian invention of the airplane had been a hoax; military journals disclosed that Stalin's role in the Civil War had been falsified and that he had committed numerous costly errors as commander-in-chief in the war against Germany.

It was impossible to revise textbooks before the start of the 1956–1957 school year, and yet, because Stalin had been the supreme authority in all fields of knowledge, something had to be done. Late in August 1956 *Pravda* provided some vague guidance: "The teacher, while giving credit to J. V. Stalin's merits and showing his role as organizer and theoretician, must at the same time throw light on the very grave errors he committed." The party thus invited the teachers to become political analysts, a role that until 1953 had led many people to their doom. Only when a new party history was published in 1959 could teachers relax.

The Khrushchev reforms embraced all aspects of civic life. The legal liability of workers leaving the workplace without permission ended with an April 1956 decree. A September 1957 order stipulated an end to the practice of naming places, enterprises, and organizations for living persons; all such existing names were to be changed. Not until 1961, however, did Stalingrad become Volgograd, and efforts to style the great conflict there the "Battle on the Volga" proved unsuccessful. Stalin Prizes again became Lenin Prizes, as they had been prior to 1935. In 1958 the press

admitted there had been no grounds for calling Shostakovich and other composers—and by extension, writers and artists—“antipopular” and “formalist.” Such evaluations, *Pravda* confessed, “reflected J. V. Stalin’s subjective approach to certain works of art.”

## “REHABILITATIONS”

The revelation of Stalin’s crimes made it imperative for the CPSU to exonerate thousands of persecuted members. This was an exceedingly delicate matter. Would the party be obliged to accept Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Trotsky back into the ranks of its revered heroes? Even anti-Stalinist communists shuddered. The regime declared that there would be no review of the judicial proceedings against, let alone rehabilitation of, Trotsky and the three chief defendants in the purge trials.

Public exonerations of lesser fry began in *Pravda* while the Twentieth Congress was still in session: the newspaper published an article praising the Hungarian revolutionary Béla Kun but did not mention his execution in 1937. The same issue disavowed the 1938 dissolution—really a superpurge—of the Polish Communist party, which, according to NKVD reports at the time, “enemy agents” had infiltrated. Moscow now claimed that “this accusation rested on materials falsified by subsequently exposed provocateurs.” Those “provocateurs” had acted on Stalin’s orders, but *Pravda* did not report that.

Over the next several years, the press revealed names of many prominent communists now cleared of charges that had sent them to the executioners in the period 1936–1952. Courts and prosecutors exonerated thousands of party members—people who had helped construct the system that devoured them and for whom the masses understandably had little sympathy—posthumously. Not until the glasnost era

of the late 1980s, however, did the CPSU complete the rehabilitation of its slain comrades by reinstating them in its ranks, and not until Gorbachev became leader did the party pay serious attention to the millions of Stalin’s victims who had *not* been in those ranks.

As early as October 1955 the party secretly cleared General Yan Gamarnik of all charges; and in January 1957 the state prosecutor rescinded—also in secret—the June 11, 1937, guilty verdicts against Gamarnik’s fellow officers Tukhachevsky, Kork, Yakir, Uborevich, Eideman, V. P. Primakov, and B. M. Feldman. A. I. Yegorov and V. K. Blücher also won posthumous acquittal. Once again, however, the communists made a more or less complete *public* statement of the full legal and party rehabilitation of the military commanders only in 1988.

The 1956 anticommunist, anti-Soviet violence in Poland and Hungary gave the Khrushchev regime an excuse to suppress the news of the review of the “repressions.” The process continued, however, limited to CPSU members and a few prominent nonparty people. The great mass of *zeks* simply returned to the factories and collective farms, in a sense on parole.

Complete rehabilitation had to follow established judicial procedure: cross-examination of witnesses, presentation of documentary evidence, and so on. That took time, and such cases inundated the courts; more often than not it took years to reach a decision. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of illegally imprisoned people simply declined to bother, trusting the new regime to keep its word not to abuse the innocent.

## THE ANTIPARTY GROUP

Thousands of CPSU and secret police officials had a keen personal interest in halting the revelations about the Stalin era. Many others, devout communists not involved in the terror,

felt threatened by any challenge to their faith. Returning *zeks* were filing innumerable petitions demanding the arrest and trial of their tormentors, most of whom remained at their posts even after the Twentieth Congress; affidavits attesting to the criminal acts of the accused accompanied the demands. The regime could sidetrack petitions from obscure citizens indefinitely, but Khrushchev's own brief against Stalin had set an irreversible precedent. Something would have to be done to calm the country.

Conservatives argued that *everyone* had been a Stalinist while the Gensek lived; Khrushchev's hands were as bloody as anyone's. Many communists resigned their posts to wait out the storm; the pseudoscientist Lysenko was the most prominent example. He left the Agricultural Academy chairmanship in April 1956, only to regain his political influence the following year. A few officials involved in the arrest and imprisonment of innocent people killed themselves when threatened with exposure. This was the path of Aleksandr Fadeyev, secretary-general of the Writers' Union. Finally, some Stalinists decided that only the removal of Khrushchev could restore sanity and order to party affairs.

Various plots to kill the first secretary failed, but a political maneuver aimed at deposing him almost succeeded. In June 1957, while Khrushchev and Bulganin were on a state visit to Finland, the Stalinists struck. Summoned to a meeting of the Presidium the day after his return, Khrushchev was voted out of office. Only Suslov and Mikoyan among the full members supported him; with his own vote, that meant that his faction numbered three against eight—Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Voroshilov, Bulganin, Pervukhin, Kirichenko, Saburov. Among the six candidate members, Khrushchev had the support of all save Shepilov; but of the five who backed him, only Marshal Zhukov was in a position to be of immediate service.

Khrushchev demanded that the entire Central Committee, which alone could legally elect or depose a first secretary, be summoned to Moscow. The conspirators had taken steps to prevent CC members from learning of events in Moscow until presented with a fait accompli. Premier Bulganin had posted his own bodyguards inside the Kremlin and at CC headquarters on Old Square; the conspirators planned to arrest Khrushchev if he refused to submit.

At this point the first secretary called in his debts. He had retained Ivan Serov as chairman of the KGB despite his link to Beria; Serov now supported him. The conspirators could not use the KGB to arrest Khrushchev or prevent the convening of the CC. Further, Khrushchev had rescued Marshal Zhukov from oblivion; Zhukov now repaid the favor and arranged for military aircraft to fly CC members to Moscow. Finally, Frol Kozlov, whom Khrushchev had installed as head of the Leningrad province party organization, rushed to support his patron, as did Leonid Brezhnev, a candidate member of the Presidium who had strong ties to the Ukrainian party organization.

By June 21 more than 300 top party leaders, including nearly all 133 full members of the CC, had assembled in Moscow. Neither Bulganin's bodyguard nor any other agency available to the conspirators could prevent the convocation of a plenary session.

That session took place June 22–29, 1957. There was no time limit on speeches, and Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov each spoke twice. Khrushchev's opponents denounced de-Stalinization and rejected the decision of the Twentieth Congress to expose Stalin and rehabilitate his victims. They assailed the virgin lands scheme and called for reversal of plans to enlarge the powers of union republics. Molotov bitterly attacked peaceful coexistence, normalization of relations with Japan, reconciliation with Yugoslavia, the peace treaty with Austria, and summit

conferences. He and his associates demanded an end to the prosecutions—few though they were—of officials involved in the terror. The Molotov group demanded restoration of the *Short Course*, the grotesque “history” that exalted Stalin and denigrated Lenin, as an authoritative guide to the past.

Khrushchev defended his policies vigorously; speaker after speaker supported him. No one save the conspirators wanted a return to Stalinism. Molotov’s prediction that the day would come again when the innocent would “inevitably and unavoidably” be imprisoned along with the guilty in the fight against “imperialist agents and class enemies” sent a chill through the meeting.

The anti-Khrushchev faction had mustered eight votes in the Presidium, but the number fell to four in the plenary session of the Central Committee. Voroshilov broke down and cried while admitting his mistakes; he had learned to love his job as titular head of state and wanted to keep it. Pervukhin and Saburov, short on political acumen but aware of the difference between 4 and 300, recanted with slightly more dignity. Bulganin backed off in an attempt to remain premier.

Only Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov were left in what became known as the “antiparty group.” *Pravda* had referred to the first three more colorfully in 1956 as “sycophants and hallelujah-shouters.” The plenary session now heard an account of their crimes. Malenkov had assisted Yezhov in the purge in Byelorussia in 1936 and with Beria had fabricated the Leningrad Case. Kaganovich had conducted bloody purges in Ukraine and the North Caucasus. Molotov liked to write on secret police lists of candidates for the Gulag “arrest, convict, shoot.” A few years later the party would learn that he had once had several innocent people arrested as “terrorists” when his car skidded on an icy road.

The session expelled Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov from the Presidium and the CC,

expelled Shepilov from the CC and dismissed him as a candidate member of the Presidium. These relatively lenient measures indicated both Khrushchev’s own shaky hold on power and the determination of the CC not to resort to terror. It was content to strip the “antiparty group” of their posts and give them humiliating assignments. Molotov became ambassador to Mongolia. Malenkov was sent to manage the Ust-Kamenogorsk hydroelectric plant in Kazakhstan. Kaganovich became manager of a Sverdlovsk cement plant. Shepilov, who had briefly been minister of foreign affairs (June 1956–May 1957), went to the Academy of Sciences as a junior specialist in political science.

To give the country and the outside world the impression of a stable political order, three Presidium members—including Bulganin—who had voted against Khrushchev were permitted to remain on that body for a brief period. Bulganin retained the premiership for nine months, then was downgraded to the post of chairman of the State Bank. A few months later, allegedly because he had failed in that job, he received an assignment as director of the economic council of the backwater town of Stavropol. Voroshilov held on to the presidency until May 1960, when Brezhnev replaced him. One of Khrushchev’s opponents on the Presidium, Pervukhin, was demoted to candidate member, and another, Saburov, removed altogether.

The June session elected a new Presidium and increased the membership from 11 to 15. Among the new full members were Marshal Zhukov and Leonid Brezhnev. Khrushchev’s allies Aleksei Kosygin and Andrei Kirilenko were among the eight new candidate members.

## TWENTY-SECOND PARTY CONGRESS

The defeat of the “antiparty group” did not give Khrushchev a free hand to run the party. The fact that several of his opponents retained

their posts—however temporarily—after the June Plenum indicated CC control over the first secretary.

The CC was determined to keep the party leader in check, and it was still more cautious where the military commanders were concerned. In October 1957 the Presidium expelled Marshal Zhukov from its ranks and dismissed him as minister of defense. The press charged that Zhukov had attempted to exaggerate his role in the war and had neglected ideological work in the armed forces. Professional officers did resent interference in military affairs, and Zhukov had tried to lessen CPSU meddling. After his fall the party instituted a 50-hour ideological training program for officers. The extent to which this program improved military efficiency and morale is open to question.

The CPSU also accused Zhukov of “Bonapartism” and of attempting to create his own cult of personality as a step toward seizing political power. It is impossible to say with certainty that Zhukov never harbored political ambitions, but nothing in his record substantiates that charge. There is, however, a mountain of evidence attesting to the party’s fear of a military coup d’état. The party feared the military, and the best way to neutralize the threat was to pin an unflattering label on its leader. Zhukov disappeared for a second and final time into obscure retirement.

The charge of exaggerating his role in World War II was more properly directed against Stalin. Throughout the Khrushchev era the late generalissimo was frequently taken to task for his failure to prepare the nation for the war and for his mistakes in the early campaigns. *Pravda* repeated the accusations and attacked Stalin’s other errors in marking the eightieth anniversary of his birth in December 1959. The same article, however, praised him as an “outstanding theoretician and propagandist of Marxism-Leninism.”

A militant hard line reminiscent of the Stalin era returned in October 1958, when the Khrushchev regime savagely attacked Boris Pasternak, awarded that year’s Nobel Prize for Literature by a Swedish Academy bent as much on fueling anti-Soviet propaganda as on honoring Pasternak. Although he had published little except translations in the Stalin years, Pasternak had been in the front rank of Soviet poets for a generation. In 1956 the censors, urged on by pathetically untalented wordsmiths who controlled the Writers’ Union, rejected Pasternak’s first and only novel, *Dr. Zhivago*. Published abroad in 1957, the circumstances of its birth constituted an indictment of Soviet repression.

This gave conservatives their opportunity. At their prompting, Khrushchev and A. N. Shelepin, then head of the KGB, led a savage, obscene campaign against the defenseless writer. Rejecting the appeals of unscrupulous organizations and individuals—who cared nothing for him—to come to the West, Pasternak endured public humiliation, renounced the prize, begged Khrushchev not to force him to leave the country, and was left to die in such peace as he could find less than two years later.

Increasingly on the defensive at home and abroad, Khrushchev did not retreat from his reform program, but he varied its pace. In 1961, when his popularity was at a low ebb, he summoned the Twenty-second Congress; the Twenty-first, in 1959, had been devoted largely to economic matters.

Nearly 4,400 voting delegates, the most ever, assembled in Moscow for the congress on October 17–31, their ostensible mission to approve a new party program. Khrushchev defended his policies, vilifying the “antiparty group” and revealing new details of the participation of its members in Stalin’s crimes. He had succeeded in replacing Voroshilov with Brezhnev in May 1960, and at the Twenty-second Congress he told the delegates of Voroshilov’s complicity in mass murders. He reviled Molotov

and Kaganovich, describing hideous scenes in Stalin's office when they cosigned orders condemning hundreds of thousands of innocent people to death. Stalin signed in red ink, Molotov in black, Kaganovich and Voroshilov in blue. The first secretary heaped scorn on his former traveling companion, ex-Prime Minister Bulganin, and made public more details of Malenkov's cooperation with Beria in the Leningrad Case.

Khrushchev hinted at the possible involvement of Stalin in Kirov's murder:

Great efforts are still needed to find out who was really to blame for . . . [Kirov's] death. The more deeply we study the materials connected with . . . the case, the more questions arise. . . . A thorough enquiry is now being conducted into the circumstances of this complicated matter.

This could only mean that Kamenev and Zinoviev, shot for inspiring the murder, had been innocent. That left the secret police as the only possible assassins, and in December 1934 the NKVD could not have planned and carried out the murder without Stalin's approval. Before the Kirov case could be cleared up publicly, however, Khrushchev was deposed. His immediate successors shut the books on the matter, which Gorbachev reopened in 1986. As of mid 1993, however, the Kremlin still had not revealed the archival evidence.

More rehabilitations were announced at the congress, and Khrushchev proposed that the party erect a monument to Stalin's victims. Other speakers, however, insisted that people who had "deserved" their punishment should not be rehabilitated or reinstated in the party. The head of the party Control Commission, N. M. Shvernik, indicated that the judicial review of questionable convictions was proceeding slowly and that fewer than a quarter of those applying for reinstatement had been accepted back into the party.

By decision of the congress, Stalin's body was removed from the Lenin-Stalin Mausoleum, which now became simply the Lenin Mausoleum. The late tyrant was buried under 10 meters of concrete in the small cemetery for party and state heroes at the foot of the Kremlin's east wall.

Khrushchev assured the congress that the "cult" was safely buried along with the man who had created it. Having listened to speeches praising him lavishly, he noted that

A certain special emphasis is placed on me personally, and my role in carrying out major party and government measures is underlined. I understand the kind feelings which guide these comments. Allow me, however, to emphasize vehemently that everything said about me should be said about the Central Committee of our Leninist party and about the Presidium of the Central Committee. (*Stormy, prolonged applause* [note in official transcript].) Not one measure, not one responsible pronouncement, has been carried out upon anyone's personal directive; they have all been the result of collective deliberation and collective decision. (*Stormy applause.*)

This was disingenuous. Khrushchev was certainly no Stalin, but he generally had his way in CPSU councils. At a time when most party officials were ready to back off from de-Stalinization, he chose the Twenty-second Congress as an occasion to wash still more extremely dirty party linen in public. He did so, moreover, with the ideological quarrel with the Chinese, Albanian, and Romanian parties growing more vitriolic and with the CPSU beset by all manner of other difficulties.

Yet Khrushchev's power was precarious. Behind his back party members began to quote the Russian proverb: "When the Devil grows old, he becomes a monk." Had the first secretary acknowledged his own past, resigned his post, and become manager of an obscure collective farm somewhere in the south, his fellow citizens would have recognized a syndrome often

encountered in Russian history and in Dostoevsky's novels: guilt, repentance, atonement, salvation. Khrushchev, however, repented Stalin's sins, not his own, and grew ever more fond of power.

Nevertheless, the atheist Khrushchev, educated and taught Holy Writ by Russian Orthodox priests (he admitted in 1960 that he had been a "model pupil"), did make one final attempt to atone. In 1962 he personally authorized publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's powerful novel about the Gulag, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. That book and Khrushchev's own "secret speech" changed history by changing the way history looked at Stalin.

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# chapter 17

## REFORM-ERA FOREIGN POLICY

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A domestic upheaval on the scale of de-Stalinization inevitably had sweeping ramifications abroad. As Molotov had warned, foreign enemies used the revelations of the Twentieth Congress as a stick with which to beat the USSR and communism; friends in Europe and Asia looked on in astonishment as the CPSU shook its own foundations. Petty Soviet minions in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and elsewhere waited anxiously for the dust to settle in Moscow, where their own fortunes were determined. In Beijing, Chairman Mao listened silently as Marshal Zhu De, head of the Chinese delegation to the congress, reported on the events in Moscow. Seeing himself as China's Stalin, a stern, powerful leader confronting the colossal task of modernizing a backward nation, Mao could only regard Soviet developments apprehensively. For a few months he would go along with the Khrushchev regime, speaking of the inadvisability

of exaggerating the role of any individual. In mid-1957, however, he would decide that an attack on Stalin constituted an attack on him.

### **TURMOIL IN POLAND**

On June 28–29, 1956, thousands of workers from the Zipsco Locomotive Factory in Poznan, where an international trade fair was in progress, marched through the streets carrying banners reading **BREAD AND FREEDOM** and **RUSSIANS GO HOME**. This would have embarrassed the regime and the Soviets at any time, but during the fair, which brought several thousand foreigners to Poznan, it was humiliating. The authorities sent in police; riots ensued, and in two days of violence 53 people died. The Polish government had however managed to avoid calling in the army, which

was under the command of Polish-born Soviet Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky.

Believing the Polish Army unreliable, Rokossovsky had contingency plans to use Soviet troops stationed in Poland, plus reinforcements from East Germany, in the event of serious disorders. Warsaw hoped to avoid that.

On October 19, a few days after a court sentenced the alleged ringleaders of the Poznan riots to prison, Khrushchev and Mikoyan, accompanied by the unrepentant Stalinists Molotov and Kaganovich, flew to Warsaw for discussions with the new Polish party leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka. Because the situation in Hungary was likewise threatening to get out of control, it was imperative to reach an accommodation or crush Poland quickly. Gomulka insisted that the Soviets accelerate the repatriation of Polish citizens from the Gulag, regularize the stationing of Soviet troops in Poland by statute, and give Poland a fair price for the coal it supplied to the USSR. He also wanted a share of German reparations payments.

The negotiators reached a compromise. The Soviets accepted Gomulka as head of the Polish Communist party. Rokossovsky resigned his Polish posts (as minister of defense and vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers) and returned to Moscow. An agreement guaranteeing equality in relations between the two states was concluded in mid-November, and on December 17 a treaty regulating the presence of Soviet troops on Polish soil was signed.

## HUNGARIAN REVOLT

Spurred on by Secretary of State Dulles's rhetoric, American officials had encouraged the Hungarians to launch an uprising. The exhortations were broadcast over CIA-controlled Radio Free Europe, staffed by East European émigrés, and the Voice of America, an arm of the State Department. Launched from West Germany and Italy, millions of balloons containing propaganda leaflets and instruc-

tions on waging guerrilla warfare were carried into Hungary on wind currents. Secret agents, mostly émigrés trained by the CIA, parachuted into the country with instructions to make contact with people known to be hostile to the regime, foment discontent, and commit sabotage. Most were caught and shot.

These activities had been going on for years but intensified in the wake of Khrushchev's "secret speech." Hungarian Stalinists interpreted that speech correctly and began tidying up their affairs. Late in March 1956 they announced the posthumous rehabilitation of a former foreign minister arrested and shot in 1949 on trumped-up charges of "Titoism." Hungarians who had been imprisoned in the Soviet Gulag began to return home. Censorship eased slightly, and more food appeared in the markets. In July Ernő Gerő replaced Stalinist Mátyás Rákosi as leader of the party; Gerő was no improvement but he was a change. The propaganda barrage from the West continued without interruption.

In Budapest the Petöfi literary circle became the center of a spontaneous reform movement. Hundreds of intellectuals, journalists, professional people, students, and workers participated. In mid-July *Pravda* took note, claiming that through the Petöfi Circle "certain elements which oppose the policy of the . . . [Communist] party and which have succumbed to the external influence of imperialist circles have tried . . . to spread their anti-party views." The newspaper warned Hungarians to remember Poznan.

Imre Nagy, prime minister before being ousted in April 1955 as insufficiently Stalinist, returned to head the government on October 24. The same day, anti-Soviet riots erupted in Budapest; Soviet forces moved against the demonstrators with tanks and infantry. On October 25 the Hungarian party's Central Committee, after consulting with Soviet Ambassador Yuri Andropov, appointed János Kádár to succeed Gerő.

At this juncture fate intervened in the form of Middle Eastern politics. The United Nations voted on October 28 to discuss the Hungarian situation, but the next day Israeli forces attacked Egyptian positions in the Sinai Desert and drove rapidly toward the Suez Canal, recently nationalized by Egypt's Nasser. Britain and France rejected an American proposal (supported by the USSR) for an Israeli-Egyptian cease-fire and issued an ultimatum to both sides to stop fighting and permit Anglo-French occupation of strategic points along the waterway. On October 31 the British and French bombed Cairo and the Canal. Israel continued to attack Egyptian positions. Only on November 6, bowing to intense pressure from the United States, did the British government accept a cease-fire; Israel and France followed suit. Eisenhower was reelected the same day.

The West was thus distracted in a week that proved decisive for Hungary. Even had there been the will to intervene on the side of the Hungarian rebels, it would have been impossible because of the Suez crisis. That tragic affair, and the added complication of the American election, allowed the Soviets to move without interference in Hungary.

On October 27 Nagy and Kádár appealed for order and promised to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet military forces, chief goal of most noncommunist Hungarians. The Soviets began to pull their troops out; columns of tanks and infantry moved eastward. Nagy promised free elections, an end to one-party dictatorship, and took leaders of a previously outlawed peasant party into his cabinet. The head of the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary, Josef Cardinal Mindszenty, still in the American embassy after seeking asylum in February 1949, hailed the Soviet withdrawal as the beginning of the end of Kremlin rule.

The move was only a feint, a tactical move to regroup. Nagy summoned Ambassador Andropov on November 1 to question him about the ominous buildup in the eastern part of the

country. Andropov promised that there would be no invasion. Determined to force the Kremlin's hand, Nagy declared that Hungary was withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact. He informed Andropov on the afternoon of November 2 that his nation would henceforward be neutral in world politics.

The Soviet Army struck on November 4. After ten days of fighting, the peace of the tank and the bayonet again enveloped Hungary. Kádár became leader of the new Hungarian regime. Unswervingly loyal to Moscow even though he had been imprisoned and tortured by the Stalinists, he supervised the brutal pacification of his country.

Imre Nagy had received assurances from Kádár and Andropov of safe conduct out of the country; he was arrested on November 22 as he left the Yugoslav embassy. Nagy and the military leader of the uprising, Pal Maléter, were executed at a Soviet base in Romania after a secret trial in June 1958.

## CHINA

Russia had been resolving problems in eastern Europe by force for almost two centuries; the events of 1956 were wholly in keeping with that tradition. China was another matter.

In his public remarks at the Twentieth Congress, Khrushchev had carefully praised the Chinese and Yugoslav communists, knowing that their reaction to the impending disclosure of Stalin's crimes would be crucial. Soon after the congress, Mikoyan and an Uzbek official were despatched to Beijing to explain the "secret speech."

Beyond the tensions that arose from de-Stalinization there were fundamental political differences between China and the post-Stalin USSR. The Soviets had a horror of nuclear war, while the Chinese leaders jeered at the American "paper tiger." The Soviets spoke ever more seriously of peaceful coexistence,

while the Chinese, who had laid down the principles of this policy in 1954, reversed themselves and called for “uninterrupted revolutions” to topple capitalism and imperialism. Moscow accused Beijing of flirting with Trotsky’s “permanent revolution.” When the Soviets began to normalize relations with Japan, China attacked this trafficking with a “Yankee puppet.” Moscow changed direction in the mid-1950s and announced that it would work with the “national bourgeoisie”—for example in India. The Chinese condemned this “capitulation” and declared they would deal only with communists and the masses.

Zhou Enlai came to Moscow in January 1957 to try to iron out the differences; his mission failed. Mao himself headed a delegation to the festivities marking the fortieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution later the same year, but his discussions with Khrushchev likewise produced no compromise. The Chinese already suspected that the Soviet leader’s attacks on “Talmudists and pedants” and “pedantic quotation-lovers” in the CPSU were directed at them. And when the first secretary jibed that it would be “absurd to comb Marx and Engels for instructions on what to do about deliveries of farm products by collective farmers,” he was referring to a common Chinese practice, one that in the 1960s assumed vast dimensions in Mao’s Cultural Revolution.

Khrushchev and Suslov went to Beijing in September 1959 for the tenth anniversary of the communist seizure of power and were treated coldly. By 1960 relations had deteriorated to the point where only a change of leadership on one side or the other could bring about a rapprochement.

## FROM SPUTNIK TO BERLIN

In August 1957 Khrushchev’s position at home and abroad seemed to become stronger with the world’s first successful test flight of an

intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM. No radar or other early warning system, no amount of air or sea power, could guarantee any nation against attack. A new era in international relations had begun.

Less than two months later the Soviets put the first artificial satellite, *Sputnik (Companion)*, into orbit around the earth. Radio signals from the 83.6-kilogram device left no doubt as to the success of Moscow’s space program. *Sputnik* gave further testimony to both the capabilities of Soviet science and the vulnerability of the United States.

Two days after the launching of *Sputnik* the Soviets successfully tested a powerful new hydrogen bomb. Soviet sabre rattling, however, far from cowing the United States into seeking an accord, produced an American response in the form of about 30 thermonuclear tests in the Marshall Islands in the spring and summer of 1958.

The most serious confrontation in this period occurred in Berlin, a city marked by decennial crises. Shut out of the Middle East by an American show of force in Lebanon in the summer of 1958 and increasingly concerned over the Chinese surge in Asia and Africa, Khrushchev announced on November 18, 1958, that the USSR would expel the Western powers from West Berlin. A few days later Khrushchev issued an ultimatum: the West would leave within six months or face a showdown, presumably nuclear. Reflecting the long-simmering Soviet bitterness over the rearming of West Germany, forbidden by the Potsdam Conference, and over the August 1956 banning of the Communist party in West Germany, the first secretary declared that West Berlin would become a free city. That could only mean incorporation into the East German puppet state.

The Western powers rejected the ultimatum. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko (in office since February 1957) escalated the crisis on Christmas Day 1958, when he told the

Supreme Soviet “there is a growing threat that Berlin may become a second Sarajevo.”

In January 1959 the Soviet Union presented a draft German peace treaty to the West. Since 1945 the four powers had not been able to agree on a treaty, and the West had come to regard the absence of one as an advantage. The German question remained unsettled; that meant that the East German regime still had merely provisional status as a Soviet occupation zone. Determined to force recognition of that regime, the Soviets submitted a document that would have legalized it. The West, however, had never accepted the Oder-Neisse line as the *de jure* border between East Germany and Poland and was in no mood to do so in 1959.

The West rejected the draft but agreed to continue negotiations. Khrushchev indulged in more bluster, warning of a new Berlin blockade, then agreed in March that East and West Germany could continue to exist side by side. He pledged not to resolve the German question by force. Once again the first secretary had ranted and threatened, only to back down. This was to cost him support in Moscow, not to mention Beijing.

Khrushchev withdrew his ultimatum because he and Eisenhower agreed in the spring of 1959 to exchange state visits in an attempt to improve the international climate. It was typical of Khrushchev's diplomacy that the Soviets landed a rocket—their second—on the moon on the eve of his departure for Washington. The space feat heralded a September 15–27 tour that produced little substance. Only in the last three days, when the two leaders met privately outside Washington, did any real accord develop, and then they merely agreed to continue talking about Berlin and other matters and to expand the cultural, educational, scientific, and sports exchanges negotiated in 1958.

The press featured photographs of the smiling leaders and promptly created a “spirit of Camp David” that had as little in common

with reality as the 1955 “spirit of Geneva.” Nevertheless, the tension that had entered an acute phase in October–November 1956 did seem to ease a little, and prospects for a calmer exchange of views improved.

## U-2

The Soviets sought to take advantage of the new attitude in Washington to reach an accord on Berlin and perhaps on arms control before the November 1960 U.S. elections. A conference of American, Soviet, British, and French leaders was planned for May in Paris. On May 1, however, Soviet rockets shot down an American U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft near Sverdlovsk, 2,000 kilometers from the nearest frontier.

The meeting was now doomed. The four leaders arrived in the French capital on schedule, but Khrushchev announced that he would not negotiate until the United States apologized, promised to halt the U-2 flights, and punished those responsible. Eisenhower responded on May 16 that there would be no more flights as long as he remained in the White House, but he declined to apologize. The conference thus concluded before it began, and Khrushchev announced that the president's planned visit to the Soviet Union would be postponed indefinitely. The Soviets had won a major propaganda victory.

Seeking to pursue his political advantage, Khrushchev came to New York in September to participate in the 1960 session of the U.N. General Assembly. Several other communist leaders came along to support him: Castro, Novotny, Kádár, Gomulka, Zhivkov, and Mehmet Shehu of Albania. Also on hand were Tito, Nehru, Macmillan, Nkrumah of Ghana, and Eisenhower.

The conclave threatened to turn into a circus. When a speaker irritated him, the first secretary took off his shoe and pounded it on his desk.



Khrushchev and Eisenhower at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, September 1959. (Department of Defense)

Khrushchev and Castro harangued crowds from the balcony of the Hotel Theresa in Harlem and engaged in debates with journalists, spectators, police guards, passersby—anyone who wanted to match wits. The *New York Journal-American* urged “all patriotic Americans” to switch off their television sets when Khrushchev was interviewed. In this atmosphere it was impossible for the General Assembly to make any headway discussing the most pressing item on the agenda, disarmament.

### KHRUSHCHEV, KENNEDY, BERLIN

Following the U-2 incident and the collapse of the Paris conference, Khrushchev pronounced the Monroe Doctrine a dead letter and warned that the Soviet Union would use its rockets should the United States try to overthrow the Castro regime. In part because the United States reacted so vehemently to Castro’s nationalization of foreign—chiefly

American, including Mafia—private property, the Soviets and Cubans had drawn closer after Castro came to power in January 1959. In the 1960 presidential campaign, Richard Nixon counseled patience and moderation in dealing with Cuba, while John Kennedy spoke of “liberating” the island. In one of his last official acts, Eisenhower severed diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Eisenhower had earlier approved plans for an invasion of Cuba by anti-Castro Cuban émigrés trained, equipped, and financed by the CIA. President Kennedy gave the signal for the operation to commence, and on April 17, 1961, the émigrés attacked the beach at the Bay of Pigs. The invasion was a disaster; within three days Castro’s forces had captured or killed all the attackers. Following Eisenhower’s precedent in the U-2 incident, Kennedy accepted responsibility.

The tragic farce was followed by theatre of another sort: Khrushchev and Kennedy met in Vienna on June 3–4, 1961. The grandiosity of

the agenda—Germany, disarmament, a test-ban treaty, Southeast Asia—indicated that both saw the meeting as a public relations stunt. The first secretary and the new American president simply took each other's measure. There was no accord save an insincere pledge to support a peaceful, independent Laos and respect its neutrality. The June 1961 summit constituted an argument against the casual holding of such meetings.

The encounter nevertheless had important consequences. Khrushchev declared on June 15 that the Soviet Union would sign a peace treaty with East Germany by the end of 1961 whether or not the Western Allies and West Germany participated. He revived his demand that West Berlin be made a free city and warned that after the conclusion of the Soviet-East German treaty, the Allies would have to deal with the East Germans.

The conflict escalated on August 13, when the East Germans closed the border between East and West Berlin. Two days later they began constructing a wall between the two sectors of the city. Within a few weeks the human hemorrhage, which had cost East Germany several million citizens since 1945, was stanching. The Berlin Wall, eventually extended along the entire East-West frontier in Germany, became a symbol of communist terror and failure in Eastern Europe.

The East Germans and their masters were content to stop the outflow of people and did not press the 1961 crisis further. Khrushchev did not sign a treaty with East Germany, Berlin did not become a "free city." The Soviets waited a year to abolish the office of Soviet Commandant in East Berlin; this theoretically obliged the Allied Commandant in West Berlin to deal with East German authorities, but in practice that did not happen.

Khrushchev continued to bluster, telling the West German chancellor in December 1962 that "if the war to which your present political course is leading is unleashed, the Federal

Republic of Germany will burn up like tinder in the very first hours of that war." By this time, however, he had become the boy who cried "Wolf!"

In June 1964 a subdued first secretary, his foreign policy in disarray, signed a treaty of friendship and mutual aid with the East German regime of Walter Ulbricht, perhaps Moscow's most faithful henchman. The limited, basically insignificant accord, his last statement on the issue, provided eloquent testimony to Khrushchev's failure to resolve the German problem.

## SINO-INDIAN DISPUTE

Khrushchev regularly proposed an international summit conference to include India but not China. He argued that the American refusal to deal with China constituted an insurmountable barrier and that it was better to accept half a loaf. The Chinese communists bitterly resented this attitude, and to embarrass Khrushchev they embarked on a strange adventure in India.

China and India had shared a common frontier since 1950, when Chinese forces occupied Tibet. The mountainous, remote border was quiet for nine years. In August 1959, however, China suddenly moved into the North-east Frontier Agency territory, also claimed by India. Khrushchev was to visit the United States three weeks later.

The invasion left the Soviets in an impossible situation. Supporting the Chinese would cost them the friendship of the nonaligned nations. Backing India would alienate China and her ally, Albania; possibly North Korea; and the Indonesian and other communist parties sympathetic to Beijing. The Khrushchev regime adopted a neutral position and called for negotiations. This did not please the Indians, who saw themselves as victims of unprovoked aggression. It outraged the Chinese, who in-

sisted that *they* had been attacked—no one believed this—and further that it was the USSR's duty to come to the aid of a fraternal socialist country no matter what the circumstances.

A TASS statement on September 9, 1959, stressed Moscow's desire for friendly relations with both countries but criticized states that sought to "obstruct the relaxation of the international tensions and to complicate the situation on the eve of the exchange of visits [Khrushchev to the United States, Eisenhower to the USSR]." This was the first public attack on China.

Khrushchev had stumbled into the Chinese trap, although there was probably no way he could have avoided it. Beijing accused him of being more interested in having a glass of beer at the White House than in emancipating oppressed peoples. One of the two main Chinese goals in the Indian adventure was at least partially achieved: Beijing's claim to lead the militant wing of the international communist movement was now firmly established if not universally recognized. A cornered first secretary had no choice but to pursue the logical consequences of his policy and cut off supplies of weapons, spare parts, aircraft, and fuel to China.

The other Chinese goal in India remained elusive: as opposed to neutralism as John Foster Dulles, Mao had hoped to discredit nonalignment and compromise Nehru. The Indian leader, as Beijing suspected, secretly requested American aid. Hard evidence of Nehru's "sellout" to capitalism, however, did not materialize, and with few exceptions the leaders of the other nonaligned nations supported him against the Chinese.

Mao's reaction to the Soviet declaration of neutrality, which amounted to siding with Nehru, provoked Khrushchev to redouble his efforts to woo India. In September 1959 Moscow extended a 1.5 billion ruble credit to New Delhi, and the following February Khrushchev went ahead with his scheduled visit to the

country. Still trying to straddle the fence, he persuaded Nehru to invite Zhou Enlai to New Delhi for talks.

The Sino-Indian border remained quiet for more than three years after the 1959 Chinese invasion. Then suddenly, on October 20, 1962, the People's Liberation Army attacked at several points along the line separating it from the Indian Army. The Indians were routed; the Chinese drove southward against only token resistance.

A desperate Nehru turned to the Soviet Union, only to find Kremlin officials speaking on October 25 of India's "imperialist legacy" as the reason why Moscow would now support China. Stunned, the Indians could only watch in horror as their defeated soldiers stumbled out of the Himalayas and down into the valleys. But on November 2 a *Pravda* editorial announced Moscow's support of India. The Soviets would supply weapons, including MiG-21 fighter aircraft.

This bewildering about-face neither calmed Indian fears nor slowed the Chinese advance. Nehru asked for American aid on November 19; two days later President Kennedy ordered transport aircraft to India.

At this point the Chinese announced a unilateral cease-fire. Beijing declared that it would withdraw its forces behind the lines that had existed in the Northeast Frontier Agency as of November 7, 1959. The retreat indeed took place, and by mid-January 1963 Chinese forces had abandoned the areas seized in the autumn 1962 fighting.

The Himalayan conflict in October–November 1962 was only superficially a dispute between China and India. The Chinese forced the crisis not to seize Indian territory but once again to humiliate the Soviet leader. They could not have chosen a better time: in October 1962 the Soviet Union was locked in a confrontation with the United States.

## CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

On August 31, 1962, Senator Kenneth Keating charged that the USSR was installing in Cuba offensive missiles aimed at the United States. The Kennedy administration issued a prompt denial. On September 1 a TASS statement warned that an attack on Cuba would mean war with the Soviet Union. Soviet weapons on the island, the agency declared, were “intended solely for defensive purposes,” to prevent another Bay of Pigs operation. In fact, the missiles were deployed in a “soft”—easily targeted—configuration, which made them feasible only for first-strike use.

TASS did not reveal that Castro’s deputy, Ernesto “Ché” Guevara, was then in Moscow working out final details for the placement of Soviet nuclear-tipped rockets in Cuba. Construction of the launch sites had been under way for some time; the missiles were to be aimed at targets on the American East Coast. Had this plan succeeded, the number of nuclear systems able to strike the United States would have increased substantially.

As late as October 14, 1962, Kennedy’s national security adviser declared that there were no offensive missiles on Cuba. That same day, photos taken on a U-2 reconnaissance flight showed four launch sites for medium-range missiles nearing completion and two others under construction. Soviet personnel were also preparing to assemble Il-28 medium-range *Beagle* bombers, which had been shipped to the island in crates.

When Foreign Minister Gromyko met Kennedy at the White House on October 18 and again insisted that only defensive weapons were on Cuba, the president concluded that the Soviet Union wanted a showdown. Kennedy did not tell Gromyko what he knew, but he set procedures in motion to prepare a response.

In a somber televised speech on October 22, Kennedy reported the presence in Cuba of

Soviet missiles capable of hitting targets in the United States. He declared that the United States would not tolerate aggression anywhere, least of all in the Western Hemisphere. He announced a naval “quarantine” of Cuba. This amounted to a blockade, involving the risk of an incident on the high seas that would tip the crisis over the brink of war. Kennedy warned the Soviets that he would consider a missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the hemisphere as “an attack by the Soviet Union upon the United States,” and he called on Khrushchev to “halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations.”

The world was on the verge of a nuclear conflict. The American advantage was overwhelming: Nearly 1,000 American intercontinental delivery systems against 10 operational Soviet ICBMs and about 200 long-range bombers in the Soviet arsenal. Had war come, the United States would have taken some severe blows, but it would have inflicted far greater destruction on the USSR.

For more than 48 hours the world awaited Moscow’s response. Capitulation would make Khrushchev’s position virtually untenable at home and in the communist camp at large, but he had the alternative of caving in or going to war. He quickly determined that Kennedy was not bluffing. American forces around the globe went on ready alert, and the Pentagon radioed missile-carrying Polaris submarines an uncoded message ordering them to “put into play” their objectives.

On October 24 the 18 Soviet-bloc freighters bound for Cuba with military cargo halted dead in the water; Khrushchev would not try to run the blockade. Four days later technicians began dismantling the missiles already in place and preparing them for shipment, presumably back to the Soviet Union. Construction of new launch sites ceased.

Washington and Moscow had worked out a

compromise. In response to a plea to allow Khrushchev to save face, Kennedy agreed to pledge that on demonstration of Soviet readiness to capitulate, he would not invade Cuba. Further, on October 26 the president's brother, Robert Kennedy, informed Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin that after the resolution of the crisis the United States would remove its missiles aimed at the USSR from Turkey; this pledge was soon extended to cover missiles based in Italy. This was not a quid pro quo for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. The weapons in Turkey and Italy were outmoded and vulnerable, and the United States had planned for some time to substitute Polaris submarines.

The crisis passed. In failing to specify which offensive weapons the Soviets could not deploy on Cuba, American officials neglected to pursue the advantage gained when Khrushchev capitulated. Kennedy had merely said missiles then on the island had to be removed. This oversight left the door open. Eight years later, when the Soviets began constructing a submarine base on Cuba, American officials searched for records of Kennedy's 1962 understanding—or presumed understanding—with Khrushchev. They found nothing.

Twenty-seven years later, the world learned just how close the brush with nuclear catastrophe had been. At a January 1989 Moscow conference of advisers to Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro, the Soviets reported that half their 42 missiles on the island in 1962 had been operational and could have been launched within four or five hours. Not without reason, Castro feared an American invasion and spent the night of October 26, 1962, in a bunker at the Soviet embassy. According to one report he urged Moscow to attack, and Khrushchev's son said in 1989 that the Cuban dictator sent his father a cable saying he and his comrades "were prepared to die" in defense of the island.

## THE SOVIETS AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The chief lesson Khrushchev and Kennedy drew from their horrifying confrontation was that they would prefer to avoid another. They agreed on various safety measures including an emergency communication link and better access to top officials for ambassadors. In February 1963 the Soviets presented a draft nonaggression treaty; the West rejected it as a meaningless gesture. The first secretary and the president, however, both deeply sobered, resolved to reach an agreement on nuclear weapons.

The Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb in August 1949 and its first U-235 weapon in 1951. The United States introduced tactical nuclear weapons into Europe in 1952, thus virtually ensuring that any violent Soviet-NATO clash would witness their use. NATO maintained that the substantial Soviet superiority in conventional forces necessitated deployment of atomic hardware. The Soviet Army and Air Force received atomic and thermonuclear weapons in 1953.

From 1953 to 1960 the Soviets developed an arsenal of atomic and thermonuclear weapons and built various delivery systems for them, chiefly rockets. As the nuclear stockpile grew, Khrushchev reduced conventional forces, alienating the professional military establishment. The number of men in uniform, 5.763 million in 1950, fell to 3.623 million by 1960.

In the spring of 1957 the Kremlin called for the banning of all tests of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons. The proposal was not taken seriously, but Khrushchev repeated it in December 1957 shortly after renewing his "absolute weapon" boast, and this time there was—as Western intelligence soon learned—reason to believe him. The USSR was ready to suspend tests, the first secretary announced, as of January 1, 1958.

