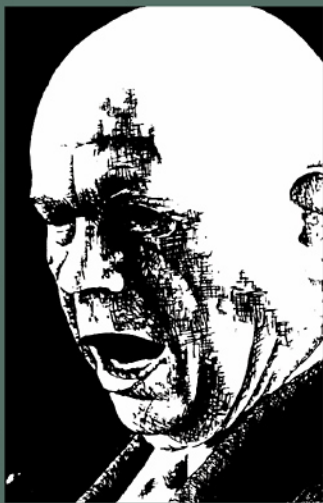


# STALINISM

AND

# AFTER

THE ROAD TO GORBACHEV



*t h i r d   e d i t i o n*

# Alec Nove

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## *Stalinism and After*





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# *Stalinism and After*

The Road to Gorbachev

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## Preface

The object of this book is to explain how Stalinism came to be, what was its nature, how it was modified after the despot's death. To this end I concentrate on causes and trends rather than on detail. If you wish to know the date at which Stalin arrived at Tsaritsyn, the text of any paragraph of the Constitution, or the output of steel in 1980, this is not the book for you. I do not wish to imply that these things are unimportant, and you will find in the list of recommended reading a number of books which deal with them. In fact, it is my hope that you will be sufficiently interested in this dramatic and eventful period to wish to read much more about it.

This is not a biography of Stalin, of Khrushchev or of Brezhnev. We are concerned with them, of course, but as political men. We are concerned also with another and vital question: what difference did their personalities make? A great revolution, carried out in the name of equality, freedom and justice, turned into Stalin-despotism. Why? How? Is this explicable primarily in terms of Russia's historical heritage, or of the Russian revolution and its isolation in a hostile environment, or was it the result of the logic of Leninism, the seizure of power by a Marxist party in a backward peasant country? These are impersonal explanations. Do they miss out the vital factor of Stalin's peculiar personality? Similarly, we may ask ourselves whether the attempt by Khrushchev to demolish the Stalin myth and to alter course was a personal aberration, and whether this applies also to the partial return to more repressive methods under Brezhnev. This latest edition also takes into account what some regard as 'the Gorbachev revolution', which is going on as these lines are written.

The book is almost without statistical tables and wholly without footnotes. The reader may be assured that statements of fact or citations are accurate, to the best of my ability. Hypotheses and interpretations are clearly indicated as such. In some degree the interpretation is personal, being influenced not only by the author's family background and reading but also by observations and conversations on numerous visits to the Soviet Union. I realise that academic histories are usually written in the third person. None the less, the occasional injection of personal reminiscences and opinions seems to me to do more good than harm. In the Soviet Union in particular, documentary and written evidence is sometimes hard to come by and can be misleading, and evidence based on personal experience may be usefully cited to highlight certain events and to justify interpretations. To take one example, not a single Soviet source has ever mentioned that there were riots in Tbilisi in the summer of 1956, yet these riots certainly occurred, and I know this because of what I heard and saw in Tbilisi shortly afterwards.

Now we have *glasnost*, and the Soviet media are far more informative. Thus riots in Armenia, and demonstrations in the Baltic states, *are* reported. There is much greater frankness about the real situation today, and also about the past: new essays are published almost every month about Stalin and Stalinism, with a wide-ranging debate: *was* he necessary, *were* there alternative roads, why did he succeed and his opponents fail, why did millions willingly follow his lead? At long last, Soviet historians are joining the discussion, which is now refreshingly free. We may be confident that historians and socialist thinkers in many countries will be discussing the fate of the Russian revolution, and the nature of Stalinism, for hundreds of years, if the human race survives that long.

# Chapter 1

## *Genesis*

### **The Russian Political Tradition**

Stalin was born in Gori, Georgia, in 1879, and his name was Djughashvili. The pseudonym Stalin was adopted to suggest 'steel', and proved to be well chosen. His early education was in a religious seminary. No doubt these facts are an important element in Stalin's personal psychology, and no doubt this personal psychology played its role in Russia's and the world's twentieth-century history. Yet it is perhaps even more useful to see him as a *Russian* leader, heir to a Russian tradition and meeting Russian needs in ways which had deep Russian roots. This is not the only such case in European history. One has only to remember Napoleon, a very French emperor who was nevertheless a Corsican.

In fact it is part of the Russian tradition that she is ruled by foreigners. *The legend of the foundation of the Russian state* in the tenth century is as follows. After a period of chaos, the notables met and decided to write to a Varangian (Viking) prince, saying: 'Our lands are vast and bountiful, but there is no order in them. Come and rule over us.' Then came Rurik, the founder of the dynasty, and so Russia (or Rus') was born. No doubt it can be argued that this did not happen so, that Vikings needed no invitation to come and plunder and colonise. But the existence and durability of the legend is significant. In my young days it was known by every Russian schoolboy.

Absolute rule by one called in to establish order in a disorderly land, was one element of the tradition. The absolutist tradition was doubtless reinforced by Russia's adherence to the Orthodox Church, and therefore Byzantine influence prevailed, while links

with the Catholic western Slavs were weakened. Another element was provided by the *Tartar conquest*, which brought Russians into close touch with an initially successful Oriental despotism, and underlined the vulnerability of the Russian lands (by then again disunited). The frontiers to the east, west and south were open, there were no natural barriers, Russia was backward and relatively weak. Despotic and ruthless Muscovite princes succeeded in the end in overthrowing the Tartar yoke, and gradually absorbed or conquered rival princes. They also subdued the westward-looking trading city-states of Novgorod and Pskov, which had close links with the German Hanseatic league towns. Muscovy, the easternmost and most Tartar-influenced of the principalities, became the focus-point of Russian unity. For a long time Muscovy remained weak and vulnerable, and in 1571 Tartar slave-raiders burnt most of Moscow, and Polish armies occupied the Kremlin itself in 1610–12.

In other European countries, unity was disrupted by struggles between the powerful feudal nobility and the king. In Russia such a struggle was nipped in the bud by Ivan the Terrible, who destroyed much of the nobility and separated the rest from what might have become territorial power-bases. It is not for nothing that Stalin declared this bloodthirsty monarch to have been a great statesman, remarking in an unpublished aside that he (Ivan) should have spent less time praying and more in destroying the enemies of the state, a mistake Stalin himself never committed. The survivors of the old aristocracy became gradually merged in a class of *service gentry* (*dvoryanstvo*), who owed their entire position and status to the Tsar. Peter the Great, moderniser of Russia, made the gentry families serve the state (i.e. himself) for life, in a civil and military service of fourteen ranks. True, the compulsion to serve was dropped in 1762, but the gentry had little else they could do, except vegetate on their estates. The great Russian nineteenth-century poet, Pushkin, remarked that by west European standards Russia had no aristocracy, since all depended on rank and rank depended on the monarch, who could and did promote men from the lower orders. This, he pointed out, led to 'cowardly slavishness' towards authority.

Slavishness of a different kind was developed among the bulk of the people, the peasants, by the institution of *serfdom*. Its principal purpose was to compel the peasants to serve the servants of the Tsar. This is why Peter the Great, uneasily aware of the abuses of

serfdom, found it necessary to strengthen it. It was part of the pattern of the *universal service state*, believed by Peter to be necessary for Russia to raise itself to great-power status. This dominance of state and state defined purposes over society was a major feature of Russian history.

Of course it is to be found in some degree elsewhere too: Frederick's Prussia and Louis XIV's France are but two examples. But nowhere else was the state's dominance so complete, nowhere did it last so long. In a very real sense, Stalin's Russia is a continuance of this long tradition.

Chekhov, another great writer, once said: 'We [i.e. the Russians] must squeeze the slave out of ourselves drop by drop'. The readiness of many to accept Stalinist despotism is to be explained among other reasons by this deeply-rooted national characteristic.

The Renaissance passed Russia by. Until the nineteenth century Russian culture was as backward as the way of life of the bulk of her people. Hardly anything was written which can be read with pleasure today. Then, with dramatic suddenness came the flowering of Russian literature, which made it one of the world's finest: Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Chekhov. With them there came on the scene that most Russian of phenomena, the *intelligentsia*. Some of them were of the gentry, conscience-stricken at the sight of serfdom, privilege, oppression. Some rose from below, were sons of village priests, merchants, even ex-serfs. Indeed Lenin's grandfather had been a serf, while his father became an educational official and rose in the civil service to reach the status of hereditary gentleman. The *intelligentsia* combined in themselves a number of features: they were opposed to the Tsarist system, but this did not lead most of them to harbour any sympathy for Western liberalism. On the contrary, they disliked the 'merchant' culture of western Europe, and dreamt of finding some new Russian road. Some believed that the old Russian peasant communal traditions pointed the way, others like Lenin thought that Russian capitalism was destroying the old institutions, though he hoped to move rapidly to socialism. Some were deeply conservative, idealising the era before Peter the Great's enforced 'Europeanisation' of Russia. Others were revolutionaries of many hues. They had no responsibility for doing anything, so they formed factions and argued endlessly. Among them there were some who believed that conspiracy and terrorism were the best weapons to use, since the inert and ignorant people

would not listen to propaganda. Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by these terrorists in 1881, and his successor, Alexander III, was to have been assassinated too, but the conspirators were arrested and executed, Lenin's elder brother among them. These *intelligentsia*-terrorists were a remarkable breed, men devoted to raising up the people, ready to die for their beliefs, yet singularly lacking in either political effectiveness or any appeal to the people on whose behalf they fought and suffered.

No wonder Lenin, in his own doctrine, emphasised organisation and conspiracy, had little illusion about or use for spontaneous mass action. It is said, though with little evidence, that he reacted to his brother's death with the words: 'We will go another way'. Individual terrorism, the blowing up of tsars and ministers, was not his road. We will be discussing in some detail very soon the road he did take.

Lenin, though himself a man with a distinguished university record, had little patience with the Russian *intelligentsia*. They were ineffective, they talked too much, they did not understand power and politics, they had namby-pamby scruples. Yet many of his own comrades were precisely such men. Indeed, the Bolshevik party in 1917 could be said to have been dominated by the ultra-radical wing of the *intelligentsia*. The rise of a Stalin, who was so very different, is partly to be explained by Lenin's search for tough organisers who did not possess the typical *intelligentsia* defects. It was late in the day when Lenin observed that Stalin had other defects, perhaps more formidable ones. And later on Stalin himself took a terrible revenge on his educated comrades.

There were other elements in what can be called the Russian tradition. There were the *rebels*, men like Stenka Razin and Pugachev, Cossack freebooters, peasant bandits. In the national consciousness there was the danger of anarchy, disorder, of chaos, in which life would be nasty, brutish and short, and from which Authority and Autocracy could be the only salvation. It is not just a matter of the historical memories of past centuries. In 1919 large areas were controlled by peasant bands of so-called 'greens', neither White nor Red, some of whom kept tame anarchist philosophers in their baggage train. Against this, too, the Stalin system came into being.

Then there was the old Russian mixture of indolence, drunkenness inefficiency and generosity. The indolent appeared in Russian literature under the name of 'Oblomov', the idle

gentleman. Lenin took the disease of *Oblomovism* seriously enough to fulminate against it at party meetings after his victory. He knew that the Russians needed organising, that they had to learn the ways of the west, of businesslike behaviour, of thrift, and he said so. He was very conscious, too, of the lack of educated people. For far too long the Tsars had held back education, had sought to prevent its spread to the 'lower classes'. After 1900 progress was rapid, in this as in so much else. Russian universities were good, the best scientists and doctors were excellent, many school teachers were skilled and devoted. But by the time of the revolution there were still few qualified people, and the World War, civil war and emigration were to deprive Russia of most of them by the time the Bolsheviks finally triumphed. The human material was coarse and ill-qualified. No one knew this better than Lenin. He hoped that revolution in more advanced countries would come to the rescue of backward Russia.

Finally, on this list of traditional attitudes there was a kind of nationalist exclusiveness. This took many forms. There was the religious idea of Moscow as the 'third Rome', taking over from Byzantium after its conquest by the Turks. Russia was the home of the true religion, Orthodoxy, *Pravoslavie*, a Church as national and nationalist as any in Christendom. Foreigners were almost always 'heathens' as well as dangerous or subversive. Anti-religious revolutionaries took over the notion of Russia as the country in which light and truth can be found, and eventually Stalin was to link together the internationalist communist creed with the glorification of the past and present of a Russian state. With these ideas there went, for many centuries, restrictions on the movement of foreigners, suspicion, passports, visas. Restrictions applied also to Russians. The poet Pushkin appealed in vain to Tsar Nicholas I to let him visit the West, and was reprimanded by the chief of the gendarmes for visiting the Caucasus without permission.

Indeed, many of the rules and regulations under which Soviet citizens live today have simply been taken over from the Tsars. They may seem shocking to us, but we have a different historical experience. Peasants could not move to town without having to obtain a passport; even a Russian could not move into Moscow or St Petersburg (Leningrad) without a residence permit. This was so under Nicholas II, it became so under Stalin. The habits of centuries assert themselves in two ways: they affect what the rulers

consider right and proper to do, and also what the ruled are accustomed to regard as normal and tolerable in the behaviour of Authority.

Of course many individual Russians did not and do not fit these generalisations. In any case, the old ways of life and thought were dissolving under the impact of the industrial and commercial developments which began in the 1860s and gathered rapid momentum in the 1890s. None the less, just as Tsardom remained little changed (despite the parliament or *Duma* decreed in 1905) until its fall, so some deeply Russian features survived, greatly to influence events after the revolution. Indeed, the revolution itself had the effect of expelling many of the liberal-European features which had begun to influence the body politic in the reign of the last Tsars, and so to strengthen traditional attitudes, even while adopting the most advanced and extreme revolutionary programmes.

### The Circumstances of Revolution

The Russian Empire at the turn of the century was a backward European country, but none the less a great power. Her industrial production was approaching that of France, though of course her population was five times greater. A working class was forming, some of it based in large modern factories erected with the help of foreign capital and foreign specialists, the rest in old-fashioned workshops. But most of it was of recent peasant origin, and the bulk of the population still consisted of peasants. Life was hard in the new industrial settlements, the workers discontented and ready to listen to socialist propagandists. The country was still ruled by the Tsar and by a bureaucracy responsible only to him.

In 1904 the government blundered into a war with Japan which ended in ignominious failure. This touched off a revolution in the cities and peasant riots in the villages. The Tsar was obliged to grant a constitution, but the Duma was found too radical and the stern suppression of the rebels was followed in 1907 by an electoral law ensuring a safe majority for the propertied classes. Industrial development was resumed, and 1913 was the culminating year of a boom period in agriculture and industry alike.

The government, shaken by the peasant riots of 1905, introduced far-reaching changes in the villages: the so-called

Stolypin reforms tried to break up the village commune to encourage better-off peasants to consolidate their holdings, to buy land, to become richer, and so more loyal to the throne. Two million households had become peasant-proprietors of the Western type by the time the war broke out in 1914. Who knows, perhaps Stolypin, the then Prime Minister, was right when he claimed that political stability under Tsardom would come given time. But he was assassinated in 1911, and war was soon to engulf Europe.

Stalin at this period was still a minor party functionary in the Caucasus. He attracted notice as a political bank robber, 'expropriating the expropriators' in aid of party funds. His political activities also attracted the attention of the police, and he was arrested and exiled. By the standards he later imposed, his treatment was mild: he was free to live as he pleased in a remote Siberian village, he was not in a prison or camp. He was, however, effectively isolated from political life.

What were Lenin and other revolutionaries hoping for before 1917? What were their programmes, what were the nature of their disagreements? These are not questions of abstract theory, they deeply affect our understanding of what the revolution was about, and many of the later events.

Marxist ideas played a very important role, and found a ready audience among Russian intellectuals. *Das Kapital* was translated first into Russian. Some revolutionaries disapproved. Heirs of the radical wing of the Slavophiles, they believed in a solution based on peasant communal traditions. They did not care for the dictatorship of the proletariat and disliked industrial civilisation. They attracted support, though of a rather passive kind, among the peasants. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party, founded in 1904, became the chief protagonist of these ideas.

The principal Marxist party was the Social-Democratic party, founded in 1898. This split in 1903 into the so-called Bolsheviks (or majority-men) and Mensheviks (minority-men), nicknames which were the result of one vote at one conference, but which stuck. Their chief bone of contention was apparently organisational: whether or not the party should be based upon a select group of revolutionary conspirators, or have a broader base. On to this difference were grafted others. Lenin's Bolsheviks came to attract the more ruthless and extreme elements and they became identified with a more revolutionary approach, though of course the Mensheviks too desired the overthrow of Tsardom. But before

1917 there was no strong distinction between the two factions, and many members in Russia were impatient of their leaders' quarrels, which seemed to them to be splitting hairs.

Brief mention must be made of another Marxist-inspired party, the Jewish Bund, which defended specifically Jewish working-class interests. There were Jews in high positions in all the other revolutionary parties, including the Bolsheviks. This was because they were literate, able, and frustrated by the discriminatory restrictions imposed on them by the Tsarist regime.

A full account of Marxist theories and of their various interpretations would require another book. Karl Marx believed that capitalism, with the private ownership of the means of production, had enabled the owners of capital to exploit the working class, or proletariat, who sold their labour power to the capitalists. The workers created value, but the capitalists appropriated part of the product for themselves. This system was a great advance on the feudalism that preceded it, liberating productive forces and greatly expanding the output and productive capacity of society. However, as Marx saw it, capitalism was bound to generate contradictions which would ultimately destroy it. As capitalism developed, so there would be ever greater concentration of capital in fewer hands, in great monopolistic corporations. The mass of the workers would remain poor. The small business men would be driven by the monopoly-capitalists out of business and into the ranks of the workers. The class struggle would become more acute. Workers would feel increasingly discontented and 'alienated' from the process of production and from society. There would also be deepening crises and slumps. A highly developed capitalism would then run into grave difficulties, and the way out would be socialism, ultimately communism, a form of society in which the means of production would belong to the people, and in which the 'anarchy' of the market would be replaced by planning. Marx foresaw a future ideal society in which goods would be abundant, everyone would be fully educated, jobs would be interchangeable, money and acquisitiveness would disappear, production would be for use and not for sale, all would be equal, freely contributing to social work to the best of their ability, and drawing whatever they needed from the abundant stocks of goods and services. There would then be no state, since the state is an organ of the exploiting and dominant class, no army, no police. Communism would be world-wide. This

happy future was, of course, not seen as an immediate prospect. At first there would be civil strife, revolution, and the mass of the people, the working class, would exercise the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' over the handful of capitalist exploiters. Then there would be a transition period of unknown length, after which socialism would come into existence.

Marx himself described his ideas as scientific, comparing them with so-called Utopian socialists, who merely dreamed of a future just society. Some elements of Marx's vision of the future state may seem Utopian, unreal, to most readers of this book, as they do to its author. However, Marx did have a powerful theory of history, based upon class struggle and material interest (though he did not deny that ideas affect events too), and he is regarded as one of the founders of modern sociological analysis. His attacks on the existing order were strong and effective, at a time when workers were indeed extremely poor and the gap between classes extremely wide. Although he himself made it clear that under capitalism production expanded mightily, his doctrines could be and were used to explain poverty in terms of exploitation, and his vision of a future just society inspired generations of socialists to strive for change through revolution, which would liberate mankind from oppression.

Marx did occasionally refer to the 'Asian mode of production', in which a despot assisted by courtiers and bureaucrats ruled over society (this rule being reinforced and explained by control over water for irrigation), but the bulk of his analysis related to developed capitalism and the contradictions of its maturity, out of which socialism would come.

Marxism was all very well, but what would its doctrines mean in peasant Russia? Did not Marx foretell proletarian revolution in developed Western countries? His doctrines envisaged the concentration of capital in few hands in advanced capitalist countries, the squeezing out of peasants, small traders, petty farmers, so that the mass of the people were proletarianised. Russia was not like that. The mass of the peasants were only beginning to emerge from the medieval forms of communal tenure into the consciousness of the virtues of private ownership. Indeed, as we shall see, most of them had still not made the mental transformation when the revolution broke out. Yet the communal institutions were decaying, were permeated by market relations; Lenin in his first major work had asserted this, arguing against

those who would base a future Russian revolution on peasant communalism.

What was the way out for a Marxist socialist? The moderate wing, i.e. most of the Mensheviks, argued that Russia was becoming ripe for a bourgeois revolution to overthrow the Tsar. Thereafter capitalism could develop in a democratic republic, and then only gradually would conditions ripen for socialism.

Lenin and most of his Bolshevik colleagues reasoned otherwise. Lenin's own thoughts underwent changes, and the following is only a brief summary of his ideas.

Firstly, the peasants may be backward and confused, but they wanted the lands still owned by the great landlords and the church. In this respect they were potentially revolutionary. True, once their land-hunger was assuaged, the better-off peasants would cease to be radical, and would oppose socialism, but Lenin hoped that the poorer peasants would make common cause with the working-class. The essential point, tactically, was that the peasants could play a vital part in the overthrow of the existing order. The moderates feared the brutality and ignorance of the dark masses; Lenin was prepared to ride the storm.

Secondly, he envisaged the Russian revolution as part of a world revolution. Backward Russia might be the weak link in the world imperialist chain. Then the chain must be broken at its weakest link, and the long-forecast revolutions in advanced Western economies would follow, and these countries would come to the aid of their fellow-socialists in Russia, and thereby resolve the contradictions inherent in trying to build socialism in a largely peasant country.

Thirdly, Lenin (unlike the Mensheviks) was temperamentally unwilling to wait for conditions to ripen. Marxism is at once a revolutionary and an evolutionary doctrine. History is made by men who take advantage of opportunities. Without favourable circumstances, the revolutionary will be crying in the wilderness, a mere Utopian rebel. But for Lenin it did not follow that one had to wait for social-economic circumstances to 'ripen'. One might seize power and *then* change society. To Mensheviks and other moderate Marxists this was heresy. This was standing Marxism on its head. But for him—and for such activist comrades as Stalin—the evolutionary and long-term view was the negation of what they stood for. They wanted power, they wanted a socialist transformation that would begin in their lifetime, whereas to wait

for a proletarian majority was to wait for many decades at least. However, the logical consequence of this approach was a prolonged period of rule by a minority party, while society was being altered from above.

But if this were the task of a conspiratorial and disciplined party, argued Trotsky (not then a Bolshevik), the party would substitute itself for the proletariat and in due course a dictator would substitute himself for the party. The danger of this kind of bureaucratic despotism existed indeed, and we shall see that the history of the revolution bore out this tendency, which was perhaps inherent in the Leninist concept of change organised and imposed from above in a predominantly peasant country.

Before 1917, the chances of a Bolshevik takeover seemed remote. Tsarism was being challenged, it is true, but Lenin and his comrades were not the most effective-looking of the challengers. The outbreak of war in 1914, and the severe defeats and privations suffered by Russia in 1915 and after, shook the regime. The weakness of Tsar Nicholas II, the power exercised by Rasputin, the corruption and inefficiency of the war machine, might have seemed to offer revolutionary opportunities, but even at the end of 1916 Lenin, in his Swiss exile, expressed the view that he might never see the revolution.

In the end, Tsardom fell almost of its own accord, without organised action by any of the revolutionary parties. A provisional government was set up in March 1917, and one of its first actions was to release political prisoners. Back from Siberia came Stalin and other exiles. A month later, Lenin returned from Switzerland through Germany in the famous 'sealed train'. General Ludendorff hoped that Lenin would help to weaken the Russian war effort. This proved to be the case, but in another way it was one of history's major miscalculations: Lenin in no way pursued German interests, and after his victory he and his cause challenged all that Ludendorff and his German fellow-conservatives stood for.

This is no place for yet another description of the events of 1917. At first Stalin and his comrades did not see the opportunities ahead. It needed Lenin in his famous April theses, to rally the party to a policy aimed at the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the seizure of power. The party adopted the slogans of 'peace' and 'land', and war-weary soldiers began mass desertions to return to their villages to participate in land seizures. Authority was breaking down. Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks in July, and

Kerensky, who emerged as leader of the Provisional Government, used his eloquence in vain to steady the situation. The Provisional Government adopted some progressive social legislation, but was unable to cope with the mounting chaos, to which the Bolsheviks made their contribution but which was only partially due to their activities. The government had no popular mandate. It shared power with the Soviets, rough-and-ready assemblies of workers', peasants', and soldiers' deputies, which were to give their name to the 'Soviet' system of government, but which until October 1917, were controlled by the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries. They were divided on the vital issue of how and whether to end the war, and felt unable to tackle the complex issue of land reform without a mandate from the people, expressed in a free vote for a Constituent Assembly. (Lenin, indeed, accused them of delaying elections to this Assembly, but when they were held and produced an anti-Bolshevik majority, he had no hesitation in closing it down.) The Provisional Government faced an impossible task, made no easier by its own disunity and inexperience, and by the fact that it lacked the semi-divine attributes of the Tsar without being able to acquire any other kind of legitimacy in the eyes of the masses. It steadily lost support among the workers and soldiers, while its socialist pretensions alienated the middle classes and most of the officers who began to seek a solution in military dictatorship. Lenin, by contrast, pursued single-mindedly the overthrow of the government, by whatever means were to hand. When he had majorities in the Soviets, he put forward the slogan 'All power to the Soviets'. Kerensky did not dare to call upon the forces of the Right, since as the confused plot around General Kornilov showed, they might well dispose of Kerensky himself. He drifted helplessly until he had to flee, leaving his ministers to be arrested in the Winter Palace (7 November 1917; this was 25 October by the old Julian calendar, then still in use, hence the 'October' revolution).

We need not say that the Bolshevik triumph was either inevitable or predestined, since the circumstances which brought it about (the war, the weakness of Tsar Nicholas II, the tactical genius of Lenin, and so on) would then have to be regarded as 'inevitable' too. What is surely true is that the Bolsheviks were able to seize power with relatively small forces, while the army and the bulk of the citizens looked on indifferently; the Provisional Government was defended at the end by a handful of

unenthusiastic soldiers, of which the largest unit was a women's battalion.

'We will now build socialism/announced Lenin to a wildly cheering crowd. What was it he thought he was building? What construction materials were to hand?

Lenin's political and economic ideas were said later to underlie Stalin's policies and actions. Stalin's future enemies—Trotsky, Bukharin and others—did not fail to claim that *they* were the true Leninists. It is therefore only right to devote a little space to his ideas.

Revolution? Yes. But what was to be done with power once it was won? Nowhere in Lenin's works, up to and including 1917, is he on record as favouring a one-party state. He seems to have sincerely believed that the state would wither away, and that until that time, while suppressing bourgeois counter-revolutionaries, the state would become the organ of the masses, without a professional bureaucracy, with every citizen taking his or her turn to run the government. Economic problems he saw mainly as problems of technique and of accountancy, workers' controlovertheeconomicapparatus being made possible (in his view) by industrial concentration and monopolistic cartels. By workers' control he did *not* mean that factories must be run by their workers: 'nothing so silly as railways to the railwaymen and tanneries to the tanners'. He envisaged the 'workers' controlling the whole economy collectively, in some way he never defined.

As for the peasants, at this stage Lenin found it tactically right to adopt the programme of which the peasant masses approved: legalisation of land seizures, toleration of the traditional peasant community's control over the land, and therefore cultivation based on the family, with land divided into strips within the age-old three-field system. Far from encouraging the extension of the Stolypin reform, the Bolsheviks treated the richer peasants who benefited from it as 'kulaks' ('fists', exploiters) and encouraged a class war against them. This may have done them some political good, but in terms of agricultural productivity this was a reactionary solution, which caused great complications later. Of course, collective cultivation was seen as the way out, but it was obvious that the peasants would oppose so radical a change in their lives and expectations, and it made little progress until it was imposed much later.

Lenin's ideas underwent changes as the bitter experience of government under conditions of civil war taught him and his comrades some unforgettable lessons. The influence of the dramatic years 1917–21 on the whole course of subsequent history, and on Stalinism, cannot possibly be overestimated. It was in the civil war that Stalin and men like Stalin emerged as leaders, while others became accustomed to harshness, cruelty, terror, which at this period were indeed essential for survival. At first, the leadership was overweighted with intellectuals, men of action indeed, but men with scruples, often with a European education: such were Bukharin, Lunacharsky, Kamenev, Krestinsky. Even when they approved of terror, it worried them. Lunacharsky was, indeed, so concerned about architecture that he resigned when the Kremlin, held at that moment by anti-Bolsheviks, was bombarded.

The tough men inevitably came to the fore. Many of the old devoted Bolsheviks perished in the fighting in the civil war. Many workers fled from the cold and hungry cities as industry ground to a halt and transport was disrupted. Anarcho-syndicalist and libertarian ideas were plainly inconsistent with the necessities of the time. Harsh discipline alone would serve the regime. The miseries of the war-communism period caused widespread discontent, and it soon became clear to the leadership that organised opposition was too dangerous to be tolerated. Indeed, opposition factions inside the Bolshevik party itself came to be looked upon as an impermissible luxury, and were formally banned in 1921. Lenin himself, as his articles and especially his letters bear evidence, played a notable role in imposing terror and eliminating dissent. No doubt this brilliant and ruthless political leader saw that the alternative was loss of power, and this would carry with it a high risk of being hanged, amid the bitterness and hatred of fratricidal strife. It is quite wrong to imagine that he was a gentle or tolerant man, though he certainly was not personally brutal. Similarly Trotsky could express such ideas as 'in defence of terrorism'.

Revolutionary terror was the task of the Cheka, a name made up of the Russian initial letters of Extraordinary Commission. Originally set up to deal with an admittedly desperate emergency, it killed and imprisoned the enemies of the revolution in the name of the freedom of mankind. Dzerzhinsky, its first chief, was said to suffer acutely every time he signed a death sentence. (He had much occasion for suffering.) Unfortunately, this secret police became

part of the Soviet system, and under various names—OGPU, NKVD, and now KGB—it played a role very different from that originally envisaged by those who made the revolution.

Civil war was accompanied by ‘war communism’. This was an attempt at total mobilisation of the exhausted and ruined country, central control over production, accompanied by a ban on private manufacture and private trade, and, most important, the imposition on the peasants of compulsory delivery of produce to the state. Money rapidly lost all value. Virtue was made of necessity, and all this was said (and was believed by many) to be the first stage of a direct transition to Communism. The peasants detested having to deliver food in exchange for ‘worthless pieces of paper’, and requisition squads scoured the countryside. Black markets flourished, illegal traders were seized and often shot. Party officials, lacking any experience of planning, made a hash of the task of running industry, a task made very hard for them by the demands and destruction of civil war. In this setting ruthless commissars fought, improvised, confiscated, executed. In this terrible school Stalin and most of his future henchmen learned their lessons about the art of government. They applied these lessons only too thoroughly.

### **‘NEP’ and the Rise of the Secretariat**

By the end of 1920 the civil war was over. The country was bled white, starving, ruined, much of industry was closed down, transport at a standstill, most townspeople had fled to stay with relatives in the country. The attempt to continue the policies of war communism, (an attempt which was made) threatened disaster, Revolts broke out, World Revolution was clearly not around the corner. The attempt in 1920 to advance into Poland, after defeating a Polish invasion, was a bitter experience: far from welcoming the Red Army as class brothers, Polish workers and peasants drove them back. Stalin was then the political chief of the Southern Army group; with Voroshilov, he ignored orders to advance northwards, thereby contributing to the success of the Polish attack in front of Warsaw. The Commander-in-Chief, Tukhachevsky, criticised them publicly for this, and this quite possibly contributed to his being shot in 1937, since Stalin had a long and vengeful memory.