This proposal was in part Moscow's reaction to a November 1957 disaster: a military reactor producing plutonium for atomic bombs had exploded in the Ural Mountains. The area around the town of Kyshtym, between Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk, had long been dangerously polluted because of incredibly careless waste-disposal procedures at the plant. Radioactive waste stored in liquid form in dry lakes seeped into groundwater and thence into the Techa River, a tributary of the Ob. Further, water contaminated in cooling the reactor was simply pumped into a holding pond and from there directly into the Techa. Gas containing radioactive particles was expelled through a smokestack, subjecting a wide area to deadly "rain" of nitric acid and radioactive iodine-131.

Kyshtym and its environs had thus been bombarded with high levels of radioactivity for about a decade when the November 1957 catastrophe struck. The explosion at the reactor was apparently chemical rather than nuclear, the product of careless storage in close proximity of a combustible combination of chemicals. There was considerable loss of life, and thousands of people suffered exposure to enormous doses of radioactivity. Plant and animal life was destroyed over an area of at least 100 and perhaps as many as 1,000 square kilometers. The entire area was cordoned off and dams constructed to halt the spread of water-borne contamination. The inhabitants of some 30 villages, which disappeared from subsequent editions of Soviet maps, were resettled elsewhere, leaving everything but the clothes—burned as soon as possible—on their backs in the disaster area.

*Pravda* later noted that the "harmful effects of thermonuclear tests on living organisms are well known in the Soviet Union." Nothing about the events in the Urals in November 1957, however, appeared in the popular press; only through scientific journals did some segments of the public learn what had happened.

The Kyshtym tragedy, the world's first nuclear catastrophe of such dimensions, played a role in the March 31, 1958, Soviet decision to suspend nuclear testing. Khrushchev called on the United States and Great Britain, then the only other nuclear powers, to halt their own tests. The United States continued to test after the Soviet suspension, as did Britain. On October 31, 1958, however, both Western nations declared that they would halt tests for one year while negotiations to limit nuclear arms went forward; three-power talks had begun in Geneva earlier the same month.

Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki had proposed the creation of a nuclear-free zone in central Europe in October 1957. Under his plan, unquestionably born in Moscow, no atomic or thermonuclear weapons would be permitted in either of the two German states, Poland, or Czechoslovakia, an area with a combined population of more than 100 million. The West rejected the Rapacki plan as a maneuver to secure withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from West Germany—an acknowledged Kremlin goal—and perpetuate the division of the German state.

The West also rejected Khrushchev's 1959 call for a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific basin. The Soviet leader was, however, speaking not to Washington but to Beijing. The Chinese were trying to develop their own nuclear capability, which would primarily threaten the USSR. Khrushchev's proposal was ignored in the United States and derided in China.

In August 1961, at the height of the year's Berlin crisis, the Kremlin announced its intention to resume thermonuclear testing. The "aggressive actions of the imperialists," *Pravda* declared, necessitated this step, which was accompanied by a decree extending military service "until the signing of a peace treaty with Germany." On September 5, 1961, Kennedy ordered the resumption of "safe" tests, those which allegedly produced little or no radioactive fallout. At the end of October the U.N. General

Assembly formally asked the Soviets not to detonate a 50-megaton hydrogen bomb; the Kremlin ignored the request and exploded the device in the Arctic.

Secret negotiations for a test-ban treaty began early in 1963 and continued for several months. Averell Harriman, who had once served as American ambassador to the Soviet Union, went to Moscow in July to direct the final stages of the bargaining. On August 5, 1963, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union signed a limited nuclear test-ban treaty barring tests in space, the atmosphere, and under water. Underground tests were not affected.

The treaty went into effect in October 1963. Within a year more than 100 nations had signed it; China and France refused. Described at the time as a major step forward in bringing the nuclear arms race under control, the accord had a more modest impact. It reduced radioactive fallout and helped prepare the ground for the Outer Space Treaty of

1967, the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970, and the Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) I pact of 1972.

## MOSCOW AND THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

The Soviet leaders appeared as stunned as the rest of the world by the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963. A kind of bond had developed between Khrushchev and Kennedy after the near-catastrophe in the Caribbean, a recognition that they were united by a common desire to avoid annihilation.

It quickly developed that the alleged assassin was an American citizen who had once defected to the USSR, Lee Harvey Oswald. Returning to the United States, he developed an affinity for Castro's Cuba. Anticipating charges of Soviet-Cuban involvement in the affair, the Kremlin took the unprecedented step of conveying what it claimed was the complete

Fidel Castro, Nikita Khrushchev, and Marshal Rodion Malinovsky in Soviet Georgia, 1963. The man on the left is Aleksei Leonov, the long-time Soviet Consul in Mexico City who gave Lee Harvey Oswald a visa to enter the USSR. (ITAR-TASS)



KGB file on Oswald to the American authorities. No Soviet link to Oswald after his departure from the USSR was established, and the Warren Commission, which investigated the matter, concluded that the assassin was a deranged fanatic who had acted alone.

The possibility of a Cuban link was also dismissed, but this was a much stickier wicket. It would be revealed in the 1970s that after Castro came to power in January 1959, the CIA had concocted a number of plots to assassinate him, going so far as to negotiate a murder contract with the crime syndicate, the Mafia. Several CIA-sponsored attempts on Castro's life failed.

Critics of the Warren Commission denounced its report for failing to refute the claim of some Americans that the Kennedy assassination was Castro's retaliation for the CIA's attempts on his own life. And if Castro was involved, the critics argued, his Kremlin masters had surely been consulted at every stage of the plot and had approved it.

The question of Soviet-Cuban involvement has never been laid to rest. It is unlikely that any security agency involved, or the Mafia, will soon release its unsanitized files.

## THE THIRD WORLD

When Egypt's Nasser flirted with communists at home and abroad he brought down on himself the wrath of John Foster Dulles. In July 1956 the United States, obediently followed by Anthony Eden's government in Britain, withdrew its offer to help finance the construction of the Aswan High Dam on the Nile. The Suez crisis of 1956 deepened the rift between Egypt and the West despite the fact that the United States had forced the Israeli-Franco-British alliance to halt its aggression against Nasser.

Preoccupied with events in Poland and Hungary and the stresses of de-Stalinization, the Soviets were slow to step into the breach. In the autumn of 1956, however, Moscow

pledged unequivocal support for Egypt and took up that country's cause in the United Nations, although it was not until Nasser visited the Soviet Union in April–May 1958 that the two governments began to cooperate closely. Nasser opened negotiations for a loan to finance construction of the dam. In October 1958 the Kremlin announced that it would lend Egypt—known as the United Arab Republic (UAR) during the 1958–1961 union with Syria—\$100 million toward construction; that sum would, later be substantially augmented. Design work was completed in July 1959, and Nasser turned the first shovel of earth in January 1960.

Ignoring the warnings of some officials, Moscow misjudged Nasser badly. The majority opinion in Soviet government circles considered the Egyptian leader an essentially weak, malleable politician who could be bent Moscow's way. In reality Nasser was exactly what he claimed to be, a devout Muslim and Arab nationalist. He would traffic with communists only when it suited his purposes.

In January 1961 the Egyptian police arrested 200 leading communists, and Cairo warned the Kremlin to cease interfering in Egyptian politics. So far as the Egyptians were concerned, construction of the dam, which involved the influx of several thousand Soviet technicians, was strictly a business deal requiring no political concessions, least of all any ideological cozying up to the atheists from the USSR. Relations between the two countries deteriorated, and Anwar Sadat, then chairman of the UAR National Assembly, went to Moscow in May to explain to Khrushchev that only communists suspected of plotting to overthrow the regime had been arrested.

Nikita Khrushchev visited Egypt in May 1964 to join Nasser in celebrating completion of the first stage of the dam. When he fell from power a few months later, one of the charges against him was that he had given so much to and received so little from the Egyptian leader.

Elsewhere in the Middle East the Soviets sought to subvert the bilateral defense agreements which the United States had concluded in 1959 with Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. Equally to their distaste was the 1955 defensive alliance between Iraq and Turkey (Baghdad Pact), to which Britain, Pakistan, and Iran adhered. The Baghdad Pact, renamed Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) after Iraq's March 1959 withdrawal, constituted a *cordon sanitaire* to thwart a Soviet move toward the Persian Gulf, around which lay the world's richest oil-producing area. Further adding to Soviet problems in the region, American nuclear-tipped missiles in Turkey were pointed at the USSR until their removal in 1962–1963 and the U-2 flights over European Russia originated from airfields in Pakistan.

Soviet apprehensions did not lessen when the shah of Iran settled an oil-revenues dispute with the West in August 1954 and took his country into the alliance of Middle Eastern and Western nations. In 1955–1956 the USSR and Iran resurveyed their 2,000-kilometer frontier, one of the most heavily guarded in the world. The tension between the two countries did not ease when in 1959 the shah unilaterally abrogated the 1921 Irano-Soviet agreement permitting the movement of Soviet troops into Iran in the event that military forces constituting a threat to the Soviet Union entered that country. Moscow did not recognize the shah's action.

In East and Southeast Asia the Soviet Union frequently used domestic communist forces to achieve its political goals. After the July 1954 division of Vietnam into a communist North and a noncommunist South, the Soviets naturally backed the North and stepped up military and economic aid. The Soviet effort in Vietnam was however dwarfed by that of Beijing: in July 1955 China granted the Hanoi regime of Ho Chi Minh \$338 million in aid. When the United States increased its own assistance to the South Vietnamese regime in the

early 1960s, the Soviets again expanded their aid to the Viet Cong (South Vietnamese communists) and to Hanoi, which sponsored, trained, equipped, and maintained them.

The Vietnamese conflict escalated dramatically in 1964, a presidential election year in the United States, and the Americans became deeply enmeshed. The Soviets adopted a holding pattern, keeping up the flow of aid to the Viet Cong and Hanoi and remaining aloof from the fighting. Beijing periodically halted the transshipment of Soviet supplies by rail across China.

The ancient enmity between China and the peoples of Southeast Asia went back at least 1,000 years and stemmed from both cultural differences and Chinese attempts to dominate the area. The Soviets thus had only to call Hanoi's attention to Chinese obstructionism. The Moscow-trained Ho Chi Minh was like Nasser in that he took help from the Devil when he had to, but he never wavered in his preference for Moscow over Beijing.

The Soviet Union fostered communist and communist-dominated insurrectionary movements elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Most important were those in the Philippines, Malaya (Malaysia), Burma, Cambodia, and Laos. Sizable American and British aid programs helped defeat the communists in the first three countries, but Cambodia and Laos long remained unstable.

In the largest, wealthiest, and strategically most important nation in the region, Indonesia, a strongman, Sukarno, led the postwar struggle against the Dutch colonial regime. A nationalist with a visceral hatred of colonialism, Sukarno believed he could manipulate the large Indonesian Communist party (PKI) to his own ends and deal with the Soviet Union without compromising his newly independent country.

In April 1955 Sukarno was a sponsor of the conference of 29 Asian and African states that took place at Bandung, Indonesia. The final

communiqué denounced “colonialism in all its forms”—omitting, however, to list the Soviet variety. The Soviet Union was one of the behind-the-scenes organizers of the Bandung Conference, which also approved the “five principles of coexistence” enunciated by Zhou Enlai and Nehru in April 1954 but later repudiated by Beijing.

Sukarno took Moscow’s side in the Sino-Soviet dispute, and his imposition of severe restrictions on the millions of Indonesian Chinese late in 1959 provided one of the first clues to the depth of that quarrel. Indonesia acted as a Soviet surrogate in Southeast Asia in other ways, notably by repeatedly launching guerrilla raids against the new Federation of Malaysia, which included Sarawak and North Borneo, both claimed by Jakarta. The PKI, many of whose members were Indonesian Chinese, was loyal to Mao. Overestimating his own political sagacity, Sukarno believed that he could tack between Moscow, Beijing, and the PKI with impunity, playing each off against the other to his own advantage. When the Sino-Soviet conflict reached the stage of open hostilities, his efforts came undone.

In 1965, a year after the ouster of Khrushchev, Sukarno’s patron, the PKI attempted to seize power through an armed coup d’état. The action was ruthlessly put down by the Indonesian Army, which slaughtered about 300,000 communists. After the 1927–1928 events in China it was the largest massacre of party members in the history of the international communist movement. Khrushchev’s protégé stood accused by the army of complicity in the PKI putsch. Sukarno was forced to yield most of his powers in March 1966.

The Soviet Union courted leaders in black Africa, among them Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sékou Touré of Guinea, and Patrice Lumumba of the Congo Republic. Its unswerving anticolonialist policy won the Soviet Union some friends in Africa, and foreign aid

likewise purchased a certain amount of unstable affection. The Soviets had little experience on the Dark Continent, however, and they underestimated the ability of Western nations to learn from their mistakes and come to terms with new realities. Further, the persistent Soviet refusal to bring any sort of serious pressure to bear on the racist Republic of South Africa, a major, semiclandestine Soviet trading partner, hurt Moscow’s image in Africa, as did the racism which African students encountered in the USSR.

The Soviet Union had not paid much attention to Latin America before the Castro revolution of 1959. When the United States failed to move decisively against the quasi-communist regime on its doorstep, the Soviets plunged into the Caribbean basin. Kremlin aid, amounting in the 1960s to \$1 million a day kept Castro afloat, neutralized the American economic boycott, and left something over for Cuban mischief-making.

Castro’s principal aide, Ernesto “Ché” Guevara, became a Soviet favorite. Through Guevara, Moscow began to organize a network of revolutionary underground organizations throughout Latin America. In some areas skeleton forces were already in place and needed only an infusion of guns, money, and hope; elsewhere, Guevara and the people he trained had to build organizations from the ground up. The Soviets did not spare the purse. The Cuban cadres were well financed, and huge amounts of arms flowed into the region through Havana. Thousands of Latin American youths were trained in guerrilla warfare at special camps in Cuba, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union.

The great crisis of October 1962 momentarily brought the increasingly aggressive Soviet-Cuban revolutionary mission to a halt. The activity resumed in 1963, however, and the pace was to quicken after 1964.

## KHRUSHCHEV'S FOREIGN POLICY: A SUMMARY

Khrushchev was a bold innovator, as audacious as Stalin had been prudent. He subdued the Hungarians by force and the Poles by a few concessions and the threat of force. He undertook a foreign aid campaign that matched that of the United States.

Soviet philanthropy was designed to serve the political interests of the USSR, but the billions spent in the Third World ultimately purchased little goodwill. One cannot conceive of Egyptian peasants praising Moscow as they irrigate their fields with water from Aswan High Dam, but to the extent that those peasants were more productive, prosperous, and presumably happier, Soviet aid was not in vain, at least not from the standpoint of the Egyptians. The Soviets helped raise the standard of living of millions of people around the world at enormous cost to themselves. As a percentage of gross domestic product, Soviet foreign aid greatly exceeded the American figure.

A population whose own standard of living remained among the lowest in Europe deeply resented the expenditure of vast sums on foreign aid. More significantly, given the nature of the political system, many high-ranking officials began to question the largesse. Nasser's harsh treatment of Egyptian communists, Sukarno's inability to turn the PKI away from its pro-Beijing orientation, and the failure of communist parties to make significant headway in black Africa led some Soviet leaders to undertake their own cost-benefit analysis of foreign aid and conclude that the Soviet Union simply was not getting an adequate political return for its investment. Castro's Cuba seemed an exception until the leaders faced the realities of the huge sums needed to shore up that regime, and of course the 1962 crisis accentuated the vulnerability of the USSR's most distant client state.

A protracted reappraisal of foreign policy began after the Cuban missile crisis. The sub-

dued first secretary undertook no substantial new gambles; the sums allocated for foreign aid declined. A majority of the leadership concluded that because the dams and steel mills and refineries built with Moscow's aid had not noticeably altered the East-West balance of power, Kremlin foreign policy should in the future concentrate on targets of real opportunity, exploiting unstable situations that had developed with or without Moscow's interference. Captives of the image they wished to project as defenders of oppressed peoples, the Soviet communists often found themselves obliged to intervene in crises better left alone.

Khrushchev had spoken with increasing frequency of "wars of national liberation" but did relatively little to encourage them, concentrating instead on showy, costly construction projects. It was far cheaper and more in the Soviet interest, his critics believed, to plunge into an existing conflict with AK-47 assault rifles and military experts than to build roads or construct factories.

In the end, Khrushchev proved an inept manager of revolution. His colleagues would not tolerate that.

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## chapter 18

# INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN THE REFORM ERA

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### POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The U-2 crisis produced dramatic changes in the Soviet leadership: a Central Committee plenary session on May 4 elevated the Khrushchev loyalists Aleksei Kosygin, Nikolai Podgorny, and Dmitri Polyansky to the party Presidium and removed A. I. Kirichenko. On May 7 Leonid Brezhnev succeeded Kliment Voroshilov, last Stalin crony still in high office, as chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium.

Khrushchev now had a team composed in part of people whose careers he had made and in part of old-line party officials. On the 14-member party Presidium, 7 members (Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny, Polyansky, Kozlov, Furtseva, and Mukhitdinov) owed their positions to the first secretary, who thus had a majority. Khrushchev believed he could also count on the support of Anastas Mikoyan, an economic expert with no political ambi-

tions. N. M. Shvernik, 72, and O. V. Kuusinen, 78, were party hacks interested in little but a comfortable ride on life's last journey. Two younger bureaucrats, A. B. Aristov and N. G. Ignatov, did as they were told.

The final member of the Presidium, the conservative ideologist Suslov, had helped propel Khrushchev into the party leadership and sided with him against the Stalinists in 1957. Suslov had become the political conscience of the party, his support crucial to anyone who wanted to be first among the leaders. As long as he backed Khrushchev, all but the most rigid Stalinists could rest assured that the CPSU was on a true Leninist course.

The Khrushchev team was of mediocre caliber. Kosygin, an economic manager, supplanted Mikoyan in this area and took his ideological cues from Suslov. Brezhnev was a gregarious individual remarkable more for his personal charm—rare among communist

leaders—than his intellect, a skillful politician who also deferred to Suslov on ideology. Podgorny headed the Ukrainian party organization; N. A. Mukhitdinov, the first non-Caucasian to sit on the Presidium, led the Uzbek branch. Yekaterina Furtseva had long served in the Moscow party organization. Mukhitdinov, Furtseva, Aristov, and Ignatov, however, lost their Presidium seats at the Twenty-second Congress.

A key Khrushchev appointee was Frol Kozlov, head of the party in Leningrad province and a major figure in the 1957 defeat of the Stalinists. Kozlov, who had ambitions to higher office, subsequently broke with his mentor.

In 1961 the Khrushchev faction pushed through more de-Stalinization. This was the last time the faction held together on a major issue, and it did so only with difficulty.

Party conservatives were distressed by the split within the international communist camp, which burst into the open at the congress when Khrushchev denounced Albanian Stalinism. Representing the Chinese party, Zhou Enlai vigorously defended the Tirana regime. In the middle of the congress Zhou abruptly left Moscow. In a demonstration of his hostility toward Khrushchev, Mao went to the Beijing airport to greet Zhou on his return.

Fundamentalists were further disturbed by the Khrushchev faction's declaration that "because the construction of socialism has been completed, the dictatorship of the proletariat has fulfilled its historical mission." The Soviet state, the CC report and the new party program declared, was a "state of the whole people"—workers, peasants, and people's intelligentsia; this adumbrated the granting of full civil rights to the peasants beginning in 1974. Abandoning the concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat" struck Stalinists as anathema.

Middle-of-the-road party members disapproved of Khrushchev's unqualified prediction that "this generation of Soviet people will live under communism." This smacked of his

1957 boast that the USSR would overtake the United States in several categories of agricultural production by 1960 and recalled his taunting Americans that their grandchildren would live under communism.

A 1961 innovation in party rules adopted at Khrushchev's demand alienated party cadres. Article 35 called for the replacement at each regular election of at least a quarter of the membership of the CC and its Presidium; at least a third of the republic central committees and regional party committees; and at least half the town and district party committees and half the officers of all cells. There was an escape clause permitting the exemption from this turnover of "experienced party workers of special merit," that is, Khrushchev and his friends. The first secretary's stated motive in seeking to bring new blood and vigor into the party bureaucracy had much to commend it, but his enemies believed he was preparing a purge. Career officials became apprehensive, and many supporters broke with him on this issue.

The Twenty-second Congress marked Khrushchev's last major triumph; thereafter he seemed to lose his political touch and occasionally—as in the Cuban missile affair—his grip on reality. One of his advisers revealed in 1988 that the first secretary's enemies slyly persuaded him to adopt a crackpot scheme that called for the division "on the production principle" of district and province party committees into independent industrial and agricultural sectors. Khrushchev pushed this bizarre plan through a November 1962 CC plenum; the result "undermined his authority among party leaders once and for all."

## TROUBLES IN AGRICULTURE

Agricultural production, which had seemed on an upward curve after the 1956 harvest, began to decline again. The 1957 harvest was a poor

one and 1958's not much better. Yields of the virgin lands fell precipitately as natural nutrients in the soil were exhausted. Further, the shelter-belt forestation program, designed to protect steppe topsoil from wind erosion, proved a dismal failure, not least because seedlings were planted in Lysenkian "clusters." By planting several together, Lysenko declared, only the fittest would survive. The plowing of vast territories unprotected by forests inevitably produced disaster: 1.5 million hectares were ruined in Pavlodar province alone in 1962, and in 1963 severe windstorms blew millions of tons of topsoil away.

The party searched for scapegoats. Unwilling to blame Lysenko, it declined to admit that nature could defeat communists. Moscow refused to face the fact that the virgin lands lie in an area where the May–July probability of drought is 20–40 percent. Khrushchev gave a supernatural explanation for the troubles in March 1961, pointing out that the name of the region's chief town, Akmolinsk, means "White Grave" in Kazakh. He proposed renaming it Tselinograd, Russian for "Virgin Land City."

Akmolinsk was renamed; the harvests did not improve. In 1962 Kazakhstan fell 35 percent short of its grain quotas and likewise failed to fulfill the plan for meat, milk, and wool. The new lands did not emerge as the salvation of agriculture; in European Russia the annual grain production per capita in 1961–1964 was lower than in 1913.

In 1956 the party reexamined the role of machine-tractor stations (MTS) and began to switch them to a cost-accounting basis. Established in 1928, the MTSs were state-owned and -operated machinery pools serving the kolhozes, which had paid a high tax for the use of the machinery before 1956. In 1957 there were about 7,900 MTSs, each serving an average of 6 or 7 kolhozes; the sovhozes had their own implements.

The move to cost accounting was necessary, CPSU spokesmen said, because the financing of

the stations bore no relation to crop and livestock yields. That was true; but what the party really wanted was to abolish them altogether by having the kolhozes buy their own machinery. Before the war the average MTS had serviced 30–35 kolhozes. Postwar amalgamation of the farms, however, created huge agricultural enterprises. In 1958 the average Ukrainian kolhoz had 3,000 hectares of land, 600 head of cattle, 200 milk cows, 500 pigs, and 640 sheep (privately owned animals not included). Organizations this size and larger—there were 20,000-hectare kolhozes in Kazakhstan—clearly needed their own machinery and repair shops. Moreover, Khrushchev admitted that the cost of MTS services had been pegged artificially high. Because the stations had outlived their usefulness, party leaders decided to abolish them rather than reform the price structure.

Fearing that self-contained and even self-sufficient kolhozes might generate delusions of independence, conservatives opposed abolition of the MTSs. Khrushchev prevailed, however, and in 1958 the enterprises were liquidated. Property worth 32 billion rubles was sold to the kolhozes, which had already amortized 18 billion of this sum. Thus the compulsory deliveries and payments in kind for MTS work came to an end. The former MTS became a repair and technical service station, or RTS, which performed capital repairs on agricultural machinery on a realistic cost-plus basis.

Abolition of the MTSs did not solve the agricultural problem. Even in the best of years agriculture remained barely capable of meeting the country's needs. More than any other factor, the constant meddling of politicians brought about this dismal state of affairs, but natural phenomena also played a certain role. The drought of 1963 obliged the state to buy 12 million tons of grain on the world market—bitter medicine for a first secretary who had sworn to overtake the United States in food production.

## SEVEN-YEAR PLAN

The sixth Five-Year Plan, 1956–1960, called for an increase in industrial production of about 65 percent, and at the Twenty-second Congress the Central Committee claimed that the actual growth figure for 1955–1961 stood at an astonishing 80 percent. Although exaggerated, the boast came closer to reality than most Soviet statistics: Vasily Selyunin and Grigori Khanin wrote in 1987 that the 1950s represent “the most successful period in [Soviet] economic history.” Labor productivity rose 62 percent, return on assets increased 17 percent, and material intensiveness declined by a healthy 5 percent. After the twelfold increase of 1928–1950, retail prices fell and wholesale prices stabilized during the first half of the 1950s, and in the last five years prices rose very little.

Khrushchev attributed the success to the 1957 reforms, when the party scrapped the existing plan for a new Seven-Year Plan. In many important respects the reorganization of the economic administration was the largest peacetime social upheaval since the abandonment of the NEP. It involved the creation of 105 economic regions, among them 70 in the RSFSR, 11 in Ukraine. Leningrad, with 600 very large enterprises employing about a million people and producing 50 billion rubles worth of goods annually, constituted one region, as did the entire Uzbek republic, the Byelorussian republic, and so on. Each economic region would be under the control of a regional economic council, or *sovnaarhoz*, empowered to deal with problems of supply, production, and marketing. Only large enterprises would come under the purview of the *sovnaarhozes*; smaller ones remained responsible to the appropriate ministry of the republic. Under the law of May 10, 1957, all Union industrial ministries except those directly involved in defense and nuclear power were abolished, their powers divided between the

national Gosplan, republic Gosplans, and the *sovnaarhozes*.

The boundaries of the new economic regions coincided with those of provinces or groups of provinces. The party boss in the province, or the senior boss in a group of provinces, acquired substantial economic powers because the *sovnaarhozes* reported directly to him.

The reform aimed at decentralization. When industry was under national control, each ministry, seeking to fulfill its assignment, tried to produce materials and components in its own plants. Sometimes that meant going a considerable distance for items which could have been purchased locally from plants belonging to another *competing* ministry. Yet another problem, the constant striving to fulfill the plan rapidly, led ministries to encourage production of expensive items to meet that plan “in gross,” that is, in terms of the ruble value of output. Further, as Khrushchev pointed out, officials were often “afraid of specialization and extensive cooperation because these involved a certain break in the established forms of production organization.”

The 1957 reorganization failed because pressures that induced the ministries to try to become self-sufficient influenced the *sovnaarhozes* in the same way. Research and development remained under control of Union committees for particular branches of industry, thus creating a “rupture in the research-production cycle” and vitiating the decentralizing effort.

Decentralization of management had been accompanied by a new emphasis on the *centralization* of planning. There were at the time about 200,000 “state industrial enterprises” and more than 100,000 construction sites. Coordinating the activities of them all was like playing chess on a board with 300,000 squares. Computers would have helped, but they were either not available or, when available, unequal to the demands placed on them. The Soviet Union began to feel the effects of its lag in computer technology and automation.

In January 1959 the CPSU admitted that Soviet labor in heavy industry was only half as productive as its American counterpart. There were a number of factors involved here, among them lack of incentives. Soviet steelworkers were paid much less than those in the United States, and the party could no longer summon up the specter of imminent war to produce a 1930s-like enthusiasm for work and sacrifice. Production was still using prewar technology, while the Americans, West Germans, and Japanese had rebuilt a substantial part of their industrial plants.

Still another problem that stunted growth was the lag in the chemical industry. The Kremlin invested 11.5 billion rubles in that area during the Seven-Year Plan, which produced a 240 percent increase in production—an average annual growth rate of 13.6 percent. That was impressive but below the Japanese figure. Worse, the output of plastics increased by only 300 percent against the 700 percent called for, and that of synthetic fibers by only 250 percent against a projected 1,200 to 1,300 percent.

In 1961 the party admitted that the reorganization simply was not working. The *sovnarhozes* aped the inefficient practices of the ministries, the gap between planning and capabilities did not appreciably narrow, and labor productivity had slackened. Early in 1961 the 105 economic regions were reduced to 17, dramatic evidence of “creeping recentralization.” More evidence came in March 1963 with the creation of the Supreme Council of the National Economy, a superagency charged to supervise and coordinate the work of Gosplan, the *sovnarhozes*, the state construction agency (Gosstroii), and all production committees.

In 1962 the party began an experiment with the profit motive. Encouraged by the authorities, economist Yevsei Liberman of Harkov University argued that the way to make enterprises efficient was to make them

profitable, giving labor and management a share in those profits. Many communists must have shuddered when they read Liberman's article in *Pravda*; one could hardly imagine a more unlikely proposal in the pages of Lenin's newspaper.

The government had announced a plan to reduce taxes in 1960 only to be forced to postpone it until 1962, when it was again postponed, this time indefinitely. A monetary reform in January 1961 exchanged ten old rubles for one new one. The attendant publicity did not distract attention from price increases of up to 50 percent on meat, butter, eggs, and other consumer items. These increases did not reduce demand sufficiently to bring it more in line with decreasing production; and on June 1, 1962, the state announced still higher prices for meat and butter.

The 1962 price hikes produced serious unrest in Leningrad, Odessa, Krivoi Rog, and other industrial centers, but the authorities were able to contain the various sitdown strikes and demonstrations. In Novocherkassk, however, an industrial town of 104,000 near the mouth of the Don River, violence erupted; officials had made the mistake of announcing a 30 percent wage cut at a major factory the same day the increase in food prices was made public. The workers immediately went on strike and several hundred others from nearby plants joined them. The strikers held meetings at the locomotive factory—where the movement began—all day on June 1. That night about 30 were arrested.

The next morning several hundred people marched on CPSU headquarters; thousands of spectators flocked into the square where the building was located. According to some reports, troops of the local garrison refused an order to open fire. Non-Russian soldiers were brought in; firing over the heads of the crowd, they shot some small boys out of their perches in trees. The crowd surged forward, and the troops fired directly into it: 70 or 80 people

were killed, more than half with dum-dum bullets.

Mikoyan and Kozlov flew to the city and took charge. On June 3 they announced that the “enemy provocateurs” who had organized the events of June 1–2 would be severely punished. Mikoyan declared that the agitators had used dum-dum bullets, not Soviet Army issue. A trial was held and seven men were sentenced to death, two women to 15 years in prison.

The tragedy at Novocherkassk and demonstrations elsewhere frightened the party, which promptly stocked stores in affected cities with food. Neither that nor longer-range solutions in the form of capitalist-style incentives, or the new superagency in charge of planning, brought the economy out of the doldrums. The vested interests of party bureaucrats and industrial managers triumphed over every attempt to rationalize the Soviet economy. Recentralization gathered momentum, and by 1964 the 1957 reforms were a distant memory. The party abolished the *sovnarhozes* shortly after Khrushchev’s fall.

## LIFE IN THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA

For all the shortcomings of the economic reforms, the standard of living did improve between 1957 and 1964. Residents of the showcase cities—visited by millions of Soviet and foreign tourists annually—Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev were better housed, fed, and clothed than at any time in Soviet history. The three urban agglomerations dazzled visitors, although not always in the way the party intended. New housing was badly constructed; food shops had adequate supplies of bread, potatoes, and cabbage but were frequently out of meat, vegetables, and fruit; clothing remained drab and poorly tailored.

Cities were far better supplied than small towns and villages, but no matter where one found them consumer goods continued to be of

inferior quality. *Pravda* admitted in May 1956 that Soviet radio tubes, for example, lasted only 800–1,000 hours, whereas British tubes were designed to serve 10,000 hours. In 1963 the inspection service of the RSFSR’s ministry of trade tested 12.6 million manufactured items and found fully half defective. A large Moscow shoe store inspected 672,000 pairs in 1959 and rejected 50,000.

The problem was not only quality but availability. Visitors to the Black Sea port of Novorossiisk in late 1961 assumed that it was a local custom for men to wear beards. *Izvestiya* investigated and found that there were no razor blades in the city of 100,000. The same situation prevailed in Lvov (450,000), Tbilisi (770,000), and elsewhere.

Another index of the quality of urban life was the shortage of telephones. In 1957 there were only 5,000 in Harkov, a city of more than a million. Saratov (620,000) had only 3,800, and Stalingrad (from 1961 Volgograd), with a population of 600,000, had only 1,300. The tiny minority who did have telephones had to go to a central office each month to pay their bills; there was no system for payment by mail.

An extensive black market made up for some of the shortages, and a network of influence peddling helped those who became part of it to cope with the problems of daily life. White-collar crime flourished and fortunes were made. Entrepreneurs from the Caucasus and Central Asia would fly to Moscow or another large city with fresh fruit, vegetables, or even flowers; set up shop on a street corner; and quickly make a substantial sum. The police generally did not interfere. Likewise, the free market, through which peasants disposed of food grown on their private plots, operated with official sanction. The free market provided by far the largest portion of the fresh fruit and vegetables consumed in cities.

The Seven-Year Plan called for construction of more than 205 million square meters of housing. Although there was considerable

improvement in the situation, the goal remained elusive. By 1965 the number of people living in communal apartments in the most favored city, Moscow, had dropped to perhaps 3 million of a total 6.5 million. Khrushchev had initially favored prefabricated, five-story apartment houses, cheap and easily assembled. Block after block of the ugly, inefficient buildings went up until experts pointed out that at the 1950s rate of construction, the suburbs of Moscow and Leningrad, 600 kilometers apart, would merge before the end of the twentieth century. Gosstroï switched over to more efficient high-rise apartment buildings.

To lower construction costs the party ordered the reduction of ceiling heights from the standard 3.2 meters to 2.7 or even 2.3 meters. The average area of a one-family apartment (still a luxury) was reduced from 41.6 square meters to 28.3 square meters. Prefabricated units were used whenever possible, and lighter-weight materials introduced; the new dwellings weighed about 278 tons per 100 square meters as against 315 tons in prewar buildings. New apartments were smaller, more oppressive, and noisier. So desperate was the housing shortage, however, that citizens overlooked these shortcomings and rejoiced when they finally obtained an apartment. The urban population had increased from 60.4 million in 1939 to more than 100 million in 1959; people could not afford to be choosy.

Housing woes continued to exacerbate social problems. According to the 1959 census the divorce rate was 8.5 percent (26.3 percent in the United States), but the figures did not tell the whole story. The rate was always low in the countryside but considerably higher in the cities; in Moscow and Leningrad it roughly matched the American figure. Furthermore, so difficult was it to find housing that couples who would otherwise have divorced often remained together in misery.

Overcrowding also played a role in child and wife abuse and the abandonment of families by fathers. These problems were discussed with increasing frankness in the press, and malefactors were often subjected to stern penalties, including imprisonment.

Alcoholism and alcohol abuse continued to be major social problems despite periodic government campaigns. The situation was complicated by the fact that in the 1950s and 1960s the turnover (sales) tax on alcoholic beverages accounted for 10–12 percent of all state revenues. The planners paid little attention to the hidden costs; in 1982 the overall cost of alcohol abuse was approximately 5–7 percent of national income.

The left hand not knowing what the right was doing, the authorities attacked the problem with public awareness campaigns, shorter hours for the sale of alcohol, higher prices, and other tactics. So-called sobering-up stations were established in Moscow and other cities; there was a fee for the service, and the police informed the culprit's workplace. There was an increasing willingness to recognize alcoholism as a disease and to treat it accordingly. Reporting the suicide of the head of the Writers' Union, Aleksandr Fadeyev, the press noted that he had long suffered from the "severe and chronic ailment" of alcoholism.

In 1958 Khrushchev announced the state's readiness to pass a law limiting customers in bars and restaurants to one drink. No such law was ever enacted. In 1960 the RSFSR ministry of trade issued an order establishing a limit of 100 grams—3 ounces—of spirits per customer; it was never enforced.

Drugs such as hashish, opium, and cocaine had long been in use among a tiny percentage of the population, and the problem seemed to grow worse in the late 1950s. Dealers known in the argot as "bankers" bought a "plan"—about a kilo—of hashish in Central Asia or Afghanistan and brought it to European Russia. Cocaine ("marafet") entered the country

through the ports of Odessa and Leningrad, as did opium. Marijuana, indigenous to Central Asia, grows wild in many parts of the Soviet Union. Smoked for centuries in steppe villages, it did not constitute a problem until the 1960s. Partly because of the publicity the press gave to drug abuse in the West, marijuana became increasingly fashionable in student and artist circles in the cities.

The state continued the Stalinist practice of intruding into the private lives of citizens even in trivial matters. In February 1957 the Komsomol newspaper asked rhetorically,

Who is not familiar with these utterly repulsive young men with their ultra-modish jackets, their ultra-tight and ultra-short trousers and their eccentric neckties in all colors of the rainbow, with an air of self-satisfied stupidity on their faces? Or with the even more disgusting girls, with their coiffures 'à la garçon'—pitiful bristles of cropped hair—and their shoes that remind one of caterpillar tractors?

The newspaper was referring to the *stilyagi* ("modish ones"), young people who—the puritans charged—adored everything foreign, shunned work, and in general did not behave like disciplined citizens.

It was not only the hairstyles and clothes that outraged conservatives. The music that growing numbers of young people preferred generated apoplectic outbursts such as this one from Foreign Minister Shepilov: "All these 'boogie-woogies' and 'rock-and-rolls' sound like wild orgies of cavemen." As a music critic Shepilov presumably remained in favor, but he was fired as foreign minister a month later for his association with the "antiparty group." Attacks on "vulgar"—no one could define the term—popular music appeared with increasing frequency in the press.

The party deputized the Komsomol to act as morals police; the zealots and prigs gladly assumed such functions. Komsomol "music patrols" began in 1960. Members went around to restaurants—many of which had live or-

chestras—and checked on the music; if they heard any Western music from the mid-1930s or later, they stopped it, summoning the police if necessary. Because there were no laws against music, the police had to charge people with such vague offenses as "outrage against public morals" or "disturbing the peace." The patrols posted signs in restaurants and clubs: DANCING "IN THE STYLE" IS FORBIDDEN. Komsomol deacons alone knew what this meant.

Occasionally some petty crime was unearthed. In 1960 a policeman reported the corruption of the young by dealers in "rocks and bones"—recordings of forbidden music on X-ray film.

Cultural and political fundamentalists believed that music, hairstyles, and clothing constituted a statement of political opposition. To some extent this was true, but it was almost impossible to do anything about it without sealing off the country. Modern communications had made the USSR another outpost of the global village.

## EDUCATION

Despite the highly publicized successes of Soviet science and technology in the 1957–1964 period, the educational system had a number of serious problems. The 1959 census revealed virtually universal literacy among the population, but only about 30 percent of primary school graduates went on to obtain a secondary education, and only 7 percent of secondary school graduates continued their education in universities and university-level institutes. (In the United States both percentages were about double.)

Economic factors were partially responsible. The work force was too small, and the state encouraged people to enter it early. Further, wages were so low that it was important for every family member to become a wage earner as soon as possible. Beyond that, the over-

crowding that led schools in the large cities to operate double and even triple shifts influenced some pupils to drop out because the teachers had little time for individual counseling. The overcrowding also helped foster a lack of discipline. For a variety of complex rea-

sons, juvenile delinquency increased in this period.

The first post-Stalin reforms were timid. Sex-segregated education was ended in 1954. The following year saw the introduction of a slightly modified curriculum:

GRADE										
(Hours per week per subject)										
1955-1956 School Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Russian lang., lit.	13	13	13	9	9	8	6	6/5*	4	4
Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
History	—	—	—	2	2	2	2	4	4	4
USSR Constitution	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Geography	—	—	—	2	3	2	2	2/3	3	—
Biology	—	—	—	2	2	2	3	2	1	—
Physics	—	—	—	—	—	2	3	3	4	5/4
Astronomy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Chemistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	3	3/4
Psychology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Foreign languages	—	—	—	—	4	4	3	3	3	3
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Drawing	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
Mechanical drawing	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1
Singing	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
Practical work	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	—	—	—
Practicum	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>

\*Six hours first semester, five hours second semester

This course of study did not differ greatly from the one it replaced. The emphasis on mathematics, science, and foreign languages, however, caught the attention of the Western world after the 1957 launch of *Sputnik*, first in a long series of technological feats. Soviet pupils were generally better educated in mathematics and science than their American counterparts.

There remained some shortcomings. Most universities and institutes failed to anticipate the development of polymer chemistry; as late as 1962 few graduating chemists had any idea what a polymer compound was. Further, Lysenko regained a position of authority in the agricultural sciences, biology, and botany. In December 1958 he told the Central Committee

that Western scientists who identified the double helix of DNA as the key to heredity did not know what they were talking about.

The most controversial Khrushchev reform, surprisingly enough to those who believed the USSR a classless society, involved an attempt to democratize the educational system. At the Thirteenth Komsomol Congress in April 1958, the first secretary denounced the "shameful situation" in which unqualified children of party officials and other influential people could obtain a higher education, while qualified offspring of workers, peasants, and others without *blat* ("pull") often could not. This syndrome was reflected in the privileged classes' contempt for work and the skill with which they avoided

doing any. In 1958 only 5 percent of first-year university students had worked in factories or on collective farms.

The law of December 25, 1958, provided for the reorganization of the school system over a five-year period beginning the following September. There were to be eight rather than seven years of compulsory schooling at the primary level; secondary schooling remained at three years. Admission to secondary schools, universities, and institutes would be determined by merit, with trade unions and the Komsomol involved in the process to ensure fairness. Individuals with two years of work experience were to receive preference for admission except in the case of talented students in mathematics and the natural and physical sciences. A system of advanced technical-vocational schools enabled young workers to continue their education while holding down production jobs.

In theory, all secondary school students were to work two years at a trade. As part of a "from the asphalt to the land" scheme, agricultural institutes were to be moved from the cities to rural areas and admission to them restricted to those committed to careers in agricultural *production* (rather than administration). In June 1959 higher education became the responsibility of the republics.

Forty years after the revolution, these reforms did help. By 1963, 80 percent of the places in higher education went to students with production experience, only 20 percent to those coming straight from school.

Bureaucrats and others in favored positions resented Khrushchev's assault on their privileges, the more so because he took handsome care of his own family and friends. They were especially incensed by his attempt to block them from purchasing places for their children in the universities. For a few years it was difficult to bribe those who administered entrance examinations or sat on admissions boards, but gradually corrupt practices returned. The "communist

bourgeoisie" hated the first secretary for making their offspring work in factories and on collective farms. Both children and parents tried to circumvent this rule, which was rescinded shortly after Khrushchev's fall.

## WOMEN

Khrushchev frequently bragged of women's equality in the Soviet Union, and he appointed Yekaterina Furtseva the first woman to sit on the party Presidium and hold ministerial rank. Furtseva pointed out in 1960 that 27 percent of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet were women, as were 47 percent of the urban work force and 45 percent of the industrial workers. There were more than 1,000 women on the faculty of Moscow University, Furtseva boasted; she did not add that most were laboratory assistants and language instructors. About 1.845 million women had graduated from universities and advanced institutes since the revolution.

The devastating impact of the war continued to reverberate throughout Soviet society. Especially difficult was the lot of Soviet women. The following figures are from the January 1959 census:

Number of Men and Women in Various Age Groups as of January 15, 1959 (in thousands)

<i>Age 1959</i>	<i>(Age 1941)</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
0-24	(2-6)	10,056	10,287
25-29	(7-11)	8,917	9,273
30-34	(12-16)	8,611	10,388
35-39	(17-21)	4,528	7,062
40-44	(22-26)	3,998	6,410
45-49	(27-31)	4,706	7,558
50-54	(32-36)	4,010	6,437
55-59	(37-41)	2,906	5,793
60-69	(42-51)	4,099	7,637
70 and over	(52 and over)	2,541	5,431

Almost 15 million women between the ages of 30 and 59 had no husbands. Many older women were war widows; most younger ones

probably remained unmarried not by choice but simply because there were not enough men. The psychological trauma that tormented two generations could not be measured.

In Muslim Central Asia ancient customs kept women in a state of quasi-servitude. In the Kirgiz and Turkmen republics, for example, girls as young as 12 were frequently abducted into marriage. In the eyes of the law, this constituted kidnapping and rape. Local officials normally tried to reconcile custom and law by solemnizing the affair with a Komsomol wedding. In the Turkmen republic some parents still gave their underage daughters in marriage. Often “bride money” was due the parents, who retained custody of the girl until it was paid. Bigamy and polygamy were still encountered in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Most of the native populations lived in villages and small towns, where European customs had had little impact. They preserved the old ways, lived by the Koran, and many of their practices, the state charged, constituted “offenses against the personal freedom and dignity of women.”

## ARTISTS AND INTELLECTUALS

Conservatives did not like Ehrenburg's *The Thaw*, which suggested the end of the long Stalinist winter, and were outraged by Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* (1956), an attack on the Stalinist bureaucracy. Khrushchev called the novel “slanderous.” In 1958 the editor of the *Literary Gazette*, Vsevolod Kochetov, published an “answer” to Dudintsev in the form of a novel entitled *The Yershov Brothers*. Without literary merit, the work embodied a “primitive and savage attack on the liberal intellectuals who perpetrated the rebellion against Party controls in literature.”

With the Pasternak affair behind him, Khrushchev could afford to strike a generous

pose. In a speech to the Third Congress of Soviet Writers in the spring of 1959, he rehabilitated several authors who had been on what amounted to probation and allowed that even Dudintsev “was never our enemy.” He also repeated the party's demand that literature serve party goals.

Denied access to state publishing houses, writers who refused to conform had only the option of silence. In the late 1950s, however, some courageous individuals revived the tradition—which dated back to the late eighteenth century—of *samizdat*, or self-publishing. This in turn led to *tamizdat*, or publishing abroad, and *magnitizdat*, or tape-recording. Two of the best-known *samizdat* writers in the Khrushchev era were Andrei Sinyavsky, who wrote as “Abram Tertz,” and Yuli Daniel, who took the pen name “Nikolai Arzhak.”

For nine years the KGB hunted the mysterious writers, analyzing their styles with the aid of primitive computers. Success came not as a result of these efforts but from the American CIA. Because the United States was taking a propaganda beating around the world for its massive intervention in the civil war in Vietnam, the CIA, anticipating a show trial, revealed the identities of Sinyavsky and Daniel to individuals known to have Lubyanka connections. In September 1965 the KGB arrested the two men, whom the state put on trial the following February. After a farcical “trial,” Sinyavsky received the maximum sentence of seven years at hard labor for slandering the state. Daniel got five years.

This savage charade 16 months after the fall of Khrushchev marked the first time that anyone had been tried for what he or she had written. Other writers had been accused of various crimes and hounded by the state, and some who had angered the authorities had simply disappeared into the Gulag. Not even under Stalin, however, had anyone been forced to stand in the dock and answer for the alleged political content of literary works.

In the second half of 1962, it briefly appeared that the party might again relax its control over the arts. In October *Pravda* published Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem "The Heirs of Stalin," which begged the party to redouble the guard at the late dictator's grave. In November the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* caused an immediate and sustained sensation. In the same month Viktor Nekrasov published *Both Sides of the Ocean*, one of the first nonpolitical accounts of travel in the West to appear in the USSR.

Hopes for a new thaw quickly faded. Salieri-like, the Soviet socialist realist art establishment plotted the destruction of talented young artists who refused to conform to party dictates and tricked them into bringing some of their most daring—in the context—works to the December 1962 exhibit entitled "Thirty Years of Moscow Art." Khrushchev and several other high officials attended; not one knew anything about art.

Conducting the tour, the socialist realist hacks attacked the "severe" style of the post-Impressionist canvases and drew the leaders' attention to the favorable comments on them in the Western press. Egged on by his fellow conservatives, especially Suslov and Andropov, Khrushchev savagely attacked the artists as "pederasts." Three months later, to the accompaniment of organized chants for the poet's head, he shook his fist and hurled threats at Andrei Voznesensky at a public meeting with writers and intellectuals.

Conservatives rejoiced and stepped up their attacks on nonconformist artists and writers. They began a campaign against Solzhenitsyn that was to culminate in his expulsion from the USSR in 1974. He was denied a Lenin Prize in 1963 but did publish two short stories that year.

As in the West, conservatives sanctioned violence and condemned sex. CPSU watchdogs assailed "naturalistic scenes of intimacy" in such films as *The Forty-First* (1956) and *Quiet*

*Flows the Don* (in three parts, 1957–1958). Puritans saw no political value in fleeting glimpses of unclad women in these and a few other postwar works. More to their liking were the dozens of straightforward war films, but even those began to change in the Khrushchev era. M. K. Kalatozov's *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957) depicted the civilian population in wartime. Moreover, there were no heroic communists in the film; some characters actually had flaws and were the more believable for them. The film won the Gold Palm award at the Cannes Film Festival. Another war film set in the rear, Grigori Chukrai's *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959), made a party-pleasing point about patriotism but also included a decidedly apolitical love story.

More evidence of a new approach in cinematography came in 1962 with the restoration of cuts Stalin had ordered 36 years earlier in Eisenstein's classic *October*; the Gensek had excised many scenes depicting Lenin. In the same year *Izvestiya* admitted that "the Stalin cult had a ruinous effect upon our motion pictures."

In December 1962 the party demanded changes in Dmitri Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony, in which Yevtushenko's poem "Babi Yar" constitutes a choral interlude. The poem lamented the absence of a monument to the World War II massacre in Kiev and suggested that anti-Semitism lurked in the background. Party officials denied this and insisted the poem be altered. Yevtushenko agreed to add four lines pointing out that Russians and Ukrainians perished alongside Jews at Babi Yar.

The première took place on schedule on December 18. The Moscow intelligentsia had learned of the pressure on composer and poet; the concert became an occasion for expressing solidarity. The performance was a huge success. The prolonged ovation for Shostakovich and Yevtushenko embodied a certain defiance of the regime—and the party proved capable of tolerating it.

It would be misleading to leave the impression that the 22 months after Khrushchev's emergence as an art critic were a period of unrelieved oppression in the arts. Shostakovich's new symphony, after all, made its debut on schedule, and the altered lines of the poem did not dilute Yevtushenko's expression of outrage at the party's failure to honor the martyrs of Babi Yar. Further, the opera that had very nearly led Shostakovich to his doom in 1936, when Stalin expressed distaste for *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, was restaged in 1963. Retitled *Katerina Izmailova*, it was substantially the same work. Shostakovich had completed his Fourth Symphony in 1936, but because he feared Stalin's reaction, it was first performed, to critical and public acclaim, in 1961.

The off-again, on-again campaign to suppress nonconformist art and literature confused everyone in the party and further alienated the Stalinists, to whom one poet with an unfettered pen was more dangerous than an enemy army. Khrushchev's vacillation would not alone have tipped the scales against him but it did add another arrow to his opponents' quiver. Communists too prudent to take a stand on political issues without an unequivocal signal from Moscow were not reluctant to express themselves on art and literature. Many party members resolutely condemned writers and artists who did not depict Soviet life in the brightest and most flattering colors.

## FALL OF KHRUSHCHEV

There was no one issue on which opposition to Khrushchev focused; his long string of errors and bad judgment had slowly swelled the ranks of his enemies. Cuba, China, Berlin and Germany, Albania, and India were the scenes of some of his foreign policy debacles. He had made a mess of agriculture, his special field. Vested interests in and outside the party resented his assault on their privileges, the more

so because he constantly increased his own. The CPSU bureaucracy was outraged by his attempt to introduce the principle of systematic renewal of party officers. The professional military establishment condemned his reduction of conventional forces at a time when the USSR was still vastly inferior to the United States in missiles and bombers. The average citizen held him in contempt for failing to keep grandiose promises.

In April 1964 the press celebrated the first secretary's seventieth birthday with an orgy of congratulations: *Pravda* devoted 11 pages to the occasion over six days. Most speeches were embarrassingly effusive, but Leonid Brezhnev said only, "The soviet people will always be grateful to you for the fact that . . . you demonstrated courageous initiative in unmasking the Stalin cult of the individual. . . ." The speeches of Suslov and Kosygin were likewise fairly muted, but the general chorus sang a song of adulation. Many communists wondered whether a new cult had materialized.

In the summer of 1964, Khrushchev sent his son-in-law, who had no foreign policy qualifications, on a diplomatic mission to West Germany. In September, he sent an insultingly low-ranking delegation to the Beijing celebrations marking the fifteenth anniversary of Mao's victory. Uneasy about the quarrel with China, Kremlin party leaders considered this the last straw.

Early in 1989 the man who had headed the Ukrainian party organization in the early 1960s, Pyotr Shelest, revealed that an anti-Khrushchev conspiracy took shape around Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksandr Shelepin. The plotters assured themselves of the support of KGB chief Vladimir Semichastny and other key security officials, then approached Suslov and stunned him with the news. Suslov managed to overcome his misgivings, as did Shelest himself and the rest of the Presidium.

While Khrushchev vacationed on the Black Sea under the watchful eye of Mikoyan, his op-

ponents struck. They summoned the full members of the Central Committee to Moscow, where Suslov read an indictment of the first secretary. Only two or three people spoke in defense of Khrushchev, who was then summoned back to Moscow.

On October 14, 1964, a special plenary session of the CC ousted Khrushchev as first secretary. Confronted with the unanimous opposition of his colleagues, the ousted party leader also resigned his post as chairman of the Council of Ministers. Leonid Brezhnev succeeded him in the party post, Aleksei Kosygin in the government.

The press merely noted that Khrushchev had asked to be relieved of his posts on the grounds of advancing age and deteriorating health. Members of the Presidium flew to cities around the country to brief officials on the changes in Moscow. If support for the former first secretary existed, it remained well hidden.

Khrushchev became simply another retired official with a decent apartment in Moscow and the use of a state dacha. He and his family were allowed to use the Kremlin clinic, the special stores, and a chauffeured limousine. He also had a KGB bodyguard whose duty it was to protect him and also to ensure that he did not have any contact with political dissidents, journalists, or foreigners.

Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev died on September 11, 1971; the party denied him burial in the Kremlin wall, which was reserved for Soviet heroes. He was buried instead in the cemetery of Novodevichy Convent in Moscow, not far from the grave of Stalin's second wife. No ranking Soviet official attended; the party CC sent a large wreath. A year later, Ernest Neizvestny, one of the artists who had felt his wrath in 1962, sculpted a monument in black and white stone that dramatically captured the bifurcated character and career of the late first secretary.

Before he died, Khrushchev apologized to Andrei Voznesensky for treating him so bru-

tally in 1963. He could not make amends to Boris Pasternak, much less to the people he had sent to their graves in the 1930s as Stalin's faithful henchman.

## KHRUSHCHEV IN RETROSPECT

A few days after cashiering Khrushchev, the new rulers explained their actions in *Partiinaya zhizn* (*Party Life*). They charged him with "crudeness, shouting . . . [and] a tone of offensive superiority." They condemned his "bombastic phrases and braggadocio, overhasty conclusions and hare-brained schemes divorced from reality":

Even the most authoritative person cannot be permitted to escape the control of the guiding collective, the party organization, or get the idea that he knows everything and can do everything, that he has no need for the knowledge and experience of his comrades.

The first leader to admit publicly that power had corrupted Stalin, Khrushchev did not recognize the same process in himself. To the end he saw himself as a democratically elected leader whose power derived from a party consensus. The burgeoning "cult" so visible at the time of his seventieth birthday was only partly of his own making; to a considerable extent the aging leader acquiesced in the schemes of his entourage.

While Khrushchev was in the Kremlin, the Soviet Union moved sharply away from Stalinism. The Gulag was dismantled, and by and large citizens had no reason, after the Twentieth Congress, to fear arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. The KGB came under party control, a less sinister if still immensely powerful organization. The standard of living improved significantly. Intellectual and cultural life flourished as it had not done since the days of the NEP. All told, Khrushchev's were the most sweeping reforms since 1917.

But Russia has historically held her great reformers in high regard only if they were simultaneously tyrants, and that crown never sat well on the reforming first secretary's head. Some of his policies won wide approval, but Khrushchev himself was never a genuinely popular leader. When the public learned of his ouster, a joke began to circulate to the effect that he had won a gold medal at the 1964 Olympics for "falling from an unprecedented height."

He had indeed become something of a comic character, and that contributed mightily to his downfall. Stalin had been remote, aloof, mysterious. Khrushchev, in contrast, was extremely approachable. He met Soviet and Western journalists frequently in both formal and spontaneous interviews. He was accessible and frequently displayed emotion. He had a sense of humor and told jokes. Stalin spoke, and nations trembled. People laughed with—and sometimes at—Khrushchev even as they nervously waited to see whether he meant his threats.

Leonid Brezhnev was to emerge as the most powerful member of the new group of rulers, and during the 18 years of his tenure in office

there was almost no mention of Khrushchev in the press. Like so many victims of Stalin's wrath, the former first secretary became a "nonperson." Within a few weeks after Brezhnev's own death in November 1982, however, the party began to rehabilitate Khrushchev and praise his role in the Battle of Stalingrad, the first step in a gradual reassessment of the bloodstained man who had toppled the idol that was Stalin.

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## chapter 19

# RULE OF THE TROIKA, 1964–1971

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The men who came to power in October 1964 claimed to be acting in the spirit of the Twentieth Congress. They announced the return of “Leninist collective leadership,” and there seemed some reason to take them at their word; one of their first acts was to establish the principle that the same individual could not simultaneously hold the offices of party first secretary and chairman of the Council of Ministers. They offered no timetable for the triumph of communism, hurled no threats. The transfer of power took place with a minimum of dislocation. Khrushchev went into ignominious but comfortable and secure retirement.

The new leaders had declined to support Khrushchev’s “radicalized anti-Stalinism” at the 1961 Twenty-second Congress and had repeatedly clashed with him on this and other issues in the ensuing three years. They refused to put Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov on trial or to indict hundreds of thousands of

lesser figures involved in Stalin’s crimes and insisted on pardoning Voroshilov altogether. They thwarted plans to build a monument to the victims of the terror and slowed the pace of the “rehabilitations.” Unable to prevent publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, they denied Solzhenitsyn a Lenin Prize. Finally, they overthrew the architect of de-Stalinization himself. Would they now direct a return to the Stalinist order?

Such a course of action seemed unlikely. The leaders of the party’s conservative and now dominant wing demanded a halt to the assault on Stalinism but did not shoot Khrushchev or anyone else, reopen the Gulag, or try to effect a wholesale reversal of the post-1953 reforms. They renounced terror as a political weapon. The leaders insisted that theirs was a truly collective leadership; the party approved the change of command and direction. The nation at large, granted only token

participation in the management of public affairs, seemed as indifferent to the birth of the new regime as to the death of the old.

### COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

At the center of the tough new regime were Suslov, Kosygin, and Brezhnev, close Khrushchev associates remarkable for the uniformity of their political and personal profiles. All were Russian, born into worker or peasant families early in the twentieth century. They were between 8 and 12 years younger than Khrushchev—too old to constitute a new generation, too young to have any coherent memory of stable tsarism in peacetime. They were the first leaders whose political consciousness was formed under communist rule. In October 1917 Suslov was 14, Kosygin 13, Brezhnev 10.

Brezhnev was not the intellectual equal of either Suslov or Kosygin, but the more ambitious politician, he became party first secretary. He had served in the Russian, Ukrainian, Kazakh, and Moldavian republics in important party posts and successfully completed a number of assignments in industry and agriculture. He served as a political commissar during the war, emerging with the rank of major general. Later he supervised the reconstruction of the devastated Ukrainian industrial centers of Zaporozhe and Dnepropetrovsk. At the Nineteenth Congress he won an appointment to the Central Committee Secretariat, where he worked with Stalin, Malenkov, Suslov, Khrushchev, and five others. Having also become a candidate member of the Presidium, he seemed destined to join the inner circle.

For a time after Stalin's death, however, it appeared that Brezhnev would become a casualty of party infighting. He was demoted to a relatively insignificant defense ministry post, possibly because he was closely identified with Malenkov's rival, Khrushchev. As Khrushchev outmaneuvered the other contenders for

power, however, his protégés again thrived; Brezhnev went to Kazakhstan in 1954 to supervise the virgin lands project. After presiding over the spectacular 1956 harvest, he returned to Moscow and the CC. Firmly in Khrushchev's camp—as were Suslov and Kosygin—in the clash with the “antiparty group,” he became a full member of the Presidium.

Brezhnev's new duties made him responsible for heavy industry, defense, and the space program; as early as 1958 there was talk in the party of him eventually becoming first secretary. The anti-Khrushchev faction, however, sidetracked him in the shakeup that followed the May 1960 U-2 incident. Frol Kozlov, who coveted Khrushchev's job, won the unofficial but powerful post of “second secretary,” and Brezhnev was shunted to the chairmanship of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. Although that position carried only ceremonial responsibilities, Brezhnev made more of it than any of his predecessors. In his 1960–1964 tenure in office—he would resume the post in 1977—he traveled widely and established his credentials in foreign policy. He had already made a record in heavy industry, defense, and agriculture; this new expertise consolidated his standing. In June 1963 he returned to the Secretariat. Kozlov having been felled by a stroke that removed him from active politics, Brezhnev again became unofficial heir apparent. In the summer of 1964 he relinquished the “presidency” to concentrate on party responsibilities, the most important—if not publicly acknowledged—of which was preparation of Khrushchev's ouster.

In the early years of troika rule Brezhnev's duties involved party work. He did speak out on foreign affairs and economic policy but only as party leader; Kosygin articulated official policy. Kosygin directed the attempts to contain the quarrel with China and went to the United Nations to present the Soviet view on developments in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. He bore responsibility for the initiation of a major

economic reform. In ideological matters Suslov held unchallenged sway.

There was thus no first among equals on the troika, which had come to power on a wave of hostility toward one-man rule. It appeared that the party had at last decided to heed Lenin's warning not to permit too much power to reside in the office of general—or first—secretary.

## RESTORATION OF STABILITY

The new leaders abolished the division of party organizations, local soviets, Komsomol, and trade unions into industrial and agricultural sections. In November 1964 they reunited the provincial industrial and rural party organizations into single entities and reestablished the rural district party committees (*raikoms*). They abolished the separate industrial and agricultural bureaus of Union and republic central committees.

The 1961 party statute requiring regular rotation of officials came under attack. Turnover of cell secretaries had doubled since the enactment of that statute, sapping morale and creating instability. The same situation affected party bureaucrats up the ladder through the republic level.

Sounding the cry of "Leninist respect for cadres!" the leadership abolished the 1961 rotation rule. More than three-quarters of the RSFSR regional first secretaries in mid-1965 had held the same job three years earlier. Only 10 percent had been rotated out; the others had been promoted, transferred, or pensioned on schedule or had died. The same situation existed in the other republics. Party officials who carried out their responsibilities satisfactorily could now assume job security, and even those who got into trouble were rarely disciplined.

This bred contentment and loyalty. The cadres rejoiced that the men in the Kremlin

understood their problems, and there quickly appeared the smug sense of inviolability that leads to stagnation or worse. When the press attacked bureaucrats who worried more about careers than responsibilities, it was usually the critics, not the bureaucrats, who were rebuked.

## FATE OF THE REFORMS

There were indications that the troika would continue some post-Stalin reforms: Within days of Khrushchev's ouster the press attacked Trofim Lysenko. By the middle of November the press was speaking of a Lysenko "cult." Agricultural journals revealed that farm production *declined* wherever Lysenko's theories were applied.

In February 1965 Lysenko lost his job as director of the Genetics Institute. In May *Izvestiya* published an article on Gregor Mendel by the late N. I. Vavilov, Lysenko's most distinguished victim. *Pravda* carried a laudatory article on Mendel in June; the following month the appearance of the scientific journal *Genetics* completed the rehabilitation of the science. By 1966 ten new laboratories were functioning within the Institute of Biological Problems, where previously all research had had to bear the imprimatur of "Lysenkoism." The ultimate sanction came in October 1968, when Academician B. M. Kedrov argued in *Pravda* that Lenin himself approved of genetics.

Another positive signal came with the ending of the antireligion campaign of 1959–1964. The state certainly had not made its peace with religion, but it no longer deemed it necessary to pursue a war against it. It became rare for Komsomol and KGB thugs to break up religious services, the destruction of ancient churches ceased, and there were minor improvements in the working conditions of the clergy.

In 1968 four Muslim minorities expelled from their homes in Georgia 20 years earlier as “unreliable” were permitted to return. That left about 500,000 Crimean Tatars, several thousand Koreans transported by the Japanese to Sakhalin Island before 1945, and an indeterminate number of border peoples languishing in indefinite exile.

The reestablishment in September 1970 of the Union ministry of justice, abolished in 1956 as part of de-Stalinization, seemed to some observers a further sign of liberalization. The reconstituted ministry was to ensure the strict observance of “socialist legality” but had a limited mandate, charged with overseeing and coordinating the work of the republic courts, correcting technical mistakes in court practice, and analyzing court statistics. It did not have the right to protest court decisions; appeals could be directed only to a higher court. The ministry undertook to create a new Collection of Laws in Effect.

Laws regulating marriage and family were liberalized between October 1965 and December 1968. Restrictive wartime rules ended, and unwed mothers won the right to sue to establish paternity. The legal concept of illegitimacy was abolished, divorce became easier, and new regulations defined the responsibility of children for the care of aged parents. The divorce rate rose. Before the end of 1968 the press was suggesting reinstatement of the old Russian custom of posting wedding banns six months before the intended marriage to help end the plague of three-day marriages.

The new regime’s record with regard to literature and the arts was mixed. The harsh punishment meted out to Sinyavsky and Daniel early in 1966 on the eve of the Twenty-third Congress to mollify the Stalinists proved to be exceptional, in no small measure because many writers were frightened into silence. Books and articles critical of the shortcomings of Soviet society—but not of the party—continued to appear, as did works dealing with

the Gulag. The number of titles dropped, editions were smaller, works more heavily censored, but they were published.

For the first time in 40 years the state had to deal with “those who think differently,” or dissidents. After the Twentieth Congress, some citizens had begun to speak out in favor of transforming the paper liberties of the 1936 constitution into reality; in particular they demanded the right of free speech. In the USSR voicing the demand embodied exercise of the right.

In the beginning the authorities treated the dissidents relatively gently. The KGB and the police warned them to cease their activities, threatened them with dismissal from their jobs, and occasionally beat them up. In the context this amounted to great restraint. The government could afford to proceed in this manner because the few people involved posed no threat, and their very existence demonstrated the state’s tolerance. Until Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Andrei Sakharov won worldwide recognition as opponents of the Kremlin’s policies, the dissidents were a minor irritant and were treated accordingly.

Some individuals who voiced dissent in an unacceptable manner—for example, by speaking to the foreign press—suffered harsh punishment. They were arrested, tried, convicted of “anti-Soviet activity,” and sent to forced-labor camps. Others were lodged in psychiatric hospitals, diagnosed by unscrupulous KGB psychiatrists as suffering from “sluggish schizophrenia” or “reformist delusions” and treated with heavy doses of mind-altering drugs. Only a handful of people were so treated, but their suffering kept the threat of violence hovering over every citizen.

The public rehabilitation of Stalin’s victims continued, but at a substantially reduced rate. There was never any thought of exonerating Trotsky, Kamenev, or Zinoviev, but in 1961 Bukharin’s widow and son launched a sustained campaign to clear his name. Joining

them were several Old Bolsheviks, among them Elena Stasova, one of Lenin's associates. The regime began an investigation, but opposition from party conservatives stalled the process and the case was still pending when the troika came to power. Only in 1977 did the family learn the party's decision: the criminal charges remained valid. That could only mean that the purges themselves were still considered legitimate.

### TWENTY-THIRD PARTY CONGRESS

On the surface the reformist elements seemed to hold their own, but powerful currents flowed in the opposite direction. In the spring of 1965 *Pravda* suggested the reevaluation of certain historical figures who had suffered from one-sided treatment. The trial balloon went nowhere and indeed generated sharp attacks on Stalin's wartime leadership and on some of his henchmen, notably the sinister prosecutor Vyshinsky. And about this time General Serov, wartime supervisor of the deportations and later (1954–1958) head of the KGB, was dismissed from all his posts and forced to return his medals.

The Stalinists proved tenacious. In January 1966 three historians declared in *Pravda* that the term "cult of personality" was incorrect and un-Marxist, conveniently overlooking the fact that Marx had coined it. The obvious implication was that at least some of the criticism leveled against Stalin was wrong. A few days later a kangaroo court tormented Sinyavsky and Daniel, proving that the "Boss's" spirit lived. Newspapers around the country applauded the sentences and complained about the denigration of Stalin. Mikhail Sholokhov lamented the absence of the "revolutionary justice" of the 1920s that would have sent Sinyavsky and Daniel to a firing squad. This from the winner of the 1965 Nobel Prize for Literature—awarded by a Swedish Academy

intent on placating the Kremlin for its earlier selection of Boris Pasternak.

Signs that the impending Twenty-third Congress would effect at least a partial rehabilitation of Stalin led a group of 25 leading citizens to send a letter of protest—one of thousands—to the leadership. Any whitewashing of the discredited past, the letter warned, would shatter the bond of trust that had been restored between party and people. Among the signers were physicists Pyotr Kapitsa, Igor Tamm, and Andrei Sakharov; writer Konstantin Paustovsky; prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya; film director Mikhail Romm; and diplomat Ivan Maisky.

The party conceded a minor victory to the reformers. The congress convened on schedule on March 29, 1966, and did not discuss Stalin. The proceedings were marred only by the embarrassing absence of a guest delegation from Communist China, where Stalin was still officially revered.

First Secretary Brezhnev gave the major report outlining foreign and domestic developments since the last Congress. Only toward the end of his remarks did he refer obliquely to Stalin in proposing to rename the party Presidium the Politburo; that would merely restore nomenclature in use before 1952, when Stalin himself had changed it. The delegates roared approval; the Politburo had led them through the difficult and glorious years, most of them under the Gensek. They welcomed its return.

Between 1922 and 1952 the Politburo had had a general, not a first, secretary. The congress restored the old title. First Secretary Brezhnev, who stood to gain most from the change, did not propose it; it was buried in a list of ten changes in the statutes routinely approved on the last day. No doubt caution led the troika collectively and Brezhnev personally to resort to such stealth. There could of course be only one Gensek, and Russia would forever live in his shadow.

Prime Minister Kosygin likewise did not speak Stalin's name, but his comments on the economic achievements of 1929–1941 constituted homage to the man who had supervised it all. The only public mention of the late dictator came from the leader of the Moscow party organization. Speaking first in response to Brezhnev's report, N. G. Yegorychev signaled the party's decision to accept the *fait accompli* of previous de-Stalinization while bringing the actual process to an end. No one, he declared, could use the "scarecrow of so-called 'Stalinism'" to discredit the party. He insisted that the "personality cult"—the term having been rehabilitated—and other abuses were now safely buried and that the general line of the Twentieth Congress continued to guide the party. But it was impossible, he declared, simply to cross out the history of those years when so much was achieved at such cost.

There were other triumphs for the conservatives. The mass murderer and alcoholic Kliment Voroshilov, expelled from the CC in 1961, was restored to that body. Aleksandr Tvardovsky, liberal editor of *Novy mir* and the man who had discovered and published Solzhenitsyn, lost his seat.

After the congress the great debate continued. Some communists called for the restoration of Stalin to his place in the mausoleum beside Lenin; others were willing to settle for an heroic statue on his grave beneath the Kremlin wall; some tried to revive Khrushchev's project to build a monument to the victims of the Terror; not a few suggested that rehabilitations had already gone too far.

By 1969, the suppression of the "Prague Spring"\* behind them, the conservatives—not all of whom were Stalinists—had gained the upper hand. Articles and books defended the generalissimo's war record; a February article in *Kommunist* indicated that a full-fledged rehabilitation was well under way. The following

month, however, a serious border clash with the Chinese took place in the Far East, and a number of Soviet soldiers died. The times were suddenly inauspicious for public resurrection of the memory of the man who had inspired Mao Zedong.

In December 1969 Stalinist and conservative elements regained the offensive with a lavish funeral tribute—in which Molotov emerged from disgrace to participate—to Voroshilov. If that mediocrity merited such praise, the party seemed certain to use the occasion of the Ninetieth anniversary of the Gensek's birth a few days later to proclaim his complete vindication. A long article replete with fulsome accolades was prepared and set in type; *Pravda* was to publish it on December 21, Stalin's birthday. Other newspapers in the USSR and the foreign communist press were scheduled to reprint the piece the following day.

The reformers counterattacked, joined by several foreign parties. The leadership reconsidered, then canceled the article. Someone forgot to call the editor of the Mongolian party newspaper in Ulan Bator, eight hours ahead of Moscow time. On December 22 the article rehabilitating Stalin appeared in *Unen* with the notation that it was reprinted from *Pravda* of December 21.

The article *Pravda* did carry disappointed the Stalinists. It simply reviewed the dictator's career, praising him as an "outstanding theoretician and organizer" and as principal architect of the World War II victory. It also noted that Stalin had frequently claimed credit for the accomplishments of the Soviet people as a whole, had come to believe in his own infallibility, and had violated legal norms and sent innocent people to their deaths. His "mistakes and perversions" had done "harm" but had only temporarily sidetracked Soviet society's march toward communism.

In January 1970 a revised party history both criticized Stalin and admitted the existence of the Terror instead of euphemistically refer-

\*See Chapter 21.

ring to mere “repressions.” In June a gray granite bust, promised in the original birthday article, suddenly materialized over Stalin’s grave without public ceremony. The greatest “rehabilitation” of all took a step forward.

## THE ABORTIVE ECONOMIC REFORM

The notion that political expertise or at least success is translatable into economic wisdom was as much a pillar of Soviet thinking as the Western belief that wealth is synonymous with political sagacity and moral virtue. In the USSR, three successive crises of enormous dimensions had indeed seen the commissars perform economic miracles. The industrialization of the 1930s, the war economy, and the postwar reconstruction represented unparalleled triumphs.

What might be called the Thirty Years’ Crisis, however, had come to an end. The country had industrialized and had emerged from the war victorious and able to rebuild. Now it was time to modernize, automate, introduce innovations. Heroic measures were as anachronistic in the economy as cavalry charges on the battlefield. Having built physically the largest—if not the most productive—industrial base of any nation, the population was demanding some rewards. Modern communications and the attendant penetration of foreign influence were exerting powerful pressures.

In June 1965 a prominent economist, Abel Aganbegyan, informed a group of Leningrad editors that in the preceding six-year period, the growth rate of the economy as a whole had declined by a factor of approximately three. Spelling out the reasons for this dismal state of affairs, Aganbegyan pointed first to the industrial structure, which he called “the worst and most backward of all the industrially developed countries.” So badly organized and equipped was mining, for example, that it normally cost the state more to extract a ton of

raw materials than could be earned by selling it abroad. The lumbering industry wasted fully half the timber it processed and made only one-third as much use as the American industry, one-eighth as much as the Swedish, of the remaining half. Frequent, often wholly artificial shortages further distorted the economy. Some industries stockpiled huge, unnecessary reserves. Wages increased, heightening demand, but still the goods remained in warehouses. Inflationary price increases failed to halt the process.

Aganbegyan revealed that unemployment, which officially did not exist, stood at 8 percent of the work force. In small and medium-sized cities the rate averaged 20–30 percent. He did not mention underemployment, also a serious problem. Several million citizens worked for a pittance at menial, often meaningless jobs—for example, as doorkeepers.

The defense industry, which employed 30 to 40 percent of the 100 million working people, constituted an enormous drain on the economy. The country had, of course, to be defended; but the attempt to keep pace with and even outstrip the United States guaranteed a debased standard of living.

The factor of decline of the growth rate in agriculture, Aganbegyan noted, was eight. Agricultural production in 1961–1965 was substantially below that of the preceding five-year period, and the disastrous 1963 harvest obliged the state to import about 12 million tons of grain. There was another crop failure in 1965, and again it was necessary to turn to foreign suppliers.

Long after the need for “superindustrialization” had passed, the state continued to gouge agriculture to finance heavy industry and defense. Collective farmers produced a 22-billion ruble net income and were forced to yield fully half of it to the state through taxes and the “scissors” effect—high industrial prices, low agricultural prices. In 1965 a kolhoznik could earn only 1.50 rubles a day on the col-

lective farm, 3.50 on private plot. He *had* to work on the farm, but clearly he had little incentive to make that farm productive and profitable.

Like the planners of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the post-Khrushchev leaders remained convinced that big meant better. They constructed buildings one writer has described as “like American vegetables—all size and no taste,” and they increased the size of already unwieldy and unproductive farms still further. Of the 95,000 collective farms that existed in June 1945, only 20,000 remained in 1987. Quadrupling the size of the farms quintupled their problems, and the country remained hungry.

The party blamed “subjectivism,” that is, Khrushchev’s schemes, for the slowdown but also admitted that there had been errors in planning. The problem went deeper. Until about 1940, economists had argued that the bourgeois concept of value had no meaning in a socialist society; they called prices and money bourgeois indexes of bourgeois value, relics of capitalism that would soon disappear. Then party theoreticians decided that the concept of value was after all appropriate to socialism, but “in a changed form.” No one could say precisely what that form was. After the war, Stalin advanced some bizarre theories in his *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, setting Soviet economics back still further.

A September 1965 CC plenum called for reform. Rejecting the advice of economists who argued that the rationalization of planning through the increased use of computers would solve the country’s economic problems, the plenum opted for a complex scheme that sought to blend decentralized economic decision making with a more centralized administrative structure. Plant managers were to assume greater responsibility for establishing and fulfilling local plans, or rather the local shares of the national plan, a startling departure from the norm; planners and bureaucrats in

Moscow had always treated managers as obedient executors of their orders.

Prime Minister Kosygin revamped the organizational framework of the economy and switched from a regional to a ministerial system. He abolished the *sovnarhozes*, which gave way to industrial ministries and state committees organized along pre-1957 lines, with this difference: the new bodies could not simply dictate but also had to negotiate and consult with the managers of enterprises as partners in the decision-making process.

Party conservatives—especially Brezhnev and Suslov—were angered when the reformers announced that sales and profits would henceforward be the chief indicators of plant performance. Until 1965 gross output had always been the main criterion; the very idea of profits was anathema. Emphasis on mere output, however, had naturally led managers to produce as much as possible with little regard for quality or even deliverability. The plan had been fulfilled, even overfulfilled; but no one profited, least of all the state. This had the further effect of discouraging innovation; managers stuck with what they knew they could do.

Although the 1965 reform owed a substantial debt to Bukharinist economic thinking, the party insisted that Kosygin and his colleagues were reviving the theories of Yevsei Liberman, whose 1962 *Pravda* article, “Plan, Profit, Bonus,” had created a sensation. Liberman’s insistence that incentives would make industry more efficient had won few supporters in the party bureaucracy. Kosygin, however, persuaded the CC plenum to measure factory efficiency by only seven success indicators—as opposed to several dozen—of which the most important were sales and profits.

Enterprises retained some of the profits to establish three funds: one for bonuses for workers and management, one for social and cultural facilities and housing construction, and one for reinvestment and development. The enter-

prise would have considerable latitude in disposing of the first two, but the central authorities retained veto power over the reinvestment fund.

The 1965 reform fostered the consolidation of factories. Small and medium-sized plants producing the same goods in a given locale united under one management, where possible under one roof. Large factories began to merge with some of their satellite suppliers. This tendency accelerated after a September 1968 decree provided for a closer link between research-design and production.

The innovations encountered great opposition from party conservatives, Gosplan, bureaucrats, and managers terrified by the prospect of having to shoulder real responsibility for plant performance. Party ideologues were bitter. Three years after the Twenty-third Congress made economic incentives official CPSU policy, an economist told a newspaper that “party conscience does not allow me to vote for profits.” But the Moscow party boss reminded the congress that socialism’s watchword was “from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.” Incentives were necessary until the achievement of communism.

Speakers at the congress bragged of economic achievements but acknowledged glaring shortcomings. Brezhnev reported that the Seven-Year Plan’s output targets for coal, machinery, chemicals, and consumer goods had not been met. The chairman of Gosplan, N. I. Baibakov, spoke of the “extremely slow assimilation” of new assets and indicated an especially critical situation in ferrous metals and chemicals. Baibakov also admitted the existence of sizable cost overruns, a problem usually associated with contracts awarded by the state in *capitalist* countries. Brezhnev and others assailed bureaucrats and managers for the low shift index at most new plants and indeed at many old ones. Idle factories produced no goods and turned no profits, yet managers, citing inability to find workers, usually refused

to introduce a shift system that would keep them operating 16 or 24 hours a day.

The shift index problem pinpointed a disturbing phenomenon that had been lurking in the background for nearly four decades: the USSR was beginning to experience a labor shortage. Moreover, the failure to automate and modernize rapidly enough to compensate for the shortage was exacerbating the situation. Technological advances were not keeping pace with the relative decline in the size of the labor force, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to substitute capital for labor. One Thirty Years’ Crisis had ended. Another loomed menacingly not on the horizon but at the front door.

The 1965 reform did not pursue its initiatives to their logical conclusion and consequently had little success. According to unquestionably inflated official figures, the economy expanded at an average annual rate of 5.2 percent during the eighth Five-Year Plan of 1966–1970. Cost accounting was extended to include a 6 percent charge on capital, but there were exceptions for projects in remote areas and many defense plants. Labor productivity rose only slightly. The chemical, machine-building, ferrous metals, and coal industries all failed to meet output targets. At the Twenty-fourth Congress in 1971 Brezhnev bragged one minute about the increased per capita consumption of meat and other food items, then admitted that the farms had not met the goals set for them and that at times there had been “interruptions in trade.” What he meant was that it was frequently impossible to find butter, unprocessed meat, fish, or fresh fruit and vegetables outside Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev—and even those three favored cities frequently experienced shortages.

Only vodka remained in not only plentiful but disastrously bountiful supply. In February 1988 Mikhail Gorbachev revealed that the troika and Brezhnev regimes actually *increased* the already substantial production of distilled

spirits in order to swell the state's coffers—and the wallets of the corrupt officials who plundered the national wealth in the “era of stagnation.”

The new attention to sales and profits made prices critically important, but the existing structure did not correspond to economic realities. The years of denying “bourgeois” laws and concepts came back to haunt planners struggling to determine fair market value. A revised industrial wholesale price index went into effect on July 1, 1967; it represented a major step forward but did not go far enough. Competition for some undervalued goods produced artificial shortages. Some goods in great demand were priced so high as to make it virtually impossible to buy them; this generated production bottlenecks as factories shut down for lack of supplies.

The attempt to decentralize economic decision making while simultaneously recentralizing administration was doomed to failure. Nor was this the only problem. The reformers declined to introduce genuine market mechanisms even as they were insisting that factories become profitable. Real competition would have threatened central planning, the “main guarantor of defense industry supply priority.” This was—and is—a crucial area not only in terms of national security. Brezhnev noted in 1971 that 42 percent of the defense industry's total output went into the civilian sector—civil aircraft, merchant ships, consumer durables, etc. Whether capitalist or socialist, no nation can permit defense to be at the mercy of the market, but the peculiar Soviet system made it virtually impossible to incorporate market mechanisms even for the civilian sector into the 1965 reform.

Finally, the bonus system threatened to worsen the already significant problems generated by wage differentials. Worker resentment of the “Stakhanovites,” the superachievers, had created tensions since the mid-1930s. If now there were to arise a privileged new

group of exceptionally productive and innovative workers, technicians, managers, and research development specialists, there might also come into existence class conflicts not seen since the days of the NEP.

## COMMUNISM AND COMPUTERS

No party congress could do anything about the labor shortage. Demographers, sociologists, legal experts, other specialists, and party officials were devoting considerable if largely uncoordinated attention to the matter, but while there was growing concern, there was no general sense of urgency. Most people who dealt with the problem on a professional basis simply assumed that the automation of industry and the further mechanization of agriculture would compensate for the shrinkage of the labor pool.

The mechanization and chemicalization of agriculture was itself not a simple task. To a much greater extent than in agriculture, however, the automation of industry and concomitant rationalization of planning and management depended on the application of computer technology. In this area the Soviet Union lagged behind the West and Japan. Only in the mid-1960s did the party finally heed the warnings of scientists and engineers and jump into the field with a crash program to catch up.

The Soviet Union trailed in computer technology and its application for two reasons: (1) Stalinist ideology put major restraints on the field until 1956, and (2) after 1956 the approach to computers did not give enough room to decentralized, market-driven forces. In the Stalin years cybernetics was denounced as “un-Marxist”; this set the development of computers back several years. The first cybernetics seminar was held in the USSR in 1956; two years later the Academy of Sciences established a special Scientific

Council to supervise the field. Still the party hesitated, and as late as 1961 its official program devoted only one paragraph to automation.

The ideological brake eased after 1956, however, and by the early 1960s the state tried to introduce computers into the defense complex and the economy in general. That was precisely the problem: the political authorities attempted to force computers on potential users, few of whom wanted them. Abel Aganbegyan reported in 1965 that the Central Statistical Board (!) did not have a single electronic computer and no plans to obtain one. Accustomed to commanding, the leadership was unfamiliar with the art of persuading, and the attempt to create a market miscarried. The introduction of computers was a painfully slow process that even by the early 1990s showed only modest results.

There was of course another side to this. Planners, managers, and even military leaders resisted computers for fear the machines would be used to tighten central control. Such individuals had a vested interest in preserving the inefficient system the Communist party had created. The introduction of data-processing equipment threatened the sinecures from which the holders had for decades attacked the problem of plan fulfillment with a variety of extralegal and illegal measures. Beyond that, creative accounting performed on old-fashioned adding machines and even abacuses enabled managers to tell Moscow what Moscow wanted to hear.

In March 1966 a party-state decree detailed responsibility for developing automated management systems and for the utilization of computers in planning. The ministries, Gosplan, the Central Statistical Board, the Academy of Sciences, the State Committee on Science and Technology, and the State Committee on Standards all shared authority. The bewildering division of power created confusion and waste. Worse still was the failure to establish

clear responsibility for organizing a nationwide computer network; both Gosplan and the Central Statistical Board claimed that right. The dispute was resolved only in 1971 with the creation of the Statewide Automated System (OGAS).

At the Twenty-third Congress Brezhnev referred several times to the necessity of making the most effective use of the achievements of science and technology; he meant automation and computers. This did not, however, constitute a major theme of the congress, and most delegates probably regarded his words as the usual obeisance of a materialistic political party to science. The resolution approving the Central Committee's report directed industrial ministries to introduce new technology as rapidly as possible but listed computers last among the priority areas.