How, then, was Russia to survive under Bolshevik rule, isolated in a largely hostile world? Lenin's answer was: to adopt a so-called New Economic Policy (NEP), thereby conciliating the peasant majority and making it possible to restore quickly the ruined economy. NEP was a compromise. The peasants, after paying tax, were left to dispose of their surpluses as they saw fit. Private trade was again permitted. Small-scale private manufacture, and petty craftsmen, were given the go-ahead. The state kept a firm grip on the 'commanding heights' of the economy: large-scale industry, large shops, most wholesale trade, banking, foreign trade. But state industry was told to produce for the market, state trusts and combines behaved commercially. There was little central planning. Though Lenin looked forward to the gradual spread of agricultural co-operatives, there was no attempt to herd the peasants into collectives.

Reconstruction was rapid and successful. But it was accompanied by a vice-like grip of the Bolshevik Party at all levels of political power. Economic liberalisation was not accompanied by political liberalisation. On the contrary, the economic rights given to private enterprise necessitated, in Lenin's eyes, the tightening of political controls. For he realised that spontaneous political and social forces in a predominantly peasant ('petty-bourgeois') country would give expression to interests inimical to socialism. So the advance would only be resumed if the Party kept power in its hands, and then only if the Party itself prevented the development of internal factions, which might express within its ranks the heretical opinions banned outside. Such, then, became the logic of the one-party state, the Party itself requiring to be kept pure by periodic cleansings. The snuffing out of democratic dissent outside required the elimination of freedom in the Party itself.

At first this logic was not clearly perceived, certainly not by Trotsky and most other future victims of totalitarianism. They only became alarmed when they saw how skilfully Stalin used the situation to further his own ambitions.

All this had some organisational consequences. The levers of power required an operational headquarters, which must also allocate the Party cadres to key posts throughout the country. The Party had been organised on a narrow, conspiratorial basis before the revolution. Many members were recruited in 1917, many more when it became clear that it was and would remain the ruling party. The experienced, literate and reliable kernel was not large.

These were the 'cadres', the full-time party men who were available to be rushed wherever they were needed, to take responsibility for the complex and daunting task of civil war, reconstruction, police and repression. They had to be used to supervise the trained but politically unreliable specialists, or the loyal but ignorant comrades fresh from factory, mine and Red-army battalion. One can see how vital it must have seemed to distribute these cadres among the various key posts to be filled, tasks to be performed. Who but the Secretariat of the Party could carry out this necessary task? Election, within or outside the Party, became increasingly insignificant. Appointment of disciplined strong-minded men, capable of forcing through Party policy in the given locality or sector, became the essential feature of the system. The criterion of success of those appointed became the way in which they carried out Party policy. The old catchphrase 'democratic centralism' expressed the idea that the Party members had to obey instructions issued by a freely elected leadership. Conspiratorial necessity limited the possibilities of election in pre-revolutionary times. Civil war and the struggle for survival made democratic forms within the party unworkable after the seizure of power. Though in the first years there was still, by later standards, free discussion and examples of real choice between Party candidates (for instance for central committee membership), centralisation and discipline came increasingly to dominate all party procedures.

The Secretariat, however, was at first ill-adapted to carry out its task. Intellectuals like Krestinsky and Preobrazhensky came and went. At a Party congress a delegate complained: 'Papers are all in confusion, there is not even a registry of incoming and outgoing correspondence'. To this Trotsky retorted: 'There is no bureaucracy!' The delegate replied: 'Indeed there is no bureaucracy, but there is chaos'.

In 1922, Stalin was brought in to run the Secretariat. Up to that date it was not considered to be a top leader's post. Lenin was still dominant in the Party, and the public at large, including Party members, knew far more about men like Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Rykov, than they did about Stalin. He had spent most of the civil war as a commissar with an army group and held the post of Commissar for Nationalities and also head of a 'workers' and peasants' inspection'. Lenin saw that a tough organiser was essential and appointed Stalin to the job in the knowledge that

these qualities were accompanied by certain defects. No doubt he hoped that he could keep these defects within bounds.

At this point accident, or rather the logic of medicine rather than of politics, takes over. Lenin was struck down by disease. By 1923 he was scarcely capable of work, and he was finished as a politically active figure well before he died in January 1924. In his last conscious months he became increasingly alarmed about the way things were going. He saw the growth of bureaucratisation, and within it the growth of the power of the Party Secretariat and particularly of Stalin. The Secretariat's power to shift Party members around could be and was being used to pack key committees, to send off to remote provinces anyone who spoke out of turn or who threatened Stalin's grip on Party organs. Of course at this period Stalin's personal power was still limited, he had to form alliances, manoeuvre, speak with tact to still-powerful comrades. Thus, with Lenin ill, he skilfully aligned himself with Zinoviev and others who disliked Trotsky's arrogance and mass appeal. Trotsky's supporters were shifted away from politically influential posts, and these came to be more and more in the hands of Stalin's associates. It became known that open support for Trotsky would cause harm to career prospects. Even in Trotsky's own People's Commissariat (War) men loyal to him were being shifted and replaced. Already then the Party's decisions were due less to debate or discussion than to pre-congress organisational manoeuvres, of which Stalin was a master. By the end of 1923 he had virtually destroyed Trotsky's entire political base. Yet his allies—who were nearly all later to become his victims—had no notion as to the consequences of their acts.

But the sick Lenin saw what might happen. It was a tragic scene: the founder of Bolshevism and of the Soviet State lying in his sick-bed, seeing what was going wrong, appreciating in particular the role Stalin might play, but already powerless to stop it. He sent letters, messages. He tried to encourage the victims of some particularly unpleasant ploy of Stalin's in his native Georgia. He dictated a testament, warning the Party. About Stalin this is what he wrote: 'Comrade Stalin having become the General Secretary has accumulated enormous powers in his hands and I am not sure whether he will be able to use this power with due care'. Shortly afterwards he added a much sharper postscript. 'Stalin is too rude, and this defect...is intolerable in the person of a general secretary.'

Stalin should therefore be replaced by one 'more tolerant, more loyal, less capricious...'

At his last gasp, outraged by insults proffered by Stalin to his wife, Krupskaya, Lenin went further, trying to break off all relations with Stalin. Conceivably he might yet have toppled him if he could have recovered sufficiently to address the Party as a whole, or its central committee. But this was not to be. Would history then have been different? Would another man have played Stalin's role? Or did Stalin dare to defy Lenin only because he knew that the old man would soon die? We will never know the answers to such questions. But we can clearly see that the rise of such as Stalin, and the power of the Secretariat, were not accidental.

Stalin brought to the Secretariat men personally loyal to him, who were to make their career alongside him. Among them, Molotov played a particularly significant role. Molotov served Stalin faithfully, using his considerable organisational gifts to effective purpose. But perhaps more important than individuals like Molotov was Stalin's appeal to middle-grade Party officials who had emerged in the civil war, after having served in minor capacities in the illegal pre-revolutionary Party in Russia. They were in the main semi-literate simple people, who understood little of the subtleties of the cosmopolitan intellectuals, of whom they were jealous. They were all for discipline, were pleased to be told what to do, were even more pleased if no one was allowed to argue with them when they did it. We shall see how important the mentality of these men was in explaining the growth and evolution of Stalinism.

The rise of Stalin and the Secretariat took place while the Soviet economy was being rapidly restored under the beneficent influence of NEP. He consolidated and extended his power in the course of a great debate, which was in one sense independent of the power struggle, since it reflected the basic dilemmas of a Marxist party in power in a peasant country. But of course the manoeuvres and counter-plots of politicians were intertwined with genuine perplexities. Where, they all said, do we go from here?

### The Great Debate: Socialism in One Country

'Oh ye, whose task it is

To put between high banks of concrete

Our country's stormy and anarchic waters,  
 More severe, even more grim than he,  
 You follow Lenin's road.'

In these words the poet Esenin addressed Lenin's heirs. Esenin himself loved old peasant Russia, and was shortly to commit suicide. Yet he felt instinctively what was to be done, and the coercive logic of the situation.

Let us look at the problems faced by Stalin, or by any other Bolshevik who happened to be in power. If, even in the briefest sketch, things look complicated, the reason is that they *were* exceedingly complicated. Yet to understand what Stalinism was all about, it is necessary to dwell on the problems of the twenties. To see him merely as a power-hungry despot is to see only one aspect of the truth.

There was the problem of *industrialisation*, begun under the Tsars, and disrupted by war and revolution. New and large investments were necessary to carry Russia forward, beyond reconstructing the industries which already existed in 1913. How were the necessary resources to be obtained? There were now no landlords, no large capitalists. Foreign capital was unlikely to be forthcoming, since the Bolsheviks had repudiated past debts. Accumulation and sacrifice would be at the expense of the people, and the bulk of the people were peasants.

Industrialisation had two other aspects. One was military: Russia had a feeble war industry and lacked steel and machinery-making capacity. Yet there she was, isolated in a hostile world. Security considerations provided a sense of urgency. The other aspect was political. Bolshevism rested on the idea of a working-class dictatorship. The working class was small. The survival of the regime in the long run, i.e. its political security, required a much larger proletariat, a large industry. Lenin once put the point vividly: 'Either the political conquests of Soviet power will perish, or we will place them upon an economic foundation. This does not now exist.'

The *peasant problem* was intimately linked with these considerations. The peasants, having seized the landlords' land in 1917-18, were now a conservative or at least non-socialist force, interested in higher prices for food and not in the least interested in

financing industrial development. The land was being cultivated in fragmented small-holdings, many of them divided into strips in medieval style, and by antique methods. The traditional peasant communal institution, known as the *mir* or the *obshchina*, controlled the use of the land and in effect ran the villages, rendering the local Soviets largely power-less, especially as the Party had few members in rural areas. Again this raised the issue of political security. But perhaps more important still was the contradiction between peasant agriculture and the needs of industrialisation. The peasants ate better, but sold less of their produce. This was a consequence of the elimination of land-lords and of most large peasant ('*kulak*') holdings by the revolution, as these had specialised on production for the market instead of their own subsistence.

True, the more enterprising peasants were once again consolidating their holdings, leasing their poorer neighbours' land, setting up as mini-capitalists. This more commercial attitude was economically desirable, no doubt, but appeared politically dangerous to the regime. Tons of ink were devoted to earnest argument about the *kulak* menace. Might it not lead to the domination of the countryside by men whose class interests were anti-Soviet? (It was hoped that the poorer peasants would show more sympathy for Soviet power.) But industrialisation requires more marketings of farm produce, to feed the growing towns and for export. How was it to be obtained?

These problems and dilemmas were an inescapable consequence of the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in a predominantly peasant country, under conditions of international isolation. Less clear was the choice of a way out.

At first all the leaders, including Trotsky, accepted NEP and its logic; Trotsky's criticisms were aimed at the 'regime in the party', its bureaucratisation. But after he was thrust out of the seats of power Trotsky criticised the party majority for being soft on *kulaks*, urged a speed-up in industrial investment and also attacked the record of the Communist International in Germany, China and elsewhere. His ally Preobrazhensky publicly advocated 'primitive socialist accumulation' at the peasants' expense, and argued that the effort to 'build socialism' in Russia would fail without the help of revolution in advanced countries.

The other wing of the Party was most clearly represented by Bukharin, with whom Stalin chose at that time to ally himself.

Bukharin believed in NEP, and in an alliance with the bulk of the peasantry. He was conciliatory to the better-off peasants, whom he wished to encourage to grow more produce for the market. This logically called for increased production (and imports) of industrial goods which the peasants wanted. In the long run he expected socialism to be built. 'Socialism in one country' was possible, he asserted, but by cautious stages, 'at the speed of the peasant nag'. To go faster was to endanger the alliance with the peasants and thereby to threaten the stability of the whole Soviet regime. He denounced Trotsky's policy as adventurist, and as lacking faith in Russia.

Trotsky's career has been the subject of a good biography in three volumes by Isaac Deutscher. He was a man of brilliant intellect and eloquence, who rose to prominence as chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet during the disorders of 1905, and subsequently took an independent line, disagreeing with Lenin on many issues. He helped devise the so-called theory of 'permanent revolution', in which the process of revolution not only spreads over the world but must occur continuously within each country. During the First World War, in exile, he took a position similar to Lenin's, and soon after his return to Russia in 1917 he joined the Bolshevik Party and was a leading co-worker of Lenin's during the seizure of power, becoming first Commissar of Foreign Affairs and then Commissar for War. In the latter capacity he played a major role in organising the Red Army in the civil war. Despite his eminence, or because of it, he was never 'accepted' by other Bolshevik leaders, and his somewhat arrogant manner did not help. As soon as Lenin's health failed, they tried by every means to discredit Trotsky. His past disagreements with Lenin were magnified, his doctrine of 'permanent revolution' presented as a threat to a hard-won respite; the masses had had enough of revolution.

Stalin accepted the principle of *socialism in one country*, and used Bukharin in the fight to destroy Trotsky and Zinoviev (who, when it was too late, joined Trotsky in defying his ex-ally Stalin). He never went as far as Bukharin in enunciating a pro-peasant policy, but preferred to bide his time, creating meanwhile a politically impregnable position, so that when the clash with Bukharin came the latter had no choice but meek surrender.

Stalin's doctrine had a ready appeal to Party members. Revolution in the West was unlikely for many years to come.

What business had the Bolsheviks to rule Russia unless they at least claimed to be building socialism? It was all very well for Trotsky to quote Lenin's words about world revolution and Russia's backwardness. The difficulties faced by an isolated backward Russia were a fact. Yet what was the ruling party to make of its power? The Mensheviks and the Western Social-Democrats had criticised them for seizing power 'prematurely', in a situation 'unripe' for socialism. Most Party members must have yearned for a leadership which would confirm their belief that their efforts were not in vain, that success, though difficult, was possible. Stalin could appeal also to a latent nationalism: Russia would show the world a new way of living. This theme too had deep roots: poets like Blok and Voloshin during the revolution, and in past centuries the religious ideologists of 'Moscow the Third Rome'. Truth and righteousness would come to the world from Soviet (or Holy) Russia.

Against such an appeal to political self-preservation, national tradition and harsh realities, Trotsky was powerless. Even without the clever manipulation by Stalin of the party machine, he had lost and he knew it. He saw himself the victim of the self-interest of the party-state bureaucracy, and of the weariness of the people, who had suffered much and were unwilling to listen to prophets of still more (indeed 'permanent') revolution. Stalin also proved himself to be a master of intrigue and political manoeuvring, arts in which Trotsky proved to be incompetent. So we must see his defeat as due to a combination of adverse circumstances and personal qualities and deficiencies, with the circumstances as the decisive factor.

By 1926, Trotsky, Zinoviev and the so-called 'left-opposition' were helpless and isolated in the Party. They persisted in playing to the rules, keeping disagreements within the Party which was now controlled by their enemies. For them the Party was all that mattered. Or maybe they understood too well that the mass of the people were hostile to all Bolsheviks, and so an appeal to the (peasant) majority against the ruling caucus made no sense. Anyway, it was not until November 1927 that a few desperate oppositionists went out into the streets to demonstrate, to appeal at least to the city 'proletariat', to their Party comrades. They were speedily silenced, many were exiled, Trotsky was sent to Alma Ata, in distant Central Asia, and was then exiled from the USSR to

Turkey, whence he wandered helplessly until a Stalinist assassin finished him with an ice-pick in distant Mexico in 1940.

Up to 1927, Stalin was in alliance with Bukharin. Bukharin had succeeded Zinoviev as the head of the Communist International, which in these days still seemed to matter, at least to the faithful. Rykov, an ally of Bukharin, was prime minister. Tomsy, also of the Bukharinist persuasion, was boss of the trade unions. Through cronies such as Molotov, Stalin controlled the Party Secretariat, but his control was not yet absolute. The supreme body at the top of the party, the Politbureau, could decide against him. Lenin's testament was known to them. They—or rather the Stalin-Bukharin majority—had decided to keep it secret, but it could be revived, and Stalin still could not afford to offend his allies, certainly not until Trotsky, Zinoviev and their friends were totally destroyed politically, and even then he had to tread warily. We must surmise that he deeply resented these limitations on his power and bided his time; later he would create and seize opportunities to rid himself of men on whose loyalty he could not rely, and who were intellectually his superiors. Bukharin was a man of undoubted brilliance, charm, eloquence, held in great affection and esteem by many party members (as Lenin had said). He was, however, no match for Stalin in political in-fighting.

While on one level Stalin could be seen as wanting the Bukharin group out of the way in order that he should achieve supreme power, it is true and perhaps more important to see that they clashed over policy. So we must return to the 'great debate', and go on looking at the very real dilemmas which faced the Bolsheviks in the mid-twenties.

NEP seemed to be a great economic success. By 1926 Soviet industry had reached the production levels of 1913. So now they had to move on, to plan the future economic development of Russia. Discussions raged about how best to proceed, at many levels, including the economic-technical one. How fast? In what direction? Should investments be channelled to agriculture, so as to buy modern machinery from the West, paying for it with farm exports? Or should Russia aim to make her own machinery at the earliest possible moment? Should industrial investment concentrate primarily on consumer goods industries or on heavy industry? Since there was much unemployment, might it not be wiser to invest in industries using a great deal of labour? What kind of planning should there be? What role should be reserved for prices

and market forces, which were of major importance under NEP? In trying to cope with these and other questions, Soviet economists can be said virtually to have invented development economics, anticipating many arguments which were first heard in the West when development and growth became fashionable, i.e. after the Second World War.

Economics as such is not our concern, but it is easy to see that many of the above questions had political aspects of the very highest importance. 'How fast' meant: 'how hard is it desirable or feasible to squeeze the peasants?' Bukharin, as has already been pointed out, wanted to avoid conflict with the peasants, which meant being content with a modest rate of capital accumulation and thereby slow growth. Priority for heavy industry not only meant the creation within Russia of the sinews of future growth, and of the basis of a modern arms industry, but also multiplied the sacrifices (no one can eat or wear steel or machine-tools) and once again brought the peasant question to the fore. A decision in favour of centralised planning and against market forces would—and did—change the political as well as the economic scene, impelling it towards what came to be called totalitarianism. So political issues, the personal power struggle and economic difficulties were all of great significance, and interpenetrated each other. This had some tragic results. Thus a non-Party 'technical' economist who advised that more should be invested in consumer goods industries could be labelled an ally of the Bukharinist faction and, when repression grew, he might be arrested and never seen again.

But this is to run ahead. Mass terror was still in the future. Party leaders who spoke their minds in 1926 did not expect to be jailed, and Stalin still had not the power to jail them.

Stalin was a secretive man, and his published works and speeches give us less insight into his real thoughts than is usual with politicians. Indeed he lied on a prodigious scale. Consequently we do not know when he made up his mind to part company with Bukharin and steal the policy clothes of the Trotskyist opposition. The most likely explanation is that he always regarded NEP as a forced, temporary compromise, that he preferred ruthless strong-arm methods to accommodation, that he wished to launch a major industrialisation drive as soon as it was practicable; therefore he had misgivings about Bukharin's line. We do know that when Bukharin went so far as to launch the slogan 'get rich' (i.e. encouraging the *kulaks* to produce more for the

market), Stalin said: 'This is not our policy'. However, tactical exigencies, and the country's weakness and vulnerability, inclined him to play along with the Bukharin group until Trotsky was eliminated. In 1927 he became strong enough to act on his own, though he still had to play his cards with caution. The party congresses in 1925 and 1927 had gone on formal record in favour of industrialisation and also of the growth of collectives in agriculture.

But these resolutions were not controversial. Questions of tempos and coercion were.

Already in 1926–7 a speed-up in investment began, and grain prices were kept low. Very quickly this caused trouble, and Stalin's reactions to the resultant crisis showed how his mind was working.

### **The Great Turning-Point**

People first became aware of a crisis in connection with grain procurements. Grain in Russia was then, and still is to some extent, 'the staff of life', and also a major export. In the winter of 1927–28 it became apparent that the peasants were not willing to sell enough grain at the official price. Many hoarded it to await higher prices, or fed their livestock better. In doing so, they behaved as economic men. It is absurd to 'blame' them though Stalin treated them as conspirators.

At the same time investments were increasing, some major construction projects were begun, ambitious versions of a five-year plan, the first in history, were being drafted. The impact of this on the economy was to create goods shortages. The reason for these shortages was that the new investments diverted resources into major construction projects, increasing at the same time the incomes of those working on them, while the supply of consumer goods could not match the increases in purchasing power. This, in a free-market economy, would have been reflected by inflationary price rises, but the state tried to keep prices low by strict controls, and this led to an imbalance between supply and demand. The NEP traders and petty manufacturers could cash in, by selling scarce goods at high prices. Increasingly they were treated by Party officials as black-marketeers; they were taxed arbitrarily, refused licences, denied materials and transport. This took time, but NEP was beginning to break up in the winter of 1927–28, with Stalin's

evident approval, even though in all official speeches the principles of NEP continued to be exalted. Bukharin had every cause to be worried.

Then came the flashpoint. Defying the Party's own rules, ignoring the Politbureau, acting directly through his cronies in the Party machine, Stalin dealt with the grain procurement problem by violence. Disregarding the law, the police set up road-blocks, seized peasant produce en route to the (legal) markets, confiscated 'surplus' and 'hoarded' grain. Stalin himself went to the Urals and Siberia to supervise the operation in these areas, and called this extortion technique 'the Urals-Siberian method'. In the light of subsequent arbitrariness and brutality, this might seem to us to be 'normal' behaviour. But in terms of NEP it was an outrage. Local officials were taken aback. Many thought that laws should be observed. Stalin reprimanded them: 'Suppose this is an emergency measure. What of it?... As for your prosecuting and judicial officials, they should be dismissed!'

Force, not economic means, not persuasion, had been used against the peasants. Not just against 'kulaks' or other real or imagined class enemies, but also against millions of so-called 'middle peasants', ordinary smallholders. NEP was doomed. A new coercive era was beginning.

Bukharin was horrified. A row blew up in the Politbureau. Stalin admitted excesses, retreated in words, allowed the publication of a resolution which apparently censured over-zealous application of policies designed to meet an emergency. But he kept his grip firmly on the apparatus of power, began a campaign to isolate and discredit the so-called 'right-wing deviationists', the name given by Stalin to anyone who sought to avoid a clash with the mass of the peasantry. He repeated the policy of requisitions. The helpless Bukharin saw at last—why did he not see it before?—what was coming to him. In despair he turned even to his old party enemy Kamenev, friend of Zinoviev and ally (in 1926–7) of Trotsky, and spoke with horror of this 'Genghis Khan', who would destroy them all. (Genghis Khan was a Tartar potentate who conquered China and terrorised much of Asia. His name is a byword in Russia for cruelty and massacre.) At last Bukharin saw that he had much more in common with the oppositionists he had helped to destroy than with his formidable ex-ally. It was much too late. He went under without being able to put up any fight.

The year 1928 saw the removal of moderate economic advisers. The able and original minds who were pioneers of economic development theory nearly all lost their jobs, and not long afterwards some of them were arrested. Kondratiev, Vainshtein, Feldman, Bazarov... the list is a long one. A few hardy individuals survived to be released after the death of Stalin. (I met one of these few in Moscow in 1969.)

This was also the first year of 'show trials', the much-publicised morality-story court cases in which the accused plead guilty to unlikely but politically 'convenient' offences. Various engineers confessed to plots and sabotage on behalf of foreign powers. But these were not yet Party men. That was to come later.

It was the last year in which open discussion of controversial issues was possible in the Party. It was in September of that year that Bukharin's 'Notes of an economist' was published, a carefully worded plea for moderation and balance in industrial planning. From then on, neither he nor any other Party leader—Stalin and his henchmen excepted—would get his thoughts into print. They could still gather and grumble, exchange letters, perhaps even conspire. But the last remaining vestige of the Party as a policy discussion forum faded away never to return, as Stalin consolidated his power and began to impose his conception of how Russia should be ruled, a conception we will be discussing and describing shortly.

In April 1929 the sixteenth Party Conference adopted the maximum version of the first five-year plan. This envisaged a huge leap forward in industrial construction. Industrial output was to rise by 180 per cent, investment by 228 per cent, consumption by almost 70 per cent, agricultural output by 55 per cent. All warnings that such figures were unrealistic were rejected as 'right-deviationist' heresy, if not treason. Stalin may or may not have believed that this plan was realisable. After all, there was no precedent in the world's economic history, and he may have genuinely thought that, by mobilising the Party and people to a supreme effort, there really were 'no fortresses the Bolsheviks cannot take', to cite a slogan of the period. Alternatively he may have believed that by these methods more could be achieved than by a balanced growth strategy, even if many of the targets were indeed unreal. Finally, he must have seen in this sort of approach great political virtues: it mobilised under his leadership a mass of Party members, to storm the heavens, to create a modern

industrial society. Let us not underestimate the genuine enthusiasm which this policy generated, especially among the younger of the faithful. Whether consciously or sub-consciously, Stalin must have welcomed the logic of this strategy: discipline, struggle, repression, organisation. He was at home in such a setting.

The year 1928, then, was a great turning-point. The realisation of this did not happen suddenly, it only gradually dawned even on well-informed citizens that a momentous turn was in progress. The more so as the tightly controlled press pretended that policy was unchanged, that NEP was still the basis of the Party line. Yet 'the revolution from above' was already beginning.

### *International affairs*

The shift from moderation to an apparently left-wing policy was reflected also in the Comintern, the Communist International set up on Lenin's inspiration in 1918, to act as the general staff of world revolution, and which from the first was dominated by the Soviet Party. It may be, as Trotsky alleged, that the 'socialism-in-one-country' doctrine was the negation of world-revolutionary doctrines. It was alleged by the opposition that the Stalin faction had been prone to seek alliances with moderates, with the TUC in Britain in 1926, with Chiang Kai-shek in China in 1926-27, alliances which ended in failure. Trotsky's analysis of Stalinist policy at home and abroad was, however, gravely defective. He thought that the subsiding of the revolutionary wave, and rule by a bureaucracy, led to conservatism. He did not anticipate Stalin's left turn, domestically or internationally.

Stalin understood little of foreign countries and gave little attention to the Comintern, but the logic of his political position impelled him not only to oust the Bukharinists from their posts in the International, but also to compel the latter to adopt in all countries the extremist line which Stalin was following in the USSR. But whereas in the USSR Stalin's policy was a real (if ruthless) response to real problems and frustrations, it made no sense outside Soviet borders.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern, in that same year 1928, obediently adopted the Stalinist theses. The international movement had followed the Soviet model, and eliminated genuine discussion in the name of Bolshevisation. Party leaders who were suspected of following a line of their own were expelled and

discredited: thus the powerful German Communist Party lost its leaders Brandler and Thalheimer, and was led to its ultimate disaster by obedient (if courageous) second-raters, such as Thaelmann. The Comintern, already weak, became from then onwards a somewhat insignificant branch of the Soviet foreign office. Lenin had spoken at congresses held in his lifetime. Stalin left matters in the hands of underlings and did not bother to attend.

The left turn was made in 1928, a year of boom in the capitalist world. It is true that a year later the great crash heralded a depression, but this circumstance brought about the rise not of Communism but of Fascism. Communist Parties were forced into the narrowest sectarian moulds. Alliances with Labour or Social-Democratic parties were forbidden. Slogans such as 'For Soviet Britain' were seriously launched. The Nazi-Fascist menace was ignored. The non-Communist left was 'the main enemy', the Social-Democrats were labelled 'social fascists'. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the sharp turn towards super-militant and sectarian policies was a mere by-product of the internal attack on Bukharin and the moderates. In this way Stalin was ensuring for his henchmen control over the Comintern, and with it also control over the world's Communist Parties, which he was cynically to use as a minor element in his political manoeuvres. It is difficult to read men's minds, especially minds as devious as Stalin's, but it may well be that he used the Comintern primarily for its effect not abroad but in the Soviet Union itself. The Party faithful took internationalism seriously. It would have been embarrassing if any Communist Party were to fall under the control of men who could not be trusted to follow the Kremlin's line.

This was of particular importance in 1928 and the immediately succeeding years because of the war scare. Official propaganda hammered away at the theme of imminent danger of invasion, intervention, counter-revolution. It is hard to say whether this was a view sincerely held. The enemy were seen as the 'Anglo-French imperialists', and also Japan. Japanese aggressive ambitions were real enough, though it was China rather than the Soviet Union which had reasons for fear. In relation to 'Chamberlain and Poincaré', cast for the role of villains (Sir Austen Chamberlain's monocle fitted the image particularly well), this was largely imaginary. True, Baldwin's government had broken off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1927, but no military action

against Russia was contemplated by Britain or France. War dangers were, however, very useful for Stalin's group. They reinforced pleas for unity and discipline, it discredited any oppositionists who rocked the boat at a dangerous time, and justified ambitious industrialisation tempos, especially for heavy industry.

Propagandist links between internal repression and the international line of the party were provided by the 'Menshevik' trial. This one was a much-publicised affair, involving a number of ex-Mensheviks, ranging from Sukhanov (who had written some fascinating memoirs on the revolution) to Bazarov and other leading economic planners. They were accused, among other things, of plotting with the leaders of the Second International (i.e. of the Labour and Social-Democratic parties of the West) to intervene, wreck, invade, etc.... So, in line with the super-left policies adopted in 1928, prominent on the list of enemies were the non-Communist left. Leon Blum, Ramsay MacDonald, Emile Vandervelde, leaders respectively of the French, British and Belgian Socialist (Labour) parties, were social-fascists. The real Fascists were largely ignored. Of course, the prisoners pleaded guilty, and provided evidence in the form of confessions which were false in most if not all respects. Thus one man claimed that an exiled Menshevik leader had visited Russia secretly to see him; yet at the date in question the leader was attending a conference in Amsterdam. This was an early example of a technique later to become all too common: a trial scenario written with far more regard for public relations than for facts, and the prisoners succumbing to pressure and admitting all sorts of crimes and conspiracies alleged by the prosecution. A detailed account of the preparation of this trial, written by the only survivor, is to be found in the book by Medvedev (see list of recommended reading). All an integral part of the Stalin system.

Already in 1930 the Nazis were plainly becoming a major menace in Germany. Yet until well after Hitler came to power, the official line insisted that the Social-Democrats were enemies, 'social fascists'. It is hard to judge how much help this was to the Nazis, but to say the least, it did nothing to help those who tried to resist them. Stalin had already reached a position in which no one but he could initiate or alter major policies, even in fields such as foreign relations in which his personal knowledge was small. It was becoming clear that he did not welcome advice which ran

counter to his prejudices; indeed such ‘advisers’ could suffer punishment. No doubt this helps to explain the obstinacy with which an erroneous line was persisted in. But more of this in due course.

Stalin won both because of his skill in manipulating the party machine which he controlled, and also because he succeeded in convincing many—probably a real and large majority—of Party members that his methods and policies could cope with the many problems of the time. The foreign menace was exaggerated, and the response to it illogical and counter-productive. However, the domestic crisis was real enough: Stalin’s proposed solutions seemed logical. At first the former left opposition, i.e. the exiled Trotskyists, welcomed the left turn as a recognition of the necessities of the situation. It was only later that they, and indeed many who thought they were Stalinists, paid with their lives for their misreading of Stalin’s character and motives.