Senior party officials, military leaders, scientists, economic planners, and managers conferred for more than two years to plan for the computer age. A key September 1968 decree called for the establishment of four types of research-development and production complexes aimed at creating new processes, developing new products, improving production methods and work organization, and providing research institutes for large industrial enterprises.

Computers were at the heart of this new program. During the eighth Five-Year Plan the output of the computer industry grew 480 percent in value terms, and the record was almost as good in the ninth plan of 1971–1975. But more than anything else these figures reflected the late start. By 1970 there were about 5,000 computers in the USSR, or 20 per 1 million people. In the United States there were 344 computers per million in 1970; in Japan the figure was 96, and in Great Britain 91. Moreover, the most powerful Soviet computer of 1970 operated at only one-sixth the level of the most advanced American machine. Substantially more than half the American, Japan-

ese, and British computers were third generation, while that year there was not a single Soviet-manufactured third-generation machine; 23 percent of all Soviet computers were first generation. Even in late 1975 second-generation computers comprised 83 percent of all Soviet machines.

The technology advanced in gigantic, unpredictable leaps; research and development assumed crucial importance. And because the West and Japan were not standing still, the Soviet political, military, and scientific establishments considered it essential to obtain Western and Japanese machines and knowledge by any means possible. Legal, questionable, and blatantly illegal deals brought many electronic items into the USSR. Despite an American embargo the Soviets managed to obtain about 40 second- and third-generation IBM computers before the Nixon administration tightened controls in the early 1970s. Unscrupulous entrepreneurs, espionage agents, and even some naive Western scientists kept up the flow of technology to the Soviet Union.

By the mid-1980s it had become clear that the Western nations and Japan could not keep all their computer technology out of communist hands. In 1984 the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (Cocom), which represented Japan and all NATO countries save Spain and Iceland, recommended abandoning efforts to prevent the sale of microcomputers to the USSR and other communist countries in favor of concentration on preventing transfer of supersophisticated technology with military applicability. The

United States, which had advocated strict controls, bowed to Cocom and instituted relaxed rules on January 1, 1985. The Soviet Union immediately began negotiating to buy large numbers of personal computers.

Computer education figured heavily in the educational program adopted in April 1984, and a year later the new Gorbachev Politburo decreed that such training would begin in the 1985–1986 school year in the last two grades of secondary school. More than 8 million students would be involved. If the program were to go forward, the USSR would be obliged to purchase tens of thousands of microcomputers, primarily from the United States and Japan. In the event, the Kremlin proved unable to finance these plans.

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## chapter 20

# THE ERA OF STAGNATION

1971–1985

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The concatenation of events in the half-dozen years after the ouster of Khrushchev favored Leonid Brezhnev. He took care of his friends, of whom he had many, seeing to their careers and personal welfare, winking at foibles great and small, taking care of families, remembering birthdays and other special occasions. Adept at resolving quarrels and reconciling conflicts, he dealt severely with challenges to party authority. He gave the KGB considerable latitude to deal with dissent but did establish limits. In political cases there was to be a formal accusation and a public trial—at which spectators, however, were usually KGB employees. There were to be no mass arrests, no executions on political grounds, no new Gulag—in other words, no Stalinist terror. Nevertheless, the Brezhnev regime sanctioned the secret police tactic, which dated from the reign of Nicholas I, of incarcerating dissidents in psychiatric hospitals on monstrously absurd charges.

Brezhnev engineered the May 1967 appointment of Yuri Andropov, a party regular without previous secret police experience, to head the KGB. The move was evidently calculated in part to counter the possibility that the security organs might support their former chief, the ambitious Stalinist A. N. Shelepin, in a power struggle.

### TWENTY-FOURTH CONGRESS

A new “cult” bearing some superficial resemblance to Stalin’s sprang into view at the Twenty-fourth Party Congress of March–April 1971. The spectacularly corrupt Azerbaijani party leader and Brezhnev protégé, Geidar Aliyev, declared, “In all the work . . . [of] the Central Committee, an enormous role belongs to Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev . . . who has won universal affection and respect for his

tireless activity and constant solicitude for the people's welfare."

Brezhnev put together a solid Politburo majority at this congress. A core, consisting of himself, Suslov, Kosygin, Podgorny, and Kirilenko, had been a minority on the 11-member body, but the congress enlarged it to 15 and approved the appointment of 4 new full members, all of whom were the general secretary's men: V. V. Grishin, F. D. Kulakov, D. A. Kunayev, V. V. Shcherbitsky. The congress increased the size of the CC from 195 full members to 241; among the new members was Mikhail Gorbachev.

The general—or first—secretary always read the CC's report, the longest and most comprehensive. At the 24th Congress, however, Brezhnev not only spoke far longer than anyone else but scheduled Kosygin's speech on the economy a week after his own and intruded into Kosygin's territory with extensive comments on economic matters. He said more about foreign policy and defense than the ministers responsible, Gromyko and Grechko. Pronouncing the party healthy, Brezhnev reported that membership had doubled in 14 years, in which period the staff was trimmed by 20 percent. He could not, however, claim that the party was being proletarianized; only 40.1 percent of the members were workers. The CPSU had been good to Leonid Brezhnev; he would repay it. About 81 percent of the full members of the CC were reelected with his blessing.

To spur innovation, improve efficiency, and achieve economies of scale, the Brezhnev regime supported the territorial production association movement. An outgrowth of both the *sovnarhoz* experiment and elements of the abortive 1965 reform, the creation of conglomerate enterprises represented yet another attempt to restructure industry. Several enterprises in a given industry and territory were amalgamated into a production association; the lesser ones became subordinates of

the most important—usually the largest—of their number. Directors of the chief enterprise exercised a limited number of functions previously reserved for the appropriate Union ministry in Moscow. The consolidation of all or as many as possible stages of the production of a given commodity would, Brezhnev maintained, characterize "developed [mature] socialism."

A latecomer to the computer age, the USSR would have to automate factories, even whole industries. The general secretary stressed this theme and emphasized the crucial link between scientific-technological developments and progress in the economic and social spheres.

Kosygin echoed Brezhnev's ideas and called for automation of industry. Automated management systems had already been introduced on a partial basis at Gosplan and one or two other Union agencies. The forthcoming ninth Five-Year Plan would see the introduction of "at least" 1,600 more such systems. Failure to take these steps earlier, Kosygin declared, had resulted in the economy's unsatisfactory performance during the eighth plan.

A systems approach in management would be coupled with "continuous planning," that is, constant review from birth of creative idea to series production. The introduction of modern technology, Kosygin maintained, would make it possible to raise the standard of living substantially during the ninth plan, but labor would have to do its part by increasing output. Once again, automation would be crucial. The premier predicted that by switching machine-tool production to digital programmed control, labor productivity would increase by 200–300 percent.

If that prediction proved accurate it would be nothing short of a miracle. Abel Aganbegyan had revealed in 1965 that although the Soviet Union had about the same number of machine tools as the United States (2 million), only half were operational at any given time.

The others were either “not in use or in repair.” Capacity was underutilized, and crews assigned to out-of-service machines contributed nothing to the national economy.

If the Soviet Union could not keep the nonautomated sector working at more than 50 percent of capacity, it was unlikely to do much better after automation, at least initially. The problem of user resistance to computers had by no means been overcome and there was some evidence that it was worsening. Beyond that, by the time the cumbersome state machinery had actually managed to automate a factory or group of factories, it was quite likely that the computers installed would be outdated. Brezhnev’s “developed socialism” simply was not geared to the rapid assimilation of new technology. Bureaucratic inefficiency and inertia, coupled with the labor force’s insistence on working strictly according to established procedure and rules, tended to stifle innovation. Managers began to speak of the “dehumanizing” effects of automation and hint of unemployment.

Spelling out targets for the ninth Five-Year Plan of 1971–1975, Kosygin stressed that this would be the first plan to provide for a faster growth rate in the consumer than in the producer sector. At last the people were to be rewarded for their sacrifices. The standard of living would rise dramatically through a combination of greater production efficiency, scientific and technological innovations, and a rise in labor productivity.

## ECONOMIC DECLINE

The new plan was ambitious not so much in terms of goals as of assumptions. In percentages the targets for production and real income differed little from those authorities *claimed* had been achieved in the 1966–1970 period; this indicated that the actual results had been less impressive. The one realistic

projection of the new plan was that the total nonagricultural labor force would increase by 13 percent against 19 percent in the preceding plan, the industrial labor force by only 6.5 percent against 15 percent. The relative decline in the labor pool meant that the planners banked heavily on a dramatic increase in labor productivity and on achieving enormous economies in raw materials and energy. The economy had never performed that way and it was exceedingly doubtful that it would do so now, computers or no computers.

The assumptions were all the more unrealistic in view of the fact that the new plan increased pressures on resources and managers. As always, the safest course of action was to defer to Moscow on all issues, even the most trivial, and as usual Moscow was willing to shoulder the burden. Gone was the modest freedom Kosygin had tried to extend to local managers and engineers. The massive centrifugal force of centralization again proved impossible to resist.

The planners also made the risky assumption that détente would continue to thrive. The introduction of new technology depended to a great extent on the uninterrupted flow of machines and expertise from the West, and in this area Soviet options were limited. There were already signs that opposition in the U.S. Senate might succeed in reversing that policy, or at least in forcing Nixon to attach strict conditions to it. If that happened, the ninth plan’s timetable would be thrown off schedule.

Determined to solve forever one of their most vexing economic problems, Kremlin leaders planned to increase the already huge investment in agriculture. The agricultural sector had taken an average of 23 percent of the total gross fixed capital investment in the latter half of the 1960s, and by 1973 its share reached 26.5 percent and continued to climb.

Midway through the ninth plan, conservative economists and party ideologues who had

defeated the 1965 reform stepped up their attacks on the attempt to modernize. In the journal *The Planned Economy*, they assailed the Western-style econometrics practiced at the Central Economics-Mathematical Institute, founded in 1963. They denounced as “bourgeois” such innovations as systems analysis, economic forecasting, and decentralized decision making. The critics tended to be older economists who were to some extent simply unable to adjust to new thinking. Part of the opposition, however, had a strong ideological quotient. Many communists had never been able to come to terms with attempts to revise and modernize Marxism-Leninism, let alone with the radical departures of the 1965 reform, and they rejoiced as the leadership abandoned that venture.

These people opposed the assignment of priority to the consumer sector. Was this another bit of Khrushchevism, they asked, a sign that the millennium was here? Had the capitalists folded their tents? Until the whole world was communist, the conservatives insisted, the Soviet economy must continue to emphasize heavy industry, to produce the steel that made the country strong.

The ninth plan did not meet its goals, partly because of what a Western scholar called the “longer-term retardatory trends in the economy” and partly because of nature’s caprice. According to customarily inflated official figures, the total national income rose by 28 percent between 1970 and 1975 for an average annual growth rate of 5.1 percent. The plan had called for 38.6 and 6.7 percent, respectively. Measured against 1966–1970 performance, agricultural production rose 13 percent in average-annual gross value instead of the projected 21.7 percent. Total industrial production was 43 percent higher in 1975 than in 1970, or 7.4 percent annually; the target figures were 47 and 8.0 percent, respectively. Production of consumer goods rose 37 percent (6.5 percent annually) instead of the

planned 48.6 and 8.2 percent; thus heavy industry continued to enjoy priority.

Western experts estimated the average annual growth rate of the national economy closer to 4 percent than the claimed 5.1 percent. Abel Aganbegyan indicated in 1965 that CIA estimates had been “absolutely accurate.” Moreover, industrial output cannot have reached the published levels, which represented a 97 percent fulfillment of goals.

There were two major crop failures during the period. The first, in 1972, was overcome in part through the purchase of 30 million tons of grain abroad, chiefly from the United States. The poor harvest of that year was only a foretaste of what was to come three years later, when it became necessary to obtain even greater amounts of grain from foreign suppliers.

The purchases ate into gold reserves, but the dramatic rise in oil and natural gas prices after 1973 temporarily softened the blow. An energy exporter, the USSR had a highly favorable balance of trade in the mid-1970s, but history has shown nothing so clearly as the cyclical nature of the world economy. That situation would not last, nor would Soviet reserves and domestic requirements permit the continued unlimited sale of hydrocarbons abroad.

The drought and resulting crop failure of 1975 were the worst since the early 1930s: farms failed to meet the revised target of 215.7 million tons of grain by 76 million tons. This time imports could not take up all the slack, for the ports were physically capable of handling fewer than 40 million tons *per year*. Consumers, including collective farmers who also needed seed and fodder, could only tighten their belts. An American economist described the 1975 disaster as “possibly the largest single blow suffered by the Soviet economy since the German invasion of 1941.”

There were innumerable ripple effects from the 1975 crop failure. It was necessary to dip into reserve stocks—never large—to provide for human consumption, and that meant

inadequate fodder. That in turn led to the premature slaughter of many animals, including breeding stock. There was a temporary glut, then scarcity. Moreover, the slaughter of breeding stock obviously made it more difficult to rebuild the herds; the meat shortage would be a protracted one. Finally, the slaughter reduced the organic fertilizer available, increasing pressures on producers and transporters of chemical fertilizers.

Consumers were obliged to endure shortages and lower their expectations. The standard of living, which had been improving at a modest rate, began to decline despite several wage increases for broad categories of workers. By 1976 the average wage for all workers had reached 145.80 rubles per month: 126.80 for farm workers, 162.20 for industrial workers. The average family spent less than 40 rubles a month for rent and utilities, perhaps 10 for transportation. Medical care was of course “free” in the sense that it involved negligible direct cost. Before the 1975 crop failure, the average family spent 40–50 percent of its income on food despite massive state subsidies for bread, milk, and a few other items. Crop failures raised prices; the state had to intervene to fight inflation and limit political damage.

## TWENTY-FIFTH CONGRESS

In April 1973 Brezhnev reorganized the Politburo. He ousted Voronov and Shelest—who also lost their government posts—and promoted four men on whom he could rely. Minister of Defense Grechko became a full member, as did Foreign Minister Gromyko and the KGB chief, Andropov. Grigori Romanov, the Leningrad party boss famous for high living, became a candidate member. The changes brought the number of full members to 16, the number of candidate members to 7.

Substantial opposition to détente necessitated the changes. Brezhnev counted on the

chiefs of the armed forces, secret police, and foreign ministry to shore up his personal position and foreign policy.

After the 1973 reorganization, Brezhnev’s team seemed to function smoothly for two years. Then, in 1975, the general secretary unceremoniously ousted the trade union chief, Aleksandr Shelepin. Having served both Stalin and Khrushchev, Shelepin played a role in deposing the latter and in the aftermath won a seat on the Presidium. But the Brezhnev people suspected him of wanting the top job, or at least the directorship of the KGB, a position he had held from 1958 to 1961; neither Brezhnev nor Andropov tolerated rivals.

The Twenty-fifth Party Congress convened on February 23, 1976. Brezhnev opened the conclave with a lengthy defense of détente, then went on to criticize the Chinese and blame them for the split. He reprimanded the French and Italian Communist parties for seeking independence from Moscow. He also attacked the poor performance of the economy, singling out Group B enterprises (consumer goods). He blamed officials at the ministerial level for the dismal record, rebuking them for their insistence on regarding the production of consumer goods as “something secondary and ancillary.” That was for public consumption; he made no promises to shift emphasis away from Group A (heavy industry). If consumers were to enjoy a higher standard of living, they would have to rely on improved efficiency and quality rather than a reorientation of state priorities. Brezhnev said little about the production associations but declared that a restructuring of the economy could no longer be postponed. Guidelines for the new plan called for development of existing associations and formation of new complexes “with common communications, engineering facilities, and ancillary plants.”

Offering a scapegoat for the 1975 farm disaster, Brezhnev ousted Minister of Agriculture Polyansky from the Politburo. The secretary

in charge of agriculture, Fyodor Kulakov, escaped without a public reprimand, but events were to prove that his standing had been compromised. Brezhnev pointed out that 213 billion of 320 billion rubles allocated to agriculture since 1917 were invested during the eighth and ninth Five-Year Plans.

Obligated for political and ideological reasons to emphasize the positive, Kosygin called the ninth plan a success despite the enormous problems in agriculture and the continuing problems of inefficiency, lagging labor productivity, and unsatisfactory quality of many goods. About 18 percent of all industrial enterprises, he noted, failed to meet their profit plans in 1975. Kosygin boasted of Soviet self-sufficiency in energy—no other major industrial nation could make such a claim—but in the same breath referred to a decline in proven oil reserves. In the future the USSR would have to rely more on hydroelectric power, nuclear energy, and coal.

Spelling out the goals of the Tenth Five-Year Plan, the premier called for a 24 to 28 percent increase in the national income to be achieved by an increase in Group A industrial production of 38–42 percent, in Group B of 30–32 percent. The “steeleaters” had prevailed. Wages were to increase 16–28 percent for industrial and clerical workers, 24–27 percent for collective farmers. The automation of industry and the mechanization and chemicalization of agriculture were to proceed at a quickened pace. Above all, Kosygin warned, managers, workers, engineers, scientists, and researchers had to improve efficiency and quality.

At its first plenary meeting, held while the Twenty-fifth Congress was still in session, the new Central Committee ousted Polyansky from the Politburo and promoted two candidate members, Grigori Romanov and Dmitri Ustinov, to full membership. This brought the number of full members back up to 16. The inner circle of Brezhnev, Suslov, Kosygin,

Grechko, and Gromyko had an average age of 71; the entire Politburo averaged 66. The average age of the 6 alternate members was nearly 60, with Geidar Aliyev the youngest at 52.

The implications of this age pattern disturbed some party members. A new generation of potential leaders who had come to political maturity after 1953 waited to assume command, but no one was being groomed for leadership. The old guard clung tenaciously to power, growing ever more rigid, resisting new ideas and new people, fighting innovation, demanding order above all. The untidy but normal infighting that occurs in all political organizations was distorted after 1971; party business tended to stagnate. The consequences of the “stability of cadres” were becoming painfully obvious.

Brezhnev boasted that he had put “an end . . . to the unjustified reshuffling and frequent replacements of cadres.” He was blind to the ossification of those cadres into a mass of sinecure holders whose overriding goal was to brake the healthy trends in society. Between 1964 and 1976, 78 percent of the regional party bureaus in European Russia either kept the same leader or replaced her or him only once. This contrasts with the 33 percent “stability index” under Khrushchev.

### THE POLITICS OF 1976–1977

In May 1976 Brezhnev rose from four-star general to marshal of the Soviet Union, the first politician since Stalin to hold that rank; Khrushchev had been content with three stars. At about the same time it was revealed that Brezhnev was president of the Defense Council, the existence of which had previously been kept secret. A bust of the general secretary was unveiled in his home town to the accompaniment of nationwide publicity. In December 1976 *Pravda* devoted one or two pages to

Brezhnev each day December 11–18, then on the 19th gave him six of the total eight pages in celebration of his seventieth birthday. He was awarded his fifth Order of Lenin and his second Gold Medal Hero of the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev loyalists continued to flourish. Dmitri Ustinov became defense minister on Marshal Grechko's death in April 1976 and was promoted to the rank of marshal, although, like Brezhnev, he was not a professional military man. Yuri Andropov of the KGB and N. A. Shchelokov, minister of internal affairs, became generals of the army in September. The promotions testified to the strength of Brezhnev's political machine and to his control over the military establishment.

More evidence of the general secretary's power came in September 1976 with the appointment of Nikolai A. Tikhonov, 71, as first deputy prime minister and thus heir apparent to the ailing Kosygin. Like a substantial number of key officials, Tikhonov had served in various posts in Dnepropetrovsk, where Brezhnev was born and began his political career. An American scholar pointed out in 1976 that of 185 officials from 25 regions who were promoted to high office outside their home regions, 24 transfers came from Dnepropetrovsk; no other region had more than 15. Beyond that, 11 Central Committee members came from Dnepropetrovsk, more than twice as many as the next best-represented area, Harkov. One of Brezhnev's closest personal and political associates, Andrei Kirilenko, spent considerable time in party work in Dnepropetrovsk, as did Shcherbitsky and Shchelokov. Two of Andropov's deputies at the KGB, Viktor Chebrikov and Georgi Tsinev, rumored to be Brezhnev's personal watchdogs, had similar backgrounds.

The Tikhonov appointment coincided with rumors of the impending ouster of Podgorny from the leadership. In May 1977 a CC plenum dropped the 74-year-old Ukrainian from the Politburo without explanation; three

weeks later the Supreme Soviet dismissed him as chairman of its Presidium and immediately elected Brezhnev in his place. The party general secretary thus became chief of state, the first politician to hold both posts simultaneously.

Brezhnev's assumption of the "presidency" for the second time was designed, he declared, to demonstrate the primacy of the Communist party. That had not been in doubt since 1920.

It was awkward for Brezhnev, in a formal sense merely the head of a political party, to deal with foreign heads of state. Moreover, all bloc countries save Hungary and Poland were ruled by men who held the top position in both party and state. At a time when Moscow's domination of the satellites was increasingly in jeopardy, Brezhnev's technically inferior rank amounted to an unnecessary irritant. Too, the logic of the "cult" dictated that Brezhnev should have the post of chief of state, the last prize his fellow oligarchs could offer him.

There was nothing subtle about the timing. Four days after taking office, Brezhnev paid a state visit to France and was greeted with full honors, including the 101-gun salute his new rank demanded.

## NEW CONSTITUTION

There was another factor in the 1977 maneuvers. In 1959 a conference of legal experts had proposed sweeping changes in the 1936 constitution, ostensibly to bring it into line with the development of socialism. In reality the document was hateful to the de-Stalinizers: it had, after all, provided legal sanction for the whole Stalinist system. In 1962 Khrushchev became chairman of the Constitutional Commission. Brezhnev replaced him in November 1964.

As he consolidated his power Brezhnev took an ever greater interest in the project. He frequently referred to the commission's work

and in 1973 declared publicly that a document would be submitted to a nationwide referendum, an unheard-of procedure in the USSR. When the text of his speech was published, the reference to a referendum had been deleted.

The draft was published June 4, 1977, 12 days before Brezhnev replaced Podgorny as chief of state. It was much like the old constitution but there were some changes. One had a bearing on the 1977 politicking: for the first time there was to be a “vice presidency.” A first deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium would fulfill routine ceremonial duties previously entrusted to the chairman, who would be free for the grander task of negotiating with foreign leaders. Brezhnev wanted the chairmanship for himself and offered the lesser post to Podgorny, who declined.

Submitted to nationwide discussion—but not a referendum—over the summer, the new constitution spelled out the party’s role: “The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the leading and guiding force of Soviet society, the nucleus of its political system and of [all] state and public organizations. The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people” (Article 6). The equality of citizens and their basic civil and human rights were spelled out (Article 50) as in the earlier document but in more specific form. The second paragraph of Article 39, however, declared, “The exercise of rights and liberties by citizens must not injure the interests of society and the state or the rights of other citizens.” This caution constituted the *ultima ratio*: according to Article 6, the party was to be the sole judge of injury to the state or the rights of others.

Article 4 recognized each citizen’s right to own a dwelling and a farm. An innovative Chapter 4 (Articles 28–30) on foreign policy reflected the Kremlin’s attempt to prove compliance with the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference. It emphasized the peace-loving nature of the Soviet state, called for “general and

complete disarmament,” and specifically forbade war propaganda.

Presenting the slightly revised document to the Supreme Soviet for ratification in October 1977, Brezhnev indicated that the party had been stung by foreign criticism. He named half a dozen Western newspapers critical of the constitution and hurled a challenge. Did the West wish to boast of guaranteeing the “right” to unemployment, inadequate medical care and neglect of the elderly, racial discrimination, crime, the propagandizing of sociopathic values? He declared that none of these phenomena existed in the USSR. Brezhnev had perhaps nicked Western democracies where they were vulnerable, but it was an odd defense.

Like its predecessors of 1918, 1924, and 1936, the new constitution reflected the anti-democratic nature and values of the ruling party. It made no pretense of seeking political or social equilibrium and did not recognize even the theoretical possibility of error on the part of the Communist party. It did not sanction political or ideological compromise and provided no curb on the powers of the party. Only the party truly had rights; the guarantee of freedom of speech meant freedom to agree with the party.

The “Brezhnev Constitution” was unanimously approved, as until 1988 was all business, by the Supreme Soviet in time for the sixtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1977. The republics and autonomous republics also adopted new constitutions at this time. It is unlikely that Lenin, Stalin, or Khrushchev would have objected to a single word in any of them.

## DECLINE OF THE BREZHNEV MACHINE

The new constitution had little impact on the life of the people. Party and government spokesmen argued that the orderly transition

from one constitutional order to another proved the genius of the framers. In reality it demonstrated the irrelevance of a constitution in a one-party state.

Veteran diplomat V. V. Kuznetsov, negotiator of SALT I and a former ambassador to China, became the country's first deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium, or vice president. Never an insider, Kuznetsov, 76, would perform the routine state duties that bored Brezhnev and taxed his health, which was beginning to fail noticeably.

Several personnel changes during 1977–1980 seemed to indicate the leadership's inability to agree on a succession policy. Brezhnev promoted one of his closest friends, Konstantin Chernenko, to candidate member status—along with Kuznetsov—on the Politburo in October 1977 and to full member a year later. There was little doubt that he was Brezhnev's personal choice as the next general secretary.

Having suffered a cerebral hemorrhage in 1976 and a massive heart attack in 1979, Kosygin relinquished his party and government posts in October 1980. Tikhonov succeeded him as prime minister, and Kosygin's seat on the Politburo went to Mikhail Gorbachev, 49, party secretary in charge of agriculture since Kulakov's death in 1978.

The coalition that had ruled for 16 years collapsed. Suslov remained officially in charge of ideology, but his own health deteriorated rapidly. For all practical purposes Leonid Brezhnev stood alone, in the ever-tightening grip of Alzheimer's disease. Politics shifted backstage as he became a mere figurehead.

Kosygin died on December 18, 1980. The party did not immediately publish the news; Brezhnev's entourage did not want to spoil his birthday the next day. The fading general secretary received the Order of the October Revolution, long reserved for highest-level party mediocrities, and obscenely lavish tributes from his cronies. Not until December 21 did the regime see fit to inform the world that

Aleksei Kosygin, a self-effacing bureaucrat who never meshed with the Brezhnev machine, had died.

## **LAST POST: TWENTY-SIXTH CONGRESS**

No potential candidate for leadership had a clear party mandate; Chernenko, Kirilenko, and Andropov propped up the general secretary like El Cid and kept him in office pending some shift that would enable one of them to assert primacy without generating an intra-party fight. By the time the Twenty-sixth Party Congress convened on Army-Navy Day (February 23), 1981, however, it had become impossible to conceal Brezhnev's infirmities. Television cameras kept a respectful distance, and the state network broadcast only the opening and closing sections of his unusually short speech, but the pictures mercilessly revealed the general secretary trapped in the decrepit old age that is the special dread of people grown too fond of power.

The nation waited for vigorous new leadership. The economy desperately needed a revolutionary overhaul; nationalist unrest in Estonia, Azerbaijan, Kirgizia, and elsewhere pulled on the resources and patience of the center; a hopeless war in Afghanistan demoralized the army in the field and the civilians at home. In the wake of the December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, relations with the West and China plunged to their lowest level since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. The fading old man in the Kremlin could do nothing about any of this.

Thus the congress unfolded in splendidly Brezhnevist fashion: nothing much happened. Save for a wistful call for a meeting with the new American president, Ronald Reagan, Brezhnev's abbreviated remarks lacked substance. The general secretary's speechwriters—under Andropov's supervi-

sion—had him defend Soviet foreign policy vis-à-vis Poland and Afghanistan, but with these exceptions the speech struck a generally conciliatory note. Lurking in the background was nostalgia for the heady days when he and Nixon had met regularly in an attempt to lay the foundation for an era of harmony and cooperation. Brezhnev blamed the collapse of détente and nearly 60 percent drop in the value of bilateral trade in 1980 on the United States. Soviet foreign policy had remained consistent, he declared, and dialogue could resume at any time so long as it did not touch on the closed subjects of Poland and Afghanistan.

His public remarks seemed to indicate that Brezhnev was little disturbed by the sluggishness of the economy. He bragged of an enormous increase in labor productivity, announced that the territorial production complexes were functioning satisfactorily, and spoke of “truly revolutionary possibilities” created by the development and introduction of microcomputers and industrial robots. Nevertheless, he could hardly ignore the stagnation in industry or the monumental problems of agriculture. He called for more discipline, better leadership, and an end to the widespread practice of adjusting plan targets downward. He warned again of the decline in energy reserves and spoke more bluntly than ever of the economic consequences of an increasingly severe labor shortage.

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan of 1981–1985 would place a greater strain than ever on both human and material resources, but the party had no coherent program to deal with the worsening crisis. Unable for ideological reasons to initiate the decisive decentralization that alone seemed to offer a way out of the morass, the party continued to employ half-measures, tinker with the planning mechanism, exhort managers and workers to perform more efficiently.

It was of course the party’s duty to direct the reinvigoration of the economy that Brezh-

nev and Prime Minister Tikhonov demanded, but how a party that refused to rejuvenate its own leading organs would accomplish that remained a mystery. For the first time in post-revolution history there was no change in the composition of the Politburo. The new Central Committee (increased in size from 287 full members to 319) elected at the congress included 231 holdovers—80 percent—from 1976 and 7 members who had come into office after that year. Of the 81 newcomers, approximately 38 had been candidate members. Among these newcomers were at least 5 KGB officials, including 3 known to be part of the growing Andropov machine: Viktor Chebrikov, Georgi Tsinev, and Semyon Tsvigun. There were also 9 generals on the new CC which dropped such former high-ranking officials as Podgorny, Polyansky, K. T. Mazurov, and V. V. Matskevich. Only 8 women were elected, along with about a dozen genuine workers.

## THE ARTS

As often happens under repressive, corrupt regimes, the arts enjoyed an underground renaissance in the Brezhnev era. Artists and writers protested the shortcomings of Soviet life. Outstanding films came out of studios in Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Lithuania, Uzbekistan, and other republics; with very few exceptions the party forbade their release.

Inextricably linked to factories and therefore cities, communism had always detested the village; both Khrushchev and his immediate successors predicted the total urbanization of the nation by the turn of the twenty-first century. Several writers lamented the death of the village and warned of the loss of such a “spiritual gold mine.” The term came from a member of the unofficial “rural school” of writers, Fyodor Abramov, whose moral strictures might have carried more weight had he not been a *Smersh*

(“Death to Spies”) executioner during World War II. The trend took hold in the 1950s and quickly won wide respect as writers with greater talent than the bloodstained Abramov published stories and books with rural settings that featured heroic peasant—almost always noncommunist—characters; Vladimir Soloukhin and Yefim Dorosh were two such writers.

Communists belatedly realized that the idealization of the village evoked doubts about their values and tried too late to suppress the “rural school.” Soloukhin wrote of the beauty and simplicity of rural life in central Russia; Valentin Rasputin and Sergei Zalygin, of Siberia; Chingiz Aitmatov, of Kirgizia and Kazakhstan; Fazil Iskander, of Abkhazia. These and other writers made the hacks who controlled the Writers’ Union uncomfortable because, like talented people everywhere, they tended to be nonconformists. In the mid-1970s only half—the talentless half—of the union’s 2,000 members belonged to the party.

In 1979 the Writers’ Union expressed “heartfelt thanks” to Leonid Brezhnev, whose recently published memoirs had had “an enormous influence on all types and genres of literature”; the public relished the perverse humor. The general secretary’s entourage had arranged for him to win a Lenin Prize for the hopelessly banal, ghost-written memoirs.

The Writers’ Union expelled one of Russia’s greatest literary talents of the twentieth century, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, from its ranks in 1969. Protected by his international fame, Solzhenitsyn lived precariously after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970. Officially silenced, his influence as a writer waned, but he retained a measure of moral authority. After his monumental history of the Gulag began to appear in the West the government denounced him as a traitor, never addressing the central question: Was his account true? The Brezhnev regime expelled Solzhenitsyn from the USSR in 1974.

He was to be followed into exile by scores of poets, writers, and other artists. The flight resembled the exodus from Germany after the nazis seized power, and it robbed the USSR of some of its finest talent: Mstislav Rostropovich, Galina Vishnevskaya, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Natalia Makarova, Maksim Shostakovich, Yuri Lyubimov, Joseph Brodsky, Vasily Aksyonov, Lev Kopelev, Georgi Vladimov, Vladimir Voinovich, Ernest Neizvestny, Andrei Tarkovsky, Viktor Korchnoi, Boris Spassky, and many others. Some went willingly; others were literally thrown out of the country.

Many writers who remained managed to retain their integrity in difficult conditions. Yuri Trifonov, in *The House on the Embankment* and other works, succeeded in conveying the central message of the intellectuals’ protest: only through a thorough, honest examination of the Stalin era could the country cleanse itself and move forward. Chingiz Aitmatov and Kaltai Mukhamedzhanov pursued this theme in *The Ascent of Mount Fuji*. Yuri Lyubimov, director of Moscow’s avant-garde Taganka Theatre, staged Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* in 1977, faithfully preserving the author’s condemnation of the ultra-authoritarian state.

The Taganka under Lyubimov was the home of the truly daring, but another theatre startled audiences in 1977 with a production of Vasili Shukshin’s *And in the Morning They Awakened*, which dealt with the problem of alcohol abuse. Aleksandr Gelman’s *We, The Undersigned* presented the “fixers” who wormed their way around production bottlenecks and moral dilemmas in a sympathetic light. Viktor Rozov’s *Nest of Wood Grouse* attacked pompous, insensitive bureaucrats and expressed sympathy for young idealists impatient with the shortcomings of society. Lyubimov was forced into remaining abroad in 1984 (he had gone to London to stage a play) by, as he wrote, “stupid little men” who had damaged Russian culture more than any foreign enemy.

In 1979 nearly two dozen writers and poets collaborated on a *samizdat* venture called *Metropol*. Vasili Aksyonov, Fazil Iskander, and three lesser-known writers served as editors. Bella Akhmadulina and Andrei Voznesensky, both prominent poets, contributed works, as did Vladimir Vysotsky. The collaborators insisted that *Metropol*, of which only ten copies were produced, was strictly nonpolitical: the goal was simply to demand the right of free artistic expression.

The party obviously could not agree. It denounced poems dealing with the Gulag, stories of corruption, fictional accounts of sexual adventures, nude drawings. *Metropol*, the authorities declared, was “pornography of the soul.” The Writers’ Union expelled two young contributors and warned the others to cease their attempts to evade censorship.

The watchdogs were no less zealous in other fields. In September 1974 the Moscow authorities used bulldozers to break up an unauthorized outdoor exhibition of “nonconformist” art. When photographs of the episode appeared in newspapers around the world, the Kremlin fired a couple of officials and in effect apologized by permitting a similar exhibition later. The works shown, however, were about as avant-garde as Impressionism; more modern schools remained proscribed.

Conservatism continued to reign in classical music, where the Lysenko-like head of the Composers Union, Tikhon Khrennikov, sought to freeze the clock in 1893—the year of Tchaikovsky’s death. Orchestras did perform the works of Dmitri Shostakovich, but only rarely did such avant-garde composers as Edison Denisov, Aleksandr Knaifel, and Alfred Schnittke have the opportunity to present their music. Schnittke’s *Latin Requiem Mass* did enjoy a great triumph at its Moscow première in the spring of 1980, several years after it was first heard in Budapest. Soviet audiences in general, however, became aware of Schnittke’s genius chiefly through his many film scores.

Knaifel and Denisov worked only rarely in that medium.

Most of the 150 to 175 films made annually in the troika and Brezhnev eras had little to commend them. The party continued to commission quasi-documentary feature films such as *Lenin in Poland*, *Lenin in Paris*, *Lenin Manuscripts*, *Conversation with Comrade Lenin*, and *The Living Lenin*, none of which left much doubt about the subject matter. Heavy-handed propaganda exercises such as *Our March*, *Banner Over the World*, and *The Internationale* stupefied everyone.

Films about World War II remained popular in cinemas and on television, but there were signs that the genre was beginning to pall. *Ordinary Fascism* had 479 showings to 118,000 people in Gorky in 1967; in the same year the American *Some Like It Hot* had 1,037 showings to 268,000 viewers. The diminishing interest in war films was another manifestation of the aging of the population.

An outstanding young director was Andrei Tarkovsky, whose first film, *My Name Is Ivan* (1962), was a rather conventional portrayal of a young boy orphaned in the Second World War. Its success, however, freed Tarkovsky to make the brilliant *Andrei Rublev* (1966) about the great icon painter who died in 1430. The harshly realistic film showed human beings rather than symbols of the class struggle. Party watchdogs did not like it and withdrew it from general circulation. Tarkovsky’s science-fiction *Solaris* (1972) proved too arcane to be popular, as did the stream-of-consciousness *The Mirror* (1975). In the summer of 1984, citing frustration over impossible working conditions in the USSR, Tarkovsky found asylum in the West.

An immensely popular actor, director, and writer was Vasili Shukshin, a practitioner of “village” prose who translated several of his own stories into successful films. *The Guelderrose* (1974) is the story of a criminal who, after completing a prison term, tries to rehabilitate himself by moving from the corrupt city to the

countryside, only to be hunted down and killed by his old gang. The portrayal of unsavory party officials, bored workers unable to stay awake during political lectures, and religious peasants electrified audiences. Shortly before his premature death Shukshin appeared in Gleb Panfilov's *I Want to Speak* (1976), which dealt with mindless bureaucrats, the painful Stalinist legacy, and spoiled youth. The authorities tolerated these films but preferred such banal comedies as *The Quiet Bride* (1979) and *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1980).

## DISSIDENTS

In most modern societies the cultural avant-garde is heavily populated by people from marginal or even outcast groups and by individuals whose personal histories are often irregular and sometimes embarrassing. The broad middle classes in the West and Japan have generally followed in the wake of such groups in the areas of popular music, dance, dress, and "lifestyle," but the men who controlled the Soviet Union never made peace with such groups and tried to keep the population from imitating them. Cultural innovation was unacceptable, and the slightest hint of political deviation invariably triggered a brutal response.

The failure instantly to demolish the dissident movement in the mid-1960s reflected the progress made since Stalin's death. The state dealt harshly with the *samizdat* writers Sinyavsky and Daniel but eventually allowed both to emigrate. Several individuals who publicly protested the invasion of Czechoslovakia likewise suffered under the blows of the KGB but survived and ultimately left the country. Solzhenitsyn was silenced, harassed unmercifully, and finally expelled, escaping the fate of Mandelstam and other writers.

In an unprecedented development thousands of Jewish citizens were permitted to go to

Israel and the West before the collapse of détente virtually closed the borders again. A group of citizens who demanded the right to monitor Soviet compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act drew world attention to the Kremlin's hypocrisy. Several members were imprisoned, some were accused of having CIA connections, all were silenced. They had, however, been heard.

Andrei Sakharov, the nuclear physicist who became the most articulate and respected critic of the regime, was exiled to Gorky on the Volga. Cut off from the outside world, his fate became a source of concern around the world—and thus a major dilemma for the Kremlin.

There was little cohesion among the dissidents, no agreement on goals. Solzhenitsyn's conservative Russian nationalism and devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church appealed to some oppositionists but by no means all. Sakharov sometimes seemed remote and aloof. The Moscow and Leningrad intellectuals in the shapeless movement frequently squabbled among themselves. The KGB penetrated most groups—and the ranks of the émigrés and "defectors."

The dissidents were few in number, and the public, which knew little of them, remained indifferent, even hostile. The state's rough suppression of the movement seemed yet another grossly excessive application of force, but the authorities knew better than anyone that—as the Bolsheviks had proved in 1917—numbers do not always reflect the strength of ideas. Unwilling to take chances, the Kremlin moved against the dissidents and in the process created martyrs—never the practice of confident, secure regimes.

## END OF THE BREZHNEV ERA

Leonid Brezhnev had brought political stability, and he had presided over the rise of the country to an unprecedented position of strength

and prestige. Now old and feeble, he could not comprehend the cost of his victories, let alone make arrangements to pay it. It was time to leave, but the Soviet system had no mechanism for dealing with an infirm leader. The last 20 months of Brezhnev's life blended into a bizarre collage of intrigue and scandal. Never able to translate his party popularity into a real following among the public, the general secretary became the butt of increasingly pointed criticism publicized with the sanction of high-level officials. In December 1981 the play *Thus We Will Win* opened in Moscow. Set in October 1922, at one point the actor playing Lenin speaks emphatically of the need to curb the general secretary's power.

The December 1981 issue of the Leningrad literary journal *Aurora* (Aurora) was dedicated to Brezhnev on his seventy-fifth birthday. On page 75 was a brief, savage satire dedicated to an unnamed "wonderful writer" who had astonished everyone by remaining alive long after he ought to have died. The narrator exclaims that his daughter, who loves a joke, delighted him one day with the news that this writer had died, only to disappoint him when she confessed that the news was false. The writer would probably die soon, however; everyone had been waiting so long for the event. A couple of years earlier Brezhnev had won a Lenin Prize for his memoirs.

Suslov died at the age of 79 on January 25, 1982. Ardent Stalinist, mastermind of Khrushchev's rise to power and chief architect of his fall, he had groomed Brezhnev for leadership and had been the Kremlin's Richelieu since 1957. For more than three decades he was the ideological conscience of the party. His death allowed the floodgates of scandal to open.

Four days after Suslov's demise the official in charge of the passport office was arrested and charged with selling exit visas. On the same day an individual connected with the Moscow Circus was arrested on charges of illegal financial dealings. It had long been an open secret

that the Brezhnev machine was both riddled with corruption and disinclined to do anything about it; "stability of cadres" extended to the cover-up of malfeasance. The arrest of the passport official indicated the end of the care-free days. The circus individual was a close personal friend of Brezhnev's daughter.

It would soon be revealed that the death in January—six days before Suslov's—of a KGB official, Semyon Tsvigun, had been a suicide and that Tsvigun had clashed with Suslov over the arrest of people close to the Brezhnev family. Suslov opposed the arrests and prevailed. Presumably because he believed his career ruined, Tsvigun killed himself. It suddenly became clear why Suslov and Brezhnev had not signed Tsvigun's obituary, which *was* signed by Andropov and all top KGB officials.

In March a Suslov protégé, Aleksei Shibayev, lost his job as head of the central trade union organization. Fourteen months later he would be reprimanded for illegal financial dealings. In July 1982 an old Brezhnev friend who was in charge of the Krasnodar party organization was forced from office; after Brezhnev's death he would be arrested on charges of corruption.

The leader of the anti-corruption drive, Yuri Andropov, was determined to succeed Brezhnev in the Kremlin. Long considered a possible contender for the general secretaryship but generally ruled out because of his lengthy tenure as head of the KGB, Andropov began the political maneuvers that would result in victory in April 1982. In that month he gave the main speech on the anniversary of Lenin's birth, which he had done in 1976 when Brezhnev was indisposed. But with the general secretary now obviously unable to continue in office much longer, the fact that Andropov gave one of the most important speeches of the year took on new significance. The following month he joined the Central Committee Secretariat. Two days later he resigned his KGB post and was replaced by his

deputy, Vitaly K. Fedorchuk, who continued the investigation of shady practices among high officials.

As the play *Thus We Will Win*, the *Avrora* piece, the arrests, and other developments indicated, Andropov and his top KGB aides could barely contain their impatience for Brezhnev to die; none of this could have transpired without their sanction. Television—always under strict KGB control—showed a tired, indifferent, disoriented Brezhnev at Suslov's funeral and two weeks later zeroed in on his uncontrollable weeping at another burial. Until this, Soviet television had never, ever shown leaders in any but the most favorable light.

Brezhnev suffered a stroke in March 1982 but seemed to revive during his usual prolonged summer vacation. In September, however, the KGB planted rumors—eagerly

snapped up by the Western press—of Brezhnev's impending resignation. Out of public view in October, Brezhnev stood atop the Lenin Mausoleum on November 7 to review the parade marking the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

During the evening of November 10, 1982, Soviet television and radio suddenly and without explanation interrupted regular programming to broadcast classical music. At 11 o'clock the next morning the party announced that its leader had suffered a fatal heart attack the previous evening.

The party buried Leonid Brezhnev with the unsurpassed pomp and circumstance of Russian funerals, renamed a city on the Volga in his honor, and proceeded to forget him. Four years later Mikhail Gorbachev would personally direct a public assault on the entire Brezhnev legacy.

Burial of Brezhnev, November 15, 1982. Pallbearers include Marshal Ustinov and Nikolai Tikhonov on the left, Andropov and Chernenko on the right. (ITAR-TASS)



The ex-head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, installed himself as general secretary and president, cracked down on economic corruption—except when it involved friends such as Politburo members Grishin, Romanov, Kunayev, Aliyev, and others—and solidified KGB control of every phase of life. The myth of Andropov's "liberalism" reflected a remarkably successful KGB disinformation campaign.

Andropov attacked the economic rather than the political legacy of his predecessor. Brezhnev had enjoyed greater uncoerced popularity inside the party than any leader since Lenin, and the 18 years when he had served as part of the troika with Kosygin and Suslov and then ruled as first among equals had seen unprecedented social and political stability. Brezhnev avoided the confrontations of the Khrushchev period and the bloody terror of Stalinism. Under Andropov's direction, Brezhnevist terror employed prisons, psychiatric hospitals, social ostracism, and economic sanctions to achieve domestic tranquillity. Where Khrushchev limited himself to verbal assaults on artists and poets, the Brezhnev regime expressed its disapproval by sending bulldozers to level unofficial outdoor art exhibits. As Gorbachev said in November 1987, "the process of restoring justice . . . [begun by the 20th and 22nd Congresses] was actually suspended in the mid-1960s."

The year of Brezhnev's death saw the economic growth rate reach its lowest postwar level; the year before that witnessed the smallest grain harvest in 20 years. The Brezhnev machine had left the economy in shambles. Were it not for the high world market price for oil and the "totally unjustified increase in the sale of alcoholic beverages," the state treasury would have collapsed. Speaking on February 18, 1988, Gorbachev declared,

If we remove the influence of these factors from the economic growth indices, the result is that we had no increase in the absolute growth of the national in-

come over almost four five-year plans, and it even began to *decrease* in the early 1980s. That is the real picture, comrades! [emphasis added]

The bureaucrats tried to hide the disaster they had made behind statistics. In February 1987, however, the sociologist Tatiana Zaslavskaya pointed out in *Pravda*, "Among developed countries, we rank among the last in the level of social statistics. . . ." Selyunin and Khanin reported a few months later that the 1976–1983 period saw only a 9 percent increase in physical-unit output but—because of inflation and price juggling—a 75 percent increase in ruble-value output. The government reported only the latter, essentially meaningless figures.

Even in the troika-Brezhnev "years of stagnation," however, the standard of living of the poorest stratum of the *working* population improved, although retirees on small, fixed pensions continued to subsist on next to nothing. The kolhoz peasantry finally won access to the state pension system and other social security benefits; they also received the internal passports necessary for unrestricted movement around the USSR.

During the troika-Brezhnev epoch, the Soviet Union moved from inferiority to parity with its great rival, the United States. Humiliation at foreign hands had ended. Brezhnev, Kosygin, Suslov, Ustinov, and the generals and admirals bequeathed the nation something that had eluded all the tsars, Lenin, and Stalin. As the bills came due, however, it fell to the next generation to reexamine the bequest.

## ANDROPOV

Who was to replace Brezhnev? No constitutional or even traditional mechanism for transferring power existed. For nearly 60 years power lay in the office of party general secretary, and only the Central Committee could elect, depose, or replace the holder of that office. In practice, the Politburo made a recommendation

to the CC, which had always endorsed its choice unanimously. Within 48 hours of Brezhnev's death, the CC approved the Politburo's candidate, Yuri Andropov. For the first time a career KGB officer became leader of the party and thus of the country.

Andropov's character was carved from the same stone that produced Dostoyevsky's austere, coldly rational Grand Inquisitor; the French ambassador compared him to a computer. The KGB had launched a disinformation campaign about its chief in 1980, coincidentally with his assumption of Brezhnev's domestic decision-making functions. This lifted Andropov out of the Lubyanka's fear-inspiring obscurity and made him—thanks to American journalists—an instant friend of democratic reform and free thought in general, a patron of the arts. One of his admirers who fed these lies to journalists and academicians from America, Roy Medvedev, called the KGB chief “an outwardly urbane and civilized leader, a man of intellectual interests . . . fond of painting and music, fluent in English, German, and Hungarian . . . a good conversationalist.”

The Americans bought this line, but Andropov's own people knew better. He was a ruthless killer, and they shuddered at the mention of his name. Having proved his mettle as a butcher in Budapest in 1956, he was a logical candidate to succeed first to an office once held by Beria, then to one whose first occupant had been Stalin.

In the mid-1970s, as the “Dnepropetrovsk mafia's” rampant corruption became a nationwide scandal and Brezhnev himself sank into senility, the morale of the young generation of party and government officials, including economic managers, plant directors, and the intellectual and scientific establishment, fell alarmingly. Only military commanders approved Brezhnev-era economic priorities. Many mid-level civilian bureaucrats, including Mikhail Gorbachev, owed their careers wholly or in part to Yuri Andropov and looked to him to

reverse the slide of the nation's economic fortunes and restore its moral fiber.

Hope for reform quickly faded for all but those who welcomed KGB control of the country. Gravely ill when he assumed power, Andropov proved incapable of initiating new directions.

Wrongheaded economic theories and a gargantuan military buildup had distorted the economy catastrophically. As Vasily Selyunin wrote early in 1988,

truly tectonic shifts toward manufacture of producer goods . . . have put us in a paradoxical situation where accelerated rates of development and more rapid growth in national income have little effect on the standard of living. More and more the economy works for itself, rather than for man.

Another economist, noting the USSR's long-standing supremacy in most branches of heavy industry, called in question the need for stupendous quantities of steel and heavy machinery:

What good is it [Otto Latsis asked] that we produce 6.5 times more tractors than the United States? Or 16 times more grain-harvesting combines? You can't eat tractors and combines . . . despite our abundance of combines, we harvest only two-thirds as much grain [as the USA].

Soviet planners and managers clung to gross output as a reliable indicator of economic health, but decades of “the more, the better” produced an indigestible glut.

Selyunin noted that in 1928, the last year of the NEP, 60.5 percent of output went into consumer goods. By 1985, long after the nation had industrialized and recovered from World War II, the figure had fallen to 25.2 percent; the Soviet Union supported a space-age military machine on the back of a Third World civilian economy. Rockets carrying humans soared into space, but the nation could not feed, clothe, or house itself properly, let alone provide high-quality disposable-income items common in all developed countries.

Andropov would be remembered not for genuine reforms—none materialized—but for the KGB sweeps that struck the large cities at the outset of his regime. In search of people taking unauthorized time off work to attend to personal business, squads swooped down on that fixture of Soviet life, long lines of consumers. The KGB and the police (militia) barged into restaurants, cinemas, parks, public baths, sports arenas, barber shops, beauty parlors, and department stores in search of shirkers. The raids extended even to innocent pedestrians, who were forced to produce internal passports and explain their business.

Ominous and humiliating though the raids were, the most sinister method of dealing with corruption and economic crisis resurrected a tactic employed in the 1930s. In thousands of factories, mines, workshops, offices, schools, and even ships at sea, “black boxes” for complaints and denunciations suddenly materialized as citizens were invited to report anonymously to the KGB. In the Stalin tradition, the state did not announce the results of this campaign.

Andropov admirers pointed to a shake-up in party and government as evidence of his even-handed reformist zeal. In his less than 15 months as general secretary, he replaced about one-fourth of the 150 *oblast* chiefs and removed 19 of 84 members of the Council of Ministers. The turnover involved officials whose average age was 67.3 years.

Cut from the same cloth as Andropov’s liberal mask, a selective, well-publicized “crackdown” on corruption chiefly involved the settling of various accounts. Within a month of coming to power Andropov ousted N. A. Shchelokov—another old Brezhnev friend—as minister of the interior and replaced him with Vitaly Fedorchuk, Andropov’s hand-picked successor at the KGB. Notorious for bribe-taking during Shchelokov’s 16-year reign, the regular police—a national service under the interior ministry—had earned people’s public contempt. Fedorchuk began an investigation,

which continued under his successor, Viktor Chebrikov. Hundreds of high-ranking police officials, including Brezhnev’s son-in-law, ultimately went to prison.

Andropov cracked down severely on non-conformist artists, dissidents, members of religious sects who strayed outside narrow state-defined corridors, and citizens who sought to emigrate. During his KGB years he had directed the persecution and expulsion from the country of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as well as the exiling of Andrei Sakharov to Gorky and Yuri Orlov to Siberia; the imprisonment and torture of Anatoli Marchenko and other political prisoners; the severe harassment of Christian believers and clergy; the jailing and exile of Ida Nudel, Iosif Begun, Anatoli Shcharansky, and other Jewish activists.

Of the Jews allowed to emigrate in the 1970s, the majority came from the Caucasus and Central Asia and had no higher education or special skills. Many had to be urged to file for permission to leave. Andropov’s KGB directed the severe restrictions placed on most educated Jews and other citizens who wished to emigrate, and from 1980 to February 1984 emigration almost totally ceased.

Andropov increased the pace and savagery of hostilities in Afghanistan. He ordered the terror bombing of villages in rebel-controlled areas and the indiscriminate strewing of millions of camouflaged antipersonnel mines over the landscape.

Relations with the United States deteriorated to the lowest level in 30 years. In September 1983, the Soviet Union shot down an unarmed Korean Air Lines passenger aircraft, with the loss of 269 Korean and American lives. Claiming the plane was spying on military installations, the Andropov regime refused to apologize. Soviet navy divers, however, recovered the flight recorders; the tapes proved that a simple navigational error had led KAL 007 off course. In November 1992 Boris Yeltsin formally expressed regret to the South Korean government and the families of the victims.

The tragic story took yet another grotesque turn. Criticizing his predecessor for withholding them, Yeltsin gave the bright orange “black boxes” to the South Korean government. Two weeks later the Seoul authorities quietly let it be known the boxes were empty. Russian officials explained that the tapes would be turned over to the International Civil Aviation Organization. It remains unclear whether Yeltsin was participant in or victim of this duplicity.

Responding belatedly to the threat of nuclear-tipped Soviet rockets aimed at Western Europe, in the autumn of 1983 the United States deployed cruise missiles—which could strike targets in the USSR—in four NATO countries. Andropov immediately broke off bilateral talks aimed at reducing the numbers of these weapons and also of long-range (strategic) missiles. Far from pulling Soviet rockets back, he transferred some from the Asiatic part of the country to Byelorussia.

Warning of a “runaway race” in nuclear arms, Andropov did much to speed it up. President Reagan was also spending money on the military at an unprecedented rate. Verbal exchanges between Moscow and Washington grew ever more heated, and hopes for the revival of détente faded.

To the special regret of Soviet conservatives, who longed for the era Moscow and Beijing had constituted a more or less united front, relations with China did not improve under Andropov’s brief stewardship. The two parties made no progress on border issues or trade disputes, and Moscow’s invasion of Afghanistan and support for the Vietnamese incursion into Cambodia exacerbated tensions.

In the Warsaw Pact nations, unyielding neo-Stalinist leaders held back pressures for reform, which the Kremlin had smashed with military force in Hungary in 1956, Andropov playing a promotion-winning role in crushing liberty. As the new KGB chief he had helped plan the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, and he directed the rebuilding of Prague’s ferocious secret

police. Moscow employed threats rather than troops against Poland in 1980–1981, a time when, as de facto Soviet leader, Andropov dictated the mutilation of Solidarity.

Andropov’s KGB may have masterminded the 1981 attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, and its moral responsibility for the heinous October 1984 murder of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, a strong supporter of Solidarity, is beyond dispute. The Polish security agents who actually beat the courageous priest to death admitted in open court that they acted on orders “from a very high level.” The Warsaw regime’s policies vis-à-vis Solidarity bore a “Made in Moscow” stamp and dated from the time Andropov supplanted Brezhnev as the Soviet strongman.

His defenders argued that the new general secretary’s failure to undertake a thorough overhaul of Soviet foreign policy stemmed from lack of time and the pressure of President Reagan’s uncompromising hostility toward the USSR. Such a defense comes to grief on the fact of Andropov’s major role in Kremlin policy-making after Khrushchev; the 15 months of his de jure rule witnessed the logical continuation of those policies.

In the summer of 1983, the general secretary disappeared from public view; for 176 days the state drifted. Andropov died from kidney failure early in February 1984, and Roy Medvedev claimed that “for many years most of our people will recall . . . [his] death with regret.” That seems unlikely. The best that can be said for Andropov is that he did not live longer.

## CHERNENKO

The Communist party buried Andropov between Dzerzhinsky and Kalinin near the Kremlin wall. A few hours earlier, its Central Committee had followed the recommendation of the Politburo in electing Konstantin Chernenko to succeed him.

Born in Siberia in 1911, Chernenko claimed the nationality of his Russian mother rather than that of his father, a Ukrainian. According to his official biography, he worked as a hired laborer for kulaks during the NEP period, became an officer in the Komsomol, and served in the secret police Border Guards on the frontier with China in the early 1930s. He joined the Communist party in 1931.

Chernenko did not serve in the military during the Second World War, which he sat out first as a minor party official in Siberia, later as a student at the Higher School for Party Organizers in Moscow. When he became general secretary that proved an embarrassment; in April 1984 the party began a campaign to inflate his Border Guards duty into an heroic saga. In December it published glowing reviews of a documentary film that highlighted that episode, a film no one but a few party faithful ever saw.

Chernenko became a soldier in the "Dnepropetrovsk mafia" in 1950, when he did party work in the Moldavian republic as one of Brezhnev's subordinates. Transferred to Moscow in 1956, Brezhnev brought Chernenko along; the two men's careers advanced in tandem. Chernenko became head of the General Department of the party shortly after Brezhnev supplanted Khrushchev as general secretary.

As Brezhnev's health declined, the press regularly published photographs showing Chernenko at his side, lighting his cigarette, steadying him by the elbow, showing him where to sign. Modestly educated and inarticulate, Chernenko had evidently peaked as Brezhnev's alter ego. In time of crisis the Politburo rejected him in favor of Andropov.

But that was November 1982. In February 1984 no candidate for the general secretaryship was strong enough to unseat the Brezhnevists; protracted debate over the six months of Andropov's terminal illness had produced no agreement. When Chernenko was named head of the Andropov funeral commission it

appeared he would become general secretary, but for the three days prior to the announcement the USSR had no leader at all.

Chernenko suffered from ailments of his own; a British physician-politician who met him after his predecessor's funeral detected signs of emphysema. Later it would be revealed that Chernenko, like Brezhnev a life-long heavy smoker and rather more than social drinker, also suffered from heart disease and cirrhosis of the liver. At times he appeared as disoriented as Brezhnev in his later years; at Andropov's funeral Andrei Gromyko—his voice picked up by a microphone—admonished the new general secretary not to take off his hat.

The Brezhnevist old guard, of which Andropov for all his power had never been a member, emerged victorious. Clinging to biological and political life, it included Chernenko himself, Grishin, Kunayev, Solomentsev, Tikhonov, and Ustinov. Although an outsider, the Ukrainian leader Shcherbitsky cooperated on major issues. Andrei Gromyko, at 75 the old guard's coeval, had survived as foreign minister since 1957 largely because he did *not* attach himself to any particular faction; as long as Brezhnevists were in control he carried out their orders.

The average age of the old guard was nearly 72. That was 10 years beyond the life expectancy of the average Soviet male, and these politicians were not renowned for their healthy lifestyles. They resisted turning over control of party and state to either of the two younger contenders, Gorbachev, 53, or Romanov, 61.

His remarkable comeback constituted the most impressive accomplishment of Chernenko's few months as general secretary. Following the pattern established by Brezhnev and maintained by Andropov, he became head of state in April 1984.

With the new general secretary manifestly a mere caretaker, Gromyko now had free rein

in foreign affairs. Nearing the end of a career noted for caution, he undertook no serious initiatives to repair relations with China, repeatedly denied seeking a face-saving way out of Afghanistan, did nothing to dampen world tensions. Nearly a year passed before Moscow tacitly acknowledged that the emplacement of American, medium-range missiles in western Europe had thwarted the Brezhnev-Ustinov-Andropov attempt to tilt the balance of power on the Continent. In January 1985 the Soviet Union agreed to resume arms negotiations with the United States.

Military policy now came under the sole control of Defense Minister Ustinov, who was determined to push ahead blindly in Afghanistan. Hardly the man to recommend military cutbacks no matter what the state of the economy, Ustinov suffered a stroke in September 1984 and died three months later.

Chernenko's time seemed oddly out of joint. A contemporary Moscow joke had conductors on public transportation calling out, "Next stop Chernenko—transfer from Brezhnev to Andropov!" No matter what the actual chronology, Chernenko, not Andropov, represented continuation of the Brezhnev era. Reform would have to await his death.

A man of the past elevated beyond his capabilities, Chernenko had no discernible vision of the future. Confronted with a problem, like Brezhnev he either denied its existence or prescribed further party intervention. Foreign policy consisted of building more rockets and tanks. To deal with the glut of steel, the USSR produced still more steel. If kolхозes and sovхозes could not feed the country, the state would create new farms out of prairies and reclaimed swamps and run them in exactly the same inefficient way. If artists and writers and intellectuals clamored for freedom, the party would crack down even harder. If some comrades illegally built lucrative fiefdoms, what mattered was their loyalty to the party.

Chernenko paid lip service to Andropov's

program to reduce the swollen state bureaucracy but canceled his predecessor's plans to trim *party* officialdom by 20 percent. The "stability of cadres" slogan under which the Brezhnev-Suslov-Kosygin troika had come to power remained as valid as ever; party privileges remained unassailable.

The enquiry into the monumental interior ministry scandal proceeded; and not long after it stripped him of his military rank in November 1984, Shchelokov committed suicide. By that time, however, the Chernenko death-watch had become a round-the-clock matter; under the direction of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Secretariat conducted almost all state and party business. Unpublicized investigations of corruption in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan continued; and in connection with the latter republic's scandals, Yuri Churbanov, Brezhnev's son-in-law, finally lost his job as first deputy minister of the interior early in 1985.

Frequently out of public view for long periods, Chernenko died on March 10, 1985. Three changes of the guard in 28 months had finally broken the old guard's back. The Central Committee chose the dynamic young Andropov protégé, Mikhail Gorbachev, to lead the country out of stagnation.

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## chapter 21

# FOREIGN POLICY, 1964–1985

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The stupendous expansion of Soviet military power began under Khrushchev; his successors drove the program forward. The Kremlin maintained that the buildup was designed solely for defense, a claim that mirrored the West's justification of its own huge arsenal. The Soviets wanted to achieve a warmaking capability roughly equal to that of the West and China *combined*; there could be no assurance that they would not face their two adversaries simultaneously.

### THE EAST EUROPEAN EMPIRE

In the tradition of medieval Russian churchmen who proclaimed Moscow the "third and final Rome" after the fall of Rome and Constantinople (New Rome) to infidels, the Soviets claimed to be sole leaders of the world communist movement. The ideological purity of

that movement, second in importance only to national security, took on new significance after the 1948 defection of Yugoslavia. That shook Moscow's claim to leadership; the departure of China and Albania destroyed it.

Romanian communist leaders seized the opportunity provided by the Moscow-Beijing quarrel to edge away from Soviet domination. They boldly attempted to mediate between the two giants in 1964, launching a foreign policy that became increasingly independent. Soviet leaders tolerated this because they approved the harsh Stalinist domestic policies of the Romanians.

The Communist party of Bulgaria, Moscow's ideal satellite, tried to make that country a mere appendage of the USSR. The Bulgarian writer Georgi Markov, who paid with his life for denouncing the communists' sale of the country, charged that party leaders poured the "Soviet chemicals of ruthless de-

moralization and moral corruption” onto Bulgarian soil. Bordering two NATO nations, Greece and Turkey, Bulgaria served as a singularly valuable satellite.

In the middle of the post–World War II border zone between East and West, Hungary’s value as an ally disappeared in the wake of the terrible repression—masterminded on the scene by the “liberal” Yuri Andropov—of the 1956 revolution. Three years after that heroic episode, the Hungarian communists who had cooperated in the slaughter of their compatriots began to experiment with economic liberalization. They carefully labeled their innovations “socialist” and proclaimed fealty to Marxism-Leninism. In 1968 the regime installed a “new economic mechanism” designed by young Western-oriented economists also influenced by the Lenin-Bukharin NEP. The disastrous Soviet-style command economy gave way to a decentralized market system.

The Czechoslovaks did not master the Hungarian method of soothing the Soviets with Marxist-Leninist lullabies while actually doing whatever seemed best for Czechoslovakia, and their failure doomed the democratic socialist regime that flashed through the Czechoslovak firmament briefly in 1968. Not until late 1967 did Moscow, realizing that the Prague Stalinists had outlived their usefulness, sanction a change in the Czechoslovak party leadership. A group of forward-looking young communists came to power in 1968 and initiated sweeping reforms: they democratized the party, abolished censorship, curbed the secret police, began the investigation of past abuses of power, declared they could accept a multiparty system. Led by Alexander Dubček, the reformers proclaimed loyalty to the USSR and insisted they would leave communist dominance intact.

The reformers operated in the glare of worldwide publicity; their “socialism with a human face” won widespread sympathy in both East and West. Their protests of submission

to Moscow did not reassure the men in charge there; reform in Czechoslovakia might well inspire imitation. The Kremlin found itself on the defensive as the “Prague spring” gave way to summer.

In what came to be called the Brezhnev Doctrine, the USSR proclaimed its right to intervene militarily in any Warsaw Pact country if “internal and external forces hostile to socialism” threatened to push that country “toward restoration of a capitalist regime.” That had not happened in Czechoslovakia. The new doctrine, like the one bearing President Monroe’s name, merely justified a great power’s hegemony.

Ignoring world—including communist—public opinion, the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia on August 20, 1968, with the assistance of other Warsaw Pact forces. Resistance ceased within a week. The Brezhnev-Suslov-Kosygin forces, now including the brutal new KGB chief, Andropov, resumed the postwar process of incorporating Czechoslovakia into their empire.

Brutal Soviet hypocrisy next surfaced in Poland: the “Mother Country of All Workers”—the USSR—demanded the destruction of a free labor movement. Weakened by the anti-Soviet riots of 1968 and the economic catastrophe it had created, the Gomulka regime slunk out of office in 1970. Under Edward Gierek, its successor promised reform and modernization, to finance which it borrowed heavily abroad. Poland’s debt to Western banks leaped from \$1.1 billion in January 1971 to \$22.3 billion in December 1982 as Gierek tried to make a new industrial revolution. He seemed successful in 1971–1975; the net material product (roughly, GNP minus services) grew at an average annual rate of more than 9 percent, much better than the Soviet performance and only slightly behind that of Romania.

After 1975 the inevitable consequences of living beyond its means on borrowed funds

caught up with Poland. Very little of those funds had been used rationally; party bosses squandered billions on projects designed chiefly to reward cronies and extend fiefdoms. The growth rate fell below 3 percent in 1976–1980; industrial production dropped almost 25 percent 1979–1982.

A sharp increase in meat prices in July 1980 touched off a wave of strikes and demonstrations that continued for nearly 18 months. Unofficial labor organizations arose all over the country; at a September meeting they merged into a single national industrial trade union, Solidarity.

In a decision without precedent in the bloc, a Warsaw court conferred legitimacy on Solidarity in October. The Kremlin immediately summoned Polish party officials to Moscow to warn of possible intervention. The situation seemed to stabilize briefly, but strikes resumed in February 1981; *Pravda* accused Solidarity of receiving CIA funds. A tumultuous summer was capped by a Solidarity Congress in Gdansk at which leaders boldly called for the formation of free trade unions and free elections throughout the Soviet empire. When Soviet fleet exercises just offshore failed to intimidate the meeting, the Kremlin again demanded that the Polish communists take action. General Wojciech Jaruzelski, already prime minister and minister of defense, became party first secretary and prepared for a showdown.

Solidarity and its charismatic leader, Lech Walesa, clearly posed a major threat to the communist domination of Poland and the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe. The Brezhnev regime, however, displayed a forbearance unique in the annals of Russo-Polish conflict. The Kremlin anticipated the international outcry that would attend an invasion; it would be all the more fierce because of the election of a Polish pope in 1978. Too, the Soviets were bogged down in a costly, confusing war in Afghanistan, which dictated caution in committing forces elsewhere.

Moscow's patience was not, however, unlimited; General Jaruzelski stepped up the pressure. On December 12, 1981, trade union leaders proposed the establishment of a provisional, noncommunist regime and free elections. The following day Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law. Solidarity was outlawed; its leaders and thousands of workers, intellectuals, and students were arrested.

Though spared the horrors of invasion, Poland was morally shattered. Once again her identity, so thoroughly rooted in Western civilization, threatened to disappear in the East. Nevertheless the reprisals, severe though they were, involved little bloodshed and in some respects were milder than those visited on Czechoslovakia in 1968. Some Solidarity leaders admitted that Jaruzelski was far from the worst of Poland's communists.\*

Soviet efforts to build a strong economic empire in Eastern Europe proved unsuccessful. In 1949 Stalin created the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, or Comecon) and gave it the task of putting a gloss on Soviet colonialism in the area. Toward the end of the 1950s, however, the East European countries ceased to be profitable to Moscow. That, and the upheavals of 1956, led to renegotiation of the one-sided trade agreements. Reciprocal trade among CMEA countries (the East European satellites plus Cuba, Mongolia, the USSR, and Vietnam) increased enormously. When the price of oil and natural gas soared in the 1970s, the East European members went heavily into debt to Moscow.

To deal with that debt and defuse potential social unrest, the Kremlin reversed normal imperialist procedure and began to send cheap raw materials to eastern Europe and to import inferior manufactured goods from that region. This hidden subsidy, estimated at \$1.6 billion in 1973, increased to \$20 billion in

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\*In April 1989 the Jaruzelski regime agreed to the restoration of Solidarity as a legal organization.

1981 but did not offset the increase in energy prices. And not only were the East European countries in debt to Moscow: between 1970 and 1984 their collective debt to the West increased from \$6.0 billion to \$55 billion.

## MOSCOW AND BEIJING

When the troika failed to patch up relations with China it became clear that the dispute hinged less on ideology than on leadership of the world communist movement; that would not be settled overnight. Still less amenable to quick solution was a dispute involving huge tracts of land in the Far East and Central Asia seized by tsarist Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lenin denounced the treaties through which the tsars had taken these areas, but neither he nor his successors saw fit to renegotiate them even after the Chinese communists came to power in 1949. In the beginning Mao did not press the matter.

Beijing was however determined to settle ancient scores, and Russia was no less guilty than Western powers of abusing China. The Chinese communists did not demand the return of 1.5 million square kilometers they claimed had been stolen by the tsars. They *did* insist on Moscow's acknowledgement that the treaties had been imposed on China by force, and they demanded adjustment of the border. Beijing also maintained that Mongolia, a Soviet satellite, belonged within China's sphere of influence.

The Soviets declared that they bore no more responsibility for the sins of the tsars than Mao for those of the emperors. The treaties were simply part of history. The Mongolian People's Republic, the Kremlin insisted, was an independent nation.

The Soviet and Mongolian frontiers with China stretch more than 7,500 kilometers. In 1962 bands of Chinese soldiers and civilians crossed the border at various points seeking to

"absorb" tiny sections of territory. More incursions took place in the next two years; on several occasions minor scuffles with Soviet border guards produced casualties.

The Soviets proposed talks, and topographic maps were exchanged in Khabarovsk in 1964. Chinese maps showed hundreds of border rectifications in Beijing's favor, some moving the line 150 kilometers into the USSR. Moscow declared that the Chinese claims had "no juridical foundation whatsoever . . . and do not coincide with lines fixed by . . . treaties." The talks collapsed.

The situation continued to deteriorate. That, plus new developments in China's war-making potential, affected the military provisions of the 1966 Soviet-Mongolian treaty. Moscow's forces had long been stationed in Mongolia, but now the Kremlin despatched more ground troops, tanks, and anti-aircraft batteries, some equipped with tactical nuclear weapons. Soviet bases were now only 600 kilometers from Beijing. As Soviet intelligence knew, the Chinese were about to test a rocket with a nuclear warhead.

From May 1966 Mao's Cultural Revolution exacerbated the already tense relations between Beijing and Moscow. When Moscow police broke up a demonstration by Chinese students in Red Square in January 1967, Red Guards in Beijing besieged the Soviet embassy and forced a humiliating evacuation of diplomatic dependents. The Chinese press called the USSR "a most reactionary and savage fascist dictatorship."

Violent border clashes erupted in March 1969 on Damyansky (Zhenbao) Island in the Ussuri River about 400 kilometers north of Vladivostok; more than 800 Chinese and 60 Soviet soldiers were killed. Threats of war emanated from both capitals. The Kremlin accused Beijing of obtaining arms from West Germany and called Mao a "traitor to communism." Soviet newspapers reported American charges that China was selling 8,000 tons of opium annu-

ally to earn hard currency. Brezhnev attacked China at the June 1969 International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, but opposition from the Romanian, Italian, and other delegations kept criticism of the Chinese to a minimum in the final communiqué.

In late summer 1969 a KGB journalist declared that China was not exempt from the imperatives of the Brezhnev Doctrine and that Moscow's readiness to destroy the Chinese nuclear weapons center in Xinjiang Province was "common knowledge." *Pravda* warned that Beijing was risking nuclear war. General V. F. Tolbukho, a rocket specialist, took command of the Soviet Far Eastern Military District. Nuclear missiles deployed against Western Europe were shifted from the western USSR to Central Asia and the Far East.

Kosygin and Zhou Enlai met in Beijing in September 1969 following Ho Chi Minh's funeral in Hanoi and agreed to negotiate the border dispute and other issues. High-level delegations began talks the following month; ambassadors were again exchanged. At precisely this time, however, an ominous cloud appeared on the horizon: rapprochement between China and the United States.

The situation did not improve after Mao's death in September 1976; the two sides had still failed to agree on an agenda for the border talks. Moscow rejected the Chinese demand that it withdraw its military forces from the disputed border areas. In the broader sphere, China rejected Soviet proposals for a nonaggression pact, and in April 1979, shortly after reestablishing full diplomatic relations with the United States, Beijing announced it would not renew the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance when it expired in 1980.

From 1978 on China repeatedly called the Soviet Union the greatest threat to world peace and sought a grand alliance with the United States, Japan, Western Europe, and some

Third World countries to halt Soviet aggression and imperialism. When China invaded a Soviet ally, Vietnam, in February 1979, the Kremlin could not muster world opinion to condemn the attack. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan later the same year found China and the United States united in opposition.

The Soviets counted on President Reagan's long-standing hostility toward Communist China to cool Washington-Beijing ties. Brezhnev regularly reminded the Chinese that the USSR had always supported their claim to Taiwan, and he offered increased trade and aid. Mongolia agreed in the spring of 1982 to discuss the surveying of its border with China. Wary of such gestures, Beijing repeated its conditions for better relations with Moscow: pullback of the Soviet-Mongolian forces along the frontier, withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, cessation of Soviet support for Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia. Brezhnev rejected these stipulations, as did his two immediate successors, Andropov and Chernenko. Tempers remained at dangerously high levels.

## THE MIDDLE EAST

In the Middle East the USSR and the United States confronted each other chiefly through unpredictable surrogates. To make matters worse, neither power had a coherent policy for dealing with Arab nationalism, Muslim religious fundamentalism, or ancient conflicts between peoples and religions.

The decisive Israeli victory in the 1967 Middle East War alarmed and humiliated the Kremlin as much as the Arab capitals. Soviet arms proved inferior, Arab troops trained by Soviet advisers performed badly, and the disaster could not be blamed on Khrushchev. There was no choice but to start again. Arms deliveries to Egypt, Syria, and Iraq increased and new teams of advisers were sent to rebuild Arab armies.

Egypt's expulsion of 20,000 Soviet military specialists in 1972 slowed but did not halt the reconstruction. The Arabs gave a much better account of themselves in the 1973 October War, not least because the new military hardware Moscow had sent proved a match for Israeli tanks and aircraft. The Kremlin thus recovered much of its prestige. The Communist party, however, remained outlawed or severely restricted in most Arab states.

Syria proved a no less difficult friend than Egypt. When the Baath (Renaissance) party—closely affiliated with similar parties elsewhere in the Arab world—came to power in 1966, Syria began to make common cause with the USSR in Middle Eastern politics. After the expulsion of its advisers from Egypt, Moscow began to build up Syria as a counterweight to Israel. But the Syrians suffered greater losses than the Egyptians in the 1973 war, especially in tanks. The Soviets had to step in with new tanks, a larger military advisory group, MiG-23 fighters, and surface-to-air missiles.

Disapproving of Syrian participation in the Arab League's intervention in Lebanon, the Kremlin withheld arms deliveries briefly in 1976, only to resume them when U.S. shipments to Israel upset the military balance in the area. Syria broke with the Soviet-backed leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Yasir Arafat, and over strenuous Kremlin objections sided with Iran in its war with Iraq, which began in September 1980.

## THE PERSIAN GULF

Napoleon had urged the Russians to look south, toward the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, to satisfy their expansionist impulses. That would keep them out of the Mediterranean, where France claimed hegemony, and would bring them into conflict with the British. The tsars sometimes followed his advice, pushing the empire's frontiers to the

south but also to the west. In mid-twentieth century, however, a powerful Germany stood in the way of further advance in the west, and Russia's communist rulers were anxious to avoid conflict there. Agreeing in principle to adhere to a Four-Power Pact with Germany, Italy, and Japan, in November 1940 Moscow stated as one of its conditions "that the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union."

The immediate Soviet objective in 1940 was Iran. The 1921 treaty between that country and Lenin's regime specified the action to be taken should Iran itself be threatened or a third country seek to use it as a base for aggression against Russia: "If the Persian Government, having been alerted by the Russian Soviet Government, is not itself able to avert the danger, the Russian Soviet Government will have the right to send its forces into the territory of Persia in order, in the interests of self-defense, to take the necessary military measures." Stalin cited the 1921 agreement to justify keeping his troops in northern Iran until May 1946; and the USSR on several occasions refused to accept Iran's unilateral renunciation of the clause sanctioning Soviet intervention.

When the British withdrew from the Persian Gulf in the late 1960s, Shah Muhammed Reza Pahlavi, with the backing of London and Washington, assumed the role of policeman of the area. Suspicious of Pahlavi's megalomania, the Arab states nevertheless welcomed his efforts to eradicate communist influence. The shah armed Iran with enormous quantities of expensive Western weapons, to pay for which—having obtained American consent—he raised the price of his oil.

The shah's action helped precipitate the energy crisis of 1973–1974. As world oil prices leaped, the Persian Gulf became the object of intensified Western and Soviet attention. Kosygin warned in November 1973 that the USSR, the world's largest oil producer, faced a short-

age and might have to increase imports from the Middle East and Persian Gulf well above the 6 million tons (2 percent of consumption) of 1972.

Despite their differences the Soviet Union and Iran had reasonably good relations in the 1960s and 1970s. Iranian natural gas went to the USSR through a jointly operated pipeline, and small quantities of Iranian oil fueled Soviet factories and military installations in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The two governments sometimes cooperated in attempts to bring under control the Kurdish nomads who roamed freely across frontiers.

The shah fell early in 1979 to the Shiite Muslim fundamentalists of the Ayatollah Ruollah Khomeini. The Soviets relished the discomfort of the United States, which lost its staunchest client in the region and suffered the further humiliation of having many of its diplomatic personnel held hostage for more than a year. One of the new regime's most passionate slogans, however, was "Neither East nor West!" The Ayatollah's unquestionably sincere denunciation of the American "devil" was motivated in part by a desire to keep the USSR at bay by convincing it of Iran's implacable hostility toward the United States.

Concern about the effect of the Iranian revolution in particular and the Islamic revival in general on the 50 million Soviet citizens of Muslim heritage played a significant role in the Kremlin's decision to invade Afghanistan in December 1979. The world wondered whether Iran would suffer the same fate; radio broadcasts from Baku regularly hinted at such a possibility. The Kremlin likewise made no secret of its interest in the 3 million Azeri Turks in northwest Iran. There were 5 million Azeris in the Azerbaijani SSR, and the USSR had briefly established an "independent" Azeri state in Iran after World War II. In the war between Iran and Iraq the Kremlin outraged the Iranian fundamentalists, who saw the conflict as a *ji-had*, or holy war, by adopting a neutral stance.

Moscow proved to have as little understanding of the Khomeini revolution as did Washington. It groomed the Tudeh (Communist) party to inherit that revolution, seeing in Khomeini a mere Kerensky. But Khomeini outlawed the party, expelled Soviet diplomats early in 1983, and stepped up support of the anti-Soviet guerrillas in Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union learned it would have to deal with Iran as patiently as it did with Iraq, a fiercely anticommunist country with perhaps the most volatile political tradition in the Arab world. There were more communists in Iraq than in any other Arab nation, but after a right-wing military coup d'état in 1963 all known party members were imprisoned and many executed. There was a shift back to the left a few years later, however, and although the ban on the Communist party remained in effect, the new regime sought better relations with the USSR. Moscow sent technicians and marketing experts and helped construct a modern naval base near the head of the Persian Gulf. Partly in exchange for docking facilities, the Soviets sent large quantities of arms, making the Iraqi army the best equipped in the region.

Soviet policies appeared to backfire in September 1980, when war erupted between Iraq and Iran. For all its Khrushchevian adventurism, the Kremlin did not want war in an area where American, West European, Japanese, South African, and Israeli interests coincided. In the late 1970s about 70 percent of Western Europe's oil passed through the gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, as did 90 percent of Japan's, almost all of South Africa's and Israel's. United States imports had declined after the fall of the shah, but every post-1945 president had warned that Washington would resist any attempt to block the gulf.

The Soviet Union declared its neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war, suspended arms deliveries to Iraq, and tried unsuccessfully to mediate. Only when President Saddam Hussein threat-

ened to mend Iraq's relations with the United States—broken off after the 1967 Middle East War—did the Kremlin resume weapons shipments.

Moscow registered one of its rare long-term successes in the Arab world in Yemen, with which it established cordial relations in 1955. Both Britain and Egypt opposed communist influence in the Arabian Peninsula, however, and tried to halt its spread. But Nasser had to withdraw his troops after the 1967 war with Israel, and Britain ended its police mission east of Suez at about the same time. These developments enabled the USSR to intervene militarily in the 1967 Yemeni civil war on the communist side. In the partition which followed the conflict, the extreme left-wing Southern Yemen regime allied itself closely with the Soviet Union, which thus gained the use of the port of Aden and a British-built airfield. The Yemeni-controlled island of Socotra near the entrance to the Gulf of Aden was also at the disposal of the Soviet Navy.

## AFGHANISTAN

After World War II the sleepy feudal monarchy of Afghanistan was drawn into Persian Gulf politics because it shared frontiers with the Soviet Union and Iran, into South and East Asian politics because it had a common border with China and Pakistan. The Soviets built roads and tunnels in the high mountains; the Chinese built the Karakorum Highway from Xinjiang through Afghanistan to Pakistan; the United States spent huge sums on various major construction projects.

Under the monarchy, Western influence appeared to hold sway over the government and the tiny intelligentsia. With the ouster of King Muhammad Zahir Shah and the proclamation of a republic in 1973, however, Afghanistan became unstable. The People's Democratic party (Communist) came to

power in an April 1978 coup d'état and a few months later signed a 20-year Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighborliness, and Cooperation with the Kremlin. Moscow sent economic aid; its civilian and military advisers were given free run of the country.

Russia had never been popular with the people of Afghanistan, and the formation of a communist regime in Kabul did not alter that: in the spring of 1979 more than 200 Soviet advisers were killed in riots in Herat. Attacks on Soviet personnel became so common that many took to wearing ersatz "cowboy" garb in an attempt to pass as Americans.

Events elsewhere had an impact on Afghanistan. The Soviets feared U.S. military intervention in Iran after the seizure of its embassy in Tehran in November 1979. The following month, the NATO Council approved an American plan to install nuclear missiles in Western Europe, and the U.S. Senate appeared ready to block the SALT II treaty. Also in 1979, China established full diplomatic relations with the United States, announced its intention to terminate the 1950 treaty with the USSR, and went to war against a Soviet ally, Vietnam.

To complicate matters for the Kremlin, three charismatic national leaders on the southern and southwestern flanks of the USSR had recently fallen: Sheik Mujibur Ali Rahman of Bangladesh in 1975, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan in 1977, and the shah of Iran in January 1979. Sternly anticommunist military rulers came to power in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and Muslim fundamentalists took control in Iran. Bangladesh and Pakistan both had close ties to China. Iran under Khomeini promised to create great mischief throughout the Islamic world, including the USSR.

The available evidence indicates that, because of the deteriorating political situation in South Asia, Moscow decided at the end of the summer of 1979 to send troops to Afghanistan

to crush the anticommunist guerrillas and strengthen its military posture near the Persian Gulf. The Kremlin's timetable collapsed, however, when puppet President N. M. Taraki was killed in September in a clash with his chief rival, Hafizullah Amin. An unstable journalist-politician, Amin became president despite Soviet suspicions that he had become too cozy with the CIA during a period of study in the United States. He launched a bloody campaign against the guerrillas.

Declaring that there was nothing unusual about the buildup of troops and materiel on its frontiers with Afghanistan, the Kremlin likewise denied reports of displeasure with Amin. On Christmas Eve 1979, the Soviet Army began airlifting four divisions into airports near Kabul. With the aid of some Afghan units, Soviet forces staged a coup d'état on December 26-27 in which Amin was killed. It would appear that he refused to yield his office to a pliant Soviet creature, Babrak Karmal, installed as president following the coup.

The invasion force that rapidly swelled to more than 110,000 troops took control of the cities and key points around the country. Kabul radio broadcast appeals for calm and praised Soviet "fraternal assistance."

The outside world condemned the invasion, first of its kind in peacetime beyond the frontiers of Moscow's satellites since Lenin tried to bolshevize Poland in 1920. In the United States, the Carter administration withdrew the SALT II treaty from Senate consideration, pulled out of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, and suspended shipments of grain beyond those specified in earlier agreements. The Soviet harvest of 1979 had fallen far short of goals, and Carter's experts, ignorant of the siege of Leningrad, tried to use food as a weapon.