## Chapter 2

### *The System Consolidated*

#### **The Revolution from Above**

Stalin achieved supreme power in the process of turning the political machine towards a total transformation of post-revolutionary Soviet society. NEP was based on an independent peasantry and a tolerated private trade and petty manufacture. Stalin decided to launch the first five-year plan, to collectivise the peasantry, to eliminate private enterprise in the urban sector. Just exactly when his decisions were taken is not yet clear. They could have been taken by stages, without any initial overall conscious strategy. Thus the investment requirements of the five-year plan could have precipitated the conflict with the peasants, and experience with requisitioning led to the conclusion that coercion was both necessary and feasible. Repeated requisitioning was bound to lead to adverse peasant reaction, in the shape of reduced production, and collectivisation then became a way of ensuring that there was effective party-state control over production and sales. It is possible to imagine that Stalin drifted into his 'revolution from above' by a series of responses to emergencies. It is also possible to assert that he knew what he was doing, and that his tactics, silences and evasions were due to the need to 'sell' his policies to a party which did not yet understand them and which, until the middle of 1929, might still resist them. Official Soviet histories to this day are reticent or misleading in dealing with this sensitive subject. One day, when archives are opened, we will know more about all this (or rather we *may* know, since even archives were affected by Stalin's reluctance to speak truthfully or to allow others to do so).

Collectivisation, altering as it did the lives of well over half the people, was a fact of tremendous importance. Its consequences were many: the political system, agriculture, the terror machine, the fate of many Party members, were all greatly affected. It is not for nothing that sensitive men such as Pasternak later ascribed many evils of the system to collectivisation. It was *not* just a matter of reorganising the methods of cultivation. The essential elements which must be borne in mind are listed below.

*Firstly*, Stalin launched mass collectivisation suddenly and without any preparation, in his declaration of 7 November 1929. There had been no committees to inquire about how best to collectivise, or how such farms should be run. There was no Party conference, congress, meeting, at which the policy could be explained to members. Therefore no one, neither local officials nor peasantry, knew what was about to happen.

*Secondly*, Stalin claimed that the bulk of the 'middle peasants' were voluntarily joining the collectives. This was simply a lie, but it was a compulsory lie. It was also a necessary one. Not only Engels but also Lenin had warned against the use of force against the peasant masses. But Stalin *was* using force against the peasant masses. Therefore, since there could be no mass collectivisation without mass coercion, it was necessary to claim that it was really a voluntary process. This led to all kinds of tragi-comic contradictions: thus the Commissar for Agriculture, Yakovlev, declared that force was not to be used, but local leaders were none the less told to achieve 100 per cent collective membership in weeks or even days. How this was to be done without force was left unclear.

*Thirdly*, collectivisation was carried through by a predominantly urban Party machine. There were very few Party members in the villages. Ignorant zealots, or well-meaning townsmen with no knowledge of rural problems, had no common language with the peasants. Many thought that the peasants were stupid people who did not know what was good for them. Many sincerely believed that the promised tractors and modern methods, plus the abolition of the medieval strips, would lead quickly to so big an upsurge of agricultural output that everyone would be better off. Still others just did what they hoped would accord with their superiors' wishes. One Party official told them: 'Remember that if you overdo things and are arrested, you will have been arrested for your

revolutionary work'. With good or bad conscience, the Party's cadres used coercion on an unprecedented scale.

*Fourthly*, Stalin himself intervened to make excesses inevitable. According to evidence published recently by Soviet scholars, he refused to allow any exemptions: all livestock was to be collectivised (he was later to retreat from this position, but only after extremely severe damage was done). Worse still, he decreed 'dekulakisation'. This means uprooting the so-called kulaks, the better-off peasants, breaking up families, sending millions of people to distant exile or labour camps. This was done by no sort of legal process, but on the basis of 'class analysis' (i.e. by category: you have two horses and four cows, then you are a kulak, therefore your goods are confiscated and you will be deported). It was used also as a means of enforcing collectivisation (these were the so-called 'ideological kulaks', i.e. those who opposed the official policy, whether they were 'rich' or poor). A Soviet scholar, Ivnitsky, wrote that instead of being a consequence of collectivisation, 'dekulakisation' became its cause; in other words, to punish and to strike fear into those who did not want to join collectives. There had been some opposition to these drastic measures, but Stalin cut it short with a vicious speech which contained the words 'when the head is off one does not mourn for the hair'. Softness was equated with disloyalty.

There developed another feature peculiar to Stalinist methods, which was to have terrible consequences. In the political as in the economic field, the party under Stalin's leadership enforced a kind of guilt by association perhaps unique in history. Men could be accused of not just being a Bukharinist or right-wing deviationist, but of 'appeasement' towards them, or of not opposing those who favoured a more tolerant attitude. Some found themselves in prison because, in not fighting this or that deviation, they 'objectively' provided 'grist to the mill' for potential enemies of the regime. Others were arrested for not having denounced some acquaintance who had been arrested for any of the above reasons. Later on the great purges were to eliminate all these categories, expanded to include relatives, colleagues, subordinates, friends, and associates of friends and so on. Analogously, there were some who were labelled 'kulak-sympathisers' or 'sub-kulak' (*podkulachnik*), which could be made to cover any person or Party member who might think that the official peasant policy was too harsh. Its harshness, of course, created enemies, and caused doubts,

dismay, opposition. The so-called secret or political police (OGPU, later relabelled NKVD, or Peoples' Commissariat of Internal Affairs) came increasingly into the picture, becoming more and more indispensable as real and imaginary enemies multiplied. It was used not only against the peasants or other 'laymen' but now against Party members also.

It was in this atmosphere that the peasants were forced into collectives, amid scenes of violence and repression which have yet to be adequately documented. Eye-witnesses have spoken of threats, confiscations, cruelty, of families made destitute and then sent a thousand and more miles east in cattle trucks. There were protests too. In some areas there was particularly strong resistance. These included the relatively well-off peasants of the black-earth belt in the Ukraine and the north Caucasus, and the pastoral peoples of Kazakhstan and other backward regions in Asia. Pressure was not everywhere equal, partly because the Party was ordered to concentrate on some areas, partly because local officials reacted differently to orders. But collectivisation was bitterly resented. In the months January, February and early March 1930 Stalin's officials made rapid headway, collectivising nearly 60 per cent of all the 25 million peasant households.

The damage this might do to the spring sowing, and the danger of outright rebellion, caused Stalin to call a halt. The way in which he did it was consistent with his cynicism as a political operator, but it shocked many of his comrades. He published an article entitled 'Dizzy with success'. Local comrades were blamed for excesses. Why did they use force, when the whole process was supposed to be voluntary? Why did they collectivise all livestock? Collectivisation should be consolidated on a sound basis. Not a word to suggest that coercion was inspired, indeed ordered, by Moscow.

The peasants took advantage of this declaration by walking out of the collectives in millions. The percentage of peasant households collectivised quickly fell to 23 per cent. But Stalin ordered pressure to be resumed. By threats, more deportations, arbitrary taxes, overassessment for compulsory deliveries, the peasants were gradually made to return to the hated collectives. As the government paid low prices for the produce which they took from the farms, their incomes were small and the peasants remained exceedingly poor. However, they were politically helpless. By 1934 the struggle was virtually over. The cost was huge. Livestock was

slaughtered, or died of neglect in the collectives, with catastrophic results, as the following figures show:

	<i>(Million head)</i>	
	1928	1933
Cattle	70.5	38.4
Pigs	26.0	12.1
Sheep and goats	146.7	50.2

In Kazakhstan, a backward and pastoral republic, the sheep population was almost wiped out (and with it many of the Kazakhs too).

	1928	1935
Sheep and goats	19.2	2.6

Large increases in state procurements, and poor harvests, left the peasants with too little to keep body and soul together. In the terrible period 1932–3 a great many died. Local Party secretaries who warned of the danger of hunger, who tried to protect ‘their’ peasants from excessive requisitioning, were dismissed or arrested as right-wing deviationists. To the credit of the Party officials of those days, the number of such dismissals and arrests was large, especially in the north Caucasus and the Ukraine. Their successors were more ruthless, and millions died of hunger. By then Stalinist rules applied to the news media, and not a word about mass starvation appeared in the press at the time, even in areas where corpses were littering the streets. Indeed Soviet official histories did not mention this dreadful famine at all, until very recently.

It is sometimes said that Stalin deliberately starved the peasants into submission. This would not be quite fair. He faced resistance from the peasants, he thought that they were deliberately withholding supplies, the needs of the towns and of export were pressing. So he pressed. Indeed, we now know that he told the Politbureau in November 1932 that ‘certain groups of collective farms and peasants’ had to be dealt a ‘devastating blow’, to impose discipline and authority. Perhaps he thought the peasants had secret stocks and would survive. In a letter to the novelist Sholokhov, published much later, Stalin spoke of ‘a war of life and death’. He told Churchill at one of their wartime meetings that the

struggle with the peasantry had been a terrible one, like the battle with Nazi Germany. After 1928 Stalin never visited villages, and may not have known the horrors that were being inflicted on peasants in certain areas. Be all that as it may, those millions of deaths were the consequences of his policy, and it was on his orders that ruthlessness became standard procedure. 'Without coercion we will not get the grain and so it hardly matters if we overdo things a little'; thus spoke one of his lieutenants in the Ukraine. At least it showed to everyone that Stalin and his henchmen would recoil at nothing. Many sincere and tough Party members were horrified, but few had the courage to say so in the prevailing political atmosphere. Stalin's wife, Allilueva, is said to have committed suicide as a protest against what was going on. How many died as a result of famine, and in the 'kulak' deportations that preceded it? Conquest's estimates (in his *Harvest of Sorrow*) have been criticised as too high, but certainly many millions perished, with Ukrainian peasants particularly hard hit. My own calculations point to a 'demographic gap' of some 10 million between 1930 and 1937, i.e. there would have been 10 million more people alive if the birth and death rates had been normal, but of course birth rates fell steeply in these very hard years.

While this coercion operation was in progress in the villages, the industrial five-year plan was speeded up and expanded. 'Let us fulfil the five-year plan in four years', thus went the slogan. As 1930 proceeded, more and more targets were revised upwards to ludicrous levels. Peasants fleeing collectivisation joined building brigades or staffed the new factories. They were inefficient, they smashed machines for lack of elementary training. Some were sullen and resentful, and real sabotage must have occurred, alongside innumerable reports of invented plots and treason. Others were fired with enthusiasm. Youngsters living in tents in the Siberian cold built great new factories, such as the Magnitogorsk complex, with few tools and much hard work. Productivity may have been low, waste of resources all too common, sound economic principles neglected. Yet this was a great forward leap, 'the construction of socialism', which would make Russia a great industrial power. Meanwhile what was happening in the West? Mass unemployment, financial collapse, industrial decline. Whatever was wrong with Soviet industry, it was growing, on a new basis of centralised planning. What was

there that the West could teach Stalin? Could he learn from Herbert Hoover, the American President who was presiding over the greatest depression known in the history of Western industrial society? Could he learn from Western economics, which was totally uninterested, in those days, in growth or development? No wonder some Western citizens as well as Russians thought that Stalin's way was the best way. Many Western experts came to help in the process of construction.

However, the first five-year plan was overambitious even without upward amendment. Attempts to aim for impossible targets created bottlenecks, shortages, confusion. Many vast projects remained unfinished for lack of materials, skilled labour, transport. Investment grew at a tempo far exceeding anything advocated by Trotskyists in past years, and far exceeding practicable and feasible limits. Central planners imposed priorities, and the ordinary citizen's needs came lowest on the list. Tough administrators issued orders from Moscow, cajoled, threatened. Failure was all too often treated as sabotage or treason. There evolved a style of conducting affairs, which is part of the essence of Stalinism and of which much more will have to be said. There evolved also a systematic central control over production and resource use, which did not exist in the twenties and which many now regard as typical of socialist planning.

Rationing of essential foodstuffs was introduced for urban consumers by the end of 1929, life became exceedingly difficult. The great investment drive led to inflation. Goods, at fixed prices, disappeared. There developed a variety of 'closed shops', available only to employees of priority sectors, or to those with rank and influence. 'Commercial' stores were opened, to sell rationed goods at very high prices. Others sold scarce goods only for foreign currency or gold. A market for peasant surpluses was tolerated, but in near-famine conditions of 1932-33 prices were sky-high. Quality declined. Service worsened. 'Take what you're given, don't argue and don't hold up the queue'; that is how a Soviet writer described the situation of the customer. Consumer goods production suffered from shortages of materials, which were diverted to priority industries, and also from the elimination of small private businesses and most craftsmen. Food supplies were adversely affected by the consequences of collectivisation. Everything was affected by transport bottlenecks, which led to the railways being put virtually under martial law.

At the end of 1932 the five-year plan was declared fulfilled amid a flourish of trumpets. The figures were suspect. Key industrial sectors such as steel were far behind schedule. True, much had been done, and many large projects completed in the better years 1934–36 were begun during the first plan period. But the country was impoverished and exhausted. The year 1933 was hard not only in the villages. The workers too suffered, from food shortages, queues, and, finally, from rapidly rising retail prices, which outran increases in money wages. Housing became exceedingly short and overcrowded.

Typical of Stalin was a speech he made when conditions of life had reached a very low point: 'It is clear', he said, 'that the workers' living standards are rising all the time. Anyone who denies this is an enemy of Soviet power.' An excellent example of the technique of the big lie, backed by police terror. An example, too, of how to stop empirical social research: who would dare inquire into cost of living indices and real wages? No wonder it was thought politic to stop publishing such statistics. Of course it is true that statesmen do not always speak the truth, but most others, Lenin included, would have talked about the necessity of sacrifices, rather than blandly denying that any sacrifices existed.

### **Privilege, Inequality, Hierarchy, Discipline**

Shortage, rationing, allocation, give great power to those who control. This danger was recognised by Lenin, and to guard against the corrupting effects of power he insisted on the so-called 'Party maximum'. That is to say, no Party member was to receive a salary higher than that of a skilled worker. Under the conditions of NEP, this principle meant something. But when there are 'administered' shortages, what matters is not so much the salary but the results of influence. Price-controlled and cheap goods, or rooms, or railway tickets, went to those who had the influence to get them.

At first this might seem justifiable on grounds of some sort of equity. Officials who worked hard for the common good ought not to be made to queue for necessities, just as army commanders can expect to have their food served to them or even their boots cleaned. However, what might in its origins be a necessary privilege began to be taken as a right. Such a trend is natural. What was not so natural was Stalin's reaction to it. In all sorts of

ways he made it clear that dispensing privilege was an essential part of the power-mechanism, indeed of the Soviet system itself. Social historians of the future are bound to see in it a cornerstone of Stalinism.

In 1931 he made an attack on 'petty-bourgeois egalitarianism', demanding a substantial increase on wage differentials, and increases in pay of managers, engineers, officials. The 'party maximum' was abolished. All this could be justified in terms of incentives: human skills were in very short supply, and rewards were needed for those who stayed put and learned a trade. But inequalities became not only very large but were implanted in the official ideology by Stalin personally.

With the gradual abolition of rationing in 1934-35, accompanied by large price increases, income differentials became the principal indicator of real purchasing power. But privilege continued along-side, since some goods remained scarce and could be obtained only by influence. The practice also developed of issuing extra pay to officials above a given rank, this being given in a plain envelope and without any accounting. These things continued for decades, and indeed special 'closed shops' for the elite are still with us today. Trade unions, which in earlier years might have protested, were reduced to total impotence or became part of the machinery of government.

It was also under Stalin that society became increasingly organised hierarchically. Rank-consciousness is a Russian tradition, but the old ways had been apparently decisively disrupted by the revolution. The needs of government led inevitably to some restoration of civil-service ranks, just as the army needed officers and sergeants. The old names were abolished, ministers were relabelled 'peoples' commissars', officers were not called officers, uniforms were changed and simplified. Yet gradually the old ways returned. In vain Lenin in his last years fulminated against 'bureaucracy' and the resurgent habits of old officialdom. He did not foresee that the new officialdom would develop habits too.

The scope of Party and state control was not all-pervasive in the twenties because of a degree of pluralism; the Party machine did not control all organs of opinion, it was still possible for non-Bolsheviks to get a hearing and a publisher, and the Party itself still permitted some argument within its ranks. Among the leaders were brilliant intellectuals, who put their viewpoints on a high and subtle level. Even the slower-witted Stalin and his comrades had to

discuss, to argue. He developed a technique of simplifying issues, of talking in the language of catechism, which was popular with the semi-educated Party secretaries. But he could not, in those days, indulge in the kinds of lies and prevarications which are only possible when no one dares to answer back.

In the twenties publications were censored, true, but there was a range of fundamental controversy. Men could and did make a name for themselves without having an official position of consequence. This was true of some philosophers, journalists, economists, historians. Academic life was still largely controlled by professors who had made their reputations in pre-revolutionary times. Literature was the scene of controversy, many schools contended. Non-Communist writers, such as Pilnyak, Zamyatin, Bulgakov, Mandelshtam, Akhmatova, were still printed. Satire flourished. In modern painting, architecture, theatre, Russia was among the world's leaders. People could still occasionally travel abroad unofficially.

There is no need to idealise the twenties, since it is not hard to show that many evils of later decades were already growing. But the contrast with the thirties is striking. Anyone who can read Russian can note it for himself, by just reading the publications of 1926, say, and comparing them with 1934 or any subsequent year. By then writers, academicians, philosophers, had been regimented. The various writers' groups were abolished and a single Union of Soviet Writers was formed. Only one organisation was recognised in all fields, and only one 'correct' doctrine, defined by the Party. All others were illegal, incorrect, heretical.

As for the style of discussion, Stalin himself set the tone with a sharp reprimand, in 1931, to an editor of a periodical, who chose to allow some expression of a view other than that approved of by the leadership. Error must be castigated, and shown to be due to enemy machinations. Stalin's henchmen saw to it that editors and censors understood the message, and judges, lawyers and policemen too. Whichever did not follow the line was liable to be held guilty of 'objectively' aiding the enemies of the Party by not effectively opposing their treasonable plots.

The language even of academic discussion became abusive and violent. An organ of the Academy accused one unfortunate (and very abstract) economic theorist, I. Rubin, of being an agent of the bourgeoisie and the Second-International interventionists. A pair of writers who advocated a somewhat softer policy towards the

peasants were accused (in the same journal) of sabotage and injecting horses with meningitis. Wreckers were to be sought everywhere. Dissent was plainly a crime.

All this had many consequences, not least for the structure and influence of rank. The state owned most of the instruments of production, so almost everyone who was not a collective farmer was employed by some state agency or other. Influence of any kind could be wielded only within officially recognised organisations and through official channels, and any published statement had to follow the line laid down. Obviously, this kind of society provided a tremendous field of power for holders of rank in Party and government. Conversely, to run such a society it was essential to organise the ruling stratum into ranks and hierarchies. Members of the ruling group developed a very strong sense of self-interest in suppressing any challenge from outside. It was not just by Stalin's orders that they eliminated all unofficial groups and ideas. The doctrine of the withering away of the state was forgotten, and Stalin was later to assert the opposite, that the state required to be strengthened.

In doing all this, Stalin and his many supporters perhaps subconsciously reflected another Russian tradition. The service gentry, the *dvoryane*, were brought into being by the Tsars, and owed their status to rank in the service of the state. The new official class, holding rank in party and state, owed it more and more to Stalin and his immediate entourage. Like their Tsarist forebears, they came to resent any pretensions to status except through rank. When Russia's greatest poet, Pushkin, was killed in 1837 and people came to pay their respects, a leading courtier of the day was said to have remarked: 'Why such a fuss about a mere junior gentleman of the bedchamber?' (that was Pushkin's court rank). In 1937 Stalin's courtiers were to pay as little attention to unofficial literary merit, with some tragic results.

Men of rank in the Soviet Union happen to be identifiable through the appointments system, which was developed by and under Stalin. Known in Russia as *nomenklatura*, it is a list of posts of political, social and economic significance, with alongside them the name of the Party committee responsible for the appointment. A man deemed worthy to hold a post on the *nomenklatura* is known by the designation *nomenklaturnyi rabotnik*, or official on the list. A British analogy would be administrative civil servant, except that the Soviet list, like the power of the Soviet party, is all-

embracing. It covers officers of the Party itself, civil servants, ministers, mayors, secretaries of musicians' societies, censors, trade union officials, generals, managers, editors, collective-farm chairmen. No matter who is supposed to appoint or 'elect' them, a Party committee (in all important instances the personnel department of the *central* committee) is in fact the body which hires and fires. Or at the very least no hiring and firing can take place without its approval. The totality of all *nomenklatura* personnel covers almost every one that matters in the USSR. They are the 'Establishment' in most senses of that word. They are the elite, the ruling stratum. One can be a well-paid tenor, ballerina or nuclear physicist without being on the list, true. But these are exceptions, and even the exceptions are subject to a Party veto.

The pyramid of 'elected' Soviets which nominally ruled Russia since the revolution had lost all effective power with the coming of the one-party state, i.e. by the end of the civil war. Their role in the early thirties was so negligible that even the formalities ceased to be observed.

But what about the Party itself? With all oppositionists cowed, exiled or imprisoned, was it already an obedient instrument in Stalin's hands? Could he rely on it to glorify him, to mobilise and coerce the passive and frightened people in his name? Was it disciplined, or might it perhaps kick back at him? Members of the Party had gone through a very difficult time during the period of the 'revolution from above' (this was Stalin's own phrase, by the way). We shall see that they were not yet totally free of the sin of independent thinking, and events showed that in taking belated action to assert themselves most of the delegates to the Party congress of 1934 were condemning themselves to death.

### The Seventeenth Congress and the Great Terror

The year 1934 brought some relief to a hard-pressed population. The harvest was fair. Output of consumer goods was rising. Stalin declared that 'life was getting better, comrades, life was getting joyous'. There was in fact very little joy, but no more famine. Things were getting better. The crisis was over. The peasants were almost all collectivised. The foundations of a great modern industrial structure were laid. Great sacrifices now called for some reward. Surely, after the strains of the last few years, relaxation was called for, and also reconciliation with those ex-oppositionists

who were prepared to collaborate in the building of a new and better Soviet Union.

A Party Congress, the seventeenth, met in January/February 1934, and called itself the 'congress of victors'. Stalin made the keynote speech and was duly cheered. Everyone echoed the mass media's praises of his wisdom. He was the leader, the 'architect of our victories'. Ex-oppositionists who were allowed to speak (Tomsky, Preobrazhensky) admitted errors, expressed support for Stalin. Harmony seemed to reign.

Yet an odd thing happened, noticed by few at the time. A popular and tough Party boss, Kirov, was at this time the Secretary in Leningrad. He made a speech, full of optimism. 'Our successes really are immense. The devil take it, to speak frankly, one so wants to live and live! After all, look and see what is going on! It's a fact!' He was cheered to the echo. Delegates wanted him promoted to Moscow and this was said to be connected with their desire to reduce Stalin's immense powers. According to Mikoyan's memoirs, Kirov obtained more votes than Stalin in the elections to the central committee (and Kaganovich was told to falsify the result). It is said that Kirov wanted to relax the pressures, and that a majority of the Congress, and of the central committee it elected, were in favour of this. Stalin, it seems, sensed a conspiracy. Maybe we will learn one day that the majority that could have voted to clip his wings comprised those who were later to be shot on Stalin's orders.

In December 1934 Kirov was murdered in Leningrad under obscure circumstances. Stalin was one of his pall-bearers. It is widely believed that the murder was facilitated (to put it no stronger) by secret police officials sent to Leningrad for the purpose by Yagoda (the head of the NKVD), either in the knowledge that this would please Stalin or at Stalin's behest. Anyhow, he used the murder to great effect. The murder was denounced as the work of terrorists. Legal procedures were suspended. Summary executions and mass arrests and deportations followed. Zinoviev and Kamenev, helpless and out of effective political life, were forced to admit to a vague political complicity. A lull during 1935 gave grounds for some optimism. Economic conditions were improving, and Stalin himself was committed to a new constitution, 'the most democratic in the world', which was then in draft. In that year also the Seventh (and last) Congress of the Comintern switched at long last to an anti-Fascist line, as the

reality of the Nazi menace was finally understood. The USSR joined the League of Nations and tried to secure alliances with the west European democracies. The former 'social fascists' were now wooed in a Popular-Front tactic. But then in 1936, the terror machine was unleashed. For the next two years, the Soviet Union was convulsed by the 'great purge', the scale of which still leaves one breathless and incredulous.

The world knew about it all through the series of show trials. Honoured leaders of the revolution, such as Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Pyatakov, Rakovsky, Krestinsky, were tried in public and confessed to unimaginable crimes. They, under instructions from 'Judas-Trotsky' and in association with the German and Japanese intelligence services, planned wrecking and diversionism. They caused railway and mining accidents, food shortages, industrial breakdowns; they planned the murder of Kirov, plotted against the lives of Stalin, Molotov and other leaders. They no longer had a political programme, they were—and had for many years been—mere spies and despicable traitors, who deserved to be shot without mercy.

Foreigners wondered what made these old and courageous revolutionaries confess. Was it an act of loyalty to the Party to which they had devoted their lives? Or was it torture, drugs, threats to wives and children? The charges themselves were too fantastic for any but dupes to take seriously, but some dupes were found in the West. The ordinary Russian people may have believed some of the 'evidence', and those capable of thinking for themselves were terrified by what they saw and read. In fact, as Khrushchev told us in 1956, tortures and beatings were used, and one must also allow for the demoralisation of men being destroyed by 'their' Party. That, and the fact that those unwilling to confess were anyway destroyed, explained the behaviour of these men reasonably well. Not all played their part as the script required. Bukharin tied the odious prosecutor Vyshinsky in knots on occasion, and Krestinsky did once withdraw his confession: the session was suspended, and on his return to court he had been made to change his mind. There is no doubt at all that this whole scenario was a product of Stalin's vengeful imagination.

Yet all this was but a tiny fraction of the terror. Most of it produced no public trials, confessions remained in secret files. Who was involved in this great sweep of coercion, apart from the former oppositionists?

Firstly, leading Party members, including the members of Stalin's own faction, which dominated the seventeenth Congress, who were thought 'unreliable'. By this I mean unreliable supporters of Stalin, who either voted to limit his powers in 1934, or who tried to stop the terror machine. This category includes, as we now know, the *large* majority of the central committee (at least 100 out of 130, including alternate members i.e. those who could attend without the right to vote) and of the delegates to the Congress. Here we find such men as Eikhe, Chubar, Postyshev, Kosior, Mezhlauk, and many others, including a high proportion of persons of ministerial rank, from the Commissar of Finance and the head of Gosplan downwards. The Party received a tremendous blow. Not for nothing did Leonard Schapiro call the relevant chapter of his history 'Stalin's victory over the Party'.

Secondly, the large majority of senior military officers, headed by the talented Tukhachevsky. They were supposed to have been tried by the secret court-martial, but the majority of those who were alleged to have tried them were themselves arrested shortly afterwards (Bliukher, Yegorov, etc.). All admirals commanding fleets, and all their replacements, were shot. Thousands of officers were sent to camps. The charge was treason.

Thirdly, a high proportion of managers at all levels, leading scientists, engineers; the economic damage so done is advanced as a principal explanation of the virtual cessation of Soviet economic growth in and after 1937.

Fourthly, almost every Party and state leader in every national republic within the USSR, on charges of treason, bourgeois nationalism, etc.

Fifthly, the man who headed the NKVD in 1936, Yagoda, was himself arrested the next year, and most senior police officials perished with him.

Sixthly, anyone with contacts abroad, including 'legitimate' ones: diplomats, foreign trade officials, intelligence agents, and many foreign Communist leaders resident in Russia (e.g. Bela Kun of Hungary, Remmele and Neumann of Germany, virtually *all* the Polish Communist exiles, etc.).

Finally, and numerically the largest category of all, there were those who were in some way related to any of the above: colleagues, subordinates, colleagues of colleagues and subordinates of subordinates, relatives, wives, children, friends, associates.

These filled the concentration camps which were rapidly expanded.

The stars of death shone upon us  
 And innocent Russia writhed  
 Beneath the blood-stained jackboots  
 And the wheels of Black Marias.

So wrote the poet, Akhmatova, her husband and son being among those arrested. In fact the list is endless. It includes one of the best poets of twentieth-century Russia, Osip Mandelshtam, the finest prose writer of the Soviet period, Isaak Babel, the most distinguished stage director of his generation, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and other able men and women without number. On top of all this, the sheer scale and logic (or illogic) of the operation eventually led to a mass of denunciations, and so the terrified police, fearful of accusations of lack of vigilance, arrested persons of insignificance of all classes.

Personal tragedies could fill a library of volumes. The eminent poet Marina Tsvetayeva returned from the West to Russia with her husband and son; both were arrested and she committed suicide in despair. The former Commissar for Justice, Krylenko, was an enthusiastic alpinist. When he was arrested, so were hundreds of others who happened to be alpinists too. The wives of executed generals were arrested, separated from their children, and then were shot in their turn in distant prisons at the outbreak of war. No wonder a surviving child of a general, Peter Yakir, was later to be in the fight against the resurgence of Stalinist methods or a rehabilitation of Stalin's memory. Once arrested, the prisoner faced cruel conditions in prison and in camp, far worse than anything conceivable in the first and relatively 'liberal' decade of Soviet rule, or indeed in the reign of Nicholas II. Here Stalin himself was in part responsible: he specifically authorised torture and beatings, and many sources attribute to him the statement that prisons and camps are too soft, that they should not be a 'Kurort' (i.e. a vacation centre). This was taken by officials to be an instruction to be harsh. Prisoners in distant northern camps such as the notorious Kolyma complex in north-east Siberia suffered acutely from undernourishment, the bitter cold, scurvy. The reader may be referred to three of the best documents of the period, Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *Gulag*

*Archipelago*, and Evgeniya Ginzburg's *Into the Whirlwind*, for vivid pictures of how things were for untold millions.

The high point of mass arrests was reached in 1937, with the coming of Yezhov to head the NKVD. The period is known to many in Russia as the *Yezhovshchina* in his name. Yet Yezhov was a creature of Stalin. When he had done his work he himself vanished, being replaced by the scarcely less odious Beria, under whom repression became systematised at a lower level of arrests. The Eighteenth Party Congress in 1939 noted that there had been some excesses, that some innocent men had been expelled from the Party. Zhdanov, a rising light in the Stalinist firmament, joked about a man who produced a medical certificate to the effect that he was mentally incapable of any deviations. A few were reinstated, but the millions in camp and prison remained where they were.

How many were shot, how many arrested, how many perished in camps and prisons? I will resist the temptation to speculate. Various computations exist, and some people, like Academician Sakharov, in his memorandum published abroad, have put total losses from Stalinist repression at between 12 and 15 million, a fantastically high figure which is yet within the bounds of credibility. No great terror in history ever went anywhere near as far. (I exclude genocide-massacres, which were different in motivation and purpose.) The 'terror' of the French revolution is as nothing in comparison. As for Tsarist repression, this too becomes negligible: a few thousand as against millions. (Sakharov's figure also includes arrests relating to periods other than 1936-8.)