Ominously from not only the Soviet viewpoint but also New Delhi's, the United States lifted its ban on military aid to Pakistan. China and several Arab nations increased their military

aid to the Islamabad regime. After some hesitation, the Ayatollah Khomeini denounced the invasion and promised aid to the Afghan guerrillas.

A broad, diverse coalition took shape as the United States, China, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, some of the smaller Arab states, and several Muslim nations rallied to the anti-Soviet cause in Afghanistan. Even the cautious Japanese sent sophisticated communications equipment through third parties. No nation, however, sent troops. The material aid, though pathetically small in the beginning and hardly generous until the mid-1980s, did enable the fight against the invaders to continue.

Split into four major factions and innumerable smaller ones, the Afghan guerrillas found their lack of unity almost as great an enemy as the Soviet forces. Nevertheless, they never controlled less than three-quarters of the countryside. They killed about 2,000 Soviet soldiers each year and lost several times that number of their own. Civilian casualties were astronomical, and more than a quarter of the prewar population of about 15 million sought to escape Soviet terror bombing by fleeing to Pakistan.

The Soviet press did not comment on a tragic record set on November 13, 1983. As of that date, the Soviet Army had fought one day longer in Afghanistan than in World War II, and there was no end in sight. The political situation remained as unstable as the war itself, the Karmal regime the prisoner of its dependence on Moscow. So long as Soviet forces remained, the guerrillas could not win; neither would they be defeated.

Their political goals eluded them, but the Soviets achieved some strategic objectives. Construction of a bridge across the Amu Darya at Termez in Uzbekistan began in December 1979 with a suddenness that indicated the invasion and occupation had been long in the planning; work was completed early in 1982. Soviet forces occupied the strategic Wakhan

corridor, a narrow, extremely mountainous finger of Afghanistan surrounded by Soviet, Chinese, and Pakistani territory. The Kremlin soon announced “border adjustments” in its own favor in that corridor. In the west the Soviets built a military airport at Shindand, 900 kilometers from the Strait of Hormuz.

The threat on the Soviet southern flank neither excused the antipersonnel mines scattered indiscriminately around Afghanistan to take heavy civilian casualties nor explained the use of poison gas, napalm, helicopter gunships, tanks, and heavy artillery against villagers equipped until 1985 with vintage rifles and little else. Using the cruel logic of great-power politics, however, the Soviet Union, fighting just across its own southern frontier, called offense “defense” and destruction “liberation.”

Until 1986 the Kremlin did not have to contend with an informed public opinion. But it could not bury thousands of Soviet soldiers in secret, hide the wounded and disabled, or suppress the bitter antiwar songs—many composed by soldiers—of the younger generation. Forever inundated by state propaganda concerning the glories of Soviet arms in World War II, the public interpreted the official silence correctly: the leaders had embarked on a policy of conquest in Afghanistan and did not care how many Soviet soldiers died.

## AFRICA

The Soviet Union appeared to win a major diplomatic victory in 1974 when it persuaded Somalia to become the first black African nation to sign a treaty of friendship and cooperation. Arms and aid flowed into the desperately poor country on the Horn of Africa, and Soviet crews built naval and air installations. Already ensconced in Southern Yemen, with considerable influence in Djibouti and in the break-away Ethiopian province of Eritrea, the Soviet

Union dominated the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Bab al Mandab; it could easily choke off the flow of Persian Gulf oil to the West. Hoping to solidify its position and counterpose a Marxist federation to the anti-Soviet alliance of Egypt and the Sudan, in March 1977 the Kremlin despatched Fidel Castro to the region to reconcile two potential members.

The centuries-old enmity between Muslim Somalia and Christian Ethiopia had not evaporated when Marxists seized power in both countries and did not fade under the impact of Castro’s charm. Shortly after the Cuban leader’s visit to the Gulf of Aden, however, the military regime in Addis Ababa broke with the United States and asked the USSR for military and economic assistance. Gambling that they could hold Somalia’s allegiance, the Soviets promised \$500 million worth of arms to Ethiopia; this brought them into the conflict between the two countries.

Somalia invaded Ogaden, an Ethiopian province inhabited by Somali tribespeople, in July 1977. When Moscow sided with the Ethiopians, Somalia broke relations and turned to the West for help.

With the aid of 10,000 Cuban troops and Cuban pilots flying Soviet aircraft, Ethiopia drove the enemy forces out of Ogaden early in 1978. They halted at the frontier, enabling Cubans and Soviets to fulfill their promises to limit intervention to the defense of Ethiopian territory.

The loss of Somalia was offset by gains in Ethiopia. The southern approaches to the Suez Canal, which had reopened in June 1975 after an eight-year shutdown, remained under Soviet surveillance and potential domination. One major goal in Africa had been achieved.

Another objective was to establish a measure of control over African strategic minerals. Neither Ethiopia nor Somalia had any such resources in significant amounts, but other nations with which the USSR was deeply involved did. The establishment of close ties

with the Addis Ababa regime appeared to provide an ideal base from which the Soviets could, in time of crisis, threaten the flow of those resources to NATO countries.

The Soviets and Cubans intervened in the 1975–1976 civil war in Angola, and large numbers remained in the country as military advisers and technicians. Angola became a base from which Soviet influence percolated throughout West Africa. Moscow also had good relations with Nigeria, which permitted Soviet ships to use its ports. Guinea served as a Soviet military staging area. In Zimbabwe the Soviet Union and Cuba backed Joshua Nkomo's guerrilla faction, which was eventually defeated by a rival group with Chinese backing. A Marxist party ruled in Mozambique. In North Africa the erratic Libyan dictator, Colonel Qaddafi, welcomed Soviet arms and served Soviet interests by backing terrorists in the Middle East and Europe. By early 1984 Soviet or Cuban military and technical advisers were serving in 14 African nations, and Moscow had treaties of friendship with Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Congo.

And yet the Soviet position that had seemed so strong in the spring of 1978 appeared far less impressive a few years later. Only a half-dozen of Africa's 50 countries espoused Marxism-Leninism as their official ideology. Soviet influence remained roughly as great as that of the United States but was eclipsed in North Africa by that of Libya and in West and Central Africa and Madagascar by that of France; the Republic of South Africa remained the dominant power in the south.

## LATIN AMERICA

Some of the same factors that facilitated Soviet penetration of India also applied to Latin America, where communism's best allies were poverty, disease, ignorance, corruption, eco-

nomics imperialism, and despair. The success of the Castro revolution in Cuba vitiated the Monroe Doctrine and cleared the way for expansion of communist activity in the Western Hemisphere. The USSR delegated the direction of revolutionary insurgencies to Castro, however, and filtered subsidies to communist parties through Havana.

The Soviets did not mastermind every guerrilla insurgency and land reform movement in Latin America, but fear of their machinations led the United States to topple a democratically elected government in Guatemala in 1954. When J. Edgar Hoover discovered 53 communists in the Dominican Republic in 1965, President Johnson sent in 20,000 American troops. Moscow did have some influence—less than Washington believed—on the socialist regime of Salvador Allende, elected president of Chile in 1970 despite massive American support of a conservative rival. An erratic reformer unquestionably naive about the real aims of his Chilean communist allies and their Moscow masters, Allende died in the 1973 *coup* that brought an American-sponsored fascist dictator, Augusto Pinochet, to power.

In the 1980s the USSR provided extensive economic and suspiciously large military aid to the leftist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, which had come to power after overthrowing another American puppet, Anastasio Somoza. Through Cuba, the Kremlin supported a left-wing insurgency in El Salvador against the landed oligarchy and its quasi-military "death squads."

This activity in Latin America reflected a decision to step up pressure on a United States that had lost some of its enthusiasm for foreign misadventures after the Vietnam disaster. The Soviets calculated each move carefully, however, apparently never entertaining any thought of sending troops to the Western Hemisphere.

## THE WEST

Khrushchev's successors compiled an uneven record in dealing with Eastern Europe, China, and the Third World but on the whole managed their relations with the West cleverly: obliging the West to recognize the USSR as a military equal stands as the greatest political triumph in Soviet history. Another major goal was achieved when 35 heads of state signed the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, or Helsinki Conference) in Helsinki on August 1, 1975. The signatories promised to respect one another as equals, refrain from using force to settle disputes, and recognize one another's territorial integrity. This legitimized the postwar division of Europe and sanctioned the creation of the Soviet empire.

A "second basket" of agreements pledged the nations of Europe, the United States, and Canada, to expand cooperation in trade, scientific and technological exchanges, protection of the environment, and tourism. The "third basket" promised an increase in human contacts, including an increase in the exchange of information, improved working conditions for foreign correspondents, extension of cultural and educational exchanges, and reunification of families.

The Soviet Union touted the security provisions of the treaty as a great victory, found nothing controversial in the "second basket," almost totally ignored the provisions for improved human contacts. The Helsinki Conference, which became a permanent institution, gave the Soviets what they wanted, the West a lesson in the art of interpreting agreements.

The Western allies and especially the United States found it difficult to accept the loss of the military superiority they had enjoyed since 1945. Relations began to sour in the late 1970s, and when a new administration came to power in Washington in 1981 pledging to restore Western supremacy, political ob-

servers in both countries began to speak of a new Cold War.

Soviet policy toward the West rested on the belief that socialism was winning the great struggle with capitalism. By the 1970s more than half the world's people lived under mixed capitalist-socialist, socialist, or communist regimes. Socialist governments succeeded right-wing dictatorships in Spain and Portugal, France elected a socialist president, Italy's first socialist prime minister took office in 1983. Colonialism had died, and Kremlin ideologists declared capitalism in deep, protracted crisis.

Persistent attacks on an allegedly moribund system indicated that those ideologists knew the opponent remained strong. In the post-World War II world, capitalism had made a spectacular comeback in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany); nowhere did the Soviet Union press so hard to reverse the tide.

The original goal in defeated Germany, permanent demilitarization, proved elusive. Moscow settled for partition, a solution far from disagreeable to the nations of Western Europe. The Soviets claimed the right to do as they wished in their zone of occupation but contested the West's right to unify its three zones into an independent state. Unable to prevent that, Moscow also failed to prevent the Federal Republic from joining NATO. The USSR did, however, draw a nonnegotiable line: nuclear weapons in West German hands would mean war.

American strategists wanted to equip the West German Bundeswehr with tactical nuclear weapons, but the opposition of Western—including West German—public opinion and of France's de Gaulle and other political figures thwarted such plans. The Soviets thus "won" on this issue. Former nazis served in the Bundeswehr, however, and thousands of Hitler's civilian officials were posted throughout the West German bureaucracy,

even the judiciary. A small but ominous neo-Nazi movement won headlines in the 1960s. Overlooking the presence of many ex-Nazis in the East German bureaucracy, notably in the secret police, Moscow vigorously protested these developments in the Federal Republic.

The coming to power of the Social Democrats in October 1969 led to a reconciliation not only between Bonn and Moscow but also between the two German states. The new government promptly signed the Nonproliferation Treaty, formally renouncing nuclear weapons. A relieved Soviet Union began negotiations with West German representatives on December 8 and signed a treaty in August 1970. The Bonn regime accepted the Oder-Neisse line as the permanent frontier between East Germany and Poland and thus abandoned any claim to German territory lost as a result of World War II.

The defusing of tensions in Central Europe continued. In October 1971 a Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin regulated access to the divided city within a divided nation and codified the four occupying powers' understanding of West Berlin's relationship to the Federal Republic. The two German states established virtually complete diplomatic relations in May 1973, exchanging "representatives" rather than ambassadors, and in September 1974 the United States formally recognized the German Democratic Republic.

West Germany became a major Kremlin trading partner. In 1977 annual bilateral trade reached a value of \$5 billion and stabilized around that figure. The largest deal involved a Bonn contract for Soviet natural gas over a 25-year period. West German firms supplied much of the equipment for the construction of a pipeline from Siberia.

The Soviet–West German rapprochement helped Poland avoid Czechoslovakia's fate. The Christian Democratic regime in Bonn had imperfectly disguised its support of the 1968 Czechoslovak reformers, increasing So-

viet paranoia and contributing in some measure in the decision to invade. In 1980–1981 the Social Democratic government, despite its sympathy for Solidarity, scrupulously avoided meddling in the explosive situation in Poland. The Bonn authorities even persuaded the Dresdner Bank of West Germany to arrange a \$675 million loan to Warsaw in 1980 to ease the economic crisis.

After the dictators of Spain and Portugal died, the USSR established diplomatic relations with those countries. Communists entered the cabinet in France in 1981. Britain expelled more than 100 Soviet diplomatic personnel for espionage in 1971 but four years later granted Moscow \$2.39 billion in low-interest credits for the purchase of British goods. European interests financed and helped construct a huge automotive plant at Naberezhnye Chelny after Washington denied the Ford Motor Company permission to participate. France and Italy joined West Germany in making long-term contracts for Soviet natural gas, and all three countries, plus Britain and Japan, defied the United States and supplied pipeline equipment to the USSR.

The Kremlin often had better relations with "bourgeois" governments in Western Europe than with national communist parties. The leaders of the Spanish and Italian parties, Santiago Carillo and Enrico Berlinguer (who died in 1984), were in the vanguard of a "Eurocommunist" movement that saw several West European parties declare independence from Moscow. They frequently opposed the Soviets on major issues—for example, the invasion of Afghanistan—and rejected attempts to dictate their political strategy.

Unable to seal all the cracks in its own far-flung empire, the USSR was adept at exploiting differences within the capitalist camp. When American firms withdrew under pressure from Washington, Japan participated heavily in the development of a number of gigantic

projects in Siberia and helped develop an oil field off Sakhalin Island. Argentina and Canada gladly filled huge orders for grain when political developments curtailed deliveries from the United States. Moscow cooperated with the racist government of South Africa in a number of lucrative trade deals.

East-West trade developed in spurts, notably from 1973 to 1976, when the value of Soviet imports from the industrialized countries increased 101 percent. The USSR imported \$3 billion worth of goods from the West in 1970, \$26 billion in 1980. In June 1983, however, the total Soviet hard-currency debt to the West stood at more than \$28.7 billion. For 40 months following the invasion of Afghanistan the West did not grant any substantial loans to Moscow. Then, in May 1984, an international consortium led by the Dresdner Bank agreed to lend \$250 million; no U.S. bank participated.

The USSR normally received preferential treatment from Western bankers. However inefficient, the country's huge economy could absorb reasonable debts, and after 1973 its hard-currency reserves increased dramatically as the price of oil and gold—the USSR was then the leading producer of both—soared. The Soviets managed their debt carefully, keeping the ratio of debt service to current earnings at about 16 percent in the early 1980s.

American business leaders were no less eager than their counterparts abroad to participate in the lucrative Soviet market, but shifting political winds in Washington made it difficult to establish stable trade, especially in grain sales.

In June 1972 President Nixon announced the largest grain transaction in history. The Soviet Union would purchase a minimum of \$750 million worth of American wheat, corn, and soybeans over three years. In the event, the Kremlin purchased much more. The following spring Brezhnev predicted a long-term need for American grain. He proposed a 30- or 40-year pact permitting the USSR to buy millions of tons of grain annually, to be paid for

with increased exports to the United States of raw materials, oil, and certain specialized equipment.

The 1972 grain deal constituted a byproduct of détente. Moscow had braced for confrontation when Nixon assumed the presidency, but there had ensued a period of unexpected cordiality and cooperation. This reflected the unprincipled cynicism that reigned in both Moscow and Washington. Nixon and Kissinger widened the war in Vietnam, sanctioned the destruction of defenseless Cambodia and the massacre of hundreds of thousands of its people, took the first steps toward giving Pakistan and Israel a nuclear capability, and initiated a rapprochement with Beijing that nullified everything Nixon had ever said about China. It was hardly surprising that politicians who did all this stood by as the USSR overtook and surpassed the United States in terms of military strength.

Slow to understand the delusion that was détente, the American public rather more quickly grasped the increase in food prices produced by the “great grain robbery”—the 1972 Nixon-Kissinger deal with Brezhnev. Nixon fell before a new deal could be negotiated. In October 1975 his successor, Gerald Ford, signed a five-year pact that *obligated* the Soviets to buy 6 million tons of wheat or corn annually and *permitted* them to purchase up to 8 million tons without advance notice. The agreement promised to help solve the perennial Soviet agricultural crisis and was, of course, of enormous benefit to American grain companies. From 1976, when it took effect, through 1979, the United States controlled 70 percent of the Soviet grain trade.

The most dramatic if not necessarily meaningful fruit of détente, the 1972 Anti-ABM Treaty, brought SALT I to a conclusion. The following year Kremlin leaders expressed relief when the new president, Ford, announced he would retain Kissinger as secretary of state. The Soviets had made enormous gains in the

Nixon-Kissinger years so far as the arms race was concerned, and with the inexperienced Ford now in charge they expected even more success. Brezhnev and Ford sustained the friendly momentum of the Nixon years when at a November 1974 meeting in Vladivostok they outlined a new agreement to regulate the nuclear arms competition. Developments on the American political scene, where Ford's critics charged him with making too many concessions to Moscow, were to threaten this deal and cloud bilateral relations in general.

The Soviets were clearly anxious to trade, and some American politicians demanded that the administration extract concessions in the area of human rights. Passed over the objections of Ford and Kissinger, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the 1974 Trade Act linked most-favored-nation status and special trade credits for the USSR to the emigration of Jews and other citizens. Protesting interference in its internal affairs, the Kremlin refused to give any public assurances on emigration. Trade continued to increase despite the new tensions, but emigration remained at low levels until 1979. In that year the Soviets signaled their satisfaction over the conclusion of the SALT II treaty and new grain agreements by permitting a record number of citizens (51,320) to leave. Because of the events in Afghanistan and other issues, however, trade declined after 1979 and by 1983 emigration had virtually ceased.

Soviet-American contacts continued to grow despite the Carter administration's attempt to inject a confrontational Christian morality into international affairs; not since Alexander I of Russia sponsored the Holy Alliance had the world seen anything quite like this. The Kremlin was first astonished, then outraged. The Brezhnev regime denounced Carter's criticism of its violations of human rights and repeatedly threatened to break off arms control talks. Negotiations and contacts, however, went forward; the SALT II agree-

ment was signed in 1979 and trade continued at levels far above those of a decade earlier. Sophisticated American computers and other high-tech items went to the USSR in increasing quantities, sometimes through third countries when Washington attempted to impose restrictions. The United States imported small quantities of such strategic commodities as enriched uranium, titanium, manganese, and oil from the Soviet Union.

The Soviets did not like Carter but initially managed to deal with him. The 1979 NATO decision to deploy American nuclear missiles in Europe, however, ensured that no American president would be able to maintain anything more than formally correct relations with Moscow.

To punish the USSR for invading Afghanistan, Carter embargoed all but the minimum grain shipments required by the 1975 agreement; but he could not halt sales by other countries. The 1980 harvest was a good one around the world and the Kremlin easily found other sources. The American share of the Soviet market fell to 20 percent.

The November 1980 election of Ronald Reagan led to the unraveling of many ties between Moscow and Washington established over the years since 1969, but the grain trade was not one of them. Drawing a sharp distinction between technology, sales of which he sought to halt, and food, Reagan lifted the grain embargo early in 1981.

Themselves proponents of an all-embracing ideology, Kremlin leaders could not adjust to the most ideological American president of the century. Accustomed to denouncing the West and the United States in particular with reckless abandon and to predicting the imminent collapse of capitalism, the Soviets were outraged when Reagan referred to their "evil empire" and predicted that the overthrow of the Soviet regime loomed in the not-too-distant future.

## TWO DECADES OF SOVIET DIPLOMACY

The Kremlin expressed contempt for Carter and Reagan and succeeded in convincing the Soviet public that the United States bore the responsibility for the rise in international tensions. Perplexed when their own threatening words and actions strengthened the resolve of the West to resist the extension of Soviet power and influence, the men in the Kremlin capitalized on the threats coming out of Washington to rally their own people and prepare them for the possibility of enormous sacrifices. In the spring of 1984 Radio Moscow began playing patriotic popular songs associated with the 1939–1941 period.

The USSR championed revolutionary change everywhere save in its own empire. The West tended to resist change everywhere *except* in that empire. Neither side could compromise. Each probed constantly for weaknesses, and the wonder was not that there were serious clashes but that those clashes invariably took place through surrogates on at least one side and did not lead to war between the two superpowers.

Approving change and seeking to profit from it are not the same as causing it; the Soviet Union frequently received blame for events over which it had little control. Developments in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf moved at a pace far beyond the capabilities of strategic planners in either Moscow or Washington. Volatile black Africa gave the USSR more defeats than victories. No Soviet leader dared count such dictators as Colonel

Qaddafi as friends. The problems of Latin America antedated the Soviets and Fidel Castro by generations. Nothing could justify the blatant aggression in Afghanistan, yet even there the Kremlin confronted genuine dilemmas.

The little wars went on, but always the great question was, Will there be a violent clash between the superpowers? Despite the tensions and scares of the post-1945 period there seemed to be little danger that either side would deliberately launch an attack. The real threat was war by accident or war concocted by the machinations of terrorists or client states, especially in the Middle East.

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## chapter 22

# RELUCTANT REVOLUTION

## Gorbachev, Glasnost, and Perestroika

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Shortly before midnight on March 11, 1985, the CPSU's Central Committee announced that Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, 54, would succeed Konstantin Chernenko, dead barely four hours, as general secretary. With the publication of Andrei Gromyko's nominating speech, the world learned that Gorbachev had actually governed the country much of the time during Chernenko's frequent, prolonged illnesses.

Three years later one of the new leaders, Yegor Ligachev, revealed that the selection of Gorbachev had not been unanimous, the unprecedented swiftness of the announcement and months of de facto Gorbachev governance notwithstanding. Only the determined support of Gromyko, party disciplinarian Mikhail Solomentsev, and KGB chief Viktor Chebrikov had swung the vote. These men represented elements in the party which did not fully share Gorbachev's enthusiasm for

change but accepted the need for vigorous leadership.

### GORBACHEV'S BACKGROUND

Born into a Russian family in the village of Privolnoye in the Stavropol region of the North Caucasus on March 2, 1931, Mikhail Gorbachev grew up knowing the land and politics; his father and grandfather were peasant communists. The grandfather chaired one of the first collective farms established in the area; his father worked as a combine operator. Mikhail Gorbachev attended local schools from 1938 on and evidently was not evacuated during the 1942–1943 German occupation. The Gorbachev family suffered along with the rest of the Soviet people during the war; Mikhail's mother revealed after her son came to power that at one point



The new general secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev (right), with Foreign Minister Gromyko (center) and Premier Tikhonov on the day of Konstantin Chernenko's funeral, March 13, 1985. (AP/Wide World Photos)

he could not attend school because he had no shoes.

Like the mothers of Stalin and Khrushchev, Mariya Panteleyevna Gorbacheva had her son baptized and raised him in the Russian Orthodox Church—during the Stalinist terror. Mikhail formally renounced religion when he entered the Komsomol. When he became Communist party general secretary 40 years later, however, he removed most of the restrictions on the Russian, Georgian, and Armenian Churches; eased many of the restrictions on Catholics and Lutherans in the Baltic states; and after a brief, unsuccessful assault on Islam, extended toleration to that faith. In 1988 the state participated actively in the celebration of the millenium of Christianity in Russia and Ukraine.

Working alongside his father on the kolhoz after World War II, Gorbachev won the Order of the Red Banner of Labor at the unusually early age of 18. That, an unblemished Komsomol record, and the silver medal—second in his class—on graduation from high school

gained him admission to the country's most prestigious institution of higher learning, Moscow State University. Opting to study law, Gorbachev read not only Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, but also St. Thomas Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, and Machiavelli; he was one of the few students at the university to take Latin. In 1954 he married a sociology student, Raisa Titorenko.

According to Zdenek Mlynař, a classmate who later became a high official in the 1967–1968 reform regime in Czechoslovakia, Gorbachev expressed private doubts about Stalin and Stalinism while still at the university and in later years spoke of the need for political and economic decentralization. These assertions have not been confirmed. At the Nineteenth CPSU Conference, however, Gorbachev used a phrase—startling even in the relaxed 1988 Soviet context—made famous by Mlynař's colleague Alexander Dubček, "socialism with a human face."

Unmistakable signs of conformity, overshadowed the faint and perhaps misleading

signs of liberal views. Gorbachev joined the party in 1952 and served as a Komsomol organizer at Moscow University. Evidence of the state's absolute trust in a faithful son came in the 1960s, when he was permitted not only to travel abroad with official delegations but even to drive through France and Italy with his wife.

After earning his law degree, Gorbachev returned to Stavropol and local politics, a move that was to weigh heavily in his favor. He worked his way up through the ranks and was a delegate to Khrushchev's second de-Stalinizing party congress, the Twenty-second, in 1961. According to Mlynař, he applauded Khrushchev's ouster and continued to do so even after coming to power and condemning Brezhnev's rule. In 1970 he became first secretary of the regional party organization—that is, member of the elite.

A giant boost came in 1971 when Gorbachev became a full member of the national party Central Committee without having served the customary probationary period. This can only have reflected a record of perfect obedience to the party and the patronage of highly placed individuals: Fyodor Kulakov (party secretary for agriculture), Yuri Andropov, and Mikhail Suslov. All began their careers in the Stavropol area, regularly vacationed at nearby resorts, and maintained the kind of sentimental interest in local party affairs that Brezhnev did in Dnepropetrovsk.

When Kulakov died suddenly in 1978, Gorbachev took his place on the CC Secretariat. Although he did not initiate it, Gorbachev became identified with the "Ipatovsky method" of harvesting grain through the use of massive squads of combines, a method that enjoyed success in some regions; *Pravda* published an interview with the young official on page one. Recalling the "from the asphalt to the land" campaign, he began the gradual transfer of responsibility for agriculture from the bloated Moscow bureaucracy to regional bodies and

reintroduced a cooperative brigade system on some kolhozes. Given charge of a block of arable land or a herd of animals, a brigade received income based solely on performance. Incentives reappeared in scattered areas of the countryside, as did flickers of the ancient, organic tie between peasants and land.

In those few areas—including Stavropol—where the reforms enjoyed the support not only of the local bureaucracy and peasantry but also nature, increased yields resulted. Nationally, however, poor weather, mismanagement, and waste saw harvests decline from a record 237 million metric tons in 1978 to 179 million in 1979, a disastrous 158 million in 1981. In 1983, Gorbachev's last year in charge of agriculture, the farms produced 192 million metric tons of grain.

Only the protection of Yuri Andropov accounts for the party's failure to make Gorbachev the scapegoat for these failures. The young man from Stavropol became a candidate member of the Politburo in 1979, full member a year later.

Much of the time between November 1982 and February 1984 Gorbachev acted as grand vizier to Andropov. He retained authority for agriculture for most of that period, took over the ideological portfolio on the Secretariat, and spearheaded experiments to loosen the chains on industry, a job that normally would have gone to Romanov. He also played a major role in the attempt to eradicate Brezhnev-era corruption; curiously, the KGB excesses of that campaign did not stick to him in the public mind. In short, Gorbachev was to Andropov as Andropov himself had been to Brezhnev, the indispensable aide to a dying man, the major and frequently only link between general secretary and party.

Andropov clearly hoped that Gorbachev would succeed him, but no Soviet leader was ever able to handpick his successor. Thus in February 1984 the Brezhnev machine revived sufficiently to deny any of Andropov's pro-

tégés—Gorbachev, Ligachev, Chebrikov—the general secretaryship.

## GORBACHEV IN POWER

After the perfunctory obsequies for Chernenko, Gorbachev moved quickly to implement the one great weapon in his arsenal that set him apart from all potential rivals, a platform. The new regime capsulated that platform as *glasnost* (“openness,” “candor”) and *perestroika* (“restructuring of society and economy”). Before the spring of 1985 these words had embodied no more ideological significance than *soviet* (“council”) had in 1905, but now they became part of not merely the Soviet but also the international political vocabulary almost overnight. That phenomenon, wholly beyond the control of any political movement, much less any individual, indicated startling new departures in the USSR.

Sounding a call for “revolutionary” changes at an April 1985 Central Committee plenum, Gorbachev and his allies refused to back away from terminology no one in authority in the Soviet Union ever dared take lightly. In a July 1986 speech the new leader said of the term *perestroika*, “I would equate it with the word ‘revolution.’”

The Gorbachevites—some from the broad ranks of the Establishment, others from the academic and intellectual fringe—frankly acknowledged the failures of the Soviet system, which they promised to overhaul thoroughly. Domestic opponents, chiefly in the 18-million-strong bureaucracy, bitterly condemned this “abandonment of socialism.” The Gorbachev people responded with the exhortation “More socialism!” even as they began dismantling what had *passed* for socialism since 1928. In a June 1988 speech, the new general secretary responded to his critics:

In all spheres of life, including the spiritual, we must overcome a very basic factor, alienation,

which unfortunately occurs when socialism is deformed by authoritarian-bureaucratic distortions. Alienation, bureaucratism, and formalism can be overcome only along lines of democratization and openness . . . of a moral cleansing of our society.

One who would describe Stalinism as a mere “authoritarian-bureaucratic distortion” might complain that the nazis “misbehaved” in Russia during the war; and “formalism” is devoid of political meaning. Nevertheless, in breaking with the past, Gorbachev sought to align the USSR with the mainstream of European democratic socialism.

In a few brief months in 1917, the moderate-center and then extreme left wings of a civil society born barely half a century earlier in the ashes of serfdom overthrew a thousand-year-old sociopolitical system. After a savage civil war, that society reemerged and prospered for nearly eight years, only to fall to a barbaric despotism that did not begin to recede until the despot’s death in 1953. The retreat accelerated in 1956, and there emerged what Moshe Lewin has called a “civil society recovering.” That recovery slowed to a crawl after 1964.

By the time Gorbachev came to power, the dreaded step from which the Communist party had recoiled in 1956 and 1961, that of attesting to its on illegitimacy,\* had become unavoidable. None of the myths the party touted as its history could rescue it now; everyone knew too much about communism to believe in it. Nothing could salvage an economic system that had produced near ruin. No mere reform could atone for the indiscriminate slaughter of the Soviet people. The country *needed* revolution, a frontal assault not only on Stalinism—the easy part—but also on the Leninism that had nourished the soil in which Stalinism grew.

Gorbachev inherited an understrength Politburo of 10 members, of whom only he did not owe his promotion to Brezhnev. Even

\*See Chapter 16.

after he filled 3 of the 4 (or 6, if the 16-member body of a decade earlier be the standard) vacancies in April 1985, the old guard maintained its majority. The promotion of Ligachev (party secretary in charge of personnel and ideology), Chebrikov of the KGB, and Nikolai Ryzhkov (party secretary in charge of the economy in general) strengthened the Gorbachev wing but did not license it to make a revolution.

Between April 1985 and October 1988 the new general secretary slowly put together a Politburo majority, albeit a far from mechanically obedient one, leaving in power only two Brezhnev-era members, the Ukrainian party boss Vladimir Shcherbitsky and Vitaly Vorotnikov, premier and then president of the RSFSR. Gorbachev forced the jackleg politicians Romanov and Grishin into ignominious retirement. The sinister Kunayev—who like Geidar Aliyev had retained his seat on the Central Committee even after dismissal from the Politburo—conveniently died before the state was forced to indict him. Andrei Gromyko lost control of the foreign ministry to Eduard Shevardnadze, a close Gorbachev ally and the only non-Slav—he is a Georgian—on the Politburo.

The September–October 1988 extraordinary CC plenum left Ligachev and Chebrikov, who had acted as a brake on Gorbachev, on the Politburo. In a demonstration of the general secretary's growing might, however, it assigned Ligachev the thankless task of running agriculture and removed Chebrikov as head of the KGB. Chebrikov did, however, take command of a new CC commission on legal affairs and thus retained influence in security matters and ideology.

Gorbachev had shown decency in making Gromyko titular head of state in July 1985; the deliberate break with recent precedent gave the former foreign minister an honorable transition into retirement. In 1988 the general secretary demonstrated naked political

power in taking the office *away* from Gromyko and assuming it himself. Under constitutional reforms that took effect in 1989, a revamped presidency—now officially bearing that title—gave that office holder broad authority in legislative initiative, foreign policy, defense, and many areas of domestic policy.

The special November 1988 USSR Supreme Soviet session that approved these sweeping changes also created a 2,250-member Congress of People's Deputies. A kind of national superparliament, this body elected the president, who was to be responsible to it. Obviously unwieldy because of its size, the Congress elected a 422-member Supreme Soviet from within its own ranks. Charged with review of all legislative and administrative acts, this smaller body inevitably became the country's true working parliament. The president, members of the Supreme Soviet and the Congress, and all other state officials were limited to two 5-year terms.

For the first time since November 1917, voters went to the polls on March 26, 1989, in reasonably free elections. Because theirs remained the sole legal party, the communists won 87 percent of the seats in the new Congress; but nonparty candidates such as Arkady Murashev—whose platform called for a multi-party democracy—and maverick communists like Boris Yeltsin scored impressive victories. Andrei Sakharov won a seat despite fierce communist opposition in the Academy of Sciences. Many entrenched functionaries lost their bids for seats: the mayor of Moscow; the Leningrad party chief (and candidate member of the Politburo), who received only 15 percent of the votes; the mayor of Leningrad; the Kiev party chief; the mayor of Kiev; the premier of Lithuania; the president of Lithuania; several high-ranking military officers. Twenty percent of the regional party secretaries failed to win seats, as did 30 percent of other high-ranking officials. The independent Lithuanian political movement, Sajudis, won



(Map by Larry Fogel, *Washington Post*)

three-quarters of the republic's seats in the Congress, while the independent Popular Front won 25 of Latvia's 29 seats. Many victorious communists won in districts where officials illegally kept opponents off the ballot.

Flawed and heavily weighted in favor of communists, the March 1989 elections nevertheless represented a monumentally important step forward. Reforms along these lines promised to remake the political system in the rough image of some Western systems, a cross between the Fifth Republic in France, with its strong presidency, and modern Mexico, a one-party democracy with a legal opposition.

In everything from political reforms to economic restructuring to social customs and public relations, Gorbachev and his people looked westward, but the West offered no examples of throwing off a despotism like Stalin's. China, however, did.

Deng Xiaoping's *gaige*, the rough equivalent of perestroika, began in 1978—coincidentally a fateful year for Mikhail Gorbachev, who cannot have failed to pay close attention to developments in China. As a first step, Deng emancipated the peasantry from nearly three decades of ruthless Maoist exploitation. The peasants could keep and with relatively minor restrictions sell on the open market all they produced above state quotas, which were set at reasonable levels.

As in Russia under the NEP, relative—if unevenly distributed—prosperity quickly returned to the countryside; the cities were well supplied. The Beijing reformers could then cautiously initiate political and social reforms, secure in the support of the massive—80 percent of the population—rural rear and reasonably confident that well-fed city dwellers would at least give their programs a fair hearing. They could also begin the costly modernization of industry.

*Gaige* had its share of problems. Some rural areas did not share at all in the new prosperity; the bureaucracy fought to retain its privileges, central planners continued to interfere, and the Chinese Communist party remained divided on the question of reform in general.

Only dictators like Mao and Stalin can deal summarily with bureaucratic resistance and political disagreement. Deng had to move slowly, but his pacification of the peasant sector at least partially neutralized the greatest single weapon of his opponents—urban discontent.

## GORBACHEV AND THE ECONOMY

Gorbachev faced a party-state apparatus in place more than 65 years and pampered outrageously by the corrupt central leadership since 1964. Beyond that, he could do nothing about adverse weather and bore no responsibility for the low price of oil on the world mar-

ket, the cost of cleaning up after the 1986 nuclear catastrophe at Chernobyl, and the 1988 earthquake in Armenia. The staggering loss of revenue—37 billion rubles from 1984 to 1987—from the anti-alcohol abuse campaign was indeed his doing; less measurable were the savings and enhanced profits that theoretically should have resulted.

The attempt to revolutionize the economy proceeded in stages, by the spring of 1989 perestroika had registered only modest success. The Gorbachevites had not overcome the opposition of communists who saw the collectivization of agriculture as one of their finest accomplishments. Therefore, perestroika reversed Chinese procedure and sought to eliminate central planning, decentralize and modernize the outmoded industrial base *before* liberating agriculture; this was going from the complex to the relatively simple. The work force, which might have responded to incentive programs, concentrated its attention on bare shelves and long queues at food stores and sidewalk stalls.

Gorbachev proved unable to reform the bureaucracy. As Nikolai Shmelyov put it,

... there are three million bureaucrats in our Ministry of Agriculture. Think of it. These people know nothing except how to carry their briefcases. All ... these bureaucrats are afraid of losing their jobs, and they are anathema to a healthy economy.

Shmelyov pointed out that “[r]esistance to perestroika reforms no longer comes from the top levels of our bureaucratic pyramids.” By early 1989 Gorbachev had replaced more than two-thirds of all ministers, more than three-fifths of all provincial party first secretaries, three-quarters of all first secretaries of city and district party committees. Resistance thus came from the lowest—thus broadest—levels of the pyramid.

Russia had no pool of individuals trained in modern management techniques; numerous high-level delegations observed American

business school training but produced only a glut of position papers. Soviet managers excelled above all in executing—or giving the appearance of so doing—orders from Moscow. With gross output long the sole index of success or failure, they had no interest in anything else; they were not risk-takers or modernizers. They asked their respective ministries for the largest possible budgets and work force, the longest possible time to fulfill contracts, the lowest possible quotas. They feared computerization and cost accounting like the plague. If perestroika succeeded, they were doomed.

### THE THIRD DEATH OF STALIN\*

Social perestroika proceeded no more smoothly than economic. Mikhail Gorbachev had been in power 21 months when Anatoli Marchenko died in the Gulag. Conflicting official versions of the autopsy lent weight to the widespread suspicion that the cause of death was yet another savage beating, the last of many administered to a man who spent 20 years in the camps simply for daring to protest. The release of Andrei Sakharov, Yuri Orlov, Anatoli Shcharansky, Iosif Begun—all but a small handful of political prisoners and detainees—could not conceal the deaths in the Gulag of more prisoners in Gorbachev’s first two years than during the entire Brezhnev era. Those lonely, tragic deaths—Marchenko’s was one of the few to which the world paid attention—must be factored into any evaluation of glasnost.

In 1988 a Russian historian announced that the twelfth and last volume of a general history of the USSR could not be published because, with an honest look at the past now permitted, it would negate everything in the

\*The phrase comes from Elena Joly, *La troisième mort de Staline* (Arles: Editions Actes Sud, 1989).

previous eleven. In the sixtieth anniversary year of the Russian Revolutions of 1917 Gorbachev declared, "There should be no forgotten names or blanks either in history or in literature." This and similar invitations opened the floodgates; Yegor Ligachev and conservative scholars attempted to slow the process. Remembering the collapse of previous thaws and the persecution of those who had boldly ventured forth into them, some historians and writers held back. In June 1988 the government canceled end-of-the-year school examinations in history throughout the country.

In an unremitting assault on Stalin's rule that went far beyond Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, by January 1989 the Supreme Soviet and the courts had overturned the convictions of all defendants in the "show trials" of the 1930s. Over vigorous conservative opposition the party posthumously reinstated many—most notably Nikolai Bukharin—in its ranks. Kamenev, Zinoviev, Radek, Rykov, and thousands of lesser-known victims of the "troikas" and "special boards" of 1934–1953 were exonerated.

In the spring of 1988 Vasili Selyunin and the historian Nikolai Popov published articles critical not only of Stalin but also of Feliks Dzerzhinsky, founder of the secret police, and Lenin himself. The oblique and cautious assault on Lenin seemed intended as a trial balloon, although *any* mention of the founding father in anything other than reverent tones was indeed unprecedented. Both writers implicated Lenin in the supercentralization of power in the hands of the party leadership, and Selyunin boldly laid blame for the Gulag at Lenin's doorstep.

The "good" Lenin of the NEP did not have enough time, Popov and Selyunin argued, to complete his work, which Stalin perverted. This harmonized with the general line of Gorbachev and his chief ideological adviser, Aleksandr Yakovlev, who attempted to use the rehabilitation and glorification of Nikolai

Bukharin—ignoring the man's darker side—to push the analogy between glasnost-perestroika and Lenin's NEP. The mild, delicately phrased criticism of the "war communism" of Lenin seemed the limit of what the new regime would permit. Gorbachev presided over what Elena Joly has called the "third death of Stalin," but he would not sanction, much less officiate at, any rites for Lenin.

But *Trotsky* returned to acceptance, if not favor. The man who would become court historian to both Gorbachev and Yeltsin, General Dmitri Volkogonov, wrote in *Pravda* in September 1988 that "Trotsky was not an enemy of the revolution or of socialism . . . [but] of Stalin." That judgment surprised no one outside the Soviet Union, but in that country it came as a shock.

## THE ARTS

The state itself as well as private publishing houses now published the works of such long-banned writers as Bulgakov, Zamyatin, Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Nikolai Gumilyov, Nabokov, Brodsky. The Writers' Union reinstated Pasternak posthumously, and *Dr. Zhivago* appeared in bookstores. Anatoli Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*, a study of the terror that had been suppressed for two decades, reached the public in 1987. The editor of *Novy Mir*, Sergei Zalygin, persuaded Gorbachev to allow publication of Solzhenitsyn's monument to the victims of Stalinism, *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Yuli Daniel lived to see publication of some of his poems and even one of the stories for which he spent five years in the Gulag. He died in December 1988. Andrei Sinyavsky, who had gone to prison with him and had been allowed to emigrate after serving most of his sentence, received a visa to attend the funeral; not accidentally, the Soviet embassy in Paris issued it too late. But Sinyavsky did fi-

nally return to visit his friend's grave in Moscow.

In the cinema, Tengiz Abuladze's trilogy of anti-Stalinist works, of which *Repentance* emerged as a classic, won the 1988 Lenin Prize. The Latvian director Juris Podnieks took an unflinching look at the problems of modern youth in *Is It Easy to Be Young?* Director Vasili Pichul and scenarist Mariya Khmelik gave audiences an unvarnished depiction of anomie in *Little Vera*. In 1990 Stanislav Govorukhin directed a searing indictment of communist rule, *It's Impossible to Live Like This*.

## NATIONAL MINORITIES

Unleashed by the Gorbachev revolution, ethnic antagonisms burst into the open in 1986. A nation of 130 different peoples, of which only two—Ukrainians and Byelorussians—are ethnically and linguistically close to the Russians, suddenly confronted the clash of irreconcilable aspirations.

The nationality question officially did not exist because the regime had long ago pronounced it solved. But Ukrainians had over the years paid a terrible price in blood for their resistance to communism and Russian domination; the Kazakhs had suffered proportionately more than any other people during collectivization; the Turkic and Iranian Muslim peoples of the USSR had endured savage cultural and religious persecution; the Baltic peoples knew the heavy hand of the Terror.

Khrushchev had permitted most but not all of the "punished peoples" of World War II to return to their homes. For the most part the process unfolded peacefully, but in 1958 riots in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR took a number of lives as Georgians, Dagestanis, Avars, and others who had taken over Chechen-Ingush homes and farms resisted eviction.