Calculations are rendered difficult not only by the still-pervasive secrecy, but also because the terror hit various groups very unequally. The elite suffered most. The army is not untypical: officers above the rank of major were exceedingly likely to be arrested, junior officers less so, but only a small percentage of NCOS and men were involved: there are, of course, a great many more private soldiers than generals. Intellectuals were very hard hit: it would not be surprising to learn that as many as half of all persons with higher education were arrested, and the proportion was certainly much higher for *Party* intellectuals. Party functionaries at all levels were liquidated by the thousand. But the purge also swept up a lot of harmless members of the rank-and-file. Workers at the bench could be accused of sabotage if there was

a breakdown, or of subversion for grumbling about shortages. Peasants were sometimes sentenced to eight years and more for stealing grain from 'their' farm, or for talking among themselves. A system of informers, themselves frightened by the consequences of not reporting what they heard, provided material for a police urged to vigilance against omnipresent 'enemies of the people'.

Did no one protest? Some did so. Ordzhonikidze, a close colleague of Stalin's, is said to have done so vehemently and committed suicide when he failed. Postyshev urged the end of blood-letting and was himself arrested. The machine could not be stopped, except by Stalin himself.

On top of the inhabitants of prison and camp there were yet more uncounted millions of exiles of various categories. One of these millions figures in Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward*, an educated woman ordered out of her native Leningrad and earning a precarious living scrubbing floors and emptying bed-pans in a hospital ward in Central Asia. She and her like would not figure in statistics of arrests or of concentration camps, since she was not arrested or imprisoned. Yet she too suffered personal hardships and tragedies.

We must now consider two things. Firstly what was the *motive*, the purpose of the great wave of terror unleashed by Stalin. Secondly, what were its *consequences* for the Party and for society?

### The Purposes of the Purge

What was Stalin's objective? He wanted supreme power for himself. Without doubt he wished to destroy all enemies, actual and potential. But other ambitious men have seldom acted with such ruthlessness, though they too aimed for supreme power. Was it just that Stalin was such a vengeful and vicious person? This is part of the answer, surely. An old Communist, who once worked in the Comintern and who thought that Stalin had been right and Bukharin wrong, said to me: 'But there was no reason why Bukharin should not have been sent to be a schoolteacher in Omsk'. In other words, political victory did not require show trials and executions. But Stalin believed otherwise.

Since he did not speak his mind, we must again reconstruct his thought processes from indirect evidence. The following might be a reasonable interpretation, but others are possible.

He and his comrades must have known or felt the intense hatreds below them. The revolution from above caused great hardship, coercion left many wounds. Many had been insulted and injured. Within and outside the Party, they might dream of revenge. Conspiracy was probable. Party leaders rendered politically impotent by Stalin might seek to exploit the situation. The danger of war with Nazi Germany, growing every year, might give them their opportunity. *Ergo*, cut the danger off at the roots. Trotsky, it is true, spoke always of defending the Soviet Union. But he also once advanced the 'Clémenceau thesis'. Clémenceau had urged vigorous action to overthrow the French government during the First World War for failing in its duty to the nation (and, of course, he ultimately led France to victory in 1918). Oppositionists, then, might wish to overthrow Stalin after some military failures. So: liquidate them all in good time, destroy them and their reputations.

To achieve all this Stalin had to have control over the terror machine. The OGPU had been renamed 'People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs' (NKVD, from its Russian initial letters) in 1934. But from Stalin's point of view the NKVD itself was of uncertain loyalty. Its traditions were those of the founder of the secret police, Dzherzhinsky, a dedicated fanatic of unimpeachable integrity. True, his successors were of a much lower species, but Stalin did not feel safe until the NKVD had become his own personal security organ. The old OGPU-men were in the main replaced by new recruits, loyal rather than intelligent. He knew that the NKVD was staffed by men of limited brain-power. How could they identify an enemy? The purge had to be adapted to imperfect executors. So Stalin's unique concept of security evolved: deal with categories rather than people. Was there any past associations with any opposition? Was there a record of any statement which was off the Party line? Was he reported on unfavourably by a neighbour? Did he receive a visitor from abroad? Did he, by serving abroad, have the opportunity of meeting some foreign agent or Trotskyist? Was he a colleague of, or appointed by, any of the above? When the great blood-letting was in progress, did he express doubts as to its wisdom? Was he by any chance a son or wife or father of someone caught in the net? Then play safe: detain, deport, isolate. To provide a sort of reason, compel him to confess. All these people *could* have a reason to hate the regime. Once arrested, they could not be

released, as they had a grievance. Guilt or innocence is irrelevant. Better a hundred innocent men in jail than let one guilty man escape.

This is no fantasy. Look at two characters in Solzhenitsyn's great story. Ivan Denisovich himself was arrested—why? Because he had escaped from a German prisoner-of-war camp. If the Germans *had* recruited him as a spy, he would have claimed to have escaped. So: to a camp with him in distant Siberia. His fellow-prisoner the naval officer had received a parcel from a British admiral with whom he was a liaison officer in the Arctic. Who knows, he *might* have been recruited by British intelligence? To a Siberian camp with him! In these years Greeks were deported from the Black Sea area, Chinese and Koreans were sent to prison camps from East Siberia, just in case. I heard of a man in Karaganda who received a letter from abroad in a language no one at the local NKVD could read: so they arrested him, 'just to be sure'. A Russian told me that, travelling in a train, he heard two fellow-passengers speaking French. He understood French. So he hastily bribed the conductor to move him to another compartment, in case he was arrested for not reporting what they might say!

Stalin feared war. Yet he liquidated most of his best military officers. Contradiction? Not entirely. Tukhachevsky, Uborevich, Yakir and others of the best generals had established military reputations, knew and trusted each other, had the loyalty and respect of their subordinates. These were indeed useful qualities in war, but made them potentially effective conspirators. They *could* challenge Stalin if they wished. In modern strategic jargon, they had that capability. Therefore, though there was in fact no conspiracy, they had to be destroyed. Every one was deemed to have appointed 'his' men to work with him, so thousands of staff officers met the same fate as their commanders.

Stalin believed in obedience. He believed also in there being one answer, the correct answer, to any question. To be wrong, or indeed to disagree with the official view, was another indicator of potential treason; 'he thinks too much, such men are dangerous'. Technical conflicts of view about cruisers versus submarines, or on fuel policy or economic planning, would and did lead to accusations that one side to the argument was in the pay of the enemy. He systematically eliminated the very notion of non-subversive disagreement.

Stalin believed in Stalin. He was sure that only he could rule, and steer Russia through the dangerous shoals and rocks that lay in her path. He was doubtless jealous of the intellectuals he destroyed, but he could have only contempt for their political sense and realism. How could they run the USSR? He pursued with single-minded vigour his own glorification. Poems, cantatas, pictures, novels, presented him as the embodiment of wisdom. History was rewritten to make of him the co-leader, with Lenin, of the revolution in which he played a worthy but second-rank part. Was this only to please his vanity? Not only, surely. Russian tradition was autocratic. A great charismatic leader was needed to keep everyone in line, whom the ignorant common people and the scarcely less ignorant local officials could worship. His authority and glory could not be questioned, for that would be a danger to the state in dangerous times.

Issues had to be made simple. Then the Party secretaries could impose the proper policies. It would never do to start allowing a statement of two sides to a question. Intellectuals had to be kept in a straitjacket.

Society as a whole required to be mobilised, individual convenience was unimportant. By all his actions Stalin showed that he believed in Hierarchy and Discipline as essential virtues. Privilege too, but privilege was dispensed to those who served well, and was not, under Stalin, a secure right. Stalin was many things, but surely not the expression of the narrow self-interest of the bureaucratic elite. He feared their consolidation, and punished them without mercy. They were proportionately the principal victims of the great terror. Their lives, property and privilege depended on Stalin's whim and everyone knew it.

The state was said to embody the proletarian dictatorship, but the ordinary worker in town and village was suppressed as never before. Western commentators used to say that Russia of the thirties was not a political democracy but was an economic democracy. This was a total error. It is not just that trade unions were emasculated and free speech vanished. Workers were treated with arbitrariness and brutality. Living conditions, works canteens, sanitary arrangements, were often appalling. Foul language, threats, abuses, were the rule.

Why? Did Stalin wish it so? This leads me to another question. Can one really blame all these things on Stalin personally? Surely one man could not do it alone? Indeed not. Few could deny

Stalin's major responsibility before history, least of all Stalin himself. But there were many other factors which combined to bring about the phenomenon which we are discussing here.

There was the logic of a revolution from above, of all-out mobilisation for economic growth, based on mass coercion. This is a police-state logic. There was the low cultural level of the whole country, and also of the Party membership. In the twenties many tough and uneducated members of the civil-war period were promoted to Party and state jobs. Khrushchev was one such man among many. Stalin was for them a suitable master. They followed his lead blindly. With him they knew where they were. They could rule in their sphere as mini-Stalins, eliminating or silencing anyone who dreamt of questioning their authority.

Russia at the revolution had a relatively thin stratum of educated people. Many died or emigrated. Some who remained were of doubtful loyalty. Party intellectuals questioned and argued. The great purge was, among other things, the revenge of the semi-educated petty bosses on these damned argumentative literati, with their superior airs. How well this suited Stalin! How well Stalin fitted in with the needs and aspirations of the new men! True, their careers were at risk. If they offended the big boss they would vanish. But on the one hand there were excellent opportunities for promotion (so many of their superiors dismissed, arrested, shot), and, on the other, Russian and other history knows of many absolute monarchs who mercilessly punished their servants, but whose servants none the less revered them and the absolutist principle. The great purge brought such men to the top by eliminating the more independent minds from the ruling elite.

The rise to power of a stratum of self-made and poorly educated men gave its imprint to the whole style of Soviet politics and society of the thirties. The crudities, the swearing, the disregard for the rights and conveniences of subordinates, were the consequences of the promotion to authority of what could be called the sergeant type. It should be recalled that sergeants are men of the people, and that they usually bully and bawl at the men under them. They also value and cling to their hard-won privileges. In one Soviet novel, a minor official was promoted to a job which gave him access to the managerial dining-room; 'from that time on he regarded every proposal to improve the feeding of ordinary workers as a personal insult'.

This argument should not be misunderstood. It is not being asserted that the old Russian ruling classes were kind to soldiers, serfs and workers, for there are many examples to the contrary. Some of the most humane of the Bolsheviks were those of working-class origin. But the civil war and then the horrors of the revolution from above ensured, as by a survival of the fittest, the emergence of the tough and brutal species. The men with moral standards and scruples went into the wilderness or to the wall. So did the old intelligentsia, few of whom survived the thirties. Furthermore, the brutalities of Peter and of Nicholas I were in due course softened by the influence of 'Europe' and of liberalism. In 1849 Dostoevsky was taken out for execution and pardoned at the last second. Many soldiers were flogged to death. Thirty years later such acts were no longer conceivable. The prison regime of Alexander II or Nicholas II, especially for 'politicals', was relatively civilised. But the liberal elements were wiped out by the revolution, and in Stalin and his henchmen we saw a sort of revival of what might be called the Asian-despotic element of an earlier Russian tradition. Hence the unspeakable conditions in prisons or camps. Hence also the refusal to provide any privileges for the 'politicals'. Under the Tsars these were likely to be gentry, or educated people, and therefore better than the criminals. But for a Stalin or Beria their social origin and education compounded the offence, while criminals were men of their own kind. So what matters it if criminals in camps robbed the helpless 'politicals' of warm clothes and food? Indeed, the criminals were deliberately given the softer jobs and positions of authority in camps.

The social origins of the new rulers, and the folk traditions which they brought with them, help to explain important elements of Stalinism, and also the crude ways in which power and privilege were used. But this was not without certain dangers for the regime.

Stalin may also have been conscious of the need to prevent the ossification of a privileged caste. In this respect he resembled Mao, who launched his 'cultural revolution' largely to bring about the downfall of the Party-machine men. Mao called in the mob and the army to help him. Stalin operated through his control over the police, and by playing individuals and groups off against each other.

Stalin produced a theoretical justification for his repressive measures. The state cannot wither away in a hostile

capitalist environment. On the contrary, as socialism becomes victorious the intensity of the class struggle grows, as the desperate enemies seek to destroy the Soviet system. Therefore what was needed was more vigilance, more severity. In other words, for the state to wither away its power must first be maximised.

He found enough people willing to do his bidding, some for careerist motives, some because they sincerely believed that despotic demagogic government under Stalin was the best way to rule the Soviet Union.

His immediate circle were a mixed bunch. Molotov, who was Prime Minister, was a man of education and some culture. Voroshilov was a hard-riding, hard-drinking military crony of civil-war days. Kaganovich, the only Jew in the leadership after the defeat of various oppositions, had the reputation of a trouble-shooter, but was ignorant and crude. Mikoyan, an old Armenian revolutionary, concentrated on questions of trade rather than high politics. Zhdanov, son of a schoolteacher and literate, was a hard organiser who after the war acquired the reputation of being censor of the arts. There was also Shcherbakov, a rude individual of limited intelligence whom Stalin used to impose the party line on literature in the thirties. Khrushchev, who was sent to the Ukraine when the purge swept away the republican leaders, became a Politbureau member in 1939. Beria, a man of vicious habits and low cunning, became chief of the NKVD (police) in the same year. Younger stars included Malenkov, who rose through Stalin's personal secretariat and was at least educated, and Voznesensky, able and vigorous successor of executed chief planners. Perhaps a sentence should also be devoted to Kalinin, nominal president, a pathetic old man without power who was once trusted by the peasants.

Of these, only Molotov had played some significant political role in the first ten years of the revolution, and he was totally devoted to and dominated by Stalin. All the rest of Lenin's comrades-in-arms were dead by the end of the decade. Stalin's henchmen were intellectual pygmies compared with the great minds who argued over major issues during the revolution and in the twenties. Perhaps this is one reason why they participated joyfully in the destruction of the great minds. How could crude and uneducated practical men like Kaganovich or Voroshilov stand up and argue with Bukharin and Preobrazhensky? Their political future depended on gagging and destroying men far superior to

themselves. Stalin made sure that no one in his entourage had or could acquire any stature. He was to be the supreme arbiter in all matters.

### **The Cultural Counter-Revolution and Neo-Nationalism**

I have already referred to the degeneration of public debate to the level of simplified dogmatic statements of an infallible and undiscussable Party line, a process in which Stalin himself took a leading part. At first no very clear pattern could be discerned, other than the glorification of Stalin, the suppression of dissent and praise for the stupendous victories of socialist construction. Organisationally everything was put under tight control.

The twenties had been a period in which many cultural ideas competed with one another. Modern art, theatre, experimental 'Dalton-plan' schooling, advanced forms of musical composition, flourished. Historians such as Pokrovsky rewrote Russian history in terms of class war. Intellectuals like Alexandra Kollontai advocated free love. Divorce was easy.

These tendencies were disapproved of by some influential party members, and ran counter to puritan and national traditions among the people. But at first it seemed natural that various schools should contend. Thus Lenin once wrote that he was no admirer of Mayakovsky's poems, but 'of course' he was quite incompetent as a literary critic.

In the thirties, however, Stalin's Party began to claim omniscience in all matters. The destruction of the Party's own intellectuals meant that control was to be exercised by the boorish tough-guys, who saw no value in culture as such—though they did invest large sums in education, especially technical education. They would set no value on the life and work of some poet who seemed of doubtful loyalty.

In 1934 the first Congress of the newly formed Union of Soviet Writers adopted the principle of 'socialist realism'. Stripped of verbiage this amounted to an instruction to writers to serve the Party's interests, to be 'engineers of the human soul', to mobilise and inspire, and to write in a manner which the newly literate masses could understand. 'Realism' did not mean a frank statement of the real situation. One should see the future in the present, i.e. discern what ought to be rather than what is. The key

principle was *partiinost'*, which is inaccurately translated as 'partisanship', since it means expressing the essence of the Party's line and world-view, and also obedience to the Party's dictates on the cultural front.

In 1934 the satirists Ilf and Petrov imagined a writer who sent to the publishers a story called 'A Soviet Robinson'. Shipwrecked on a desert island, he surmounted difficulties, grew crops, raised rabbits and was in due course rescued by a Soviet ship. The publisher liked the story, especially the bit about the rabbits, since the party was running a campaign to increase the rabbit population. But Robinson had no social content. A girl? No, no, that would be cheap romanticism. There must be a trade union chairman, secretary and treasurer and also a fireproof safe. 'What,' cried the author, 'this spoils the whole story. Why the safe, anyway?' The publisher replied: 'To keep the trade union dues'. 'Who would steal them?' 'Well, the chairman, or the secretary, or Robinson.' The author then said: 'If a safe is to be washed up from the wreck, you might as well have a table, a green cloth and a little bell for the chairman to ring at the trade union meeting.' The publisher replied: 'No, no, I never said the cloth should be green. We do not limit literary freedom!' Such a satire could not have been published after 1934.

The effect on the censorship of the new line was not merely to tighten up political vigilance—this was inevitable as the terror grew in intensity—but also to drive publishers and censors into refusing to allow the appearance of harmless works which were not 'positive'. Thus a poem about love or the beauty of nature, by Akhmatova for instance, could be suppressed because it did nothing to help socialist construction. Sadness was 'out', because it did not 'mobilise'. The job of authors was seen as participating in the great effort to mobilise the people to fulfil the tasks set by the Party. Of course this was not always applied in its full rigour, but the damage done to literature was certainly severe. It was unfortunately the case that later generations of Soviet officials were still inclined to look at literature in this way: 'Is it, or is it not, useful for us?'

Music suffered too. Stalin himself attended a performance, in 1935, of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Misensk (Katerina Ismailova)*. He did not like it. There is no reason why he should: modern music upsets many people, even with a much more developed cultural sense than Stalin had. But, unlike Lenin, he

erected his taste into compulsory principles. The opera was suppressed. Other officials, whose musical ideas were doubtless as primitive as Stalin's, joined in the hunt. Music, too, was to be joyous and positive. Symphonies should be in a major key. Poor Shostakovich wrote songs in praise of the happy life of onward-marching Soviet Man. Had not Stalin said that life had become joyous? Shostakovich continued to write serious music, of course, and high-quality propaganda-music was written by Prokofiev (his score for the film 'Alexander Nevsky' is justly famous). The world renown of these composers protected them, though they were attacked for 'formalism' by Zhdanov after the war. Later on, the 'positive' pseudo-folk-song became the political fashion, and mediocre composers of ditties on happy collective farmers became rich and famous. (I am not suggesting that Western pop and country-and-western songs are on a higher level than this, but their authors do not become secretaries of the Union of Composers and do not exercise a veto on the publication of serious music.)

The theatre suffered exceedingly from the arrest of eminent directors, and also from the espousal by the Party of one style, that of the Moscow Arts Theatre. Experiment, modernism, symbolism, were wiped off the stage. Talented playwrights, even if not arrested, had plays banned. Stalin is on record as having gone to see one play, Mikhail Bulgakov's *Dni Turbinykh* (produced in England as *The White Guards*) no less than fourteen times. Yet the author's other plays were suppressed, and even this one was confined by the censorship to one theatre in Moscow.

Bulgakov himself told a story about how he dreamt that he was called by Stalin into the Kremlin. Seeing that he was destitute, Stalin (in the dream) ordered that he be given clothes, and decided to telephone the director of a theatre to instruct him to put on a play by him. In Bulgakov's imagination, Stalin said the following: 'Hello, is this the director? Stalin speaking... Well? Is no one there? Have I been cut off? Fetch the Commissar for Posts and Telegraphs immediately! Hello? Who is on the line? Who? The *deputy* director? Where is the director? Dropped dead? Just now? Well, well. Why are people so nervous in our country?' (This tale was published long after the death of both Stalin and Bulgakov, but gives us a taste of the atmosphere of the time.)

The drive against modernism in all branches of the arts was due not only to the old-fashioned tastes of officialdom but also to the help given them by second-rate jealous men in the ranks of the

intellectuals, who persecuted their colleagues with a zeal which makes extremely painful reading. There were far too many such cases.

This was also the case in painting. It is not just Stalin but ordinary second-rate painters who ensured that the works of Chagall, Malevich and other distinguished 'moderns' were relegated to cellars, where most of them still are (though some were shown when old Chagall himself re-visited Russia in 1973). Artistic conservatism comes naturally in an alliance between uneducated politicians and routine hacks of the art world. For them even French impressionists were too advanced. Everything should be clear, straightforward, optimistic, on the Party line. Peasants and workers should march onwards and upwards. Stalin had to be painted in oils in appropriate poses. Revolutionary scenes showed Stalin standing behind or beside Lenin, with all 'enemies of the people' omitted. If history could be rewritten, as we shall see, why should art not follow suit? The hack painters also produced a mass of copies of approved Russian masters of earlier years, which hung in many a hall and corridor through the Union. It was Prince Mirsky, one-time lecturer in Russian literature in London, who explained the dominant taste in architecture and decoration as derived from what a peasant once saw as he looked from outside into the houses of the gentry. (Mirsky returned to Russia in the thirties and vanished in the purge.) This is a conservative outlook. In architecture it favoured a kind of monumental and grandiose neo-classicism, a Russian translation of municipal Gothic.

But to turn to other subjects. The author of the history of the Party vanished. The leading Marxist historian Pokrovsky, after his death from natural causes, was reviled, his theories cast aside. So were the legal theories of such famous Marxists as Pashukanis. Many lawyers, historians, philosophers, vanished into camps. Sociology became a dirty word, partly because it had been used several times by Bukharin. The chief legal luminary became the unspeakable Vyshinsky, prosecutor at the show trials, who hurled abuse at and mocked his helpless victims, and who must have been well aware that the scenario he was enacting was a pack of lies.

Of course there were many honest men who did their best to keep their heads high and who never said or did anything dishonourable, during a period when it required courage to avoid joining in the hunt for 'enemies'. Some paid a high price for their

integrity. The great geneticist Vavilov was in the end hounded out by the charlatan 'biologist' Lysenko and died in prison.

Education was re-modelled on traditional lines, with the old marking system, formal teaching, uniforms. The virtues of family life were again stressed. Abortion was made illegal. Divorce was made more difficult. Patriotism was declared a key virtue. It was almost like adopting Pétain's slogan of '*Travail, Famille, Patrie*'.

This leads us to the new line on history and nationalism. There was a total rewriting of the history of the revolution, the civil war and of all that had happened since. Not only was Stalin glorified, but his victims either disappeared from the record or were presented as criminals and plotters. Since they included the large majority of Lenin's closest collaborators, this compelled Stalin's historians to write travesties of well-known facts. Trotsky ceased to play any role in 1917–20, except as a disorganiser of the Red Army. Lenin's own works were edited and expurgated. 'Histories' of the Civil War had to omit the names of almost all the Soviet Commanders, since most of them had been shot in the purges of 1936–38. Documentary evidence which would show the falsity of the newly imposed legends, such as the record of the Party Congresses of Lenin's time, were removed from library shelves, along with the writings of any and all victims of the Stalin terror.

Stalin's imposed orthodoxy extended also to the pre-Soviet period. The attack on Pokrovsky's work was followed by a new history text-book, which, as far as Tsarism was concerned, followed lines which could have been accepted by a nationalist liberal historian. Stress was laid on the continuity, greatness and even goodness of the Russian state. Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible and other successful Tsars ceased to grind the faces of the poor and became positive figures. The war against Napoleon was a great patriotic war once again. The emphasis on Russia and things Russian could be seen as part of psychological preparation for a threatening war. It certainly accorded with a widespread feeling among cadres and people. It did, however, create a problem. Many inhabitants of the USSR were not Russian. Stalin himself was not Russian. Of course, there was much talk of the *Soviet* people, of Soviet patriotism, but the various other nations' histories had to be rewritten, so that Russia appeared as their protector. Thus she saved Georgia from the Turks, the Ukrainians from the Poles, and this was good. True, Tsarist Russia was 'a prison of the peoples'

(Lenin's words), but this was taken to mean that the Tsars oppressed everybody. It was still good and 'progressive' that Russia had annexed various territories, if only because otherwise they would not be part of the great progressive Soviet Union.

There was careful watch on real or alleged 'bourgeois nationalism', and national parties and governments were purged again and again. Georgia had been a victim of Stalin's Muscovite centralism when Lenin was still there to protest about it, in 1923. Despite his own origins, Stalin launched or authorised a particularly severe repression in Georgia in 1937-38. I was told years afterwards that the Georgian intelligentsia suffered terrible losses, and that Beria was the man who did the job. The same happened in other republics too. This was not, or not yet, Russification. All were encouraged to shout 'Long live the great Stalin' in their own languages.

Stalin sought to restore Russian traditions in matters great and small. Thus in 1936 he restored military rank designations, more or less on the old pattern (Lieutenant-general instead of *Komkor*, Corps-commander, and so on). The exceptions were in most cases a move away from German, e.g. 'Sergeant' instead of the pre-1917 *Feldwebel*.

He spoke, too, of ranks in the Party itself, analogous to military ranks, though only as a (none the less significant) figure of speech.

So the period of the great terror smashed the old Party, largely replacing it by a disciplined and obedient body which would serve the autocrat without question. Stalin institutionalised a police-and-informer state. He eliminated or isolated even potential critics, thereby depriving the country of the services of a large proportion of its more intelligent inhabitants. There were important achievements also, and we will be speaking of them. However, the terror was not only a fact, which had a profound effect on its victims and the survivors alike, but is an integral part of the impact and final triumph of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. Is this an exaggeration? Not at all. Of course, terror is not all that happened, and many worthy people built, taught, worked, because they felt they were doing a good job for the community, or maybe just because they hoped to earn more or be promoted. Yet never in peacetime history were a people subjected to such convulsions and so much suffering as the Soviet people in the thirties. At the beginning of the decade repression was accompanied by acute material privation. By 1937 material conditions had improved

markedly, but the terror raged across the land. And there were still greater tragedies to come in the forties.

As the French saying goes, *'un peuple heureux n'a pas d'histoire'*.

### Foreign Policy Turnabouts

'Social-fascism' survived the coming to power of Hitler. Perhaps Stalin thought that Hitler would not last, alternatively that he could do a deal with him. Unofficial military links, which existed with the Weimar Republic since the early twenties, were not cut off instantly. He was oddly slow in realising just how dangerous Hitler was going to be for him. Anti-Fascist Popular-Front tactics seem to have begun more or less spontaneously, in France in February 1934. Only later did the Moscow line swing in that direction, and some Party members were being expelled for premature anti-Fascism even at the beginning of 1935 (for instance in Czechoslovakia).

Then the line changed decisively. The Seventh Congress of the Comintern was held in Moscow in July 1935. No one dared suggest that the ultra-left line of earlier years was wrong; the Party line changes with the changing situation. It was admitted that some comrades were somewhat too sectarian. Almost overnight the 'social-fascist' Léon Blum and other Social-Democrats became potential allies. Never content with half-measures, the Party line stretched rightwards to embrace alliances with liberals, and even with the moderate right, provided they opposed Nazi-Fascism. This Comintern policy was an accurate reflection of the logic of Soviet foreign policy at the time. For Stalin hoped that the Nazi menace could be contained by an alliance with the West. The new tactic began in 1935 with a pact negotiated with the then French premier, Laval. This blossomed into a 'collective security' policy, with Litvinov, the Foreign Affairs commissar, making able speeches in Geneva on the theme: 'peace is indivisible'.

The Communist parties of the West were caught by surprise when the foreign-policy line changed. Thus in France they had opposed Laval and arms expenditures. Shortly before he was killed in 1940 I met the French novelist, Paul Nizan, when we were both in our respective armies near Lille. He had by then broken with the Communists, but in 1935 he was close to the leaders. He told me that the French party had sent a deputation to Moscow to ask

timidly to be told in advance in future when such changes were to occur. Nizan said that they got a contemptuous reply! 'We taught you Marxism, work it out for yourselves.' The parties adjusted obediently to the change. Stalin was surely right not to take their leaders seriously. Those who were in Russia as emigrants were in many cases shot during the purges. The Western Communist leaders were tied to Moscow above all by the knowledge that their followers identified Communism with Russia, basked in the reflected glory of the revolution and of the much-publicised achievements of the five-year plans. Splinter groups set up by dissidents, or by Trotsky's followers, were small and impotent.

The adoption of the 'Stalin' constitution in 1936 was perhaps partly motivated by the need to present the USSR as a fit partner for the democracies. Certainly its terms—full of fine phrases about freedom of speech, of assembly, from arbitrary arrest—contrasted very strangely with the facts of terror.

The Popular-Front tactic struck a responsive chord in the West. The Nazi menace was deeply felt, and the weak response of Western conservatism inclined the left towards an alliance with the Communists. The fear of Hitler caused many in the West to close their eyes to the despotic or oppressive features of Stalin's Russia. Some were genuinely naïve, were victims of propaganda. Some believed what they wished to believe. Some even thought that Stalin had killed the really dangerous 'international' Communists and was now just a national Russian dictator, with whom a deal was possible. There were plenty of delusions and illusions. It is easy, by hindsight, to condemn those who hoped that the Soviet Union was basically or potentially on 'our side' against the rising tide of brownshirt barbarism. Faced with the feeble appeasement policies of Neville Chamberlain, good and honest men in despair turned hopefully east, and thought they saw progress.

Stalin was careful to suppress independent sources of information and to cut off his people from any contacts with the West. Soviet scientists stopped attending conferences, personal unofficial contacts became a punishable offence, an exit visa almost impossible to obtain. Who would dare to tell the truth to a foreign delegate or tourist?

Western sympathies with the USSR increased when she alone went to the aid of the Spanish republicans when the civil war broke out. Popular enthusiasm for the Spanish cause was real enough among the left, and in Russia itself. The miserable tale of

'non-intervention', and the appearance of German and Italian forces, strengthened the popularity of the Soviet Union among the Western 'left', and also strengthened Soviet and Communist influence in Spain itself, although the Communists had been weak—far weaker than the Anarchists, for instance—when the civil war began.

Stalin's policies in Spain provide invaluable evidence about his tactics and aim at this period. He used Soviet arms to establish political influence, through a Communist Party totally subservient to him and willing to do the NKVD'S bidding in suppressing Spanish left-wing dissidents. Thus, the semi-Trotskyist POUM, led by Andrés Nin, was liquidated and Nin himself killed in an unofficial Communist prison. A son of the old Menshevik Abramovich went to Spain as a volunteer and was kidnapped and never heard of again. This attack on innocent children of political enemies was a feature of Stalin's way; two sons of Trotsky, one totally non-political, were murdered. The International Brigade was very tightly controlled. The whole political balance in Republican Spain was shifted towards the Communists. But they occupied no key positions; even in 1938 the President was a liberal, the Premier a (compliant) socialist, the Army Commander non-political. Furthermore, the Communists insisted upon a very moderate line in internal affairs: expropriations, requisitions, nationalisation were opposed. What mattered, it seems, was political control, not social revolution, perhaps because the latter would scare the potential allies of the Soviet Union out of participating in an anti-Nazi coalition.

In its volume Soviet aid was insufficient to turn the balance of the war, and, unlike the Italians, the Russians sent no actual formations of 'volunteers'. Advisers, technicians, pilots, were there. They suffered severe repression when they returned, probably because anyone who had been abroad was suspect in 1937–38. It is odd that Antonov-Ovseenko, the Soviet consul-general in Barcelona and the probable organiser of the killing of Nin the 'Trotskyist', should have been recalled to Moscow and shot, as an alleged Trotskyist!

There is a certain parallel between the Party line on Spain and that followed by Communists in other Western countries. Under 'Popular-Front' cover they busily penetrated other organisations of leftish complexion or of no political colour: they were even in control of parts of the Student Christian Movement! But their

influence was not used in any specifically Communist direction, except—big exception!—to express Soviet policy on collective security and anti-Fascism, and to wage implacable war upon anything smelling of Trotskyism. I recall an argument (in a Paris métro train, of all places) with an earnest Party organiser, who said — ‘for me, Trotskyism *is* fascism!’ But he was perfectly willing to sit alongside a Tory duchess who was supporting a foreign policy which suited Moscow.

It seems reasonable to conclude that Stalin was exceedingly concerned with the military danger to the USSR, and that he subordinated his tactics abroad to the task of finding support for an alliance which would save the USSR from facing Germany, or Germany and Japan, unaided. This time no one can doubt or deny that the danger was real. No one can blame Stalin for trying to avert it, whatever one’s views as to his methods.

### Economic Policies in the Mid-Thirties

In a speech made as early as 1931, Stalin said:

‘We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years or we shall go under.’ It so happened that there was just ten years. It is true that he mistook who the enemy was to be. It is also true that the excesses and imbalances of the first plan are not to be excused by a sense of urgency: if the runner in a 5,000 metres race covers the first 200 metres in 23 seconds, he cannot justify such excessive speeds merely because he had to win the race. Such behaviour is counter-productive, and so was much that was done in the first years of the decade on the economic front.

We saw that 1933 was a terrible year. Things then began to go better. The second five-year plan was more realistic and paid greater attention to consumer goods. By 1937 material conditions had greatly improved, the more so because this was a good harvest year. Planning methods and farm organisation settled down. There was much inefficiency and waste, but all critics agree that there was a vast rise in productivity from the abysmal levels of 1933.

Planning was centralised, resources were allocated by state and Party organs, the market played no part in deciding the direction of investment. Prices, except in the (legal) peasant market, were fixed by the state. In its essentials the Soviet economy was already functioning on the same principles on which it functions today,

though there have been many changes in detail since then. The Party exercised its control partly by its grip on all appointments in the economic sphere, partly by direct intervention via the central committee's officials, with Stalin himself the supreme arbiter in matters great and small.

The results of the sacrifices of the early thirties bore fruit. Huge new industrial complexes came into operation, including the Ural-Kuznets metallurgical combine, the Stalingrad and Kharkov tractor works, and most important, a powerful engineering ('machine-building') industry. In the first plan period much of the capital equipment had to be imported, and the export of foodstuffs to pay for that equipment was among the causes of the hunger of those years. The aim was to achieve much greater self-sufficiency. In terms of economic orthodoxy this may have been unsound, but it accorded with the harsh realities of the Soviet Union's strategic situation. In the First War the Tsarist armies suffered terribly through shortage of weapons, and it was very difficult to expand or even maintain production because the machinery and equipment was so largely imported. Even if Britain and France were allies—as they were in the First War—the fact of geography would impede the flow of supplies. And no one could be sure what allies, if any, the USSR might have in the event of war.

Centralised planning of the 'Stalinist' type has many inherent weaknesses: bureaucratic deformation, arbitrary interference with insufficient knowledge, disregard for economic cost, a tendency to use 'campaigning' methods to achieve results by a given date (with resultant neglect of other and perhaps equally important activities), and a lurching from bottleneck to bottleneck. Managerial ingenuity had to be diverted to getting supplies to fulfil plans, by fair means or foul. One of Stalin's sayings was: 'The victors are not judged'. In other words, get away with it if you can, provided you fulfil your plan. Plans were in aggregate units, such as tons, roubles, etc., and quality and the needs of customers tended to be neglected, unless the very top of the political machine was sufficiently concerned to exercise direct supervision, which could not be done systematically.

Yet with all its defects, the system had an overwhelming advantage: that of enabling the leadership to concentrate resources on its priorities, without being deflected by considerations of profitability, private-enterprise interests or the pressure of public opinion. The terror ensured the acceptance of the priorities of the

regime, since any questioning was evidence of subversion and could result in a long involuntary journey to Siberia. In peacetime this concentration on priorities is difficult to achieve under a democracy. In wartime we have centralised planning in the West also, with many of the bureaucratic distortions which inevitably accompany it, but we put up with these distortions because they are a necessary price to pay for mobilising everything for war. Stalin was engaged in the thirties in organising a war economy in peacetime.

The Soviet financial and price system facilitated his task. Investment was nearly all financed out of the state budget. The state revenue came very largely through prices, especially via turnover tax, a purchase tax levied on consumer goods. By increasing prices at which it sold its goods the state could obtain the necessary resources with which to finance the expansion of industry. Voluntary savings and managerial choice played an insignificant part in investments. It was a most effective way to ensure a high rate of (forced) savings in a relatively poor country.

Terror and despotism had also some severe economic costs. Thus experts failed to give proper advice for fear of being dubbed traitor or deviationist, which is why impossible plans were sometimes adopted. There was fear of responsibility, which paralysed initiative. Finally a very large number of skilled managers and engineers were arrested; Stalin said that 'Cadres decide everything', yet he had thousands of the best and scarcest cadres sent to remote concentration camps.

But, whatever its faults, Stalin's overall strategy and the means available to impose this strategy had a certain rationality, given the objectives pursued. Surely Stalin's ghost would argue this, and probably add that the destruction of possible oppositions, the mobilisation of the arts and sciences and his own supremacy were part of the same package.

The recovery in agriculture had been due to a species of compromise with the peasants. Collectivisation was maintained, and so was compulsory delivery of produce at exceedingly low prices. (The state resold them to the consumer at very much higher prices.) The new tractors, owned and operated by the state, replaced the horses killed during collectivisation. But apart from grain and some industrial crops, the farms and the peasants were left largely to their own devices. Each peasant household was allowed a small plot of land and a limited number of animals (a

cow, a sow, several sheep and goats, etc.), and in 1937 the bulk of livestock was in fact in private hands. The peasants were free to sell their own produce in the market. They derived from their collectives a very small cash income and bread-grain, in payment for collective work. Their little 'private enterprise' supplied the rest of their money and produce. It cannot be said that this arrangement was popular. Collective work reminded them of the old *barshchina*, work for the lord under serfdom, which entitled them to cultivate their allotments. None the less life was becoming more tolerable.

Unfortunately, as from 1938 there was a turn towards greater pressure on the village. This may have been due to the exigencies of rising army expenditures, or because Stalin now felt that agricultural production had recovered sufficiently to resume the offensive; his policies suggest a definite tendency to disregard peasant welfare even more than that of other citizens. Be this as it may, 1938 began a process of imposing large delivery quotas of more and more types of products (even including sheep's-milk cheese) at low prices, and requiring the farms to build up their livestock herds. With fodder short, this led to a reduction in privately owned animals. On top of this, taxes on the farms and on the peasant allotments were increased, and a compulsory minimum of collective work imposed. The intense unpopularity of these measures, taken on the eve of war, might help to explain why many peasants met the German invaders of 1941 with the traditional bread-and-salt of welcome.

The working class of the thirties was greatly 'diluted' by recent arrivals from the countryside. Their numbers very greatly exceeded original expectations, partly because the labour productivity plans had been over-optimistic and partly due to the flight of peasants from collectivisation. Housing plans were underfulfilled. Consequently overcrowding was appalling. The ex-peasants, rootless and unskilled, needed to be turned into an industrial labour force. We have already noted one method used to achieve this: larger inequalities of income, to provide a reward for acquiring skills. We must now mention two others, both typical of the attitudes of High Stalinism.

The first of these was 'Stakhanovism'. Called after Alexei Stakhanov, a miner who overfulfilled his work norm fourteen-fold, the original purpose of the campaign was to encourage and glorify high productivity. There was indeed plenty of scope for the

tightening up of work norms and increasing effort. However, this campaign rapidly degenerated into publicity-seeking and artificial record-breaking. Managers would arrange things to enable one of their men to become a Stakhanovite, depriving other workers of materials and opportunities for extra earnings. This is only one example of the distortions engendered by party campaigns in any field—it became more important to report the success of this particular campaign than to achieve sound results overall. In agriculture this could take the form of: ‘never mind the potatoes, the campaign right now is for milk’, or vice versa. The chase after record-breaking caused much annoyance, and there were cases of Stakhanovites beaten up by fellow-workers.

Needless to say, the distortions were not willed by Stalin, not as such. But a man must be deemed to will the probable consequences of his own acts. If one exerts pressure on Party secretaries to run campaigns then their behaviour, in endeavouring to obey, is reasonably predictable. Similarly Stalin’s drastic statements on the need for vigilance against Trotsky-Bukharin traitors within the Party was bound to lead to the arrests of thousands of individuals whom Stalin himself had no sort of reason to arrest. But he programmed the machine, and its acts are still attributable to him.

The second method was the imposition of sterner discipline. This initially took the form of denying factory housing and social insurance benefits to ‘flitters’ and absentees. An internal passport system, residence permits and ‘work books’ were introduced, as control measures. Then, amid much propaganda about duty to the socialist state and the disorganisers of production, sterner measures were taken, culminating in the decrees of October 1940, which forbade changing one’s job without permission, made the holders of many jobs subject to direction, and punished ‘flitting’, absenteeism and arriving late to work as crimes. Being late three times equalled absenteeism, which meant prison in some cases, ‘compulsory labour at place of employment’ in others.

The imposition of this law, passed ‘at the request of the trade unions’, ran into difficulties, because managers tried not to report the ‘criminals’, and prosecutors and judges did not apply a law which contradicted the habitual sense of right and wrong. Whereupon a campaign was mounted, and managers and judges who failed in their duty were themselves punished. This led to wild excesses, since the terror was still fresh in everyone’s minds.

Extenuating circumstances no longer counted. Cases were in due course reported of women arrested for absenteeism in the ninth month of pregnancy, of prison sentences passed on people who were in hospital, or looking after a sick child at home. A long list of unbelievable 'judicial' acts can readily be compiled from the columns of the legal periodical *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost'* for 1940. Of course, a halt was soon called to such absurdities as these. But one learns something of the atmosphere of Stalinism from the fact that they could occur at all. How scared must managers be to report as an absentee someone who is so sick as to be in hospital, or having a baby! Doctors were frightened of signing medical certificates of unfitness. Judges, with plain evidence before them, were terrified of being regarded as soft on absentees and flitters. These were instances of the cost of a campaign method allied with terror.

The whole idea of tying a man to his job and imprisoning him for leaving it or for being absent could perhaps be regarded as due to the imminence of war, and sure enough some reference to an emergency was sometimes made. But the arguments of official propagandists did not stress this, but rather the duty of citizens of a socialist state to be disciplined, in effect to do what they were told. It is arguable that a labour force of this kind was part of Stalin's model of a properly organised hierarchical society. (If soldiers are not to be free to choose where to go, why should workers or peasants be? This was what Trotsky had argued way back in 1920, when he favoured militarisation of labour. Not, of course, that Stalin was influenced by his arch-enemy.) In any case, the decrees were not finally repealed until after Stalin's death. He also introduced fees for higher and secondary education, contrary to the constitution, which guaranteed free education at all levels and cut down on social benefits, such as maternity leave. These things too remained uncorrected until after his death. Of course there could be no word of protest.

It has already been pointed out that growth tempos declined greatly in and after 1937, and one cause was mentioned: the disruptive effects of mass arrests. There was another: the effect of a sharp upswing of arms expenditures. In the early thirties the investments in heavy industry were intended to create the means of making arms, but actual direct spending on arms was modest. Naturally it speeded up as Hitler's Germany armed. The effect on the highly strained industrial structure was to create bottlenecks

and to diminish the civilian production of capital goods. To take one example among many, tractor output in 1937 was less than half of that in 1936, because tractor factories made tanks. Shortages of consumer goods also became severe in 1940. These consequences of necessary war preparations cannot, of course, be blamed on Stalin.

Unfortunately, he was responsible for disrupting arms production too), by shooting and imprisoning military leaders and some leading planners and engineers. Thus Tupolev, the famous aircraft designer ('TU 104' was to be his) was for a time in prison, though he was released. Worse still, he replaced talented generals with loud-mouthed nonentities. Voroshilov was commissar for war, and his three deputies, key men in organisation, armaments and supplies, were Kulik, Mekhlis and Shchadenko, all of whom later showed themselves totally incapable. Stalin himself took an active part in choosing weapons, and a leading manager (Emelyanov) has told us in his memoirs about how he personally supervised the testing of various kinds of armour-plating for tanks. New and modern types of weapons were chosen in due course, but both in tanks and in planes the equipment of the Red Army in 1941 proved far inferior to the German.

## Chapter 3

### *War*

#### **Munich and the Nazi-Soviet Pact**

Stalin has been blamed for cynically trying to embroil the West with Germany and for signing a pact with Hitler. Here, oddly enough, he has a fairly good defence for his actions in terms of Soviet security. Let us now put the case for him.

Whatever propagandists may say, it was becoming exceedingly doubtful, even before Munich, whether Britain and France would in fact join in an anti-Nazi coalition. France seemed paralysed, and Britain under Chamberlain's leadership was pursuing the policy of appeasement. It was unlikely that Laval, or Daladier, or Chamberlain would lift a finger if Germany and the USSR came to blows. They might well say: 'may they exhaust each other'. Therefore it was by no means unreasonable for Stalin to contemplate a deal with Hitler, though it did contradict the official anti-Fascist line of Soviet and Communist propaganda media. It was said in 1937 by a senior Soviet intelligence officer who defected to the West, Krivitsky, that Stalin was already then thinking along these lines.

Whether or not this was so, the fact remains that the Soviet government did try to link up with the Western powers during the Czech crisis of 1938, and that in the Munich agreement the Soviet Union was deliberately snubbed and ignored.

After this, two things happened. Stalin took over the Premiership from Molotov, and Litvinov was dismissed, with Molotov replacing him. A clear signal of a change of line.

When, after the German occupation of Prague, the British guaranteed Poland, negotiations for an Anglo-French-Soviet military pact began. But Stalin had justified suspicions about them,

supported by all that we now know from archives about Chamberlain's intentions. Justified too by what in fact happened in 1939 when Germany attacked Poland; the Western allies did nothing, even though they did declare war. There is absolutely no reason to believe that they would have done more if Hitler had invaded the Soviet Union in 1939.

Hence in the harsh terms of great-power politics the Nazi-Soviet pact made sense. By twentieth-century international standards of behaviour it was not worse than many other things that were done in and by the West.

This said, there were, however, some highly questionable consequences of the new policy.

The first was the unfolding of a programme of Soviet expansionism. Not just into eastern Poland, where at least it could be claimed that the inhabitants were Ukrainian and Belorussian, but into the then independent Baltic states, into Romanian Bessarabia and also parts of Finland. Wider horizons were discussed with the Germans by Molotov. This might be justified as strengthening Russia at a dangerous time, by adding territories into which Germany might well herself expand. There was also the strong, if ideologically impure, motive of recovering territories lost during the revolution, and conscience was saved by the organisation of 'votes' in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, in which the inhabitants were prevailed upon (polite words) to join the Soviet Union voluntarily. Finland was another story. The motive here was originally the moving of the frontier further from Leningrad and the setting up of a Soviet base at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland at Hanko. When the Finns refused, Stalin ordered his troops forward and set up a so-called Finnish people's government in the first village which they occupied, Terioki, under a Finnish Comintern official, Kuusinen. This seemed like a bid for a takeover of the whole country. However, the campaign went badly for the Russians at first, the Finns resisted skilfully, and the Terioki 'people's government' was quietly forgotten; it is not to be found in any Soviet histories of the period. In the spring of 1940 a major offensive in Karelia finally broke Finnish resistance, and Stalin opted for a moderate peace, which left Finland an independent country. It is significant that the Anglo-French forces which were so inactive in helping the Poles made plans for an expeditionary force to help Finland against the USSR, with whom they were not at war; this on the eve of a German attack upon

them. Western leadership at this time was neither realistic nor intelligent. Stalin made mistakes as we shall see, but he was not alone in so doing (but these particular Soviet mistakes would ensure that Finland as well as Romania would join the German invasion in 1941).

A second consequence was the abandonment of anti-Fascism. This greatly confused the Western Communist parties and caused many members to leave. It was bad enough to be told that the USSR had signed a pact with Hitler. Maybe this was a response to harsh necessity. But this did not make the Nazi system any less detestable, or any less a menace. Yet when the war began the Communists were instructed to oppose an imperialist war, and the official line suggested that Britain and France were somehow more blameworthy than Germany. Communist front organisations demanded a 'people's peace', whatever that was. The ban on the French Communist Party saved it from making a public fool of itself. There is evidence that when the French armies collapsed in 1940 the illegal Communists hoped to have their activities legalised by the occupying power! The Germans (naturally) would not play.

This whole policy seems to have been an almost classical example of the inflexibility of despotism. For it was certainly in the Soviet interests to have the West resist Germany effectively. In so far as Communist opposition weakened the French war effort and contributed to the ease of the Nazi victory, it brought nearer the day of reckoning for Stalin's Russia. But no doubt Stalin shared the illusion of many, including Churchill, about the strength of the French army, and the events of May-June 1940 were a shock to him (as they certainly were for the writer of these lines, who was nearly captured). None the less, Molotov did not fail to send Germany his congratulations, and the Party line did not change until 22 June 1941.

In Russia itself it was the same thing. Anti-Fascist news disappeared from the press. When Ehrenburg returned from France after the fall of Paris, he was appalled to discover that any critical references to the Nazis were censored, and he was expected to lecture in the presence of representatives of the German embassy. Nothing could be said about Nazi atrocities. Trade with Germany boomed. Everyone was given to understand that relations were good and friendly. Incredibly, the Soviet authorities handed over to the Germans some of the German Communists who were in Soviet jails! One such, Margarete Buber-Neumann,

widow of purge victim Heinz Neumann, has written about this disgraceful episode; her book includes a valuable comparative study of Soviet and Nazi concentration camps. All this was no sort of preparation for the conflict to come! Behind the scenes, it is true, defence preparations went ahead, but without the urgency which the situation demanded.

Security measures were taken in newly occupied Western territories. Polish officer prisoners were massacred. There was a mass round-up of 'suspect' categories, hundreds of thousands were sent by trains to exile, thousands went to labour camps from Riga, Tallin, Vilna, Lvov. Was this a military precaution, or was this simply the 'normal' Soviet police technique at work in an incorporated area? Probably the latter. Anyway, the remaining inhabitants of these areas welcomed the Germans in 1941.

We now know that Hitler began to plan the invasion of Russia soon after the fall of France. However, plans are but plans. The decision to prepare must be dated from Molotov's visit to Berlin in November 1940. Beneath the formal courtesies the atmosphere was cool. Molotov had large ambitions for Soviet expansion and was concerned about German activities in the Balkans. Hitler's reaction could be summarised by the phrase: this means war! 'Operation Barbarossa' was mounted.

German troops appeared in Romania, occupied Yugoslavia (to the Soviet government's visible chagrin), edged into Finland, concentrated quietly in occupied Poland. German ships were ordered out of Russian ports. Soviet intelligence agents reported all this, as did their embassy in Berlin, frontier-crossers in Poland, troops near the border. German planes flew over west Russia taking photographs. By late May 1941 the signs were unmistakable and were all pointing one way.

### **Stalin's Biggest Mistake**

He would not believe it! On June 14 he ordered a statement to be issued that rumours of impending conflict with Germany were unfounded and provocative in intent, and that relations remained normal. Indeed, Soviet deliveries of materials to Germany continued right up to the fateful night of 21/22 June. We know from the memoirs of Russian generals that no secret warnings were sent out, to counteract the effect of such a statement. In fact there were repeated warnings in a contrary direction: beware of

provocations, do not deploy troops, do not fire, do not send alarmist reports. True, there was much German disinformation. True also that Stalin did move some troops towards the threatened regions. But there was no general mobilisation, and no state of emergency. It was not until literally a few hours before the attack was launched that a warning of imminent trouble was sent out to the various headquarters. But before it reached most of the actual formations and airfields the bombs had begun to fall. Soviet divisions, in any case far weaker in equipment, training and experience than the Germans, had to meet the attack with soldiers asleep in barracks and many officers on leave.

Of course we know that another country, America at Pearl Harbour, was caught off guard by Japan later in that very year. Yet Stalin had more and better information than Roosevelt, and at the least Roosevelt did not ban anti-Japanese propaganda and lull people into a sense of false security.

How could Stalin not see? He would understandably discount British warnings, as his reading of the situation was that the British wished to embroil him in war with Germany. Other warnings seem to have reached him in diluted form. He appears to have been confused partly by deliberate German disinformation, but most of all by being surrounded by his own cronies, who would not tell him what he did not wish to hear. Beria's intelligence, as reported to his master, did not sound too alarming. It may be deduced from Zhukov's memoirs that the chief of military intelligence, General Golikov, was not passing on all the evidence either. He cannot be entirely blamed for this. He knew that 'the boss' thought that the Germans would not attack, or anyway not that year. He knew that thousands of officers had been shot on the boss's orders only a few short years ago. It was very risky to tell the truth.

Stalin's terror, his choice of second-rate and timid men as colleagues, therefore contributed to his inability to see.

A great drama can be written about June 1941. The German blow was being aimed. Soviet officers could discern the danger, intelligence men in the field could see it coming and reported even the day of the assault. Yet there was lack of reaction. Some army commanders deployed their men on their own responsibility, the fleets were put on to alert in time, but over most of the front the Germans achieved total tactical surprise, thanks largely to Stalin's obstinacy or lack of information.

How much of the resultant catastrophe can be laid at Stalin's door? What, in fact, were the decisive factors in the initial defeat, indeed virtual destruction, of the bulk of the Soviet forces in the West?

They were caught literally asleep, and no doubt this made a difference. Some units which would have put up a respectable resistance were overwhelmed as they struggled to get to their positions, or even into their clothes. The air force suffered a shattering blow, with hundreds of planes destroyed on the ground in dawn raids. A Soviet Air-Marshall put losses on the first day as one thousand aircraft. On all this there is no dispute. What follows is in part more controversial, and my interpretation could be challenged, though it can be backed with a good deal of evidence.

Firstly, there was a very large qualitative discrepancy in armaments. The total number of Soviet planes and tanks matched the Germans; but those Soviet planes that flew (for instance the I-16 fighters, or the heavy and slow TB-3 bomber) were hopelessly outclassed by the Messerschmitts, which could shoot them down at will without damage to themselves. Very much better planes were coming off the production line but few were operational and hardly any pilots yet knew how to fly them. Most Soviet planes were not then equipped with radios. In all these circumstances numbers meant nothing. It was like bows and arrows facing machine-guns. The purges could have been the decisive factor in delaying the introduction of new planes (the I-16 had done well in Spain). The same picture is broadly true of tanks. When the new Soviet tank, the T-34, became available it did very well, but the standard Soviet army tank of June 1941 was notably less well armed and armoured than the German.

Secondly, the Soviet commanders were strikingly inferior in the means of mobility. Lorries were far too few. Fuel dumps were grievously inadequate, means of moving fuel were primitive, and preparations had not been made for a retreat. This last point was a by-product of the hurrah-atmosphere of the previous years. 'If any pig dares put its snout into our Soviet garden, we will show him!' that was the burden of much official propaganda. Commanders who talked of fuel dumps deep in the rear were liable to be accused of defeatism and panic-mongering. For this Stalin had indirect responsibility. The result was the abandonment of almost all the vehicles and tanks of outflanked armies in retreat. Lack of mobility ensured that Soviet responses to breakthroughs were too late to

save the situation. In any case they had great difficulty in conveying orders, owing to shortage of radios, when the German advance cut telephone lines. Staffs lost touch with their formations.

Thirdly, Zhukov and others stoutly maintain that the Germans also had substantial *numerical* superiority. The Soviet government had not ordered general mobilisation until after the war had begun. Soviet divisions in the west were below strength, many others were too far from the threatened area to affect the outcome. So it was not possible to make up for qualitative deficiencies by using masses of men, since there was an inferiority even in numbers of infantrymen. The latter were armed mostly with ordinary rifles, against German automatic weapons. Numerical superiority in the sectors chosen by the Germans for their advance was crushing (on this at least there is no dispute).

Then, and here Stalin's responsibility is obvious, many Soviet commanders were of poor quality, hastily promoted to replace those shot in the purges. By common consent, the three principal front commanders on 22 June, F.Kuznetsov, D.Pavlov and Kirponos, were at best competent second-raters. Lower formations were led by men with minimum staff training, or none. Facing a situation which would have taxed the ingenuity of a Napoleon to the utmost, it can hardly be surprising that many of them failed. Of course, there were some able men in command positions, and gradually, learning from experience, there was a very marked improvement in the quality of leadership, but only after catastrophic losses.

Finally, morale. More than one Soviet general refers to lack of confidence between soldiers and officers because so many officers had been recently arrested. (One writer of memoirs, Gorbатов, had himself been sent from a concentration camp in Siberia to command an infantry corps in 1941.) Also there had been no propaganda build-up to prepare the troops for an attack by the Germans. There were illusions about proletarian solidarity, too: German workers would not shoot, they hoped. There was widespread discontent with the Soviet regime, though in fact the collapse of resistance was not attributable to the refusal of men to fight. Mass surrenders, when they occurred, were generally explicable by an already hopeless local situation. But they may have fought harder if they had known what sort of treatment awaited them. They had to learn this the hard way. Many

civilians, including even Jews, stayed behind hoping that life under the Germans would be tolerable, unaware until too late of how Germans treated 'undermen'; Soviet propaganda had been silent on this point since 1939.

It may well have been that any well-organised German attack was bound to score initial victories whatever the Soviet leaders did. Military experience, a higher level of training and education, the traditional qualities of the German soldier, a higher level of technology and a much larger industrial base (including that of occupied Europe), were great advantages. The initiative lay with the attacker. The achievements of Soviet industrial growth, while impressive, still and inevitably left gaps which were militarily damaging. They could no doubt have done more to produce lorries and radios, for instance, but only at the cost of cutting back the development of something else of military importance.

Disasters multiplied. While the southern front did hold for a short while, the northern and western defences were broken on the very first day, and German mobile columns penetrated very deep. By 28 June, a mere six days after the advance began, the Germans were far into the Baltic states, had captured Minsk, and quite obviously would advance hundreds of miles further before effective resistance could be organised. Yet Stalin remained silent. It has been alleged that he fell into black despair, that he felt that all was lost. It was indeed a remarkable silence. It had been left to Molotov to broadcast that war had begun. The people seem to have been left leaderless as the armies were shattered. Then at last Stalin spoke. On 3 July 1941 he went to the radio, and said: 'Brothers and sisters...' He spoke of deadly dangers, declared a scorched earth policy and urged all-out resistance. In a subsequent speech, on 7 November, he further invoked 'our great ancestors': Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Suvorov and Kutuzov, among others. This was indeed a patriotic appeal to Russian tradition.

Alexander Nevsky, who defeated the Teutonic knights in the thirteenth century, was a prince and a saint of the Orthodox church. Dimitry Donskoy defeated the Tartars in the fourteenth century. The other two were distinguished generals in the Turkish and Napoleonic wars. This appeal could be seen as the culminating point of the 'patriotic' turn of history and propaganda, which had begun well before the war. The danger *was* deadly, and German atrocities were showing all too clearly what would have been in

store for the people had Hitler won. It was logical and necessary to mobilise everyone and everything in the name of Holy Russia. The people responded.

### Stalin the War Leader

Stalin recovered his nerve, sacked some incompetent generals, had some officers shot, including the unfortunate staff of the west (i.e. central) front, appointed better men to take charge. He became Commander-in-Chief, and his own staff (*stavka*) functioned along-side and above the general staff. The large number of military memoirs published in recent years give a picture of Stalin's role as Commander. All agree that he was genuinely in command, that he took advice but imposed his own decisions, that he was not a fool who directed operations on a globe, as Khrushchev claimed in an excess of anti-Stalinist zeal. Mistakes were made, certainly, but it is wrong to ascribe these only to Stalin and the successes only to his staff officers. It is, of course, always easy to prove that any plan for victory did not originate with the Commander-in-Chief but had been proposed initially by someone else: one of his own staff, or by some subordinate commander. But it is the job of the c-in-c to decide what to do on the basis of proposals put before him.

In early July Stalin faced the necessity of further large retreats. So many troops and weapons had been lost already. Evacuation of plant from threatened areas was undertaken on a vast scale, but many factories could not be moved, and those that were could not resume production for some months. Meanwhile the loss of production and the disruption of communications reduced the productive capacity of Soviet industry, and for a time made it impossible to make up the losses and create a tolerable balance in hardware. Though the Russians succeeded in halting the Germans in the centre, in battles in the Smolensk area, the northern front was rolled back all the way to Leningrad, which was surrounded within six weeks of the outbreak of war. In the south, Soviet troops fell back to the Dnieper, holding on to Kiev. The armies in the southern Ukraine were defeated and surrounded near Uman, while the armoured columns of the central front turned south and threatened the rear of Kiev from the north ([map 1](#)). The Soviet commander saw the coming disaster and tried to get permission to retreat in time. Stalin committed the grave error of refusing,

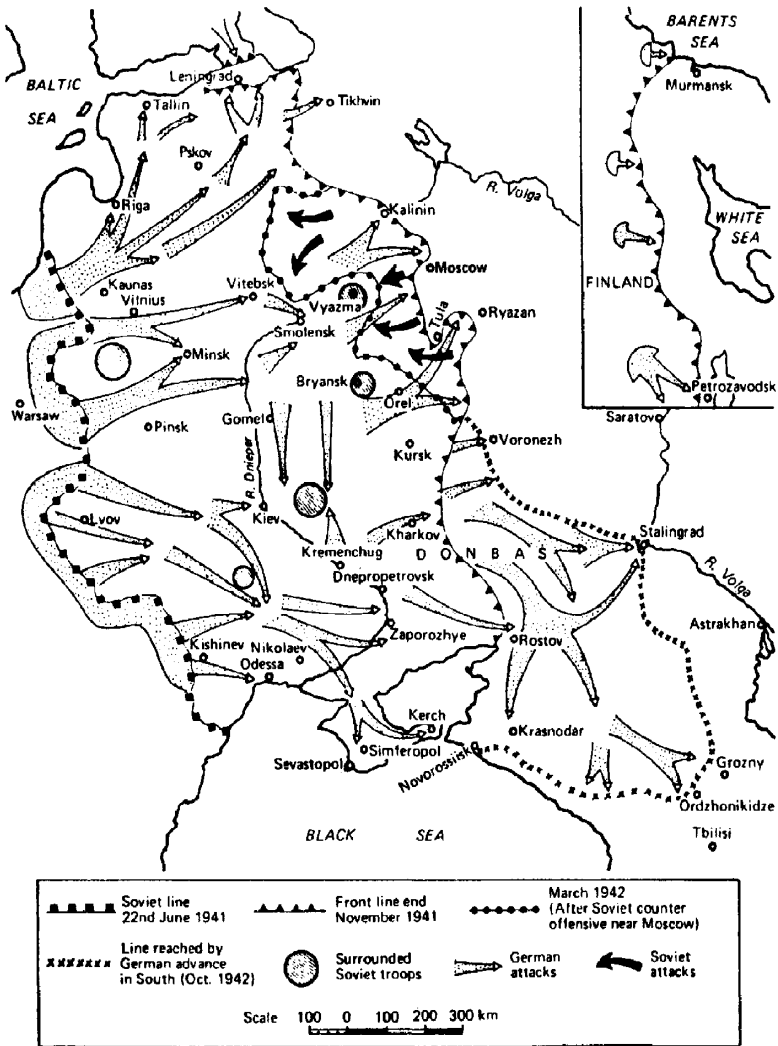
apparently in the hope that a counter-attack would succeed. German armies duly closed the trap, and an entire Russian army group was to all intents and purposes annihilated. The commander, Kirponos, nearly all his staff and the party leaders of Kiev were killed in trying to break through eastwards. The Germans claimed 600,000 prisoners. This disaster made effective defence of the industrial areas of Kharkov and the Donets basin impossible.