In 1967 the Kremlin "rehabilitated" the Crimean Tatars but did not allow them to return

to the Crimea. Now simply an impediment to Moscow's plans for the peninsula, which Khrushchev had grandiosely "given" to the Ukrainian republic, the Crimean Tatars continued to pay for the crimes of Stalin, Voroshilov, Serov, and Suslov. Peaceful demonstrations that called for the restoration of Crimean Tatar property and civil rights took place in Moscow in 1987 and early 1988; the police and KGB quickly disrupted them. In June 1988 a special commission reported that "no grounds" existed for the restoration of a Crimean Tatar autonomous republic. The population of the peninsula had tripled since the war, the cities were now overwhelmingly Russian and Ukrainian, settlers of those nationalities had established themselves on the farms, spas catering to Russian trade unionists dotted the landscape, and—the report did not mention this—party bosses had luxurious villas set in huge parks. There was no room for the people—descendants of Genghis Khan—who had for five centuries called the Crimea home.

Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the party tried to make good on its promise—or threat—to create a new, purely "Soviet" nationality. What that meant in practice was forcing a Russian culture stripped of religion and unfettered artistic creativity on the other 129 nationalities. The party struck especially hard at the Ukrainians: their institutions of higher learning could not conduct classes in the Ukrainian language, the Ukrainian Catholic Church was outlawed, and in 1975 Kiev firemen were not permitted to extinguish a fire of suspicious origin that destroyed a major part of an ancient Ukrainian library and archive. Pyotr Shelest, Ukrainian party boss under Brezhnev, and his successor, Vladimir Shcherbitsky, slavishly did Moscow's bidding to the point of speaking Russian rather than Ukrainian in public appearances.

Smaller nationalities also felt the heavy hand of Russian oppression. Russian settlers flooded Kazakhstan and other republics, di-

luting the native populations with their presence and threatening the survival of native cultures. Russians moved to the major cities of all republics in great numbers. Few learned the native language. Russians had their own schools, and federal-level official business in all republics was transacted in Russian.

The odd troupe of native dancers allowed to tour the USSR and even foreign countries could not hide the Kremlin's long-range designs, which in truth it openly proclaimed: Sooner rather than later, a hybrid *homo sovieticus* would come into being. That was the plan. When the first liberating breezes of glasnost swept across the country, however, many nationalities regained their identities.

The Turkic Kazakhs rose up en masse when in December 1986 the Politburo dismissed the aged, corrupt Dinmukhammed Kunayev as leader of the Kazakh branch of the Communist party. Riots erupted in Alma-Ata and elsewhere in Kazakhstan over the appointment of Gennadi Kolbin, an ethnic Chuvash, as the new leader. Grievances that had accumulated for more than half a century burst into the open: the million deaths—a greater percentage than in any other area—during collectivization; the suppression of the Kazakh language and culture; the influx of Russians that gave them a plurality—40.8 percent to 36 percent Kazakhs—in the republic; the burial of Kazakh soldiers who fell in Afghanistan in military cemeteries rather than in Muslim sacred ground.

The government put down the riots, which it had shown on television and publicly blamed on “youth from a degenerate class,” but it tacitly acknowledged that the uprising had deep-seated roots. Within days of taking office, Kolbin had Alma-Ata's food stores fully stocked; under Kunayev, one-third of the city's supplies had been reserved for the elite. Kolbin ordered swift publication of a Kazakh-Russian dictionary begun in the late 1950s and pledged to improve and expand the teaching of the Kazakh.



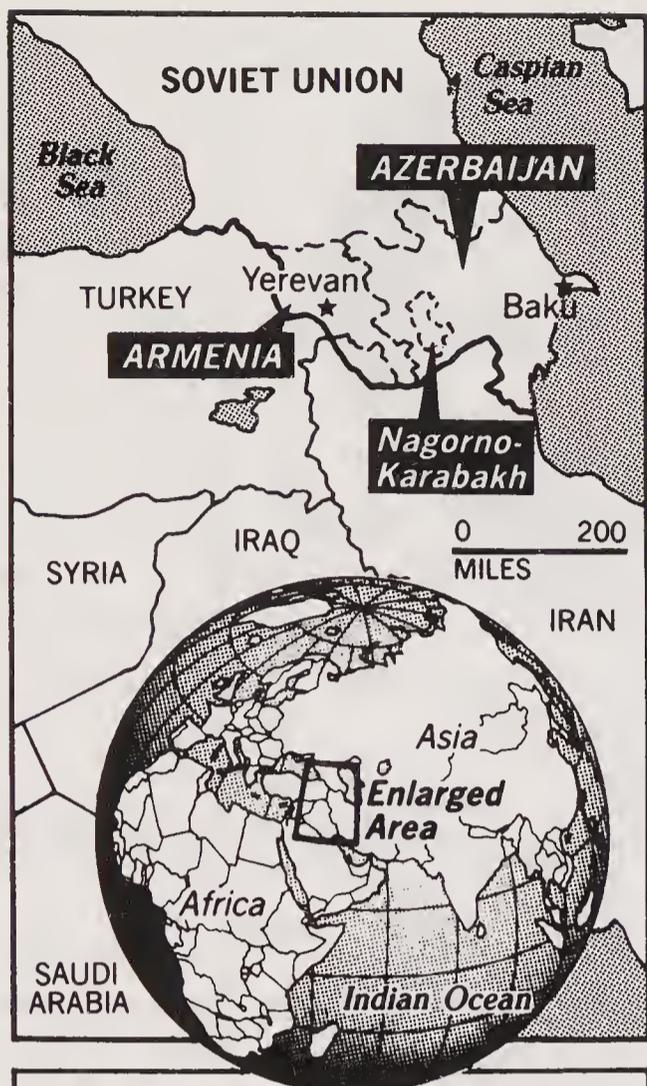
(Map by Larry Fogel, *Washington Post*)

Exposure and punishment of Kunayev-era corruption intensified.

The Alma-Ata disorders made an impression on the Kremlin, which ended the ill-conceived anti-Islam campaign. Moscow could not win the Afghan war by any means, least of all by alienating 50 million Soviet Muslims.

In regions where long-standing ethnoreligious disputes existed, it had long been communist policy to divide and rule, at times by gerrymandering borders. In 1923 Stalin deliberately assigned a mountainous Armenian enclave, Nagorno-Karabakh, to the Azerbaijani republic. A Turkic people, the largely Shiite Muslim Azerbaijanis have for centuries hated and fought the Christian Armenians, 1.5 million of whom had been massacred eight years earlier by the Turks of Turkey in this century's first holocaust.

For decades the Armenian republic had lobbied unsuccessfully for the return of the enclave. Now, with power demonstrably ebbing away from the Kremlin, the dispute

**ARMENIA****Total population:** 3,037,259**Armenians:** 2,724,975**Azerbaijanis:** 160,841**Russians:** 70,336**AZERBAIJAN****Total population:** 6,026,515**Armenians:** 475,486**Azerbaijanis:** 4,708,832**Russians:** 475,255**NAGORNO-KARABAKH****Total population:** 162,181**Armenians:** 123,076**Azerbaijanis:** 37,264**Russians:** 1,265

SOURCE: Soviet Census, 1979

(Map by Brad Wye, *Washington Post*)

flared into the open. Armenian riots in Yerevan and Nagorno-Karabakh generated violent Azerbaijani demonstrations in Baku and else-

where. Scores of deaths and uncounted injuries resulted. Television broadcast the events around the country and the world, shattering forever the myth of the “great friendship” among the country’s 130 ethnic groups.

A second government commission briefly studied the problem and recommended that Nagorno-Karabakh should remain part of Azerbaijan, despite the fact that nearly 80 percent of the population were Christian Armenians. Absurd as the decision was, any other would have alienated Azerbaijan and other Muslim republics and regions. It would also have had unpredictable consequences for Moscow’s relations with Turkey and the entire Muslim world. Dismissing party leaders in both feuding republics, the Kremlin placed Nagorno-Karabakh under its direct rule and sent Arkadi Volsky, a quintessential apparatchik, to mediate the clash. His failure did not harm Volsky’s career.

Rioting in Baku and elsewhere in Azerbaijan having taken the lives of many Armenian residents, in January 1990 Gorbachev sent in several thousand army troops, calling his action necessary to restore order. In fact the general secretary acted, as Marshal Dmitry Yazov acknowledged at the time, to save the Azerbaijani Communist party and with it—as the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet later charged—the Soviet colonial empire.

The violence had spread to towns and villages on the Iranian frontier, which now lay open. In the carnage that followed the arrival of the army, scores of Azerbaijani civilians died and uncounted hundreds were injured. Now only brute force would keep Azerbaijan inside Gorbachev’s USSR.

The Soviet Army’s killing of several civilians in Yerevan five months later in the process of another “pacification” operation may have balanced the score according to Kremlin ledgers, but in reality it demonstrated once again the regime’s indecisiveness. Unwilling to re-

sort to a massive show of force along Stalin-Khrushchev-Brezhnev lines, Gorbachev instead opted for half-cocked measures that solved nothing and worsened an already tragic situation.

Far to the north, other nationalist movements with major implications for the future of the USSR's federalist structure had blossomed. Unfurling the long-forbidden black-blue-white flag of independence, the Estonians established a People's Front, which proclaimed its independence from the CPSU—the only legal political party in the USSR. The front demanded the ending of Moscow's control of Estonian industry. Denouncing the republic's colonial status, the organization called for the "Estonization" of industry and declared that Moscow would have to pay for Estonia's products in hard currency. Other demands included establishment of Estonian as the official language, restrictions on immigration, disenfranchisement of citizens who could not speak Estonian, and the right of the Estonian republic to veto Union legislation in Estonia. The People's Front stopped just short of calling for complete independence. In November 1988 the Estonian Communist party leadership itself proclaimed the supremacy of the Estonian Supreme Court's decisions over the laws of the USSR.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The urgent need to restructure the economy stemmed not only from the system's internal contradictions but also from various elements of a foreign policy predicated on military strength and a view of capitalism a hundred years out of date. At the cost of nearly bankrupting the nation and a miserably low standard of living, the USSR had achieved nuclear parity with the United States and its allies and had built a military machine that was on paper

a match for the West and China together. The crushing burden of military spending, which some experts estimated at as much as 40 percent of gross domestic product, had succeeded in making the Soviet Union poorer but not more secure. But a mere reduction in expenditures on conventional arms—cutbacks in nuclear weapons bring relatively little savings—without a reappraisal of the theoretical basis of its foreign policy could not solve the fundamental dilemmas that faced the Kremlin toward the end of the twentieth century. In their first four years in power, the architects of glasnost and perestroika appeared determined to reduce defense expenditures and cautiously inclined to reexamine the premises that have guided Soviet foreign policy since World War II.

The Soviet Union agreed to a humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan because it had no choice. Public opinion unleashed by glasnost overwhelmingly opposed the conflict, which had sapped the blood and morale of the nation while depleting the state treasury. Not only that: with American surface-to-air missiles in the hands of the Afghan guerrillas, the war that was never winnable was lost. The Soviet army could hold Kabul and a few fortified outposts but nothing else. After the United States agreed to stop supplying weapons to the guerrillas, Soviet troops began a withdrawal that was completed early in 1989.

By coincidence, Soviet-American negotiations aimed at reducing the numbers of short- and intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe began the day after Gorbachev became general secretary. The new regime revamped its delegation and issued new instructions. At last there were men in the Kremlin who understood that the United States would accept nothing less than the famous "zero option": no Soviet nuclear missiles aimed at Western Europe, and removal of all such American weapons based in Western Europe and aimed at the USSR. A treaty embodying this agreement was signed at the third meet-



New York, December 1988. (*New York Times*/Paul Hosefros)

ing between Gorbachev and President Reagan in Washington in December 1987.

The first of those meetings had taken place two years earlier in Geneva, the second in Reykjavik in October 1986; for the final summit, Reagan went to Moscow in May–June 1988. Despite the agreement on the shorter-range missiles, fundamental disagreements remained. The American side insisted on its right to proceed with research and development of the “space shield,” a futuristic construct the Soviets insisted would violate a 1972 treaty. If the Afghanistan war and the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola appeared to be winding down, other regional conflicts remained in Cambodia, Nicaragua, the Middle East, and elsewhere. The Soviets continued to fi-

nance a North Korean military buildup that went far beyond any legitimate defense needs.

But Soviet thinking was changing. Like General de Gaulle, Gorbachev frequently spoke in terms of a Europe “from the Atlantic to the Urals.” Attempting to demonstrate his country’s wish to play a peaceful role in the European community, in December 1988 Gorbachev spoke before the United Nations and announced the impending withdrawal of 50,000 troops and 5,000 tanks from bases in Eastern Europe as part of an overall plan to reduce the Soviet Army by 500,000 men and 10,000 tanks over two years.

Gorbachev and his people realized that with American short-and medium-range nuclear missiles leaving Europe, the Continent

no longer posed any serious threat to Soviet security; a NATO inferior in conventional weapons could hardly mount an invasion à la Napoleon or Hitler. Needing Europe—for technology and loans to finance perestroika—far more than it needed him, Gorbachev appeared to appreciate the symmetry of simultaneous rapprochement with the Americans and reintegration, for the first time since 1917, into the European continent.

The great unknown in Soviet foreign affairs remained China. A modest warming trend in Moscow-Beijing relations developed in 1987–1988, and a summit meeting was scheduled for May 1989. Soviet military cutbacks were no less welcome in China than in the West; between them, the two countries spent enor-

mous sums each year to guard their common border, sums more profitably employed on perestroika and *gaige*.

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## chapter 23

# CRISIS OF THE GORBACHEV REVOLUTION

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Four years of glasnost, Andrei Sinyavsky remarked, had freed the intellectuals to say there was nothing to eat: perestroika had not relieved the shortages of consumer goods. Queues for food and fuel grew longer, the public mood increasingly hostile toward a general secretary regarded as all talk and no action. The liberated media chronicled the economic distress in exhaustive detail. That unerring measure of political leadership, crime, climbed toward barbarous American levels. Adrift at home, Gorbachev tried to find his moorings abroad.

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Following well-publicized April 1989 visits to Cuba and Great Britain, Gorbachev went to China in May in search of another foreign triumph to shore up his position at home.

Locked in a reformers-versus-conservatives battle of their own, the Chinese leaders welcomed the opportunity to discuss the border problem and other issues.

Talks between Gorbachev and the “retired” Deng Xiaoping, party chief Zhao Ziyang, and Premier Li Peng produced agreements to reduce military forces along the frontier to a “minimum level commensurate with normal good-neighborly relations.” The two sides pledged to upgrade negotiations on territorial and border disputes to the foreign minister level and agreed to restore relations—broken off in the Khrushchev era—between their respective Communist parties. They could not find a mutually acceptable formula to end the war in Cambodia, where Moscow supported, and Beijing opposed, Vietnamese intervention.

Demonstrations that had begun in Beijing in April spread to other cities. Appealing for democratic reforms, the protestors seized the

opportunity provided by Gorbachev's visit to press their demands. So large were the Tiananmen Square crowds that Gorbachev could not lay a memorial wreath; the following day, more than a million peaceful demonstrators paralyzed central Beijing.

Gorbachev left China on May 18, not a moment too soon for the Chinese hard-liners, who belatedly realized that the opposition had exploited his visit to press demands. Events in the streets of China's main cities overshadowed the end of 30 years of hostilities between the two communist giants.

The world recoiled in disbelief at the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 3-4, 1989, when tanks and infantry crushed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young people armed only with ideals and hopes. Back in a Moscow far more concerned with the cost of living and crime than relations with China, Gorbachev expressed shock and sorrow.

Early in October the general secretary went to East Berlin for the fortieth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic and angered his hosts by calling for reforms. Taking a cue from the Chinese, crowds of anticommunist protesters marched in the streets under banners demanding the resignation of Erich Honecker as leader of party and government. Honecker fell. Within days, Eduard Shevardnadze called for dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. On November 9 East Germany stood by as crowds dismantled the Berlin Wall; Moscow did not intervene.

In Rome at the end of November, Gorbachev enunciated a vision of a "common European home" that owed something to de Gaulle's dream of a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals," more to the long-standing Kremlin campaign to exclude American influence from Europe and eliminate NATO. The general secretary continued on to Malta for a summit meeting with President Bush that reinforced the growing sense that the Cold War had ended.

The bewildering tempo of events accelerated. In November the Supreme Soviet granted economic autonomy to the Baltic republics. Led by Gorbachev, the leaders of five Warsaw Pact countries condemned the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia; negotiations began for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from that country, Hungary, and Poland. The Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu, was toppled in the bloodiest of the revolutions that transformed Eastern Europe.

At the end of May 1990 Gorbachev left for the United States and a second meeting with Bush. Assured of a rapturous welcome, Gorbachev again displayed the talent for public relations that captivated the West and angered Russia. The two leaders signed major arms control agreements, including one limiting stockpiles of chemical weapons to 5,000 tons each and banning further production. Declaring it their goal to reduce strategic offensive weapons by 50 percent, they initialed several protocols and joint statements reinforcing the dramatic relaxation of tensions.

Gorbachev could not escape domestic problems even in Washington. Aware of his hosts' contempt for Boris Yeltsin, in response to an enquiry he denigrated his rival's election as chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet and spoke of the "constructive" and "destructive" sides of Yeltsin's activities. Such comments did not promote political stability in the USSR.

One of Gorbachev's greatest diplomatic triumphs came in the summer of 1990: with his consent, the East German government relinquished control of its economy to West Germany on July 1. In a meeting two weeks later in the USSR, Gorbachev and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl worked out arrangements for reunification. By agreeing to reunified Germany's membership in NATO, the Soviet leader shattered a major pillar of postwar Kremlin foreign policy. As a quid pro quo, Kohl agreed to give the USSR huge sums in aid and to finance the withdrawal of Soviet

troops from East Germany. A few days later, leaders of the two German states promised to sign a treaty guaranteeing Poland's frontiers immediately after Germany became one nation. On September 12, the four World War II Allies gave up their vestigial occupation rights. Puppet East Germany expired on October 3, birthday of the new unitary state.

The Swedish Academy then awarded the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize to Gorbachev, key figure in one of history's most spectacular diplomatic revolutions. The successes continued the following month when NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations signed a Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty which significantly reduced nonnuclear arms, the USSR and its allies making much the bigger cuts. And on November 21 the member nations of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe signed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Despite some clouds on the horizon, not since 1815 had prospects for an enduring peace appeared so bright.

The Western world regarded the man who, more than any other single figure, had made such monumental changes possible as one of the giants of the century. But Gorbachev's own country was coming apart, and he had lost control of events there.

## CENTRIFUGAL TENDENCIES

Since 1922 Russian communists—and the Russified Stalin—had aggressively encouraged non-Russian peoples to learn Russian and adopt Russian culture. That arrogance had destroyed or severely diluted the culture of more than two dozen numerically small ethnic groups and had threatened to exterminate the Kazakhs. In general the attempt to create a “new Soviet man and woman” failed, but the antireligious campaign did great harm to native cultures in Muslim areas. Russian chauvinism alienated the 5 million Tatars, the largest ethnic

group denied its own union republic. It encountered contempt among many peoples of the Caucasus and Siberia and strengthened rather than weakened nationalism in the Baltic states, Armenia, and Georgia.

The weakness of the Gorbachev-era center, and Gorbachev's own ignorance of the country's ethnic problems, began to take their toll. Suppressed nationalist sentiments resurfaced in some areas, while primitive tribalism run amok in others.

In March 1989 the Abkhazians, a Caucasian people with its own ostensibly autonomous republic inside Georgia, demanded independence. The Georgians refused but insisted on having *their* independence from Moscow. On the evening of April 14, 1989, eleventh anniversary of the restoration of Georgian as the official language in that republic, tens of thousands demonstrated in Tbilisi in favor of independence. Panicked authorities called in the army, whose commanding general, a Russian, equipped his troops with rifles, sharpened entrenching tools, hardwood cudgels, and poison gas—all of which soldiers turned on the peaceful demonstrators, including many women and children. About 40 deaths and several hundred severe injuries resulted. For nearly three weeks the army refused to disclose the chemical composition of the poison gas, forcing physicians to treat victims by trial and error. A Kremlin enquiry blamed the demonstrators and exonerated Moscow officials. In contrast to his emotional reaction to the events in Tiananmen Square, Gorbachev seemed indifferent to the tragedy.

A well-organized nationalist movement in Ukraine, *Rukh* (“Movement”), agitated for the transformation of the USSR into a “confederation” of autonomous republics. The new leader of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev (a Kazakh), declared support for Gorbachev and reform but insisted on political and economic autonomy. Moldavia, Kirghizia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan enacted laws assur-

ing primacy for the native languages; parts of Uzbekistan erupted in ethnic violence; a clamor went up in Kazan and elsewhere in Tatarstan for the creation of a union republic.

Baltic deputies in the Congress of People's Deputies pressed for autonomy and briefly walked out when Gorbachev rejected their demands. The Latvian parliament proclaimed the republic's independence; Estonia passed laws relegating its Russian and Ukrainian minorities to second-class citizenship.

Late in 1989 the Lithuanian Communist party voted to split off from the CPSU, and Gorbachev proved unable to reverse the decision. In February–March 1990 Sajudis won a comfortable majority in both local and republic-wide elections; the anticommunist Vitautas Landsbergis became president; and on March 11 the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet proclaimed the republic's independence. Denouncing these moves, the Kremlin initiated a limited military crackdown in Lithuania and gave Western diplomats 12 hours to leave Vilnius. The army took control of Communist party property and began hunting down deserters and men who refused to report for induction. Retaliating for Lithuanian attempts to take control of the economy, Moscow shut off the flow of petroleum products.

Gorbachev avoided further humiliation when Lithuania suspended the recently passed laws—but not the declaration—breaking away from the union in return for a promise to negotiate the issue. He failed to understand that Vilnius would discuss only the process, not the break itself.

Declarations of independence by Uzbekistan and Moldavia on the eve of the Twenty-eighth CPSU Congress in July 1990 had not gladdened the spirits of conservative delegates. Shortly after the congress, Ukraine announced its intention to leave the union; Armenia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan followed in August, Kazakhstan in October. The question was not whether the remaining republics would follow, but when.

## RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

The biggest question mark was of course Russia. The ethnic unrest and nationalist agitation could not fail to affect the largest, most populous, richest, militarily strongest of the republics. Russia was slowest to move, but early in June 1990 its Supreme Soviet—Yeltsin presiding—claimed sovereignty over Russian territory and natural resources.

The prospect of Russia emerging as an independent state held few terrors for Boris Yeltsin and the majority of Russians,\* who saw the power struggle as a renascent Russia against a terminally ill USSR. As Russian institutions, including the Orthodox Church, emerged from decades of repression and neglect, and as the physical and moral despoliation of Russia became ever more vividly engraved on the public consciousness, Yeltsin's insistent call for independence carried the day.

Such a program seemed radical only to those who, like Gorbachev and his coterie, believed the Soviet state salvageable; in reality it represented the most moderate tendency in Russian nationalism. Under the newly institutionalized conditions of political freedom, demagogues preaching chauvinism, fascism, and anti-Semitism flooded into the streets.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky's ludicrously misnamed Liberal Democratic party demanded restoration of "Great Russia" within the borders of 1865, when Russia controlled Alaska. Modeling himself on Adolf Hitler and supported by elements of the CPSU and the KGB, Zhirinovsky ran for the Russian presidency in 1991.

Dmitry Vasilyev headed a "national-patriotic front" movement, *Pamyat* ("Memory"), which advocated restoration of a monarchy; reestab-

\*English cannot convey in one word the distinction between *russkie*, Russians, and *rossiyane*, all citizens of Russia whose homeland is that nation whatever their actual nationality or ethnic group. Here, "Russians" refers to "rossiyane."

lishment of Russian Orthodoxy as the state Church; and *narodnost*, in the context a consultative role for the Russian people in the governing of the state. Praising the forgery known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Vasilyev condemned the role of Jewish Bolsheviks including Lenin (“a half-Jew”) in the destruction of old Russia. He expressed admiration for Hitler but professed to deplore his hostility toward Christianity and his racial theories. A noisy presence through 1990, *Pamyat* seemed to decline thereafter as many of its 25,000 to 50,000 members switched to Zhirinovskiy’s fascist party.

To combat the many nationalisms and ethnic rivalries tearing at the fabric of the state, at the end of July alarmed central authorities invited representatives of the republics to Moscow to discuss the draft of a new union treaty that would, they promised, meet demands for devolution even as it preserved the union.

## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Late in April 1989 Gorbachev purged 110 “dead souls”—the title of a Nikolai Gogol comic novel—from the party Central Committee, thus clearing the decks for the debate on reform in the new Congress of People’s Deputies (CPD). Beginning May 25, for 13 days the public watched the televised proceedings. In the first order of business, election by the Congress—where communists held 85 percent of the seats—of the USSR president, Gorbachev won easily. Some observers charged “business as usual.”

That, however, proved not to be the case. Dismissed as Moscow party boss in November 1987 and removed from the Politburo three months later in a clash over the pace of reform, Boris Yeltsin—still a party member—had won an at-large Moscow seat with 89 percent of the vote. A commanding presence among reform-minded delegates, he helped forge a

quasi-democratic opposition to Gorbachev and the party regulars. Andrei Sakharov, also anathema to the old-style communists, sided with Yeltsin on most issues and focused debate on the necessity for a speedy transition to democracy and the institutionalization of civil and human rights.

Repeatedly jeered by the Gorbachev clique for having opposed the Afghan War, Sakharov urged abolition of the constitutional guarantee (Article 6) of the communist political monopoly. Yeltsin, Gavriil Popov (who became mayor of Moscow in 1990), Anatoli Sobchak (who became mayor of Leningrad in 1990), other reform communists, and independent delegates set out to curb the lawless CPSU.

Conservative communists still controlled most levers of power, however, and when the Congress elected the Supreme Soviet from within its ranks it excluded Yeltsin. The reformers then announced plans for a nationwide strike. Gorbachev shrank from this confrontation, and a seat materialized when a deputy elected to the Supreme Soviet stepped down on condition Yeltsin replace him.

Yeltsin’s supporters had not made an idle challenge. A wave of strikes rolled through the mines in the spring and summer of 1989, threatening to bring the economy to a complete halt. Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov appointed a commission, which after a cursory investigation supported the strikers. Such concessions increased the huge budget deficit and generated demands for equal treatment in other sectors of the economy. The regime resisted here, gave in there, printed more money.

At the end of July 1989, Sakharov, Yeltsin, Popov, Yuri Afanasyev, and others formed an Inter-Regional Group of several hundred deputies. The regime launched verbal attacks on them, tapped their telephones, and otherwise kept them under surveillance. This revealed a familiar side of politicians bent on limiting reform to what was necessary to pre-

serve their hold on power. Unable to understand that cosmetics could not revive the corpse and mistaking confused, sometimes contradictory ideas for coherent programs, Gorbachev and his entourage insisted on setting and carrying out the agenda. Toward that end the general secretary sought to balance his attacks on the reformist opposition by removing Ukrainian leader Shcherbitsky, former KGB head Chebrikov, and other hardliners from the Politburo in September 1989, only to appoint three secret police officials including new KGB Chief Vladimir Kryuchkov in their stead.

### END OF THE COMMUNIST POLITICAL MONOPOLY

In November 1989 the conservative-reactionary faction in the USSR Supreme Soviet barely defeated a motion to debate Article 6, and at the second USSR CPD in December Gorbachev again deflected the issue. The most influential opponent of the party monopoly on politics, Andrei Sakharov, died two days later; his passing impoverished Russian democracy. Gorbachev paid only perfunctory respects at the bier of the man whom he had first liberated from exile, then cruelly hounded in the Congress.

Sakharov would play no role in the 1990 "February Revolution" he had done so much to bring about: the largest unofficial crowd in Russia since 1917—half a million or so—gathered in Moscow on February 4 to honor his memory and cheer speakers who demanded democracy and the repeal of Article 6. By this time Gorbachev himself had admitted that ending the monopoly "would not be a tragedy."

On March 13, 1990, the USSR CPD voted to revise Article 6. Realization that the Communist party nevertheless retained control of the political mechanism tempered public satisfaction at the legalization of a multiparty system.

Gorbachev remained in power for lack of a credible alternative. To arrest the deterioration of his authority, he asked the Congress to create a stronger executive presidency. The Congress would select the first incumbent; what he could not have won from the citizenry, Gorbachev would take from a communist-dominated assembly. The voters would choose future presidents.

The CPD elected Gorbachev to the strengthened presidency, but of 1,824 votes cast nearly 500 went against him: along with its monopoly on power, the party's discipline was weakening. In his acceptance speech, Gorbachev ignored Lenin to concentrate on the economy. He promised to "liberalize" prices, end state industrial and agricultural monopolies, permit free trade in surplus commodities, establish a stock market. A few days later he named a 16-member "presidential council" as a kind of cabinet. Seeking to please all factions, he balanced reformers with such reactionaries as Marshal Yazov and the KGB's Kryuchkov.

In the March 4, 1990, elections—the first that were truly free—for local offices and for *republic* Congresses of People's Deputies in Russia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia, adherents of a new movement called Democratic Russia and ostensibly like-minded candidates won 70 percent of the seats. As one of the winners, Boris Yeltsin quickly became a central figure in the Russian CPD and Supreme Soviet.

### THE POWER STRUGGLE

Democracy and freedom mystified Gorbachev. From atop the Lenin Mausoleum, he watched May Day marchers parade with banners reading LET THE CPSU LIVE IN CHERNOBYL! GORBACHEV—CHIEF PATRON OF THE MAFIA! TO HELL WITH THE POLITBURO! DOWN WITH THE EMPIRE AND RED FASCISM! FREE LITHUANIA! A few days later he proposed to make it a crime to insult the president.

The gibes were the least of his worries: Boris Yeltsin won the chairmanship of the Russian Supreme Soviet, the republic's highest office, over CPSU opposition. Declaring that Russia's interests outweighed those of the USSR, he pledged to press for radical reform. Thus the struggle for power entered a more serious stage. Kryuchkov's KGB found it necessary to issue a denial of rumors that it tried to sabotage airplanes carrying Yeltsin and staged a series of traffic accidents in which he was involved. In the CPD, the *Soyuz* ("Union") faction of military deputies (called the "black"—meaning sinister—colonels) demanded an end to democratic reform and the establishment of a dictatorship. Party reactionaries pushed the candidacy of Ivan Polozkov, Krasnodar party leader, to replace Gorbachev as general secretary.

Democratic Russia, which embraced broad sectors but by no means all the anti-CPSU opposition in the Russian republic, held its founding congress only in October 1990. Disillusioned by Gorbachev's vacillation and fearing a right-wing coup d'état, its members had coalesced around Yeltsin. Composed of both genuine democrats and opportunists betting their future well-being on a transfer of power to Yeltsin and the Russian republic, Democratic Russia's leadership had a mottled political complexion but agreed on one fundamental premise: despite his enormous services to the cause of democracy, Gorbachev had failed.

### **DEATHBED OF THE CPSU: THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS**

Gorbachev returned from Washington in June 1990 to assist in the preparations for the Twenty-eighth Party Congress. Unimpressed by his successes abroad, a dispirited party hemorrhaging from millions of resignations had neither the courage to oust its general secretary nor the inclination to give unquali-

fied support to the patchwork experiments that constituted his program. Many members looked to the Russian Communist party, independent of the CPSU since June 20 and now led by Polozkov, to overthrow Gorbachev.

That hope did not materialize at the July congress, where discipline held sufficiently for Gorbachev to manipulate the agenda. Re-elected general secretary by 3,411 votes to 1,116, he then expanded the Politburo to include representatives from all republics, pleasing non-Russians but failing to enhance his status with party regulars. Neither did he win friends by jettisoning Shevardnadze and Yakovlev from the Politburo and simultaneously dismissing Ryzhkov and Kryuchkov. He engineered the defeat of his former rival, Yegor Ligachev, for the new post of deputy general secretary.

Speaking to the Congress on July 6, Yeltsin humbled himself and asked for political rehabilitation. He believed he needed party backing to be an effective president of the RSFSR, and he hoped for renewal of the CPSU. When the delegates greeted him with jeers and catcalls, he promptly switched tactics and called for the complete restructuring of the party, which he urged to rename itself "democratic socialist." He demanded that the CPSU relinquish all state functions, abolish its cells in the military, KGB, and other state agencies. The country, Yeltsin warned, would no longer obey communist orders, nor would communist threats frighten it.

The rude reception forced Yeltsin to abandon his hopes and take the step from which he, a lifelong communist, had recoiled. He resigned from the party on July 12. Popov, Sobchak, and Sergei Stankevich—who became deputy mayor of Moscow in 1990—followed within hours.

The Communist party they left now consisted of a dwindling handful of confused reformers around Gorbachev; the holders of perhaps 10,000 key posts in government, in-

dustry, armed forces, and KGB; and perhaps 14 million (down from nearly 20 million) rank-and-file members bewildered by the power struggle in Moscow. Many communists sensed that the Twenty-eighth Congress, where Gorbachev tried again to blend the warm oil of reform with the icy water of Leninist discipline, would be the last.

Mortally wounded though the party obviously was, from Yeltsin's point of view the time had not come for the final reckoning. His demonstrative break with the CPSU and the regime left him vulnerable to the machinations of the bureaucracy and the KGB. His electoral mandates were strong but local, and—as Gorbachev jeered—he had won the chairmanship of the Russian Supreme Soviet by a bare majority. Yeltsin would have to deal.

## THE ECONOMIC DISASTER

An agreement between the country's two most powerful politicians emerged in late July. Yeltsin would support Gorbachev's plan for economic reform, while the general secretary would accelerate reform and bring about devolution of many central government powers to the republics.

Within days Gorbachev signed a decree "rehabilitating" all victims of Stalinism from the 1920s to the early 1950s. The document did not mention people persecuted under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Mikhail Gorbachev (for example, the martyred Anatoli Marchenko). A second decree did restore citizenship to some dissidents, including Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Yuri Orlov, forcibly exiled in the Brezhnev years. Gorbachev did not explain why he had waited five years.

Several economic plans competed for attention. All of them recognized the outrage of the "vodka economy" and the necessity to cut military expenditures, but what would replace alcohol revenue, and what would happen to

the military-industrial complex? If the means of production were to come under private control, what would happen to the 45 to 60 percent of the work force that labored in outmoded, inefficient factories certain to close? What tax structure would come into force? Perhaps the most difficult question was this: How could the government end the massive subsidies to food, housing, transportation, and medical care and yet ward off civil war, let alone remain in power?

A solution that seemed to make painful sense involved a combination of (1) steep price increases on most basic consumer goods including food, housing, and medical care, and on energy, such increases to be offset only partially by wage increases; (2) rapid privatization of most state property excluding key defense installations and strategic natural resources; (3) institution of a fair system of taxation on privatized production, and on property and incomes; (4) major reductions in state expenditures, particularly for defense; (5) budgetary and accounting reform; (6) devaluation of the ruble, which would eventually become convertible; (7) foreign assistance.

In late August a team of economists under Stanislav Shatalin presented a "500 days" program embodying most of these policies. The group acknowledged that its plan would bankrupt thousands of inefficient factories and plants and throw millions of people out of work. Prices would rise steeply, inflationary pressures would test the resolve of political leaders. Citizens favored under the old system would take many privileges—good housing, relatively high wages in the most desirable jobs, access to consumer goods and private medical care—with them into the market economy. A safety net would give some protection to the lowest-paid workers and retirees, but the standard of living of perhaps three-quarters of the population would deteriorate sharply and remain low for 18 to 36 months before beginning to improve.

Yeltsin accepted the Shatalin program. Prime Minister Ryzhkov and *his* economists, however, proposed an alternative that would leave most sectors of the economy under the control of communist managers and state bureaucrats, place the military-industrial complex off limits to reform, retain the collective farms, phase in a market economy gradually over a protracted period, retain price controls on basic consumer items and crucial raw materials including energy, maintain the ruble's artificial exchange rates. This variant would preserve virtually intact the system that had produced disaster. On Yeltsin's initiative, the Russian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution demanding Ryzhkov's resignation and the formation of a government of national unity. Ryzhkov *threatened* to resign if the Shatalin plan became law.

On September 11 Gorbachev announced he would accept the bitter medicine of the 500 days, but in the same breath he expressed confidence in Ryzhkov. And to the dismay of genuine reformers, three days later he unveiled a draft "presidential plan" concocted by Abel Aganbegyan, a hodgepodge that would offset price increases in some sectors with reductions in others, privatize some enterprises but retain many others in the state sector, continue huge subsidies to the defense industry, lease land to farmers but retain state ownership, and so on.

When Ryzhkov rejected the sterile Aganbegyan hybrid, Gorbachev persuaded the restive USSR Supreme Soviet to grant him special executive powers. He would guide the economy by presidential decree until March 1992. He began at once with a November 1990 decree requiring enterprises to turn over 40 percent of their hard-currency earnings to the central government; the new private businesses could not survive this confiscatory step. At the end of December a *secret* decree instituted a 5 percent sales tax on consumer goods and services as of

January 1, 1991. The revenue these decrees would raise would cover only a small fraction of state expenses.

On November 1, 1990, the Russian Supreme Soviet voted, 155 to 9, to begin implementing the original 500 days program in Russia immediately. The disintegration of the Soviet state proceeded.

## SOCIAL TENSIONS

As the rancorous economic debate took its toll on the public's nerves, civil disturbances shook many cities in the summer and autumn of 1990. Insisting on his right to take steps to maintain order, at the end of December Gorbachev issued a decree providing for joint army and police patrols in Moscow and other major cities to control crime—and monitor demonstrations.

Warned of impending price increases, people had begun hoarding food and other consumer items. Waiting for higher prices, managers of grocery stores, bakeries, collective farms, steel mills, and oil fields slowed production. Bread lines appeared in Moscow in August 1990 for the first time in decades, and smokers around the country rioted when tobacco supplies dried up. Soap and detergents disappeared from the stores; this continued to be a major grievance of the coal miners. In the free peasant markets, prices rose beyond the means of the majority of citizens. The billions of rubles the state printed had a way of ending up in the hands of the privileged 2 to 3 percent of the population and of the criminal element (the "mafia").

Marshal Yazov denied rumors—generated by maneuvers near Moscow—that preparations for a military takeover were under way. In Leningrad, food rationing commenced on December 1; other cities and towns had begun it earlier.

In this tense situation, the Gorbachev regime received little credit for permitting religious education in the schools and enacting a law guaranteeing freedom of conscience, in part because it left the Russian Orthodox hierarchy under KGB control. The “rehabilitations” and the publication of banned literary and political works pleased the intellectuals but failed to impress the population at large. A public preoccupied with the ever more difficult task of making ends meet viewed relaxation of controls on petty private trade not as a new freedom but as a license for the unscrupulous to enrich themselves. Security loomed larger than freedom in the minds of citizens long hostile to private enterprise and accustomed to a low but guaranteed standard of living. Opinion polls indicated a sizable majority believed life had been better under Brezhnev.

In December 1990 a frustrated Gorbachev proclaimed “law and order” his top priority, threw in his lot with the reactionaries, stepped up his courtship of the military, and named the Latvian Stalinist Boris Pugo minister of internal affairs. KGB chief Kryuchkov threatened to retaliate against government opponents “financed by the West” and to close down “destructive” newspapers. Challenged to explain on what grounds he would suppress publications that had not violated the Press Law, Kryuchkov replied, “The law can’t provide for everything.”

On December 20, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze suddenly resigned. In an emotional speech he assailed the “black colonels” and others who had accused him of destroying the hard-won Soviet position in Europe and of giving away too much in arms control agreements. He warned that dictatorship lurked around the corner. Stunned, Gorbachev declined to criticize the colonels, who had demanded that he restore order or face removal, and scoffed at Shevardnadze’s

prediction. Two days earlier he had said on television,

Everyone knows I won’t be a dictator. I could have been . . . had I kept all my power vested in the leadership of the Communist party. . . . The old party leaders wielded power like no one else in the world. Not even Pinochet had such power!

Augusto Pinochet’s image loomed large in deathbed Soviet politics. Gorbachev was himself psychologically incapable of emulating the bloodstained fascist dictator (1973–1989) of Chile sponsored by Nixon, Kissinger, and the Chicago school of American economists; but he assembled a team that would try to do so on his behalf.

He had made Marshal Yazov defense minister in May 1987. In October 1988 he installed Anatoli Lukyanov—who had a sinister record in Eastern Europe in the 1960s and 1970s—as vice president under the old Brezhnev system, and Vladimir Kryuchkov as head of the KGB. Then came the appointment of Pugo. On December 26 Gorbachev nominated Gennadi Yanayev to be vice president under the new system; this shocked the Congress of People’s Deputies. A notorious alcoholic and satyr, Yanayev had no qualifications for any responsible post. The congress first rejected the nomination, then gave in to Gorbachev’s threat to resign.

Prime Minister Ryzhkov suffered a heart attack on December 26. In mid-January 1991, immediately after the Vilnius massacre,\* Gorbachev replaced him with Valentin Pavlov and made Aleksandr Bessmertnykh foreign minister.

The new presidential team was in place, save for a few supporting players who would join in the next few months. Almost all the key members would betray the man to whom they owed their positions.

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\*See the following chapter.

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## chapter 24

# DEATH OF THE USSR: THE PUTSCH

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In November 1990 Ivan Polozkov boasted that the idea of setting up “public committees for national salvation and the defense of socialism” was taking root in many localities. Just how deeply would soon become known: in December KGB Chief Kryuchkov began planning “extraordinary measures” to restore neo-Stalinist rule.

### **BLOODY SUNDAY**

A “national salvation committee” in Lithuania announced in January 1991 that it was replacing the republic’s legally constituted government. The names of the members never became public because no such committee existed. Concocted in the imaginations of Kryuchkov and Pugo, the scheme constituted the first step toward takeover of the USSR.

On the night of January 12–13, Pugo’s OMON\* (“black beret”) forces stormed the

Vilnius building that housed television headquarters, killing 14 unarmed occupants and wounding more than 200. The blood of the Lithuanian capital now mingled with that of Alma-Ata, Tbilisi, Yerevan, Baku, Stepanakert, Sumgait.†

Televised film of this modern “Bloody Sunday” forced Gorbachev to issue a statement: he claimed to have learned of the operation only after the fact and could not explain the actions of his appointees. He had either lost control of the security forces or voluntarily donned the mantle of Augusto Pinochet.

Six days later, communist-controlled Riga television broadcast without commentary the claim of a “national salvation committee” that it

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\*An acronym for “militia [i.e., police] special mission squad.” There were then about 30,000 men in OMON forces around the USSR under interior ministry control.

†The violence actually began in Yakutsk, but no blood was shed there.



Boris Yeltsin, Moscow Mayor Gavriil Popov, and Russian Orthodox Church dignitaries at the ceremonial laying of the first stone for the reconstruction of Kazan Cathedral, which Stalin destroyed in 1936. November 4, 1990. (ITAR-TASS)

had taken power in Latvia. This too was a fictitious organization. Pugo had ordered the republic party leader to force a confrontation with democratic forces to give “law and order” advocates a pretext to seize power. When the confrontation failed to materialize, on January 20 Pugo sent a black beret detachment to take over the republic interior ministry in Riga. Four civilians were killed, including the noted cinematographer Andris Slapins.

Gorbachev suggested that like the Lithuanians, the Latvians had brought the trouble on themselves. Coupled with a perfunctory expression of regret over the loss of life, the comment reinforced the growing conviction that he would spill as much blood as necessary to preserve the union and his personal power. Only in late March would he dissociate himself from the “national salvation committees.”