The Germans then struck at Moscow. Here the Russians had managed to assemble a fairly formidable defence, with two army groups (or 'fronts') astride the main highway covering the capital.

But these troops lacked mobility and air-power, and, despite all the bitter experience of German enveloping movements, were too far forward. The bulk of both these army groups were surrounded near Vyazma in yet another disaster, in the first days of October 1941. The encircled troops were able to distract the attention of the Germans for a week or two by their attempts to break out, but most of the men and all their equipment were lost. At this time there was literally no effective formation between the Germans and Moscow. Stalin ordered Zhukov, who was then in Leningrad, to take charge of the defences. Matters were not improved when the Bryansk army group south-west of Moscow, was unable to hold Guderian's tanks, which advanced rapidly towards Kaluga and Tula, south of the capital.

On 16 October, government offices and foreign embassies were ordered out of Moscow to Kuibyshev, and panic broke out among the civilian population. The Germans took Kalinin and advanced on Moscow, the drive from the north-west reaching a point which travellers today can see marked by a memorial barrier. It stands *between* Moscow's international airport and the city. It was touch and go.

At this moment Stalin was seen at his best. He did not leave the Kremlin. His nerve did not break. A meeting of the Party was held in an underground station. On 7 November, with the enemy just outside the city, he took the salute at the march-past of troops on the anniversary of the revolution. Despite appeals from hard-pressed generals, he held back enough of the reserves, which had been ordered to Moscow, to mount a counter-attack. Winter had come. The Germans, overconfident, did not have adequate clothing, and had been exhausted by the stout defence which Zhukov had been able to improvise in the nick of time. Morale



Map 1

had been greatly strengthened by patriotic appeals, and by German atrocities. Like their ancestors of 1812, men stood fast and died: 'Russia is vast, but there is no room for retreat. Behind us is Moscow.' German losses mounted, and they were ill-prepared for a serious counter-attack from an army which Hitler had declared

destroyed. The Soviet offensive of December drove the Germans back 100 miles in places. An invaluable breathing space had been won. Tragically, Leningrad could not be relieved, and its defenders suffered horribly. With hardly any food or fuel, nearly a million civilians died in the siege. But the city held out.

Stalin prepared for the 1942 campaign in the hope of being able to drive the Germans further back. But the balance of forces was not in his favour. Industry was still disrupted by the consequences of losses of territory. Allied aid began to arrive but made little difference at this point of time. New formations were still not trained, and the huge losses of regular troops and almost the whole of their supplies and armaments could not yet be replaced. Attempts to take the offensive failed with heavy losses. One such attempt, in the Kharkov direction in May 1942, led to the destruction of the attackers and dangerously weakened the southern front, where the Germans had concentrated a powerful attacking force. Stalin has been blamed for insisting, against advice and appeals from the local commanders, that the Kharkov attack be made. This, and the Kiev disaster, could have been his responsibility, especially as his staff officers at head-quarters found it difficult to change his mind when he made it up. The German attack disrupted the southern front completely. Men simply fled. Khrushchev later recounted that some soldiers could only be assembled if they were hungry and there was a soup-kitchen. Again there was a large haul of prisoners and equipment. The Germans drove through to Rostov, across the Don, into the fertile Kuban and to the foothills of the Caucasus. Stalin felt, with reason, that here was another major crisis. He issued stern orders, the death penalty was carried out for unauthorised retreat, every effort made to restore discipline. The German drive reached the outskirts of Stalingrad in mid-August 1942.

Gradually, the Soviet production effort began to redress the balance of forces. This was a fantastic achievement. The arrival of goods on lend-lease helped overcome certain vital production bottlenecks, and was valuable in providing lorries and radio equipment, to mention two items of importance. But the fact that, by the end of 1942 the Russians were actually producing more planes and tanks than the Germans, and often they were better planes and tanks, was due primarily to the self-sacrifice and hard work of the people. Just how great the sacrifices were is simply not realised in the West. Food was short, since the best agricultural

areas were occupied and transport facilities greatly strained. In rear areas many people were hungry. They lived in overcrowded hostels and several families to a room. Overtime was long, and military discipline was imposed on the civilian population. Production of consumer goods stopped, and clothes and other necessities were almost unobtainable. In no other country was such total priority given to the waging of war. For this purpose, Stalin's political system and economic planning mechanisms were invaluable. But they would never have succeeded had the people not responded. It was tragically unnecessary to continue the methods of terror and police rule, yet continued they were. The novelist Simonov described an episode in which a unit fought its way out of encirclement, made its way east in good order, despite tremendous difficulties, yet when they reached the Soviet positions they were not thanked but disarmed by the NKVD and sent to the rear for interrogation. On the way the Germans attacked the column, and these unarmed men suffered severe losses. One would have thought they deserved better.

It does not matter too much who originally conceived the idea of attacking the German flanks around Stalingrad. A glance at [map 2](#) will show that the position suggested this possibility to anyone on the staff. Hitler was mesmerised by the name 'Stalingrad', and sent large forces to attack it. They were resisted heroically in the streets by men of the 62nd Soviet army. On either side of the German advance were weaker forces, including allied Romanians, Italians, Croats. The Soviet problem was how, while holding on at Stalingrad, to assemble in an open plain in winter, with no hard-surface roads and one railway, a sufficient force to attack the flanks of the Germans, and to conceal this from the enemy. Stalin showed iron nerve in withholding more than minimal reinforcements for Stalingrad itself, despite the fact that the defenders had nearly been driven into the river.

On 19 November 1942 the blow was struck and the tide of war turned once and for all. Paulus's 6th Army was surrounded, the Italians and Romanians were destroyed, a huge gap opened on the German southern front. The skilful von Manstein extricated his troops hastily from the north Caucasus and fell back in fair order westwards. Hitler forbade Paulus to retreat, relief attempts failed, and on 2 February 1943 the 6th Army surrendered. This was an immense triumph for the Red Army, and for Stalin the Generalissimus.

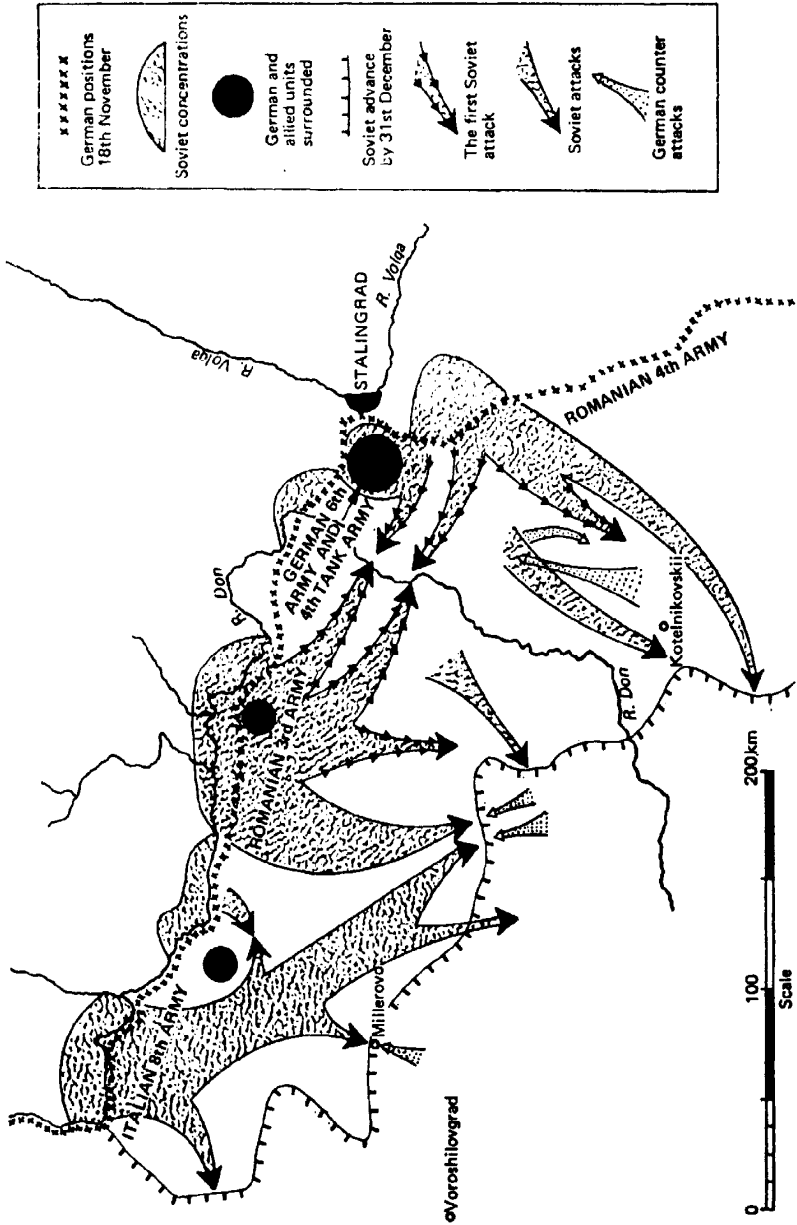
On the eve of the victory he took a step which again symbolised the stress he put on national tradition: the army's uniform was made to conform closely with Tsarist pattern, including the stiff 'shoulder-boards' (epaulets, in Russian *pogony*) for officers. In the civil war the *pogony* had been objects of hatred and derision. Now they were Soviet, and senior officers were henceforth far smarter than they had been, and infinitely better dressed than the men. Indeed there were few armies where rank distinctions and privileges were so pronounced.

Stalin himself never went to the front. But he exercised control through appointing and shifting generals, and he supervised all major operations. Often supervision over carrying out his orders was entrusted to a 'representative of the *stavka*', who kept in touch with Stalin by telephone. Vasilevsky and Zhukov often acted as such representatives.

Political control was concentrated in a small defence council, which virtually replaced governmental and Party organs. Since most of its members were later politically disgraced, the post-Stalin histories published in Russia do not mention its composition. It is therefore worth noting who they were: Stalin, Molotov, Beria, Malenkov and Voroshilov.

They were each given important sectors to supervise. Beria naturally had security, Malenkov was entrusted with armaments, especially aircraft production, and so on. Some members of the Politbureau were in effect chief political officers ('members of the military council') of fronts and army groups. Thus Zhdanov was in Leningrad, Khrushchev at Stalingrad and later in the Ukraine. (Brezhnev was with the 18th Army in the Caucasus.)

The rest of the war was an almost uninterrupted series of Russian victories. Only once, in May 1943, a German counter-attack scored a significant success, recapturing Kharkov. But they soon lost it again. In August 1943 the Germans made their last great effort; in 'operation Citadel' they tried to break through in the Kursk-Belgorod area. Forewarned, the Soviet high command took the necessary precautions, and after the failure of this attack the initiative remained firmly in Soviet hands. Stalin signed triumphant communiqués announcing the capture of important towns, which were read over on the radio and were accompanied by artillery salutes: Kiev, Sevastopol, Odessa, Minsk, the list grew. The Leningrad siege was finally raised, and Soviet troops during 1944 penetrated into Poland and the Balkans. Victory was



Map 2

coming. Since the Germans were in full retreat long before the Western allies landed in France in June 1944, it is not surprising that Stalin and Russians generally claim with pride that they bore the brunt of battle. The cost was enormous. More died in Leningrad alone than the total of British and Americans killed from all causes throughout the war. Soviet military casualties must have been of the order of 10 million, and of these perhaps 4 million died of hardship in German prisoner-of-war camps. To these must be added roughly 10 million civilians, some killed by the Germans (this applies particularly to the Jewish population of western areas), others by starvation and sickness.

Stalin's name became associated with taking Russia out of the jaws of disaster into victory. At home he became accepted even by many of those who suffered at his hands in the purges. Abroad his stock also rose. In 1943 he met Churchill and Roosevelt at Teheran. In February 1945 he was host to the same allied leaders in Yalta, in the reconquered Crimea. Stalin recognised at Yalta the primacy of Western interests in a number of areas, including Greece. He obtained from the Western leaders agreement on a predominant Soviet interest in eastern Europe, including Poland, whose borders were to be moved far westwards. He agreed in words about democracy and elections. The strains which were to become the cold war were still beneath the surface.

The war had complex effects on internal policies and human attitudes within the Soviet Union. It gave, as was inevitable, a very strong impetus to Russian nationalism, and the victories were a source of national pride. It also strengthened the conservative or even reactionary aspects of Stalinism. To cite two examples, a decree sought to end co-education, to provide separate curricula for boys and girls, using justificatory arguments which would have pleased Lord Palmerston and Mrs Beeton. Then in 1944, there was a new decree on family life, which freed men from any responsibility for children fathered outside marriage. While giving state allowances for 'single mothers' and introducing honorific titles (e.g. 'Mother Heroine') for mothers of many children, no doubt due to the very heavy war losses, the decree reintroduced the stigma of illegitimacy for children born out of wedlock. These were further steps on a road which began several years earlier. An example of another kind of severity was mass deportations of peoples accused of disloyalty: Chechen-Ingushes, Kalmyks, Crimean Tartars and some others were transported wholesale,

under very hard conditions, and their autonomous republics liquidated, with the war still in progress. On a more positive note, the war in alliance with Western democracies gave ground for hope that the regime would relax its severities after victory. Many peasants believed that collective farming would be liberalised or even ended. Intellectuals hoped for a less rigorous censorship. A new unity between rulers and ruled could perhaps have emerged from the terrible trials of war, in which the people showed by their sacrifices their loyalty to the state.

In April/May 1945 the Soviet armies entered Berlin, met the Americans on the Elbe, and victory was celebrated in Moscow with a great parade at which captured German standards were thrown at the feet of Stalin, who took the salute on Lenin's mausoleum.

What, then can we finally say of Stalin as a war leader? After his initial loss of nerve, he did hold firmly the reins of military leadership. Despite some tragic blunders, his basic ideas were in the end vindicated. The great awe and fear that he inspired, and the fact that all men who might have challenged him had been executed, helped to keep the Soviet Union fighting and united in the face of the catastrophies of 1941 and the summer of 1942. Let us not forget that both the scale of the defeats and the degree of civilian hardship exceeded by far those that brought about the fall of Tsarism in 1917. This is not a justification of the great terror. It is nonsense to say that 'Stalin destroyed the fifth column' in 1936–38; millions of his victims were totally innocent, and the scale of repression created discontent which was of use to the invading Germans, in the Ukraine and elsewhere. The fact that the Germans misused their opportunity, imposing their own brand of racist terror, was Stalin's good fortune. Stalin also had the wit and sense of self-preservation to appeal to patriotism and tradition. But it can be argued that only a discipline both harsh and credible (i.e. based on past experience of ruthlessness), plus faith in a leader built up for years as a demi-god, saved the Soviet Union from collapse.

There are those who say that the victory proves the basic correctness of the whole Stalinist line: collectivisation, industrial growth, the destruction of the opposition. I heard one such argue that the results of the battle of Stalingrad proves that Stalin's policies were right. A critic retorted: 'For all we know, but for

Stalin's policies the Germans would not have got as far as Stalingrad'.

## Chapter 4

### *The Last Years of Stalin*

#### The Brief False Spring

Joy was unbounded when peace came. There was hope of change. True, the regime and its police was basically unaltered, most of the prisoners remained in camps, soon to be joined by perhaps millions of repatriated prisoners of war and labourers deported by the Germans. But for a short time hope persisted. Stalin made a major speech at a victory banquet. In it he thanked the people, and singled out the Russian people. He drank to them, speaking, as always, with a strong Georgian accent:

‘Let me propose one more toast to you. I would like to drink a toast to the health of our Soviet people, and principally to the Russian people. I drink to the health of the Russian people because it is the outstanding nation amongst all nations of the Soviet Union. I drink the toast because not only is the Russian nation the leading nation but its people show a sharp intellect, character and perseverance.’

Yet the Russians constitute only about half of the population of the USSR. There are over a hundred other nationalities, some Slavs (Ukrainians, Belorussians), others of quite different and ancient cultures (Lithuanians, Georgians, Armenians), still others of Turkic or Tartar origin (Uzbeks, Kirghiz, Bashkirs, Azerbaijanians, etc.). Stalin was here asserting and emphasising the primacy and dominant role of the Russians in the multinational Soviet state.

Life was inevitably exceedingly hard. People returned to ruined towns and villages, reconstruction began amid universal shortages. On top of everything, 1946 was a year of drought. Many still went

hungry. But this was not seen as a repetition of the grim year 1933, since current sufferings were plainly due to the aftermath of war. Great efforts were made to restore tolerable conditions of living.

But early in 1946 the reimposition of stern Stalinist controls began. Some would link this with the beginning of the cold war. Indeed, as we shall see, it was already then becoming clear that relations with the erstwhile allies were going to be difficult. However, while not wishing to deny a connection with external strains and internal repression, it seems to me that Stalin's whole conception of government required him to stamp on 'liberal' illusions and restore total discipline, whatever line was being adopted at the time by Truman or Attlee. It is perhaps easier to discern the influence of foreign policy on economic plans at this period: a great stress was laid on the reconstruction and development of heavy industry. Stalin, more than ever isolated in the Kremlin, showed little awareness of the appalling conditions in which people were living.

Two blows were struck in 1946, signalling the end of any 'liberal' nonsense, one against the writers and the other against the peasants. Zhdanov, who was to become a species of cultural commissar, launched a violent attack on two literary journals in Leningrad, and also on two distinguished Leningrad writers, the poetess Akhmatova and the humorist Zoshchenko. He showed particular concern for the elimination of actual or imagined reflections of 'bourgeois' ideas, of alleged admiration of anything Western. He demanded the elimination of the unpolitical, the strictest subordination of the arts to the dictates and needs of the Party. Zoshchenko had written a harmless funny story about a monkey who found everyday life in a Soviet city so difficult that it decided to return to the jungle or the zoo. Zhdanov denounced this as a slander on noble Soviet men and institutions. The stage was thus set for the narrowness and extreme national-conservatism of the late-Stalin period, which extended to all branches of the arts and sciences, and which will require further examination in a moment.

The attack on intellectuals was closely followed by the decree of 19 September 1946, on 'breaches of the collective-farm statute'. It was there noted that on many farms the private plots of peasants had been increased in size, contrary to the rules, and the lands in question were to be returned to the farms. Various unofficial ways

of making life easier were stamped on. It is true that the decree also reaffirmed the 'democratic' basis of collective-farm management and denounced officials for illegally taking away collective property. However, the main purpose of the decree was to tighten discipline, and a council for collective-farm affairs was set up to ensure that regulations were strictly observed. Needless to say, it did not bother with collective 'democracy', save perhaps to ensure that the party's nominee for chairman was voted in unanimously by a peasant meeting (in some cases even this formality was not observed).

This was only one indication of Stalin's strong bias against peasants as a social group. Two more examples: in wartime some peasants had opportunities to sell the produce of their allotments to hungry townsmen at very high prices, and so it was entirely proper to levy a high tax on the allotments and on privately owned livestock. However, the tax rates remained at high levels also after the war, and were in fact increased in the last years of Stalin's life. The resultant burden was the greater if one recalls that compulsory deliveries at very low prices were levied on the peasant household as well as on farms, that (for instance) milk had to be delivered whether or not the peasant family possessed a cow. According to Khrushchev, when he tried to reason with Stalin, the latter accused him of a propeasant *narodnik* (populist) deviation.

Another example relates to the currency reform. No doubt it was true that large sums had accumulated in certain civilian pockets during the war, and action was needed to 'devalue' these savings in preparation for the abolition of rationing. But what was in fact done was to wipe out nine-tenths of the value of savings held in cash (savings banks and bonds were treated more favourably). Most cash savings were in peasant hands.

Stalin imposed harsh policies on low-paid townspeople also. The bad harvest of 1946 delayed the abolition of rationing for a year, but when it came the new prices reflected to the full the shortages of 1947. Ordinary bread cost  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times the prewar price. He did authorise an increase in wages for the lower-paid, thereby diminishing the excessive differentials in pay. None the less, average wages were still only 65 per cent above the 1940 level, and so living standards were exceedingly low. Of course, Stalin could say in his defence that life was hard because of appalling shortages occasioned by the war, and that his price policy strictly reflected reality. Furthermore, as goods became more abundant, retail prices

were reduced year after year. This is a good defence, though in most countries it was considered politically necessary to mitigate such severities by rationing or subsidies. Stalin had no reason to fear public opinion, however.

There is, of course, some connection between the economic situation and political repression. However, the relationship is anything but simple. Terror enables a leader to impose unpopular policies. It may have been the precondition of a very high rate of 'primitive socialist accumulation'. But such a relationship holds only on the general level, not for particular dates or events. Thus there is no correlation between a bad economic situation and terror. The wild excesses of 1936–38 took place when living standards and productivity had reached the highest point of the decade, far above the 1931–34 level. Similarly, the high-point of postwar repression was being reached when postwar economic recovery was far advanced.

### Stalin and the Cold War

It can be plausibly argued that Stalin's economic and cultural policies after 1945 were intimately connected with the developing cold war. True, there is much evidence that Stalin's whole conception of government, including his own aim to achieve personal despotic power, was in a very real sense independent of a hostile environment. None the less, the Stalin regime justified itself and its own severities by reference to this environment, and many Party officials certainly thought that both dictatorship and Stalin were an unavoidable consequence of danger from without. How far Stalin's own policies increased this danger is another question.

As for the origin of the cold war, many volumes have been and will be written on this theme. Perhaps it is enough to say that deep suspicion of the 'imperialist' West was always present in the mind of Stalin and the bulk of the party, and the wartime alliance seemed likely to be temporary. Despite a certain euphoria plus some illusions about the wartime ally 'Uncle Joe', many highly placed Westerners considered that the USSR was likely to be a postwar menace. Certainly this was true of Churchill well before the war ended, as his memoirs bear witness. Therefore, once the common enemy was destroyed, strains and stresses were bound to arise. Stalin's actions in Eastern Europe exacerbated the situation. In Poland and Romania especially Soviet policy very quickly showed

an insistence on the total domination of Soviet nominees and the negation of normal democratic procedures, which Western leaders thought had been agreed at Yalta. In East Germany the Social-Democrats were destroyed and a Communist regime installed under the aegis of the Soviet occupation authorities. These actions prompted Churchill's famous Fulton speech in March 1946, on the Soviet menace. A freer atmosphere at first prevailed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and its extinction may well be best seen as coming at a somewhat later stage of the cold war, intensifying it further. Soviet policymakers also exerted pressure on Turkey and Iran, which alarmed President Truman in particular.

By hindsight it would seem that Stalin was engaged in consolidating the Soviet sphere of influence, while gaining ground where he could. He did not interfere in Greece when British troops crushed the Communists in 1944–45, because Greece was assigned to the Western sphere by the Yalta agreement. He could not see that he was in breach of his obligations by imposing his nominees upon countries which Yalta had placed in *his* sphere. Suspicious by nature, he was ideologically predisposed to expect imperialist plots. American lend-lease ended abruptly in 1945, with the defeat of Japan, and the offer of Marshall Aid seemed to Stalin to be a bid to extend American influence, especially into the vulnerable area of the recently-occupied or liberated East European states. The fact that some of their governments wished to accept Marshall Aid was, for Stalin, further proof of the urgent need to establish firm and obedient Communist governments there. This in turn led to, or accelerated the process of, the establishment of party dictatorships in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, a process completed in the first half of 1948. This in turn brought a strong hostile reaction in the West.

A very important aspect of Stalin's policy was his estimate of the American nuclear threat. In the first postwar years only America had the bomb, and for long after they were greatly superior in means of delivery, with bases all round the USSR. Might they not use it to prevent the USSR from ever challenging America in the future? It is instructive to recall that at this period even Bertrand Russell advocated some such policy (in order to avoid the danger of a future war between nuclear powers). Stalin's fears were not absurd. In 1973 there was published in America a report from the then us ambassador in London, to the effect that Churchill had been advocating the use of nuclear-bomb threats to force a Soviet

withdrawal from Central Europe. Soviet losses had been huge, the country was exhausted. It was said that the USSR 'did not disarm' after the war. This was not so. The army was greatly reduced in size. But Stalin's consciousness of weakness caused him to adopt a tough posture, and also to reinforce secrecy, to conceal weakness.

He succeeded all too well. The Western countries felt themselves to be weak, in disarray, menaced by the Soviet giant. A system of alliances designed to deter the Communists was brought into being. Action and reaction now followed thick and fast. American bases were established, and the western zones of Germany were organised gradually into what ultimately became the federal republic. An early stage in this process gave rise to a conflict over Berlin, which was isolated inside Soviet-occupied East Germany, apparently as the jointly occupied capital of a future German state. This marked perhaps the high-point of Stalin's tough policy, and it strengthened Western alarm and military preparations. By now both sides were fully engaged on propaganda war and believed the worst of each other. Relations deteriorated. In retrospect, Western weakness and Soviet strength were alike overstated, and the belief that the USSR was planning to overrun Europe was unfounded, in the sense that Stalin had no such intentions and made no preparations designed to secure such an objective. But the more the West prepared to meet a largely imaginary threat, the more Stalin believed that the West must be preparing to roll back the Soviet forces from Central Europe, or go even further.

Relations were made worse still by the Communist triumph in China in 1948–49. It is by now accepted that Stalin did very little to help his Chinese comrades, perhaps foreseeing that a huge country like China was bound eventually to challenge Soviet hegemony among Communists. But at the time it appeared that the 'world Communist conspiracy' was scoring large gains and threatening the whole world. The very next year, 1950, saw the outbreak of the Korean war. Once again, most experts today will accept that Stalin allowed the North Koreans to attack in the expectation of an easy victory and American inaction. He seems to have misread a speech by Acheson, the then Secretary of state, which omitted Korea in a list of countries which America would protect. It is now also clear that Mao Tse-tung had nothing to do with the decision, that he was not consulted and perhaps not even informed. However, the North Korean attack set in motion a major American response, which ultimately brought China in and still

further worsened the already grim international atmosphere. In Washington a major war with the Soviet Union appeared quite likely in 1950–51. Hence the policy of economic embargo, and intense military preparations.

While relations with the West were deteriorating, Stalin launched his campaign to tie the 'satellites' firmly to the Soviet Union. The first stage was to put Communists in power, but Stalin did not trust Communists; did he not have hundreds of thousands of Soviet Party members shot? And these were foreigners, in contact with God knows whom? So soon followed a second stage, that of purging the parties and establishing leaders whose obedience to Moscow was certain, and reinforced by control of Beria's secret police over the repressive apparatus of each country.

This caused a clash with Yugoslavia. Though Belgrade had been liberated largely by the Red Army, the Yugoslav partisans led by Tito had an outstanding and heroic military record, and had not returned to their country in the baggage train of the Russians. Their pride, morale, national appeal, stood high. So when Stalin's henchmen demanded Soviet control over police and other state organs, Tito decided to say 'no'. Overconfident in his power over the minds of Communists abroad, Stalin thought he could destroy Tito by declaring his hostility. Tito responded by imprisoning the few who were prepared to take Stalin's side. A furious Stalin broke relations, and Tito became a 'fascist monster' in Soviet propaganda declarations.

Among his sins was carrying on discussions with Bulgaria about a Balkan federation. To Stalin this seemed treasonable, a possible ganging up to weaken Moscow control. A great purge was launched to destroy real or imagined Tito-ites, or National Communists, or potentially disobedient persons, from the parties of the satellite states (at this period very clearly satellites). In Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, heads rolled. Stalinist terror methods were imposed, with public trials and abject confessions. Many were arrested, some executed, and Communists suffered most of all. The extent of repression varied. In Poland some (including Gomulka) were arrested but the local leadership prevented a bloodbath. In East Germany the ultra-loyal Ulbricht avoided any major purge. In China, Mao Tse-tung could not be treated as a mere satellite, both because of the sheer size of China and because he and his comrades had won through with hardly any Soviet help (and indeed against Stalin's advice).

However, during Stalin's life the Chinese deferred to Moscow and to Stalin, in public at least.

All the ruling Communist parties in Europe were, by the end of 1949, wholly ruled by and from Moscow, and Stalin-worship and endlessly repeated protestations of total loyalty to the Soviet Union became universal. So was a total copying of Soviet institutions and methods, even in absurd detail. It is hard to say whether Stalin exactly willed this, or whether, like the purges themselves, there were excesses due to over-zealous and frightened comrades. In such an atmosphere, people denounced each other, tried to prove loyalty, some to save themselves and some to secure promotion. There was competition in imitating every Muscovite method, speech and policy. Western opinion was outraged.

There is evidence to show that Stalin became alarmed by the scale of Western response to his policies, and that he tried, from 1950, to negotiate a reduction in tension. Even the 'peace campaign' he launched was, in all probability, not only a political manoeuvre but a rather clumsy effort to appeal for a less bellicose atmosphere. But by then nothing could stop the momentum of the cold war.

### Political and Cultural Repression at Home

Stalin's character in the last seven years of his life underwent a deterioration. Already in the thirties his thirst for despotic power may have had paranoiac features. After the war, his intense suspiciousness verged increasingly on clinical abnormality. Perhaps worship as a demi-god not only goes to but affects the head, after a time. Stalin hardly ever met people outside the narrow circle of his drinking-companions who were the Politbureau, and everyone was required to tremble and obey. Party organs such as the central committee hardly ever met. Party Congresses were no longer called — none met between 1939 and 1952. In this hothouse atmosphere there was plenty of petty intrigue, with some comrades ready to whisper to Stalin and to Beria about the real or alleged intrigues or plots of other comrades, to get nearer to the despot's favour and to edge others out of it.

Zhdanov had been put in charge of the cultural sector, and we have seen how he began the clean-up of alleged liberal elements in Leningrad in 1946. The purge extended to the musicians. Respected and world-famous composers, Shostakovich, Prokofiev

and others, were accused of 'formalism' and lack of party spirit. Hack writers of optimistic pseudo-folk songs and party-line oratorios, were extolled. It all made most painful reading, and can be read in its devastating detail in Werth's *Musical uproar in Moscow*. As always, the despicable careerist hacks rushed to denounce their superiors. Someone even accused a composer of writing a 'formalist fugue'. Luckily none was arrested, but life became difficult for musicians.

Zhdanov was a possible successor to Stalin. In this capacity he inevitably competed with Beria and the rising Malenkov. In August 1948 he suddenly died, almost certainly a natural death. As we shall see, the cultural 'line' was in no way changed, and this supports the view that he was carrying out general Party (Stalin) policy, rather than initiating his own.

His death was followed by the mysterious 'Leningrad affair'. For reasons not yet clear, the Party leaders in Leningrad, who had led the organisation during the terrible siege, were all shot. So were many others in Leningrad. The purge also reached out to eliminate the chief planner, Voznesensky, on charges still unknown. The only common denominator in these executions was that they all had at some point some association with Zhdanov and with Leningrad.

The terror wave rose again, not to the hysterical and public levels of 1937, but silently arrests mounted. The Jewish anti-Fascist committee, set up during the war, was liquidated, apparently because it had suggested the Crimea (whence the Tartars had been deported) as an area of Jewish settlement, and some diseased mind thought of treason. The foundation in the same year of the state of Israel (originally with Soviet support), and the welcome given to Golda Meir, the first Israeli ambassador, reinforced suspicions. This led, in 1948, to the arrest of the most eminent Yiddish writers, and for good measure the old commissar Lozovsky, whom the Party had put in to control them. Most of them were shot, after three or more years in prison, in 1952, Lozovsky among them. In 1948 the surviving Yiddish institutions (theatre, press) were closed. A campaign against 'rootless cosmopolitans' acquired increasingly anti-semitic over-tones.

This was part of the ever-tightening and narrow cultural controls. Theatre critics were warned off by an article about 'anti-patriotic' criticism in *Pravda*. Writers, economists, painters, historians, were attacked and corrected. Hurrah-nationalism

became *de rigueur*. 'Kow-towing before the West' was a crime. All good things came from Russia, now and in days of old. It was discovered that Russians had invented almost everything, from the steam engine to radio, not excluding the aeroplane. Scientific contacts with the West, tenuous for years, became impossible. Cultural contacts were minimal. After the Moscow Dynamo tour of 1945, even football matches with the West ended.

In science there was the destruction of genetics, in that disgraceful meeting at which the pseudo-scientist Lysenko claimed that, in denying the very existence of genes and chromosomes, he had the authority of the Central Committee and of Stalin behind him. Some Western Communist scientists, like J.B.S. Haldane, found this too much to bear. A bold Soviet geneticist, told to recant on the authority of Molotov, dared to reply: 'But does Comrade Molotov know more about genetics than I do?' He was dismissed, as were many eminent scientists. Genetics in due course revived, and in recent years Vavilov has been (posthumously) honoured as a great martyr-scientist.

Ignorant commissar-types invaded other sciences. Various modern ideas, from resonance-theory to cybernetics, were branded as bourgeois reactionary nonsense. In each branch of knowledge some dead Russian was extolled as a great originator, and some living Russian was put in charge to watch for heresy. In economics the original mind of Varga put forward ideas about possible changes in Western capitalism. In 1948 he was dismissed and his Institute of World Economics abolished. One hack-economist attacked the very notion of using compound interest as anti-Marxist. A budding mathematical-economics school was silenced.

Einstein was attacked too, but, with scientists hard at work to devise the Russian nuclear bomb, sheer necessity protected the physicists, while pure mathematics avoided trouble because so few commissars could understand it.

It is hard to compute the damage done by this deliberate Stalinist campaign to secure total obedience of intellectuals to the Party line, and to cut Russia off from all Western influence—and so also from Western science and technology.

After 1946 there was ever more stress on *Russian* nationalism, pressure to Russianise increased. Stalin seemed to forget all he might have learned from his own Georgian nationality, and from his own old theories on the national question. He aimed at centralised subordination to himself as the leader of a new *Russian* 'socialist'

empire, which was still internationalist in theory. But how could it be so in practice when Stalin had a law passed making all marriages between Soviet citizens and foreigners (*any* foreigners) illegal! Yet such a law *was* adopted, in 1947.

Old titles restored included, in 1946, the formerly hated title of *minister*. Uniforms for diplomats, uniforms for miners, for railway-men, emphasised rank by braid and epaulet. Stiffness and formality grew stiffer and more formal.

Over all this Stalin presided, working largely at night, with officials throughout the USSR sitting in their offices until dawn in case the boss telephoned with orders or questions. Much was decided at all-night dinners, amid crude jokes and guffaws of drunken cronies. He hardly ever appeared in public, hardly ever spoke or wrote. A major exception was his essay in 1950, on linguistics, written perhaps because the pretensions of a philosopher-king require an occasional exercise of the philosopher's art. Stalin insisted, not unreasonably, that language did not significantly depend on class, and denounced crude oversimplifications, as well as intolerance in matters scientific. The 'linguistic' content in Stalin's intervention was hardly earth-shattering, but the sycophants rushed in to praise him to the skies as a genius of unique proportions.

Stalin's remarks on the need to tolerate differences of opinion in scientific questions is one of many instances of what looks like lying hypocrisy of gigantic dimensions. Who else but he had insisted on the enforcement of Party-line orthodoxy, who else had backed Lysenko? One supposes that lies of this kind came naturally to a man who, long ago in the twenties, invoked 'Party democracy' whenever it suited him in the battle against Trotsky and other oppositionists. In the same spirit he coerced the peasants while drawing attention to abuses in the democratic provisions of the collective-farm charter. Similarly, at a time of the most acute overcrowding (1948), he announced that in Moscow they had 'abolished slums', a lie so bare-faced as to take one's breath away. No wonder no statistics on housing could be published until well after his death.

The cultural and political scene of the late-Stalin period was grim, and it is hard to find any extenuating circumstances. Super-patriotism, drum-beating and semi-scientific nonsense became compulsory, and so was endlessly repeated adulation of Stalin in matters great and small, relevant and irrelevant. The author of a

doctoral thesis on mathematical statistics (if he wished to pass) would have to include quotations from the 'leader and teacher of the peoples', such as a remark that 'statistics is very important'. He would have to expunge every reference to Western statistical works and theories, to avoid 'kow-towing'.

In his last years, Stalin's isolation and paranoia grew worse. He allowed or ordered Molotov's wife to be arrested, and Molotov himself, with Mikoyan, may have fallen out of favour. Even Beria was quite possibly threatened. (No reliable evidence for this period is yet available.) Certainly a new purge of some kind was in the wind. Judging from the trial of Slansky and his associates in Czechoslovakia, it was to have an anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic 'angle', but would involve many others too. The discovery in January 1953 of a largely Jewish 'doctors' plot' showed the way things were going. By then Stalin's mind must have been so abnormal that any defenders of his record would have to plead insanity.

### Economic Progress and the Nineteenth Party Congress

By contrast, economic progress was rapid, at least in the urban sector. Growth rate statistics always look impressive in a period of postwar reconstruction, but Stalin must have been gratified at the speed of recovery and the achievements of industry. In his speech in 1946 he envisaged realising by 1960 the following targets:

	<i>(million tons)</i>	
	1945	1960
Steel	12.25	60
Oil	19.4	60
Coal	149.3	500

In actual fact these targets were exceeded:

	<i>(million tons)</i>	
	1960	
Steel	65	
Oil	148	
Coal	513	

Nor was progress confined to heavy industry. The industrial consumer goods sectors were quickly restored to their (admittedly inadequate) prewar levels, and a start was made in creating the capacity to produce consumer durables, hitherto virtually unavailable to the population. Retail prices were reduced in every year from 1948 to 1953. Life, while still hard, began to get better, though housing was still appallingly crowded.

Two reasons can be given for the good economic performance. One is the inflow of reparations from defeated countries. These included much dismantled equipment, rails, materials, and also (temporarily) technicians to train Russians in new skills. For example most of the Zeiss works in Jena were moved east and eventually Russians were able to make good cameras, for home consumption and export. But the most important reason, surely, was the hard work of the people, and the devotion to duty of a great many middle-grade managers, and officials. There were petty bureaucrats and careerists in plenty, but there were others too. I recall once meeting the chief architect of the city of Kiev, who was plainly an enthusiast for the task of rebuilding it and he and his colleagues doubtless made wholehearted efforts to do the job well. The war strengthened the feeling of patriotic pride. It caused heavy loss in manpower, but many acquired new skills in the increasingly mechanised school of war.

The economy had to rely heavily on women. A source of great unhappiness was the disproportionate numbers: almost twice as many women as men in the 20–40 age-groups at the end of the war. Women made great progress educationally and many became engineers and technologists, whilst dominating numerically the professions of teaching and medicine. However, they also had to do the hardest and most disagreeable work, which perhaps was natural in a country of peasant tradition, for field work was always a feminine occupation.

Agriculture did not do well. There were several reasons. One was the wartime destruction of villages, equipment, livestock. Another was that shortage of men was particularly acute in rural areas. But the trouble in large part was due to the neglect of agriculture by the planning organs, and the persistence of paying

very low prices for farm produce. Delivery obligations and taxes rose, incomes remained exceedingly low. A so-called 'Stalin plan for the transformation of nature' was introduced with a flourish of trumpets in 1949. It was supposed to cause a change of climate of the arid south-east by huge plantations of forest shelter-belts. Orders were given, peasants were compelled to plant seedlings, but almost all the effort was wasted, due partly to the technical unsoundness of the scheme (Lysenko had a theory that trees of the same species do not compete for light and food!), partly because no material incentives were provided. In due course the 'plan' was quietly forgotten.

In 1949–52 pressure on the peasants increased, with heavier taxes on their own animals and produce. Recovery was halted. Poverty-stricken villages and miserably low productivity were the legacy of Stalin's successors. Stalin in his last years was still continuing his policy of neglecting the interests of the peasants and of agriculture.

Perhaps he would claim that the cold war left him with little room for manoeuvre. From 1949 Soviet military spending rose. The numbers in the armed forces went up, and great efforts on the part of scarce scientific manpower were being devoted to ending the American nuclear-arms monopoly at the earliest date. As tank output rose again, that of tractors declined, in 1951–2. Indeed, the performance of the whole economy (except agriculture) was the more creditable, if one bears in mind the growing strain of the arms race in the last years of Stalin's life.

Stalin's last work proved to be his contribution to, or outline for the preparation of a textbook on economics, published under the title of *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. Amid theoretical formulations concerning the law of value, two points stood out. One was his emphatic warning to the economics profession to keep clear of practical matters of management and of resource allocation, for this was the province of the political authorities. The other was his belief that the area of 'commodity-money relations' (or spontaneous economic forces) should be gradually reduced. These ideas were anachronistic and did not long survive his death. At the time, however, they were hailed as the finest flowering of human wisdom.

In October 1952 there assembled in Moscow the nineteenth Party Congress, the first to be held for thirteen years. Stalin was there, greyer and older, but he spoke only very briefly. The main

report was presented by the man who was presumably intended to be his successor, Malenkov. The five-year plan for the period 1951–5 was submitted and approved, over a year late. The delegates acclaimed Stalin and passed all resolutions with customary unanimity. All seemed as before. Some must have forgotten that even great despots are mortal.

### The End of an Era

Death came on 5 March. It may have saved Russia from another purge, it probably saved some threatened individuals, and so inevitably a rumour arose that death was not natural, though there are no grounds for doubting that the tough old dictator was struck down by disease in a medically normal way. There were widespread expressions of genuine sorrow at the passing of a man who dominated the history of his country for thirty drama-packed years, who had led it to victory and in whose name many had worked and died. Huge crowds gathered for the lying-in-state and the funeral. Speeches were made by Malenkov, Beria and Molotov, the three most likely to succeed. Stalin's body was laid to rest beside that of Lenin in the mausoleum in Red Square. What was the measure of his achievement?

Stalin rose to power in the aftermath of a great revolution, in a country bled white by war and just beginning to recover from almost total economic ruin. He died at the head of one of the world's two super-powers, with a Soviet hydrogen bomb in the making, with an industry second only to that of the United States in its total output. The borders of the Russian Empire were almost everywhere restored, Soviet troops and Communist governments were established in the heart of Europe. The most populous country in the world, China, was ruled by Communists, even though their long-term loyalty to the Moscow leadership could not be guaranteed. All this was achieved under Stalin's guidance. So was almost universal literacy, a great expansion of education, a social security system.

His economic strategy made possible the survival of the Soviet Union in a desperate military struggle with Nazi Germany (Stalin's ghost would argue). This meant sacrifice, discipline, coercion, particularly against peasants. But did not peasants elsewhere have to bear the burden of industrialisation? Where was industrialisation carried out with 'consensus'? Did anyone ask

British farm labourers or hand-loom weavers for their opinions during our industrial revolution? Did *they* have the vote in 1800? The whole process in the USSR could have been less arduous and more easily accepted if it were not for the need to hurry, a need due to the hostile environment, the overwhelming urgency of military security.

Stalin (his ghost would continue) organised a potentially anarchic land. He harnessed the people to the huge task which faced Russia, and gentler methods would not have succeeded. His opponents were very clever, but they could not rule. They were good at arguing and agitating, and criticising, but could they build? Imagine Bukharin organising something! Why, he was a professor by nature, or perhaps an inspired journalist. Rykov? A drunkard with no real backbone. Trotsky was a non-starter, an outsider who could not command the loyalty of the Party cadres, and he pursued unsound policies. No doubt (Stalin's ghost would perhaps admit) he and his supporters were not in the pay of foreign intelligence services; this was crude morality-play stuff for the ignorant masses. But Trotsky had been wrong at a time when it was very dangerous to be wrong.

Who else could have saved the country in 1941? Potential opposition was wiped out and it would have been perilous to allow it. True, the terror paralysed the initiative of many, but where would Russia have been without iron discipline, firm leadership, indeed semi-religious faith in the leader?

Mistakes? Unnecessary cruelties? Innocent victims? Certainly. Would Russia have been happier if the character of Stalin had been different? Possibly, but people cannot be divided into parts. His qualities and his defects were indissolubly bound together. *On balance* (his supporters could claim) he must be seen as a positive figure in twentieth-century Russian history. And not only Russian history, in view of his part in freeing Europe of Nazi Germany.

This sort of line could be taken by apologists for Stalin. For Brezhnev and his colleagues it was hard to avoid falling for this argument, as they had all been Party or state officials under Stalin, and too much stress on the negative features of his rule might undermine the legitimacy of the entire Soviet state, which he did so much to create.

Another line of defence is traditional-nationalist in character. Stalin, like Ivan and Peter before him, was a ruthless moderniser, who made his country great. Indeed there have been a number of

old-style Russian nationalists who found it possible to accept Stalinism. A variant of the above is frequently encountered among German scholars: Russia can be ruled only with the whip; Stalin is the kind of ruler these people need, and deserve. Did not the Tsars rule as absolute monarchs, with the help of a service gentry who owed everything to them? Stalin's 'service (and servile) comrades' were part of the warp and weft of Russian history.

But there is a formidable 'case against'. There was, first, his ruthless disregard for human life. His victims number many, many millions. It is absurd to argue that they *had* to die to ensure the success of Soviet policies. It is arguable that these very policies would have been pursued more effectively if they had not been massacred.

A Communist or Socialist should see Stalin as one who perverted the original ideology of the revolution and destroyed the Communist Party that Lenin knew. Hierarchy, rank, privilege, the deliberate creation of vested interest as a political ploy, these are part of an anti-socialist way of life, Concealment of facts, censorship, a pretence of democracy and of continuity of revolutionary ideology, were part of the essential lying and dishonesty of Stalinism. The destruction of most of the intelligentsia did inestimable harm to society, to the economy, to culture. Not the least harm was done to Marxism itself. It is due to the Stalin terror that original Marxist thought atrophied in Russia, and so the recent interest in Marxist ideas in the West and in developing countries has kindled no Soviet contribution or response worthy of the name.

Furthermore, Stalinism *destroyed the Party* as an organism capable of thought and discussion. It is clear that any body of thought, or of men, are kept sharp by competition with persons who argue against them. The *advocatus diaboli* of Catholic theologians is a recognition of this need. Stalin's reign lowered the general level of argument and understanding in the Party at all levels. Party secretaries who did not obey and who argued did not remain Party secretaries for long. Yet the passage of time and the rule of seniority has brought the former middle-grade secretaries to positions of supreme power. Khrushchev, as we shall see, was an 'original', a character, but he was unique, and his undistinguished bureaucrat-colleagues got rid of him. What we had now, as an illegal Russian ballad has it, is rule by men who 'became bosses through learning that silence is golden', but who now have nothing

to say. How Stalin towered in retrospect over the pygmies who succeeded to his empire! It is the fault of his system that they virtually *had* to be second-raters. This is in sharp contrast with the scientists, men of world class, products of the best of Soviet and Russian education. The gap between the politician-type and the true intellectuals, which exists in all countries, might well be dangerously large in Russia.

It is also attributable to Stalin's system that Party-state officialdom represents a powerful vested interest in the maintenance of 'administered privilege'. They control what is produced and to whom it is distributed. They have become conservatives, waving a red flag on high days and holidays. Stalin used their self-seeking for his own purposes, while punishing and purging them without mercy. They held office at his whim. After his death they demolished the terror machine in the interests (*inter alia*) of personal and job security, and now they do not fear. But the net effect was that power passed into the hands of a new class which has lost revolutionary dynamism and which was no longer impelled by an autocrat. It is not clear where they go from here. Hardly towards 'world revolution', whatever that might be.

Critics can also seize upon the *economic* weaknesses of Stalinism: over-centralisation, a clumsy supply-and-production bureaucracy, lack of rational criteria for choice, the enthronement of arbitrariness. Above all his agricultural policies were cruel and counter-productive, and collectivisation is something for any country to avoid. If the pace and strategy of economic development by his methods required the horrors of terror and purge, then the pace and strategy were wrong.

Stalin's foreign policy too could be attacked, on grounds not of morals but of effectiveness. His refusal to see the menace of fascism, his attacks on Social-Democrats, helped Hitler to power. His policy towards Finland and Romania in 1939-41 may have impelled both into an alliance with Hitler, to the military detriment of the USSR. Enough has been said of his disastrous error in failing to see the imminence of the Nazi assault in 1941. The origin of the cold war is a complex subject, but at the least Stalin's policies certainly contributed to mobilising American opinion for the waging of it. His obstinate misinterpretation of 'decolonisation' caused Soviet policy to miss opportunities: for too long people like Nehru were seen as imperialist agents, a mistake quickly corrected by his successors.

So there were great errors as well as crimes, to set against the successful consolidation and enlargement of the Soviet state.

So where does all this leave us? Stalin achieved much. His rise, his methods, his successes and his brutalities all need to be understood in the context of Russian history, of Russian 'political culture', of the fate of the Bolshevik revolution in a backward and peasant country under conditions of international isolation. Having achieved power, he imprinted his personality on many events. His style of work was widely copied, his vengeful cruelty brought much avoidable sufferings to millions of people. Yet for all that, if the cruel and vengeful Tsar Peter can be called the Great, so will not future generations give to Joseph Vissarionovich Djughashvili, called Stalin, this same title, and with as much or as little reason as to that ruthless modernising despot of bygone days? It may be objected: we live in a more civilised century. But do we?

### A Digression: What Explanation for Stalinism?

How did it come about that a libertarian revolution, made in the name of Marxian socialism, brought forth Stalinism? Some reasons have been advanced already, but it seems worth while to recapitulate and to try to generalise.

One category of explanations lays stress on the specific features of the *Russian political tradition*, of which Stalin showed himself well aware. Like Peter the Great, Stalin sought to mobilise the human and material resources of a backward country to catch up with the West, by barbarous means. This was linked with the logic of the Leninist concept of *seizing power in a backward country*, and then creating the pre-conditions for socialism from above. While a one-party state was not part of the original ideology, it became an objective necessity if one were to retain power and to transform the social structure, in a country with a large majority of peasants, uninterested in or hostile to such a transformation. For this purpose the *Leninist concept of the party*, as a tightly organised, centralised and disciplined organisation, was particularly well suited, and of course Stalin as General Secretary was at the strategic centre of the party's organisational role of ruling, coercing, transforming. It will be endlessly argued whether Stalinism was the natural and logical outcome of Leninism, or whether on the contrary Stalin destroyed Lenin's party, as he certainly destroyed physically most of Lenin's comrades. Perhaps

the most reasonable judgement is that Lenin's strategy and methods created the opportunity for a Stalin, provided him with organisational and ideological weapons, but that Stalin then used them in ways which surely would have horrified the founder of Bolshevism. ('If Lenin were alive today he would be in prison', to quote words attributed to his widow.)

Also relevant was the *low educational level* of the citizenry in general, of the bulk of party members in particular. The Europeanised intellectuals were few, and it was surely no coincidence that Stalin's rise to power was followed by the violent deaths of most of the party intelligentsia. Men promoted from the ranks brought with them the conventional views so typical of high Stalinism, on topics as different as art, history, women, punishment, Jews, education and what I have called the sergeant-major-type attitude to subordinates. It may also be proper to add the unfortunate effect of the militant denial—by the left-wing intellectuals themselves—of the principles of traditional morality. Truth, justice, conscience, were for years mocked, presented as bourgeois prejudices. *Salus revolutionis, suprema lex*. This cleared the way for the extremes of ruthlessness and injustice to which they themselves were soon to fall victim.

We must now take on board the explanations which relate to *socialism in one country*, and the linked questions of *forced accumulation and industrialisation* under conditions of perceived military danger. Stalinism is then seen as a system of highly disciplined mobilisation, which can be linked with the already mentioned historical tradition relating to catching up ('Peter the Great was the first Bolshevik'), or to the specific contradictions and problems faced by Soviet Russia in the twenties and thirties (or, of course, both).

Then what of *Marx and Marxism*? Space does not permit a full discussion, but the reader is referred to the valuable symposium edited by Robert Tucker, which contains a discussion of this question by L.Kolakowski and M.Markovi. One now condemns Marxism, the other still basically supports it. But they have some points in common. Neither considers Stalin's (or Brezhnev's) Russia to be consistent with Marx's ideas on socialism, but these ideas contain much that can be regarded as utopian, or internally inconsistent. It was not explained how the 'proletariat', the real working class, is supposed to liberate mankind. It was not the case that political disagreements arise only

out of class struggle or conflict over private property, and the unanimity which, according to Marx, would be typical of a classless society could only be an imposed unanimity. The elimination of 'commodity relations', that is, of a market economy, involved the setting-up of a system of *centralised planning*, which, contrary to Marx's expectations, had to be both *hierarchical and bureaucratic*. This is because, if a market does not co-ordinate the millions of decisions taken by thousands of managers, an elaborate and complex command structure is the only alternative. Its very existence, its all-inclusiveness, greatly strengthened the power of the party and state organs which managed the economy and allocated human and material resources. Stalin's officials dominated the lives of the rank-and-file citizens (and of the more junior officials too), because the state-and-party were the supreme managers as well as the political bosses: anyone who falls foul of Authority falls foul of the only employer. The poet Mandelshtam, penniless in his exile, dreamt of owning a cow, for then he could survive even though the state refused to publish his works. At the same time the very need to co-ordinate economic activity consciously provides powerful functional reasons for the concentration of decisive power at the top. Where but at the top can one see the interconnections and complementarities of the various industries, or even just guarantee that orders are given to ensure the supply of a dozen different materials to, say, the chemical industry or the Urals machine-building plant?

Finally, what of the role of *Stalin's own character*? Medvedev wrote: 'though there were objective reasons for the cult of personality, much depends on the personality'. That is to say, the rise of a Stalin is largely explicable by impersonal circumstances, but once he achieved the status and power of a supreme despot there was much that he could arbitrarily decide to do. He surely did so decide. The scale and nature of the terror of the thirties has no precedent even in Russia's rather bloody history. Never before had returning Russian prisoners-of-war been treated as criminals and sent to concentration camps. These extremes of ruthlessness can be contrasted with what followed: after Stalin's death and the execution of Beria and a few other senior police officials, political executions virtually ceased. On a different plane, Stalin's death was immediately followed by a change in his anti-peasant policy. These facts suggest that Stalin's personal role was in certain

respects decisive. And if, as some analysts do (for instance, Stephen Cohen in his very interesting contribution to Tucker's *Stalinism*), one regards the terror as *the* essential feature of Stalin's system, then naturally this helps one to draw a clear distinction between Stalinism and the methods of rule which preceded and followed Stalin's.

## Chapter 5

### *Stalin's Heirs and Stalin's Legacy*

A difficulty inevitably faces the successors of a mighty tyrant, and furthermore one who cut down any potential rivals. The men who follow were brought up in the shadow of the despot, and reached their high positions by subservience. They were known to the public for many years in their capacity as servants who extolled the virtues of their great master and denounced his enemies. The public had been told *ad nauseam* that every achievement was due mainly or wholly to the unique wisdom of Stalin. No wonder there was fear of 'panic and disarray' when the news had to be broken that the great dictator was no more. No wonder the security forces were mobilised to ensure order, though in fact the only disorder was accidental: the vast crush of people during the funeral ceremonies were hard to control and many were trampled on. But this was not a political demonstration, except perhaps of a pro-Stalin sort. For, as a bitter Soviet critic of Stalinism had ruefully to admit, the despot was widely popular. Many a sincere tear was shed.

Who could succeed? Let us look at the line-up as if we had not benefit of hindsight. Who were the front runners? Lenin had been followed by a brief triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin. Three men made the speeches at Stalin's funeral ceremony, and seemed likely to become the new triumvirate: Malenkov, Molotov and Beria.

Georgi Maximilianovich Malenkov was just over 50 in March 1953. He it was who was thought to be Stalin's successor-designate, since he presented the main report to the Party Congress in October 1952 in Stalin's presence. This was the first Party Congress to have been held since 1939. He seemed to speak with the voice of authority. Yet he was an unimpressive-looking man with two if not three chins. Of intellectual origin, with a degree in

electrical engineering, he had served in Stalin's Secretariat, and was thought to have played a sinister if minor part in the purges of 1936–38, and a rather larger part in the mysterious purges which eliminated Voznesensky and the 'Leningraders' after Zhdanov's death in 1948.

Except when he was a member of the key State Defence Committee during the war, and as such had been directly concerned with armament production, he at no time held a post of direct responsibility for anything, working all the time in the Secretariat of the Party. (I met Malenkov later on, in 1956, and he struck me as an intelligent man who had no great presence; he certainly seemed to lack positive qualities of leadership.) Perhaps Stalin preferred him to the others precisely because he had no independent standing whatsoever.

Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov (63 years old in 1953) was another matter. One of the few surviving old Bolsheviks, his real name was Scriabin; he was related to the composer. He had been a leader of the Bolsheviks in Petrograd in 1917 when the Tsar fell, but this was less because of the strength of his personality than because older and bigger men had all been arrested. When Lenin came back in April 1917 he criticised the cautious line which had been pursued by Molotov and his colleagues. Stalin came to dominate Molotov after his (Stalin's) return from Siberian exile, and thereafter he was Stalin's indefatigable supporter. He had the reputation of being a colourless but efficient organiser, a reliable bureaucrat. In the thirties he was Prime Minister, until Stalin took this office on the eve of the war. He was at times Foreign Minister, and in this capacity he became well known in the West for unyielding and humourless obstinacy. In Stalin's last years Molotov was said to have fallen out of favour, and his wife was arrested. By seniority he was, nonetheless, a weighty candidate for the succession.

Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria (54), Georgian, had a career in the secret police, rising in 1938 to succeed the ruthless Yezhov as head of the NKVD. Though under him the purges were less drastic, he nonetheless presided over the great prison-camp empire and over the country's vast and oppressive security network, first as minister and then as 'overlord' of the Ministries of Interior and of State Security. He was said to have many unlovely personal characteristics, and fed Stalin's paranoiacal suspiciousness. While some of the stories told against him may have been concocted by

his enemies after his fall, he seems to have been cruel, boorish, ignorant—but also ruthlessly efficient. In a struggle for the succession, the combination of being a Georgian and a policeman was a serious handicap. Many did not want another Georgian succeeding Stalin and feared and disliked his police associations. His command over the security troops, and the secret files he had on his rivals, were advantages which must have caused these rivals deep concern.

So much for the triumvirate. Who else was there? Kaganovich had been a vigorous and ruthless Stalinist in the thirties, but had faded somewhat since. Mikoyan, an Armenian, was an able and astute operator, who did much for Soviet trade, but was never a real challenger for the leadership. One of the elder statesmen was Andrei Andreyev, but he was colourless and not a contender. Less senior than most of the above, but in a strong position behind the front runners, was Khrushchev, of whom much more will have to be said. Let us look at how he appeared in 1953.

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was already 59. An almost unlettered youth at the time of the Revolution, he received his schooling and Party training as a promoted worker. His first steps up the Party ladder were under the patronage of Kaganovich, in a district of Moscow. His upward moves coincided with the Purges. He admitted subsequently that he was then a wholehearted Stalin-supporter. He was not important enough to be held responsible for the massacre of the party cadres, but he stepped into dead men's shoes. In 1938 he succeeded the disgraced Postyshev as Secretary of the Ukrainian party (he had been born in Russia proper, but near the Ukrainian border and he liked to wear Ukrainian embroidered shirts). In 1939, he became a member of the Politbureau. Two years later the Germans invaded and occupied the Ukraine. Khrushchev spent the war as a political officer with various army groups in the South, and he was at Stalingrad and with the army that recaptured Kiev. After the war he resumed the Secretaryship in the Ukraine, save for a brief and painful moment in 1948 when he seemed to have lost Stalin's favour and was replaced by Kaganovich. Then in December 1949 he was called to Moscow as one of the Secretaries of the Central Committee and also as First Secretary of the Moscow Party Provincial Committee. Both in the Ukraine and in the Secretariat he took a particular interest in agriculture. Indeed in 1950 he proposed the creation of 'agro-towns', urban settlements for peasants, an idea which was

disavowed by *Pravda*, a distinct blow for its author. He did not seem a dangerous contender, and it is quite probable that the triumvirate allowed him to advance after Stalin's death because they feared the capture of the Party machine by one of their own number. They either did not consider him to be a menace, or preferred to risk him than to endure one of themselves. His bluff and hearty manner suggested the ex-peasant rather than an intriguing statesman.

No one else seemed even remotely likely to challenge for the top places. Kosygin, it is true, had been a member of Stalin's Politbureau, but in 1952 he was demoted. Brezhnev had been serving his time in the provinces (Party Secretary in Dnepropetrovsk, then Moldavia). He had become one of the Secretaries of the Central Committee in Moscow in October 1952. He was still quite junior, 46 years old, and at Stalin's death was appointed deputy head of the political department of the Soviet armed forces. Voroshilov, old crony of Stalin's, was a political nonentity. Suslov aspired only to the status of senior ideologist, a role he fulfilled until his death. Bulganin, the future Prime Minister, was a lightweight.

How far did it matter who succeeded? It is hard to deny Stalin some influence on the course of Russian history, however much one notes—as we have been noting—the importance of tradition and the logic of circumstances. But these lesser men would surely be swept along by the currents of prevailing opinion and the needs of the moment? What difference would it make if the policies dictated by the situation were carried out by Malenkov, Molotov or Khrushchev?

The question is at least worth asking. We shall shortly be discussing the legacy of Stalin, the problems and challenges which were faced by his successors. In seeing how they tackled their task, we should always bear in mind the extent to which there were choices, and the influence of the individual in command upon the choices that were in fact made. Again, as in identifying Stalin's special contribution, we should not forget that certain species of leaders are apt to make certain kinds of choices, and that the emergence of this species is usually no accident. That is to say, in explaining why something is done or not done, it is often the case that alternatives *did* exist, but the individuals in command did not see them as alternatives, or were extremely likely to reject them. Thus though President Ford had the physical possibility of nationalising some major American industry, it is evident that no

Republican would have been adopted as presidential candidate if he was suspected of harbouring such a thought. So a Soviet leader in the fifties was unlikely to try to solve the agricultural problem by de-collectivisation or to declare a new NEP for small-scale industry, or allow a second political party, though a case could have been made for such actions and they were not 'impossible' (in the sense in which, for instance the restoration of the British Empire is impossible).