Kremlin policies now took a harsh turn. A presidential decree authorized the KGB to enter any business or enterprise to search for and confiscate documents, remove evidence, question personnel. Army-police patrols, designed more to intimidate the democrats than to discourage crime, began in several cities on February 1. In a grotesque “currency reform,” Prime Minister Pavlov wiped out the savings of many citizens. Ostensibly to thwart Western schemes to ruin the monetary system, he ordered the speedy withdrawal from circulation of 50- and 100-ruble banknotes, a third of all currency in circulation.\* Gorbachev promoted Pugo to the rank of colonel general.

\*Citizens had to account for all savings beyond one month’s salary when exchanging old notes for new.

Gorbachev nominated his chief of staff, Valeri Boldin, to the national security council,\* only to have the Supreme Soviet reject him because it considered him an architect of the brutal new policies. It did not know of Boldin's role in the conspiracy.

## ATTEMPTS TO PRESERVE THE UNION

Mass demonstrations in Russia condemned the carnage in Vilnius and Riga, and the republic's Supreme Soviet began debate on the regime's policies; the head of state television denied Yeltsin live airtime until a public outcry forced him to reconsider. Accusing Gorbachev of seeking "absolute power," in a February 19 broadcast Yeltsin predicted he would never grant the republics independence. Yeltsin called for his resignation and the transfer of power to a "collective body."

Gorbachev counterattacked that the democrats were attempting to destroy the Communist party and the USSR itself. He linked reform to preservation of the union: collapse of the state, he said, would kill reform and lead to chaos, civil war, perhaps even global conflict.

A new union treaty giving signatories the right to secede was then in preparation. The democratic opposition and many nationalists rejected it as a Gorbachev device to maintain centralized communist rule, while the "black colonels" articulated conservative hostility to changes in the 1922 document that created the USSR—on which the influence of Comisar for Nationality Affairs Stalin had been decisive. Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev, a key figure in the debate, favored a compromise formula involving political devolution and a common market.

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\*Yanayev, Pavlov, and Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh—who was to remain neutral during the putsch—also served on this body, which Gorbachev created on March 7, 1991.

Denouncing Gorbachev's prediction that Russia would sign the treaty, Yeltsin called for a "declaration of war on the country's leadership, which has led us into this morass." Critics accused Yeltsin of making common cause with Pugo and Kryuchkov; in fact he was taking a calculated risk to buttress democracy.

The Baltic states, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldavia boycotted the March 17 treaty referendum that asked, "Should the USSR continue to exist?" In the nine remaining republics more than 75 percent of those who voted answered yes. But what did "or not" imply? The ballot did not say, and the government had announced in advance that the vote would have no legal consequences.

Gorbachev's boast of victory indicated his increasing distance from political reality. Far more significant was the Russian electorate's overwhelming approval, in a concurrent ballot, of the direct popular election of the RSFSR president.

## ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Defenders of the union pointed to escalating violence on the periphery as proof of the need for a firm central authority. Animosity the Kremlin had held in check for seven decades resurfaced, threatening the nation with civil war.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh continued unabated. The Azerbaijani minority sought support from Turkic peoples and Muslims in general, while the Armenian majority continued to rely on aid from Yerevan and Moscow. The intractable ethnic-religious enmity united the Shiite Muslims of Azerbaijan and Iran with the dominant Sunnis in the Middle East. Turkey, hereditary foe of Armenia and member of NATO, tried to mediate the conflict but clearly leaned toward the Turkic Azerbaijanis.

In Moldavia (now Moldova), where slightly more than half the population was of Romanian

descent and Romanian speaking, many people were caught up in a wave of national and ethnic self-assertion. Communists loyal to Moscow tried to stem that tide. Moldavian overtures to the post-Ceaușescu regime in Bucharest alarmed the minorities and the Kremlin; reunion with Romania seemed likely by the end of the century.

There remained the possibility that Ukraine would doom the union by breaking away. Attempting to win goodwill, the Kremlin legalized the Uniate (Ukrainian Catholic) Church, which Stalin had suppressed, but that concession generated demands for more. The separatist movement faltered when Ukrainian communists infiltrated *Rukh* and diluted its militance. Led by Leonid Kravchuk and miraculously transformed into nationalists, the communists blurred the independence issue, only to embrace it zealously after the events of August 1991.

Communists remained in control of the Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan, where generations of Slav domination and 70 years of communist colonialism had stunted the growth of the intelligentsia and inhibited formation of indigenous political parties. Nationalist movements generally remained weak, but party bosses exploited the collapse of the center to edge toward independence.

A serious effort to oust the communists materialized in Tajikistan. The great majority of the population Sunni Muslim by tradition and heritage, there developed a Tajik religious revival sponsored by militantly *Shiite* Iran. In part the fruit of selectively flexible Iranian policy, that revival posed a real threat to the communist regime in Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital. Violence increased steadily after 1990; in spring 1993 the outcome of the struggle between Muslim Tajik nationalists and the communists continued with no end in sight.

Shifting direction again, Gorbachev moved away from the conservatives. On April 23,

1991, Yeltsin and the leaders of eight other republics joined him in a "nine plus one" plan to preserve the USSR. Few observers doubted that the Baltic states, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldavia would go their separate ways. Under the proposed agreement, the other nine republics would receive considerable autonomy in return for remaining within the union, the "one" which would control foreign, defense, and some fiscal policy.

Central Committee hard-liners moved to depose the general secretary. When Gorbachev challenged them to find someone better able to defend USSR and Communist party interests, they submitted to party discipline and, for the last time, capitulated.

### YELTSIN'S MANDATE

The leading candidate in the RSFSR presidential election campaign continued to strengthen his position. Yeltsin attempted to mediate the miners' strikes by pushing through wage increases and other benefits. As a quid pro quo for his support of the "nine plus one" plan, he won the central government's agreement to transfer control of the Kuzbas and Rostov-on-Don mines to the RSFSR. He renewed his pledge to work with Gorbachev.

Several other candidates had substantial backing. Party regulars favored Nikolai Ryzhkov, the former prime minister. Vadim Bakatin, briefly minister of the interior, hoped to win voters who found Ryzhkov too conservative, Yeltsin too radical. Zhirinovskiy cultivated the "Stalin class" of the population, which demanded (1) iron-fisted rule in a Russian-dominated USSR free of Jews and (2) a belligerent foreign policy. General Albert Makashov promised cheap vodka and the recovery of Alaska. Other candidates had little impact on the campaign. Employing writers and publicists such as Valentin Rasputin, Yuri Bondarev, and Yuri Andropov's favorite "dissi-

dent,” Roy Medvedev, the Stalinist minority in the KGB and the CPSU mounted a vicious attack on Yeltsin.

A month before the election, Kryuchkov and Yeltsin agreed to establish a quasi-independent *Russian* KGB. The KGB chief was moving to ensure the viability of his organization; Yeltsin evidently could not conceive of a Russia without a secret police, even one that harassed him and fought for his defeat at the polls.

Yeltsin won 60 percent of the vote. Ryzhkov lagged far behind with 16 percent, mirroring declining communist fortunes. Fascist Zhirnovsky finished an ominous third with 7.27 percent. Thus the great prize Gorbachev had created but could not fully understand, democratically conferred power, went to a former protégé become mortal political enemy. Gorbachev had come to office when fewer than 300 Central Committee members confirmed a secret decision of nine old men on the Politburo. More than 45 million citizens of Russia had voted for Yeltsin.

## TOWARD FIASCO

Yeltsin’s victory set in motion the second phase of the plot to return the *nomenklatura*—top bureaucrats and officials of the pre-1985 regime—to power. Never comfortable with Gorbachev, they had lost faith in his ability to restore order and discipline and in his willingness to employ traditional strong-arm methods.

Although chiefly concerned with Gorbachev, the conspirators could not ignore Yeltsin. In July, Prime Minister Pavlov bribed Yakut (Sakha) ASSR officials to give the central government exclusive rights to mine and market the region’s natural diamonds. If implemented, the agreement would cut the RSFSR out of the profitable operation, depriving it of a major source of hard currency. The hard-liners had again served notice on Yeltsin.

Pavlov proved a still greater menace to Gorbachev: in mid-June he had demanded that the USSR Supreme Soviet transfer to his cabinet some emergency powers earlier bestowed on the president. Chairman of the Soviet Anatoli Lukyanov supported Pavlov, as did Kryuchkov. Calling “emergency measures” necessary to “save the country from ruin,” the KGB chief pledged to “preserve the [communist] social system, [but] not to protect somebody’s power.”

In late June, Washington alerted Gorbachev to the existence of a plot to oust him. American intelligence had learned some details; Moscow Mayor Popov confirmed them. Gorbachev ignored the warning but made a speech opposing the attempt to undercut presidential powers. By a vote of 262 to 24 the Supreme Soviet rejected Pavlov’s plan, and thus a legal transfer of power eluded the conspirators. That Pavlov remained in office testified to Gorbachev’s loss of control not only of events but also of his government. Responding to press reports, Yazov and Kryuchkov denied planning “some sort of *coup*.” Gorbachev departed for London, leaving day-to-day government operations to Valeri Boldin.

Routine intrigue now assumed Byzantine dimensions. Declaring that no conspiracy existed, a conservative newspaper claimed Gorbachev was staging a charade to obtain (1) agreement on the union treaty and (2) favorable treatment from the Group of 7 (G-7) capitalist nations about to meet in London to consider extending aid to the USSR.

Pavlov warned that the USSR was in danger of being enslaved by the capitalist nations. He attacked a “grand bargain” worked out by a Russian economist with American aid. Under that scheme, which both Gorbachev and Yeltsin tentatively approved, the West would extend \$30 billion in aid in return for a Kremlin pledge to maintain the movement toward democracy and a free market system.

## THE COUNTDOWN

Late in June one of Pugo's OMON detachments occupied the Vilnius telephone and telegraph center. Shutting down communications, the black berets held the building for two hours, then mysteriously withdrew. There were no casualties; reaction in the USSR and abroad was muted; dress rehearsal successful.

Signs of an impending mutiny multiplied, not least because Yazov, Yanayev, and Pavlov drank too much, talked too loosely, and relied on unreliable subordinates. Pugo was relatively sober and close-mouthed, but despite the successful Vilnius operation the morale of his OMON forces had been shaken by the May shooting of the commander of their Latvian section.

Genuinely puzzled by the ignominious failure of the "national salvation committees" to attract any support beyond hard-core communists and Russian chauvinists, Kryuchkov had become more cautious. He now regretted the creation of a Russian KGB: some personnel had transferred their primary loyalties to Yeltsin. Moreover, organizational gossip now flowed across jurisdictional lines, jeopardizing the chances of achieving surprise in any major operation.

Politically more convoluted than his fellow conspirators, Anatoli Lukyanov did not consider himself disloyal. He attended many secret meetings where introduction of a state of emergency was discussed but never, he later maintained, overthrow of the president. Lukyanov was not alone in believing drastic measures imperative. He and others reasoned that, with Gorbachev incapable of acting decisively, the heads of key state agencies were obliged to act in the president's own best interests. In Lukyanov's view, Gorbachev might actually welcome measures that would leave him free to stride the international stage even as they killed democracy.

## DEMOCRATIC FORCES

On July 1 Eduard Shevardnadze and other prominent figures formed a Democratic Reform Movement. Nucleus of a citizens' rally rather than a political party, the movement sought to play an educational role in politics and to enter the void left by the eclipse of the Communist party. This challenge to the CPSU united Mayors Popov of Moscow and Sobchak of Leningrad and Russian Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi (Yeltsin's running mate), an Afghan War hero. Ivan Silayev, Russian prime minister, was also a founding member, as were Stanislav Shatalin and Aleksandr Yakovlev.

Not a member of Shevardnadze's movement, Yeltsin took the oath of office in a July 10 Kremlin ceremony. Ten days later he ordered the Communist party out of the workplace throughout Russia: there would be no toleration of those responsible for ruining a great nation. Gorbachev attacked the decree as unconstitutional.

Disagreements between the two presidents notwithstanding, the plotters believed they were conspiring to destroy the USSR and the Communist party. On July 23 the conservative *Sovetskaya Rossiya* published a menacing "A Word to the People" from right-wing writers and officers who called on the military and all "healthy forces" to save the country. The statement questioned "how we could have given power to people who do not love this country, who enslave themselves to foreign masters and seek advice and blessings overseas?" The signers warned that "the Motherland is dying, falling apart, sinking into darkness and nothingness." This language would resurface on the first day of the putsch.

Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Nazarbayev met in Novo Ogaryevo near Moscow on the night of July 29–30 to refine the proposed union treaty, scheduled for signing on August 20. They agreed that the the republics would have

greater control over fiscal policy and that respect for human rights would be a “highly important principle” of the new union. On July 30 the Pavlov cabinet rejected these points and adopted decisions curtailing the republics’ economic sovereignty.

The conservatives opposed decentralization, reform, human rights, and arms reduction, but they failed to prevent Gorbachev and Bush from signing history’s most sweeping strategic arms reduction agreement in the Kremlin on July 31. Although retaining thousands of nuclear warheads, the two sides had taken a giant stride toward sanity. Coupled with the liberation of Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany, the 1990 and 1991 arms accords brought the Cold War to an end.

The conspirators saw these developments as a threat and evaluated Gorbachev’s proposed new party program, which would have transformed the CPSU into a social democratic party on European lines, in the same way. That draft at last acknowledged the magnitude of the horrors: “The Communist Party unconditionally condemns the crimes committed by the Stalinists, who broke and mutilated the lives of millions of people, of entire nations.”

Three days after publication of the draft, the last survivor of Stalin’s inner circle, Lazar Kaganovich, died peacefully in his apartment across the Moscow River from the Kremlin. A few years earlier he had pledged to live until the return of Stalinism. At his death, Stalin’s heirs were a little more than three weeks away from their desperate move to help him keep his promise.

## THE “VODKA PUTSCH”

Gorbachev left on August 5 for a vacation at Foros in the Crimea. He continued to work on state papers, and he finally moved against his traitorous prime minister. A presidential de-

ree of August 10 transferred all property owned by the central government to a USSR State Property Fund. As lessor, the fund would oversee privatization of state enterprises, real estate, and other holdings worth trillions of rubles. The president would appoint its chairman, who would report only to him. This decree stripped the cabinet of control over state property. Pavlov would be powerless to preserve the old system. The conspirators prepared to move.

Marshal Yazov entrusted operational planning for the seizure of power to Major General P. S. Grachov, commander of airborne assault troops. Grachov put his troops on high alert but once the putsch was under way did not lose contact with the Yeltsin forces. Kryuchkov edited the list of people to be arrested and sharply increased surveillance. He called Gorbachev several times during the week of August 10–16, warning of approaching crisis and urging declaration of a state of emergency. Gorbachev refused.

On August 17 Kryuchkov summoned the plotters to a suburban Moscow KGB villa stocked with food and vodka. He and Yuri Plekhanov—head of the KGB ninth directorate, in charge of protecting the leadership—declared that an armed uprising against the government was imminent. Hinting a connection with the planned August 20 signing of the new union treaty, they did not reveal who was involved but claimed rebels were already taking up positions at strategic points around Moscow and other cities. None of this was true. Their audacity enhanced by vodka, the conspirators signed a declaration for broadcast a few hours later: Due to the president’s illness, a “State Committee on the State of Emergency” (SCSE) was taking power.

The committee assigned Boldin, Plekhanov, Varennikov, and one other official to present the fait accompli to Gorbachev. The KGB would take 60 or so leading democrats and liberal publicists into custody. Marshal



The "White House" (James Trott)

Akhromeyev and several other high-ranking officers had conveyed approval.

Recognizing Plekhanov, the head of the security detail at Foros admitted the delegation late in the afternoon on August 18. Gorbachev tried to telephone Moscow but found the lines cut. Cursing, he told the delegation that neither he nor the USSR Supreme Soviet had appointed any such committee. Boldin then read the SCSE declaration and demanded Gorbachev sign it. Accusing his commander-in-chief of weakness in the face of "extremist, nationalist, and separatist forces," General Varennikov screamed at him to resign. According to his own account, Gorbachev told his visitors to "go to Hell." His wife began burning the family's private papers.\*

The delegation returned to Moscow empty-handed. The president, his family, and 32 loyal members of the guard remained in Foros

under house arrest. For the next 72 hours Gorbachev had no control over the nuclear attack codes; it is unclear who did.

The state of emergency became effective in Moscow at 4:00 A.M. on August 19. Justifying the move on the basis of the constitution and the referendum on the fate of the USSR, eight SCSE members† announced they were taking steps to overcome the "profound and comprehensive crisis, the political and civil confrontation, the confrontation between nationalities, chaos and anarchy."

Having returned from Kazakhstan the previous evening, Yeltsin heard the SCSE statement on the radio. He immediately went to the Russian "White House," the parliament building on the Moscow River in the city center, barely escaping the detail sent to arrest him. Assisted by police and civilians, his guards began constructing barricades.

\*V. T. Loginov, a Gorbachev aide, provided this and other information during interviews in Moscow (August 28, 1992) and Barcelona (November 1-7, 1992).

†Yanayev, Pugo, Yazov, Kryuchkov, Pavlov, Tiyazkov, Starodubtsev, Baklanov.

At 9:00 A.M. Yeltsin, Russian Prime Minister Ivan Silayev and Acting Chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khasbulatov issued an appeal "To the Citizens of Russia." They denounced the SCSE's act as "right-wing, reactionary, and unconstitutional" and urged citizens to rebuff the "putschists" and return the country to "normal constitutional development." Gorbachev, they insisted, must be allowed to address the nation, and an extraordinary session of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies convened. They appealed for a general strike.

The White House is in the Krasnopresnensky borough, but that morning the borough council could not contact it and did not know Yeltsin's fate. At 10:00 A.M. borough council members published their own declaration:

RESPECTED KRASNOPRESNENSKY  
RESIDENTS!

At dawn today a coup d'état took place in our country. The lawful president, M. S. Gorbachev, was removed from power. The free media have ceased functioning. We are deprived of the possibility to learn the reaction of the population, the Supreme Soviets, and the republic governments to these events.

Power is in the hands of the Army, KGB, Interior Ministry.

We protest the introduction of the state of emergency and abolition of the constitutional rights of citizens.

We demand an extraordinary session of the USSR Supreme Soviet and M. S. Gorbachev's appearance before it.

We call on all citizens to maintain calm and order, to refrain from giving grounds for provocations, and to remember that an incautious step could lead to bloodshed.

The return of the legal power can only be accomplished by lawful means. The lives of your relatives, friends and neighbors depend on your restraint and calm.

For the coordination of our efforts, wait for information from your councilmen.

Written by historian Yuri N. Zhukov,\* the document reflected the striking harmony be-

tween the democratic intelligentsia and the the RSFSR leadership.

The conspirators proved incredibly inept. Beyond instructing the army to "maintain order," Marshal Yazov—"I won't be a Pinochet," he said—merely told his subordinates to stay tuned to television and radio. Kryuchkov and Pugo shut down most newspapers and took control of the official broadcast media, but foreign television and radio broadcasts continued uninterrupted, as did three small print news services and international telephone service. Beamed by satellite to Munich, London, and Atlanta, information about developments in Moscow was then relayed by telephone and fax back to the RSFSR White House. Telephone service inside the city served as a vital link for the democratic forces. Several low-power radio stations operated intermittently. Information provided by all these sources and messages sent by couriers clarified the situation and rallied the democrats.

Yeltsin signed three decrees on August 19. He pronounced the putsch unconstitutional and branded its perpetrators outlaws, warned that anyone who obeyed SCSE orders would be prosecuted, and guaranteed legal protection to military, security agency, and prosecutorial personnel who opposed the SCSE. At a tense noon press conference he joined Silayev and Khasbulatov in asking Muscovites to come to the White House to defend democracy.

Emerging onto the street at 1:00 P.M., Yeltsin climbed atop a tank—elements of the Taman Division had opted to defy the SCSE—and exhorted citizens to repulse the attempt to overthrow the legally constituted regime. Like his immediate and unswerving decision to back Gorbachev, this was one of the defining moments of the resistance. The courageous gesture heartened the supporters of democracy and confounded its enemies. Yeltsin's

\*Son of Olga Ovchinnikova, the Red Army commander pictured on page 39.

third decree of the day authorized RSFSR officials and agencies to carry out functions of the federal government in Russia.

General Varennikov repeatedly called Kryuchkov demanding to know why Yeltsin had not been shot but never received an answer. Convinced of the passivity of the public and the weakness of the democrats, the conspirators had anticipated a quick, decisive victory. Kryuchkov and Pugo would make arrests, of course, but there was no great hurry: who dared disobey the KGB?

Thousands of people did. The unexpected resistance at the White House, where the crowd continued to grow throughout the day, threatened to necessitate activation of a backup plan. Crack KGB troops of the "Alpha Group" would storm the building.

At 5:00 P.M., Yanayev, Pugo, and three other conspirators met the press. Yanayev had been drinking steadily for 36 hours. Hands shaking, he announced that because of Gorbachev's illness, he had taken over his duties. After a long rest and treatment "in a safe place," the president might resume his duties. But in the meantime, to combat the disastrous economic slide, ethnic violence, and generally anarchic conditions, the SCSE had taken power. There would be a temporary suspension of some civil liberties including the right of assembly and freedom of the press. Communist newspapers including *Pravda* would continue to publish.

A journalist asked, "Did you seek any suggestion or advice from General Pinochet?" Yanayev declined to respond.

The SCSE's news conference, statements, declarations, and decrees proved its intention to bury glasnost and perestroika and resurrect the tough KGB regime of Yuri Andropov. Persuaded that the people had had enough of Gorbachev's vacillation, of capitalism, of humiliation in Afghanistan and Eastern Europe, of press freedom that brought public officials under close scrutiny and pornography to the

kiosks, of endless political bickering—and persuaded that an attack on these developments would have popular support, the conspirators deluded themselves into thinking their cause just and their forces invincible. They believed they had only to show their colors to have most citizens salute them.

These propositions proved false in Moscow, Leningrad, and most other large cities in Russia. They had more support in small towns and villages, where conservative views usually reign. SCSE assumptions had little relevance outside Russia. In that republic, the chief enemy of both SCSE and democrats was apathy. Even in Moscow and other large cities a population weary of years of promises and an ever worsening economic situation generally held aloof from both camps. Pro-democracy crowds surrounded the White House in Moscow and flooded Palace Square in Leningrad, where Mayor Anatoli Sobchak and other democrats denounced the conspirators, but most citizens went calmly about their routine business in both cities. In Samara, Nizhni Novgorod (citizens had voted to restore the name), Astrakhan, Kasimov, Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg (Yeltsin's home town of Sverdlovsk had restored its original name), and other cities, most people neither knew nor cared what was going on in Moscow. The immeasurably important drama of August 1991 was played out on a small stage by a tiny cast.

Toward the end of the first day, August 19, several vehicles of the airborne forces drove up to the White House flying the white-blue-red Russian flag, which Peter the Great had copied from the Dutch: General Grachov, disobeying Yazov, had despatched them to protect RSFSR leaders. The first crack had appeared in the SCSE coalition. People in and around the parliament slept little that night, but they took hope.

Nonexistent on the first day, communication between the two sides began to develop in the early morning hours of August 20. As news

came in from around Russia of pledges of civilian and military support for Yeltsin and incidentally Gorbachev, leaders of the democratic forces slowly realized that their position was not only holding but becoming stronger. In midmorning, Rutskoi, Silayev, and Khasbulatov met Lukyanov—who professed surprise at the political developments—and presented the Russian government's demand for the immediate liquidation of the committee.

At noon a crowd of perhaps 250,000 outside the White House heard a progress report from Rutskoi, Shevardnadze, Gavriil Popov, Sergei Stankevich, and other speakers: liberty still lived, and the SCSE "state criminals" had 24 hours to surrender. But at 5:30 P.M. Yeltsin's lieutenants asked all women to leave the White House; an Alpha Group assault was expected.

Throughout the evening the defenders waited for the attack. Loyal Army units had supplied weapons, gas masks, and expertise, but no one had any illusions about the ability of a couple of thousand civilians plus a few soldiers to fend off the Alpha Group, whose commander estimated he could complete the operation in 20 minutes, with many casualties, almost all on the defenders' side.

Thousands of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and heavy trucks were now parked around central Moscow. Civilians bantered with the soldiers, brought food and flowers, begged them not to open fire. Lacking orders to do anything other than take up positions, the bewildered troops protested that they had no intention of killing anyone.

In the battle of communiqués, the democratic forces steadily grew more confident. When hours passed and the storming of the White House did not take place, those agencies and individuals around the country who initially supported the putsch began having second thoughts. After a scolding from his wife, Yazov resigned from the SCSE. Having started early, Pavlov and Yanayev drank them-

selves into insensibility. Kryuchkov's worst fears about the divided loyalties of many KGB personnel were realized as the affair began to unravel, but not before blood was shed. Nerves were frayed and for three days few people who cared about the fate of the nation had had much sleep. Fraternization with civilians had confused the soldiers and compromised discipline; the absence of clear-cut orders worsened the situation. Military vehicles careening around the city were occasionally struck by Molotov cocktails and other objects, and sometimes the occupants fired back. In the end, three young civilian men were killed: Dmitry Komar, Ilya Krichevsky, and Vladimir Usov took their places among Russia's honored dead.

Deciding on the afternoon of August 21 to concede defeat, the conspirators hoped to present the putsch as a misunderstanding. Yazov, Lukyanov, Kryuchkov, Oleg Baklanov, and Vladimir Ivashko (CPSU deputy general secretary) flew to Foros, where Gorbachev refused to see them until his communications were restored. When the meeting did take place, he called them traitors.

Early in the morning of August 22, Gorbachev returned to Moscow. Before leaving Foros, he had named General Mikhail Moiseyev, who had sympathized with the SCSE, to replace Yazov as minister of defense. The appointment apparently stemmed from inadequate information, but Gorbachev's decision not to go to the White House, where tens of thousands of people were waiting, reflected stupendously bad judgment. His ordeal had been easier than theirs, his bravery of a lesser magnitude, his contribution to freedom ultimately no greater. Gorbachev went home. Kryuchkov, who had been on the same plane, and Yazov, on a second one, went to prison. The crowd at the White House slowly melted away.



September 29, 1991, "Russian Requiem" concert at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, in honor of the three young martyrs to democracy. From left: Ruslan Khasbulatov, Raisa Gorbacheva, Mikhail Gorbachev, Ludmila Rutsкая, Aleksandr Rutsکoi, Ivan Silayev. (ITAR-TASS)

## DEATH OF THE USSR

A few thousand people had put their lives in jeopardy to defend the White House; millions celebrated the victory. The great myth of the KGB's omnipotence exposed, crowds jammed the square in front of its headquarters and refused to disperse until a crane removed the statue of "Iron Felix" Dzerzhinsky, Lenin's butcher. The square resumed its old name, Lubyanka. Except for Kryuchkov, Plekhanov, and a few others, the people inside the headquarters remained the same.

Gorbachev appeared to have learned little. He followed the Moiseyev appointment—rescinded on August 23—with two more of the same ilk, referred to himself regally as "the president" during a press conference, and defended the Communist party. Whatever residual respect he enjoyed disappeared: a public

opinion poll taken a week later indicated an approval rating of 4 percent for him, 77 percent for Yeltsin.

The Russian parliament treated Gorbachev roughly when he came on August 23 to thank it and give his report on the putsch. Constantly heckled and interrupted, he complied like a chastized schoolboy when Yeltsin ordered him to read documents proving the treason of his appointees. Televised around the world, the humiliation of the president started the USSR deathwatch.

Pugo shot and seriously wounded his wife, then killed himself. Marshal Akhromeyev hanged himself. Marshal Yazov wept as he apologized for disgracing his uniform. Continuing to protest his innocence, Lukyanov went to prison along with the rest of the surviving conspirators.

Yeltsin temporarily banned the Communist

party's newspapers, then on August 23 "suspended" the party in Russia. Struggling to catch up with the tide and once again reversing himself, Gorbachev resigned the next day as CPSU general secretary and transferred control of party property to the USSR. He ordered the party out of the government, KGB, judiciary, and military.

President Levon Ter-Petrosian of Armenia warned him not to try "reanimating the cadaver," but Gorbachev fought quixotically to save the union. He persuaded the USSR Supreme Soviet to dissolve itself, then carried the battle to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. On September 5 that body transferred power from the Kremlin to the ten republics still formally in the Soviet Union despite their declarations of independence. The USSR itself clung to existence as a mere coordinating council.

Largest and most powerful of the successor states, Russia flexed its muscles. When its Congress of People's Deputies approved his plans for the kind of drastic economic reform Gorbachev had refused to initiate, Yeltsin moved on November 16–17 to seize control of all USSR economic resources—thus reducing the federal government to beggary. Russia absorbed the union ministries, beginning with those that controlled the economy. The USSR had a deficit of 153 billion rubles through the first three quarters of the year, and Gorbachev appealed to the Supreme Soviet to print still more money. This was economic madness. On November 30 Yeltsin agreed to bail out Gorbachev's bankrupt regime—by taking over the USSR budget.

Meeting at Nikita Khrushchev's dacha at Belovezhskaya Pushcha near Minsk in Belarus (as independent Byelorussia is known) on December 8, Yeltsin, Belarus President Stanislav Shushkevich and President Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine signed a treaty creating a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and

proclaimed the USSR dead. The first person Yeltsin called with the news was not Gorbachev but the U.S. secretary of state. Gorbachev disputed the right of the three presidents to form a commonwealth and asked the USSR Congress of People's Deputies to overturn their action.

Although he had been invited to Belovezhskaya Pushcha, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan did not attend, wanting first to sound out opinion in the other Muslim republics. Two weeks of hectic negotiations followed. The leaders of the independent states of the old union, except the Baltics and Moldova, met in Alma-Ata, the Kazakh capital, on December 21 and approved most of the general principles embodied in the December 8 declaration. "With the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States," their statement said, "the USSR ceases to exist."

On December 24, Russia took over the USSR seat in the United Nations. On Christmas Day, Gorbachev resigned as president of a state that no longer existed, and at midnight the Russian flag replaced the hammer and sickle over the Kremlin. When Gorbachev returned the next day to empty his desk, the guards did not allow him to enter. Boris Yeltsin was already at work.

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## chapter 25

# UNCERTAIN RENAISSANCE

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Q: *What are the lessons [of the putsch] for the West?*

A: I suppose: don't exclude exotic possibilities from your scenarios of the future of Russia—or of anywhere else. If you are a student, switch from political science to history.

—Robert Conquest in the *Wall Street Journal*,  
August 22, 1991

Ignorant of physics as well as politics, the putschists believed only iron rigidity could overcome the great paradox of the post-Stalin USSR, the brittleness of its stupendous power. When their attempt to save the old system failed, the eviscerated shell of the state collapsed. Millions of mourners blamed Gorbachev, chief defender of the Soviet Union.

Unreconstructed communists launched a restoration movement. A key element in that movement, the managers of state enterprises, dreaded the cost accounting, systems analysis, respect for contracts, and reasonable honesty of

the free market. The forfeiture of the East European empire infuriated the “black colonels” and chauvinists. Yet another faction, Roy Medvedev’s Andropovites, raged when freedom removed the Communist party’s fangs. The unrepentant—except for Marshal Yazov—putschists in vodka-free Sailor’s Rest Prison shrank from admitting they had delivered the coup de grâce to the system they revered.

Aside from the colonels, most restorationists were in their 50s and 60s. Inspired in their youth by the Twentieth Congress, these communists had set a corrected course and would have come to power in the 1970s but for Brezhnevian “stability of cadres.” They did not shrink from shedding blood—Vilnius, Riga, Baku—or telling people what to think, but they did not kill on the old scale or reopen the Gulag.

Probably fewer in number, progressives and liberals in the cohort tolerated noncon-

formism and questioned neo-Stalinist myths. Led by Yeltsin, many genuinely converted to democracy: no one could count the "Saul on the road to Damascus" stories.

In 1991 this generation's offspring included about 30 million people aged 18 to 23 whose political and social consciousness took shape under glasnost-perestroika. During the putsch, these *grandchildren* of the Twentieth Congress stood alongside older liberals and progressives to defend democracy; the two generations brought Gorbachev's "reluctant revolution," itself rooted in Khrushchev's reforms, to fruition. Now they had to rebuild the country.

The task required vigilance. True believers mounted a legal challenge to Yeltsin's "suspension" of the CPSU and the Russian Communist party. In November 1992 Russia's highest judicial body, the Constitutional Court, upheld the ban but also ruled that Yeltsin had illegally confiscated party property. The court refused to decide whether the parties had been constitutional irrespective of the ban: when Yeltsin acted, it said, the CPSU had virtually ceased to exist and the Russian party had not yet registered. The untidy verdict enabled each side to claim partial victory.

Russia took over USSR institutions on its territory, and the democratically elected Congress of People's Deputies became the supreme legislative body. Restorationist communists had an 87 percent majority because voters unaccustomed to freedom had chosen people who knew how to manipulate the political machinery.

Most senior Gorbachev appointees lost their positions, but hundreds of thousands of middle-level bureaucrats, along with farm and factory managers, scarcely noticed the changing of the guard. The great majority of KGB officials remained in place. A Russian foreign intelligence service headed by a career (clandestine) KGB general came into being in December 1991; the Russian federal ministry for

security took over domestic KGB functions in January 1992. The ministry of the interior likewise changed little, but the foreign ministry, where many senior officials had supported the putsch, underwent reorganization.

The man whose refusal to follow Yazov's orders had helped to save democracy, General Pavel Grachov, became minister of defense. Senior commanders who had supported the SCSE lost their jobs, and Grachov demoted and transferred many junior officers.

Stressing determination to maintain a strong defense, Yeltsin denounced Ukraine's claim to a large part of the Black Sea Fleet and refused to speed the recall of troops from the Baltic states.\* He removed the 14th Guards Army from CIS jurisdiction and ordered it to defend Russians in Moldova. When ethnic fighting in North Ossetia and Ingushetia threatened the Russian minority, he sent in troops. Several ethnic enclaves within Russia threatened to secede, but Yeltsin's unconditional defense of the state's territorial integrity persuaded 18 of the 20 semiautonomous regions to sign a treaty of federation on March 31, 1992. Chechenya held out for full independence, and two important ethnic enclaves in Russia, Tatarstan ("Land of the Tatars") and Bashkortostan ("Land of the Bashkirs"), sought separate treaties and special guarantees.

Yeltsin had at least temporarily reassured the officer corps. General Grachov appeared before parliament in December 1992 and declared, "The defense ministry's position, and my own, are clear: my comrades and I assure you we will not allow Russia's armed forces personnel to become involved in political battles." In the dramatic events of March 1993, the military remained aloof.

The struggle for political power hinged on economic policy. Industrial output continued to decline, food and other consumer goods re-

\*Lack of housing in Russia was a major factor in the slow withdrawal of the troops stationed in the Baltic states.



Learning capitalism, Moscow, September 1992. (James Trott)

mained in short supply in state stores if not in private markets, and servicing the huge foreign debt\* consumed funds needed elsewhere. On January 2, 1992, the state lifted price controls on 90 percent of all goods. The next day, prices rose an average of 250 percent; by the end of the year they had increased more than 2,000 percent. The state limited the hikes for some basic food items, but by now three-quarters of the population had fallen below the official poverty line.† The

price increases reduced the living standard of most citizens; the sudden influx of goods into stores made the economic medicine all the more bitter. By the spring of 1993 the rate of inflation stood at about 1 percent per day, on the brink of hyperinflation. Miraculously, these developments had not yet resulted in major social upheavals.

Vice President Rutskoi and *nomenklatura* figures such as Arkadi Volsky and Viktor Chernomyrdin attacked Yegor Gaidar—Yeltsin's chief economic adviser and acting prime minister—for dismantling the military-industrial complex. They argued that with the economy heavily oriented toward smokestack industries and defense, the state had to subsidize those sectors, however inefficient and unprofitable. Sacrificing Gaidar, Yeltsin replaced him with Chernomyrdin in mid-December 1992.

These debates overshadowed foreign affairs. At a February 1992 summit where he and

\*A December 1991 treaty fixed Russia's share of the \$68 billion USSR debt at 61.34 percent. In 1992, bilateral agreements provided for Russia to assume the entire debt and for five other former republics to relinquish claims to some USSR assets. Russia proved unable to pay more than a fraction of the amounts due in 1992, but representatives of major industrial nations could not agree on debt rescheduling. In December that debt stood at \$86 billion.

†Then set at 342 rubles per capita, in December 1991 that sum would buy 1.5 kilograms of meat.

President Bush formally interred the Cold War, Yeltsin proposed enormous cuts in strategic offensive weapons and promised that Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan would either destroy or transfer all strategic nuclear weapons to Russia by July 1, 1992; the parties did not meet that deadline. The United States agreed to pay the cost of dismantling Ukraine's 176 multiwarhead (MIRV) missiles and buy its uranium, but toward mid-1993 the weapons remained on Ukrainian soil.

In June 1992, Yeltsin and Bush agreed in Washington to ban land-based MIRVs and cut nuclear arsenals from around 11,000 to 3,000 or 3,500 each, but negotiating the details proved difficult. Russia preferred the less expensive, less verifiable procedure of modifying existing systems rather than building new ones, while the United States proposed the cheap, easily reversed step of reconfiguring some of its nuclear bombers to carry conventional explosives. Both sides continued to seek the advantage.

On nuclear questions, Russia sought to speak for the CIS, which had proved marginally more durable than anticipated. Leaders regularly discussed the restructuring and coordination of their economies, defense, and other issues. The CIS facilitated negotiations between Russia and Ukraine on the delicate issues of nuclear weapons, the Black Sea Fleet, and the future of the Crimea, which Khrushchev had "given" Ukraine in 1954 and which Russia now wanted back. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resisted mediation, but the CIS continued to seek a compromise.

Seeking to widen his powers during the December 1992 CPD session that forced him to dismiss Gaidar in favor of "Commander of Production" Chernomyrdin, the embattled Yeltsin repeatedly suffered defeat. The parliamentary leader of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, turned against him and promoted an antireform agenda aimed at making himself into a new Brezhnev—whose luxurious apartment he occupied.

Arkady Volsky's Civic Union, which passed for the "center" in the CPD, united the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Nikolai Travkin's Democratic party of Russia, and Vice President Rutskoi's Free Russia party. Professing support for reform "at a slower pace," Civic Union served as a parliamentary vehicle for the restorationists. Rutskoi too turned against Yeltsin.

On the "red-brown" (communo-fascist) far right, a Russian Unity bloc formed the core of a National Salvation Front. Former KGB and military officers joined Fatherland; many agricultural bureaucrats entered Agrarian Union. All three groups wanted to restore "Soviet power" in its 1964–1982 incarnation. The fascist Liberal Democratic party and Pamyat supported the assault on democracy.

Boris Yeltsin moved into a Kremlin office on Christmas Day 1991 hoping to preside over a Russian renaissance, but a year later the reemergence of the *nomenklatura* threatened to return Russia to more than a semblance of the USSR. Surrounded by enemies, he himself acted erratically on occasion and made major blunders. He sponsored the political careers of Khasbulatov and Rutskoi, who attempted to overthrow him in March 1993. He clung too long to his unscrupulous advisers Genadi Burbulis and Yuri Skokov, uncritically followed Gaidar's Western-style economic program, and at times appeared in public emotionally distraught.

Yeltsin banked too heavily on foreign aid. The West and Japan were experiencing economic recession, and reunification costs limited Germany's options. When the fall of the USSR deprived it of a common enemy, the West procrastinated on aid, playing into the hands of the CPD oligarchs determined to recapture power. Only in the spring of 1993, when yet another major confrontation between Yeltsin and his opponents threatened to plunge Russia deeper into anarchy, did the West slowly begin moving to infuse massive



And life goes on. Izmailovsky Park, Moscow, September 1992. (James Trott)

amounts of aid. The U.S. administration of President William Clinton supported this policy, as did Japan, which at last realized that the survival of freedom in Russia outweighed the immediate return of a few islands in the Kurile chain.

Many foreigners could not understand the widespread Russian resistance to materialism and the free market, not all of which stemmed from a desire to turn the clock back to communism. Because the Protestant-capitalist ethic is wholly alien to the national experience, wealth and power have never connoted political acumen in Russia, much less moral superiority. However imperfect as bearer of the ancient and undivided Christian faith, Russia has remained true to that faith in exalting not the rich, whom she has always mistrusted, but the poor. The catastrophic com-

munist experiment represented one attempt to alter that psychology, the dreams of remaking Russia in the capitalist image another.

To avoid the fate of their predecessors back to Peter the Great, the revolutionaries—for that is what they are—of the 1990s must nurse a fragile democracy to maturity and create a mixed socialist-capitalist economy capable of giving Russia a better material life without doing violence to her spiritual traditions. Seven decades of communist rule having left her morally impoverished, Russia has never confronted a more formidable task.

#### **EPILOGUE: SUMMER 1993**

Yeltsin failed to move quickly to consolidate a new democratic order after the 1991 victory over the communo-fascist putschists, and

when in the early spring of 1993 the viability of his presidency came into question, he called for a nationwide referendum on his leadership. Led by Khasbulatov and Rutskoi, his opponents in the Supreme Soviet forced a second question on the ballot: Do you approve of the socio-economic policies carried out by the President of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Russian Federation since 1992? Suspecting that Yeltsin himself might win a majority, his opponents were certain that the electorate would express disapproval of his reforms.

The old communist *nomenklatura*, and the nakedly ambitious duo of Khasbulatov and Rutskoi, suffered humiliating defeat as Russia voted not only in favor of Yeltsin (57.4% to 39.9%) but also his reform program (53.7% to 45.5%). Moreover, a powerful majority (70.6%) called for early elections for the *nomenklatura* stronghold, the Congress of People's Deputies.\* According to the 1977 communist constitution, now encrusted with more than 300 post-putsch amendments, that body remained the supreme power in the country.

Strengthened by his remarkable victory, Yeltsin took steps to consolidate his position, dismissing some reactionary advisers and pushing ahead with plans for a new constitution that would give Russia a strong presidency and curb the powers of the parliament. Caught off guard by their self-inflicted defeat, Yeltsin's opponents assailed the press, foreign governments and intelligence agencies, and Russia's rapidly growing business class. Alongside such primitives as Khasbulatov, Rutskoi, and Volsky, Boris Yeltsin—for all his shortcomings and mistakes—clearly merited the vote of confidence Russia had given him.

On the last day of summer 1993, Yeltsin finally struck back decisively. In defiance of

the almost incomprehensible 1977 constitution, he dissolved the Congress and set new parliamentary elections for December 11–12 and a presidential election for spring 1994. He pledged not to use violence to enforce his actions but simultaneously warned that any attempt to thwart them would be punished.

With Khasbulatov as chairman, the Supreme Soviet promptly “deposed” Yeltsin, called for a nationwide general strike, and named Rutskoi interim president. But all key ministers, including those of defense and state security and the head of the independent Central State Bank of Russia, pledged support for Yeltsin. The Supreme Soviet was reduced to issuing hysterical appeals for support.

As summer gave way to autumn, the question was not whether Yeltsin's undemocratic moves represented a genuine attempt to ensure the survival of democracy—they did—but whether the population, exhausted and alienated by the seemingly endless struggle for power, had the will and energy to participate in the democratic process. Russia remained under the spell of the ancient Chinese imprecation: May you live in interesting times.

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\*On the question of early elections for the presidency, 49.8% voted in favor, 49.1% opposed.

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