What were the problems facing Stalin's heirs? In no order of importance, they were the following.

### *1 Foreign policy and the cold war*

Though the USSR was developing nuclear weapons, it was far behind America both in number of warheads and in means of delivery. American bases ringed the Soviet Union. Many countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, were in American-led military alliances. Latin America was wholly in America's sphere. The Korean war was still dragging on, with China heavily engaged, but Soviet arms and prestige also involved. Soviet-backed or imposed regimes ruled in Eastern Europe by Stalin-type terror, but a bitter and counter-productive quarrel raged with Yugoslavia. Soviet influence in non-Communist countries, including the ex-colonial countries, was minimal. Stalin's successors needed to find some accommodation with the West, since a confrontation in the nuclear age was far too dangerous. The Korean war had to be brought to an end, if only to take some steam out of Western military effort, which was now including German rearmament. The new leaders needed to re-think their relationship with their satellites. They had to give thought to the evolution of relations with China, a country far too large and proud to be treated as a satellite. An effort to win friends and influence people in the developing countries was clearly overdue, if only to challenge pro-American governments in those countries and thereby reduce the threat from American bases.

### *2 The terror*

At home it was at a pathological and intolerable level. The general sense of insecurity extended also to the leadership. Only a few years previously Voznesensky and the Leningrad Party leadership had been summarily executed. No one felt secure. This

affected the conduct of government business, but also other aspects of life. New ideas in any sphere were inhibited by fear. The wall separating the Soviet citizens from Western contagion kept out also the flow of desirable technical information, and contributed to technological backwardness. Vast numbers of people, many of them above average in education, were held in labour camps, where they produced little and required a large number of guards. It was very likely that Stalin's heirs would consider the creation of a greater sense of security, amnesties, some effort to gain the confidence of the intellectual community. This applied not only to the scientists and technologists, whose services were obviously essential, but to the writers too. Insistence upon Party-line literature had become quite evidently counterproductive. Plays or books showing happy peasants eating goose contrasted so blatantly with the real situation in the villages that they had no effect. Some sort of relaxation had to come.

### 3 *The 'Stalin' political system and the Stalin image*

How far could any relaxation go without endangering the Soviet state, the monopoly of power of the Party, the many vested interests associated in that monopoly? By 'vested interests' I mean not only the fact that senior officials of Party and state benefited from material privileges, but also their security from criticism from below. Thus a provincial Party Secretary was monarch of all he surveyed, controlling the local press, judiciary, local government, and subject only to removal from above. A convenient state of affairs for the beneficiaries. The one-party state had existed since Lenin's time, and for most people it seemed normal, even natural. ('What', said a Muscovite when a foreigner suggested a multi-party system, '*several* parties? Isn't *one* bad enough?') This linked up with the older Russian tradition of firm rule as the one alternative to anarchy and confusion. This tradition was greatly strengthened by the Stalin despotism, not least because it had eliminated those elements of free discussion that survived into the twenties. People were accustomed more than ever to tremble and obey. How much relaxation, then, would be safe? And what of Stalin himself? He embodied the repressive system, and at first he remained infallible: his embalmed body was laid to rest in the mausoleum beside that of Lenin. To criticise him was dangerous. Dangerous to those of his successors particularly closely identified with his policies and

his crimes. Dangerous also because it was bound to lead to embarrassing questions: if he committed errors and crimes, how is it that his colleagues tolerated him for so long? How, too, could they admit that the Soviet Union was led through a critical period of its history by a despot whose ruthless suspicions bordered on the pathological? On the other hand, to dismantle some parts of the Stalinist structure without publicly criticising Stalin was likely to be neither convincing nor effective. Not surprisingly, the leaders oscillated rather nervously between criticism of and silence about Stalin's crimes, before settling (under Brezhnev) for silence. Another important political issue faced them: how to organise the selection of the leadership itself. Lenin and Stalin had died. Hardly anyone had been able to resign or to retire into private life: the way out from the top was to prison or before a firing-squad. The Party Congresses had virtually ceased to meet, and these unwieldy assemblies were no more than mass meetings anyway. The Central Committee under Stalin's rule seldom met either, though much was declared and decided ostensibly in its name. An orderly procedure for succession had to be devised.

#### 4 *The economy*

i *Living standards.* Stalin's system paid little attention to the needs of ordinary citizens. They came last in the scheme of priorities. While of course the output of consumer goods was rising, and Stalin may have sincerely desired that people should live better, in fact the quality of the goods available was often deplorable, shops were few and short-ages many, housing conditions were abominable (not only in the space available per family, but also because repairs and maintenance were shamefully neglected), consumer services primitive. Rural standards were particularly low. All this contrasted with the undoubted achievements of Soviet heavy industry. It was both feasible and politically necessary to improve the consumer's lot, and Stalin's successors were bound to seek the credit for doing this.

ii *Industrial planning.* Stalinist over-centralisation had a number of negative features, already remarked upon. Increasingly it seemed impossible to run a complex modern industry by orders issued from ministries in Moscow. The achievement of quantitative plan targets was too often at the expense of quality, and inefficient solutions were frequently adopted for want of being able to

identify better ways of achieving given objectives. Stalin's doctrine that the 'law of value' does not apply to transactions within the state sector seemed to justify arbitrary pricing of means of production: for if value categories did not affect the production and allocation of materials and machines, it did not seem to matter what their prices were. Yet planners in fact chose between alternatives by comparing costs. In choosing what appeared to them the cheapest variant they could be misled by irrationally fixed prices. The planning system was also 'conservative'. This statement may seem strange if one considers that industrialisation was a primary objective of the Stalin regime, yet it was so because planners planned by using 'material balances', i.e. they based themselves on past experience in determining material and fuel requirements. This led to neglect of new and progressive materials and fuels: oil and natural gas were backward, while emphasis continued to be given to solid fuels. Chemicals were backward too, with little attention to synthetics and plastics. In transport, the steam locomotive predominated until after Stalin's death. Consumer demand failed to find due reflection in production programmes. The latest and most modern machines were few, it being simpler to fulfil plans by making obsolete models. There were serious problems of co-ordination between plans made by different ministries. The wage system was in chaos, there being no one at the centre responsible for wages policy. Yet Stalin's 1940 decrees tying workers to their jobs were falling into disuse even before his death. So there were plenty of perplexities facing his successors, even while they could continue to boast of high growth rates.

iii *Agriculture*. The weaknesses here were very noticeable, despite strict censorship and statistical silence (or misleading and exaggerated claims based on a mythical 'biological yield' of grain). Poor and lopsided mechanisation, very low harvests, gross misuse of labour, appallingly low incomes for collective work, farms very short of money because of low prices paid for produce, very inadequate supplies of fertiliser, and finally heavy tax and delivery burdens on the private allotments and animals which formed the basis of the collectivised peasants' livelihood, all these cried out for remedy. Food supplies to cities and raw material supplies to industry were adversely affected. It is not surprising that the first major measures decreed by Stalin's successors were concerned with agriculture.

Thus there was plenty on the agenda for Stalin's successors, whoever they might be.

### Malenkov Outmanoeuvred: Khrushchev Wins Power

Malenkov spoke first at Stalin's funeral. He appeared to be taking over the direction of the Party and the state. Yet in a few days he ceased to be Party Secretary, retaining the Premiership. How he was compelled or persuaded to give up a key post—the key post—remains obscure. Leadership was to be collective, we were told. It was reasonable, in this context, for his colleagues to require that no man could hold the two top positions, that he had to choose one or the other. Did he in fact choose the Premiership, because he thought that it would be the decisive position to hold? If so, he was mistaken. It was an odd mistake to have made, for one who spent most of his political life in the Party Secretariat. More likely he was denied the Secretaryship by his comrades, as part of a deal.

This is suggested by the fact that no First Secretary was appointed at this time. What happened was that, of the Secretaries that remained, Khrushchev was senior. Other leading Party figures took key *ministerial* posts: Molotov (Foreign Affairs), Beria (Interior and Security), Bulganin (Defence) and Kaganovich all became Deputy-Premiers. Mikoyan and Kosygin were among the other Ministers. The Politbureau (Presidium)<sup>1</sup> of the party at this date consisted of Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Pervukhin and Saburov, in the order in which they were then printed. Perhaps it was this massing of top leaders in the government as distinct from the Secretariat of the Party that helped to convince Malenkov that, as head of the government, he was in a strong position.

He began to evolve a policy of concessions to the citizen. Lower retail prices in the spring of 1953 and 1954 seemed to follow Stalinist precedent, since Stalin had lowered prices several times from the high levels of 1947. However, Malenkov's cuts were excessive, in that they made shortages of some foodstuffs worse. He launched a campaign to increase output of consumer goods, revising the five-year plan target figure upwards. The relative rate of growth of producer goods and consumer goods was altered, giving more emphasis to the latter. He announced a new deal for agriculture and the peasants, though it was his rival Khrushchev

who was to carry through the detailed measures and to take the credit for their success. He made pacific overtures to the West.

Beria, it appears, was willing to go further yet. It is odd to imagine a man with such a police record opting for an ultra-soft policy, and of course he was never able to explain his policies or defend himself once he was attacked. But his enemies accused him of aiming dangerously to weaken collectivised agriculture and of urging too drastic concessions to the West, particularly over Germany. The riots in East Berlin (June 1953) may indeed have been a consequence of the appearance of a loosening of the Soviet grip on East Germany, a state whose unpopular regime particularly required Soviet troops to maintain itself in power. Anyhow, Beria fell. On 28 June 1953 his name was omitted from the list of top men attending a performance at the Bolshoi theatre. Innocent observers might have surmised that he did not like the programme, or that he had a cold. But at this period lists of top men on such formal occasions served to inform officials throughout the land about ranking (in those days Malenkov still came first), and absence from such a list without explanation was rightly interpreted by Kremlin-watchers as a sign of demotion, if not worse.

The circumstances of Beria's arrest is a subject of contradictory off-the-record statements. He may well have been detained at a meeting of the Politbureau with the commander of the Moscow garrison participating, to ensure that security troops could not help their fallen chief. He was certainly suspected of using his position as security chief to seize power. The others must have feared him and his security empire. Under Stalin it was subordinated only to Stalin himself, not to the Party or government. They feared that, with Stalin gone, Beria would try to rise to supreme control, so he and his empire would have to be cut down to size. The formal accusations against him were traditional-Stalinist: he had been a foreign spy, and so on. He was allegedly tried and certainly shot, the shooting quite possibly preceding his 'trial'. With him went his senior deputies (such as Abakumov, who featured in Solzhenitsyn's *First Circle*) and some republican and provincial security chiefs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Politbureau was renamed 'Presidium' in 1952, and became known as the Politbureau again under Brezhnev. To avoid confusion, we will call it the Politbureau throughout.

The executions of these executioners proved to be the last *political* executions to date. (I except the shooting of a spy, Penkovsky, and a series of executions for criminal offences such as stealing government property.) Few could feel much sorrow at the elimination of the administrators of terror, and many must have rejoiced. Beria was succeeded as security chief by a professional policeman without political ambitions, Ivan Serov. Serov's record, however, included supervising deportations from territories annexed in 1939–41, reminding one that few could achieve high office in the Stalin era and keep their hands clean.

In August 1953 the Supreme Soviet met and was addressed by Malenkov. It was then that he announced new agricultural policies.

But it was at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the *Party* in September that Khrushchev showed that *he* was in command of agriculture, and in an increasingly strong position generally. He vigorously criticised the existing state of affairs. There was a shortage of grain (the audience might have remembered Malenkov saying, to the Nineteenth Party Congress in October 1952, that 'the grain problem is finally solved'). Livestock numbers were below the levels of 1928 and even 1916, and the number of cows was falling. Taxes on the peasants were too high. Prices and incomes were too low. He announced measures to relieve the situation. Procurement prices were raised. Taxes were cut. Investment in the needs of agriculture, and peasant incomes too, would go up. The Party's role was vigorously stressed, the inadequacies of the Ministry of Agriculture were stressed too.

Early in 1954 Khrushchev launched the first of his many agricultural campaigns: to increase grain supplies quickly by ploughing up vast tracts of virgin and long-fallow land in an area stretching from the Lower Volga to the Altai, but mainly in Kazakhstan and southern Siberia. The drought risk was high, but it seemed a quick way of remedying the grain shortage, while the task of providing more fertiliser to raise yields in existing areas was bound to take many years. This campaign was launched on Khrushchev's authority as Party Secretary. Malenkov remained silent.

Khrushchev's authority was being gradually enhanced. From just being 'secretary' (though the chief one by virtue of seniority) he became known as 'first secretary' in September 1953, and later as 'First secretary', the capital letter being a signal to all who could read and understand. He steadily established his supporters in key

positions in the party. For example, he weakened Malenkov by shifting Andrianov, Malenkov's protégé, from the Leningrad Party Secretaryship into obscurity. Malenkov remained Premier, and judging by Khrushchev's later actions most ministerial positions were not held by men who followed Khrushchev. But by stressing the role of the Party and exercising increasing control over its organisations, Khrushchev was becoming a formidable force in Soviet politics.

A sign of Malenkov's weakness was the appearance of an odd pseudo-fairy-story in a literary monthly: 'A sparrow was appointed Eagle. Then the other birds wondered: "Is he really right for the job?"' (Even I noticed the significance of this in distant Glasgow. The point will not have been lost on Russian readers.)

However, industrial policy remained under Malenkov, who continued to stress the need to produce more consumer goods ('on the basis of the successes of our heavy industry'). Foreign policy, too, was at this time in the Malenkov-Molotov bailiwick. Some successes were achieved in the direction of détente: the Korean war finally ended (July 1953), and the Austrian peace treaty signed (but only in February 1955). Further progress, especially on the complex German question, was blocked as much by Western intransigence as by Molotov's unyielding obstinacy. This was the John Foster Dulles period of American policy, when the very idea of an agreement with the Soviet Union was considered immoral, and no proposal the USSR would possibly accept was made from the Western side. Whatever Stalin's responsibility for starting the cold war, the West was now firmly committed to waging it, and Malenkov's rather tentative gestures were not heeded. He was able to announce, soon after becoming premier, that the USSR had the H-bomb. While he must have thought that this was an essential deterrent, it hardly added to the Western sense of security, especially as exaggerated accounts of Soviet strength and intentions were current.

Other unsettled problems seemed to be left in abeyance. First steps were taken to woo the Third World, but it was not until after Malenkov's fall that decisive steps began to be taken. Similarly, while mass arrests were no longer made, and the 'doctors' plot' story abandoned and discredited, there was no amnesty, and those in camps and in 'eternal exile' stayed where they were. Nor was anything done to alter the industrial planning system.

Malenkov, then, seemed to be suffering not only from the power-manoeuvres of the energetic and much more colourful Khrushchev, but also from lack of decisiveness, standing and influence. His consumer goods policy could easily be presented as unsound. How could the standard of living grow rapidly without massive *investments* —in agriculture, in the consumer goods industries themselves, in housing, in trade facilities? At the same time, Party conservatives were upset by the apparent downgrading of heavy industry, 'the foundation of our military and economic might'. It was in fact over this issue that Malenkov was attacked, and over this issue Khrushchev could count on the support even of men like Molotov and Kaganovich, old Stalinist hard-liners, as well as the industrial planners-in-chief Saburov and Pervukhin. The decision to remove Malenkov from the Premiership was presented to the public at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet (February 1955), in which a statement was read to the effect that Malenkov resigned, giving as a reason his administrative inexperience. In this statement he took responsibility for past agricultural failings, but was made to deny responsibility for the 1953 reforms which he had himself announced in August of this year. It is interesting that, though present, Malenkov himself said not a word. He was appointed Minister of Electric Power Stations, and retained his seat on the Politbureau. The new Premier was to be Nikolai Bulganin, an amiable man with a little beard, carrying little authority and evidently expected to do Khrushchev's bidding.

So the events in February 1955 established an important precedent: they were non-sanguinary. Malenkov was not executed or imprisoned, merely removed, nominally by the Supreme Soviet, actually by the Party (Central Committee). It was a peaceful outcome. A year later, Malenkov came to Britain as head of an electricity delegation, and this astonished old Kremlin-watchers: 'What? Allow the fallen Premier out of Russia? Stalin would not have done it!' Others may have recalled that there had been a time when Stalin *did* allow his future victims to become ambassadors abroad, and Bukharin had visited Paris two years before his execution. However, times really had altered. The leaders must have agreed to avoid blood-baths. They had all been under heavy strain in the reign of the late dictator, and wanted no such things to happen again.

The supremacy of the Party, and of the Party's First Secretary, was strongly reasserted. Khrushchev had come to power. But it

was still power with strings attached, since the Politbureau was virtually unchanged: it still included Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Voroshilov, Saburov, Pervukhin, all of them men who did not owe their positions to Khrushchev and who could be a majority against him when and if they chose. Indeed, throughout Khrushchev's period of rule moments occur at which it is unclear whether a given decision was Khrushchev's own, or whether it was forced on him (or watered down) by his comrades. This was so at times even after the events of 1957 enabled him to dispose of his more obstreperous colleagues in the leadership.

But Malenkov's removal had other aspects. It was carried out by methods which were secretive; no word of any disagreement appeared in the press until after the *fait was accompli*, there was no debate, Malenkov made no public defence, and everything was said to be unanimous. This reasserted the principle that the Party was always to appear to the people as monolithic. There was to be no return to the Party debates of the twenties. It did not happen until the party conference in 1988.

In retrospect, Malenkov was surely an unsuitable choice of successor; he really was a sparrow failing to hold the job of an eagle. Yet he did manage to project to the people the idea that he stood for higher living standards, and this may be illustrated by a kind of folktale heard in Moscow in 1956. According to this tale Malenkov was visited, shortly after Stalin's death, by his mother, who was an old intellectual, a doctor. She said: 'Georgi, you have done much harm to the Russian people, but now you are in power, you can do good.' 'Very well, mother, I will try,' replied Malenkov. And he tried. So 'they' got rid of him.

Apocryphal? Imaginary? Certainly. The significance does not depend on the truth of the story, merely in the fact that such stories circulate about 'them'.

### Khrushchev's Policies and 'Destalinisation'

Khrushchev's personality was unique. Under Stalin a whole breed of functionaries arose who gradually lost such individuality as they may have possessed, at any rate in their reported utterances. Whatever its content, a speech by Molotov, Kosygin, Malenkov, Saburov and most of the others was depersonalised, standardised, full of predictable, prefabricated phrases. Mikoyan was to some extent an exception; perhaps an Armenian was allowed to express

humour (there have been many 'Armenian jokes' in Russia for a hundred years or so). But here was Khrushchev, informal, bullying, cheerful, folksy, shrewd. In a world which, under Stalin, was protocol-minded to the nth degree, Nikita Sergeyevich's bluff chatter was a very radical departure from precedent. It shocked many, both colleagues and ordinary people, who expected dignity and remoteness.

Here are some typical extracts from a Khrushchev speech, as it was reported at the time (it was said afterwards that his colleagues frequently had to insist that his words be edited and toned down before publication).

'We all know the huge role of women in all sectors of communist construction. But in this hall there are very few women. Can't even see them without binoculars. How can we explain it? People say: those present here are mainly the directing cadres. So—men direct and women work? Clearly not an adequate explanation.'

'Some might say: "what's this, has Khrushchev come to criticise us and tell us off?" What did you think, that I'd come to read you Pushkin's poems? You can read poetry without me. I have come to show up defects, to urge you to freshen up some organisations, to blow some wind of change at some of the directing cadres.'

'Suppose someone like a skilled mechaniser receives a tractor. In his hands, a tractor is like a violin in Oistrakh's. But I know some tractor-drivers who treat their machines differently. If such a one starts up the tractor, I want to shout to him: "Switch off, the nerves can't stand it!"'

Not the style or words of address usual in Party circles, at least in public! He spoke often, at great length, toured the country, harangued, stirred up local officials, criticised subordinates in front of their subordinates.

What is it that Khrushchev tried to do? Wherein did he differ from the other leaders? Did his personality affect policy? Again we return to the role of personality in history. Writing about Lenin a Soviet author (writing for *samizdat*, i.e. illegally circulating literature) remarked that his personal qualities, such as a liking for Beethoven and modest kindness, were of as little importance in themselves as an ex-peasant general's liking for cabbage soup and

dirty jokes. What matters is what people do, and how it fits into the historical circumstances. Can the same be said of Khrushchev? What does it matter if he introduces an agricultural policy with a cheerful speech about his grandmother's views on cooking, if the policy he actually introduces would also have been adopted had he been replaced by any of five or six comrades in the leadership? Was there a Khrushchevian policy? If so, what was it, and how could it be distinguished from that of Malenkov, Molotov, and later from that of Brezhnev?

One clue is provided by the changes which occurred after Malenkov's fall. The priority of heavy industry was reasserted. But Khrushchev gave increasing priority to agriculture, greatly extending the virgin lands campaign and also investment in farm machinery, and later also in fertiliser. Prices were increased again, causing a further rise in incomes of collective farms and peasants, though the levels were still modest by later standards. In July 1955 Bulganin raised major questions concerning industrial efficiency and managers' authority, though without finding a solution. In the same year a state committee on labour and wages was set up, to bring order into the confusion of wages rates. (Kaganovich was made its first head, his last post before his political demise.) There followed a whole string of social legislation of a progressive kind. A housing drive was launched, which at last gradually began to add to the pitifully low area of housing space per head in cities. A minimum wages law benefited the lower-paid. Revised regulations greatly increased the pensions and disability benefits of the ordinary worker and employee. The law forbidding workers to change their jobs without permission was repealed. Maternity leave, which had been cut to 70 days by Stalin in 1940, was restored to the original 112 days. Tuition fees in secondary schools and in higher education, also introduced by Stalin in 1940, were abolished. One must assume that Khrushchev urged or supported these measures.

Agriculture is primarily a supplier of consumer goods—foodstuffs. Housing and social services benefit the citizen. It is therefore futile and misleading to contrast Malenkov's concern for the consumer with Khrushchev's emphasis on heavy industry. He may have somewhat downgraded manufactured consumer goods as against agriculture, and he had to emphasise heavy industry if he was to secure the 'conservative' support he needed to throw out

Malenkov. But his emphasis was unmistakably towards doing something visible for the citizen.

The 'conservatives' were likely to have been less pleased by another measure which followed Malenkov's fall: releases of political prisoners and exiles. In 1955 and 1956 most prison camps were closed and their inmates returned home, many after seventeen or more years of suffering. Few families indeed existed in which no one had been arrested in the Stalin period. Many perished, of course, but a great many survivors came back, especially among those who had been arrested or re-arrested in 1949–52. These were all sorts and conditions of people; two whom I met included an economist who had a total of fifteen years of prison camps, and also a peasant who told me he had been sentenced to fifteen years for stealing grain on 'his' collective farm. As they came back and spoke to their families and friends it became difficult to avoid some official statement about the repressions and terror of the Stalin era. Khrushchev found it both necessary and convenient to act accordingly, as we shall see.

Khrushchev continued the policy, very cautiously begun soon after Stalin's death, of encouraging the intelligentsia to think for themselves. Censorship remained, of course, but was somewhat relaxed. Criticism was now tolerated, not of the regime as such or of its top leaders, but of many abuses, shortages, inefficiencies. Critical works on agriculture flowed from the pens of literary men like Ovechkin, Dorosh, Yashin. Ilya Ehrenburg caught the atmosphere of the time with his novel *The Thaw*. Needless to say, Khrushchev himself was an ignoramus as far as the arts were concerned. (In 1956 I saw how he talked his way through a 'command-performance' solo by David Oistrakh at a Kremlin reception, while paying undivided attention to army folk-dancers.) But he sensed the need to win the trust of the artistic as well as the scientific intelligentsia, and up to a point he allowed them some scope, and is known to have caused concern not only to his more cautious colleagues but also to the literary bureaucrats. For, as experience shows, few are more conservative and negative than officials of the writers' and painters' unions.

In foreign relations, Khrushchev took pride in a very liberal visa policy for foreign visitors, who were no longer to be shunned like the plague by ordinary Russians. (But exit visas for Soviet citizens remained very hard to come by.) Scientific and cultural delegations were exchanged with many countries. Already in November 1955,

he and Bulganin visited India and Burma, and began a policy of economic aid for developing countries, which at first yielded political dividends, because of novelty and the USSR'S anti-imperialist reputation, and also because American aid was at this time heavy-handedly linked with anti-Communist military alliances. Khrushchev was also able to utilise a clash between the Western powers and Egypt to establish an important political and military bridgehead in the Middle East. This led to some rather naïve attacks on 'Soviet economic penetration' from the West, with indignation about Soviet arms sales, as if it is a law of nature that only Western arms should be supplied to the Middle East.

While these moves were undertaken in the Third World, Khrushchev also attempted accommodation with the West. Adenauer was invited to Moscow in 1955 and diplomatic relations were established with the German Federal Republic, though real agreement over Germany was still very far away. In 1956 he visited Britain with Bulganin.

Continuing to develop nuclear weapons, Khrushchev ordered a substantial cut in conventional forces, and the number of Soviet troops diminished, from well over 5 million to 3,600,000 between 1955 and the end of the decade. (I heard much talk of this among Russians in 1956. Some expressed the view that the compulsorily demobilised officers 'would have to do some real work for a change'.)

Meanwhile, back to internal affairs. Khrushchev promised to observe Party rules, to follow the procedures so neglected by Stalin of calling regular Central Committee meetings and regular Congresses. A Congress was held in February 1956, the Twentieth Congress. It was this gathering that Khrushchev chose as the occasion for a secret speech attacking Stalin. Years afterwards, a Soviet academic told me that, in his view, Khrushchev's 'debunking' of the Stalin legend was his great service to his country. Let us see how he came to make his attack and the form which it took.

The successors of Stalin, as already indicated, faced a problem, and vacillated in their treatment of the dead dictator. A long article could be written tracing the zigzags of policy from 1953 to the Twentieth Congress. Goutious criticism of some of his ideas alternated with a reassertion of his services, but more common was silence: thus neither the anniversary of his birth nor of his death was celebrated, while Lenin was built up steadily into the

unique father of the Soviet state. Gradually the phrase 'cult of personality' was born, as a way of referring to excesses by Stalin and fulsome praise of Stalin. The country was therefore not wholly unprepared for a steady downgrading of his semi-divine attributes. Nonetheless Khrushchev administered shock treatment.

The 'secret' speech was read to Party meetings and to selected groups of non-party people in the months that followed the Twentieth Congress. It had a most profound effect. Some rejoiced. Some wept, for they had sincerely worshipped Stalin. Some, relieved at the end of despotic terror, were alarmed: could the resultant shock-waves be controlled? It was made known also through Party channels in Eastern Europe, China and to other Communists in the world. It leaked to the West and was published in full in several Western newspapers.

Khrushchev roundly accused Stalin of despotic rule, of morbid suspiciousness, of crimes against innocent Party and military leaders. Many loyal comrades had been shot or imprisoned, on false evidence or on no evidence. He told harrowing stories about individual cases. He said that beatings and torture were widely applied after 1936, and that the murder of Kirov, which gave the signal for the purges, was a mysterious and suspicious affair. He accused Stalin of blindness in the face of the Nazi German attack in 1941, of self-glorification, of historical falsification.

Some extracts from the speech can give some idea of its effect on men and women brought up for a generation on the Superman Stalin myth:

It was determined that of the 139 members and candidates of the Party Central Committee who were elected at the 17th Congress, 98 persons, i.e., 70 per cent, were arrested and shot (mostly in 1937–8). (*Indignation in the hall.*)

What was the composition of the delegates to the 17th Congress? It is known that 80 per cent of the voting participants in the 17th Congress joined the Party during the years of the [Bolshevik] underground before the revolution or during the Civil War; this means before 1921. By social origin the basic mass of the delegates to the Congress were workers (60 per cent of the voting members).

For this reason it was inconceivable that a Congress so composed would have elected a Central Committee, a majority of which would prove to be enemies of the Party.

The only reason why 70 per cent of the Central Committee members and candidates elected at the 17th Congress were branded enemies of the Party and of the people was that honest Communists were slandered, accusations against them were fabricated, and revolutionary legality was gravely undermined.

The same fate befell not only the Central Committee members but also the majority of the delegates to the 17th Party Congress. Of 1,966 delegates with either voting or advisory powers, 1,108 persons were arrested on charges of counter-revolutionary crimes, i.e. decidedly more than a majority. This very fact shows how absurd, wild and contrary to common sense were the charges of counter-revolutionary crimes made, as we now see, against a majority of the participants in the 17th Party Congress. (*Indignation in the hall.*)

We should recall that the 17th Party Congress is historically known as the Congress of Victors. Delegates to the Congress were active participants in the building of our socialist state; many of them had suffered and fought for Party interests during the pre-revolutionary years in the underground and at the Civil War fronts; they fought their enemies valiantly and often nervelessly looked into the face of death. How then can we believe that such people could prove to be 'two-faced' and had joined the camp of the enemies of socialism during the era after the political liquidation of the Zinovievites, Trotskyites and rightists and after the great accomplishments of socialist construction?

An example of vile provocation, of odious falsification and of criminal violation of revolutionary legality is the case of the former candidate member of the Central Committee Political Bureau, one of the most eminent workers of the Party and of the Soviet government, Comrade Robert I. Eikhe, who had been a Party member since 1905. (*Commotion in the hall.*)

Comrade Eikhe was arrested 29 April 1938, on the basis of slanderous materials, without the sanction of the Prosecutor of the USSR, which was finally received 15 months after the arrest.

Investigation of Eikhe's case was made in a manner which most brutally violated Soviet legality and was accompanied by wilfulness and falsification.

Eikhe was forced under torture to sign ahead of time a protocol of his confession prepared by the investigative judges, in which he and several other eminent Party workers were accused of anti-Soviet activity.

On 1 Oct. 1939, Eikhe sent his declaration to Stalin in which he categorically denied his guilt and asked for an examination of his case. In the declaration he wrote: 'There is no more bitter misery than to sit in the jail of a government for which I have always fought.'

On 2 Feb. 1940, Eikhe was brought before the court. Here he did not confess any guilt and said as follows:

'In all the so-called confessions of mine there is not one letter written by me with the exception of my signatures under the protocols, which were forced from me. I have made my confession under pressure from the investigative judge, who from the time of my arrest tormented me. After that I began to write all this nonsense. The most important thing for me is to tell the court, the Party and Stalin that I am not guilty. I have never been guilty of any conspiracy. I shall die believing in the truth of Party policy, as I have believed in it during my whole life.'

Eikhe was shot 4 Feb. (*Indignation in the hall.*) It has been definitely established now that Eikhe's case was fabricated; he has been posthumously rehabilitated.

(Many more cases were cited in the same vein.)

The speech was shattering enough. But it was notable also for what it did *not* say. The names of rehabilitated and innocent victims did not include any of the leaders of various oppositions: not Trotsky, Bukharin, Rykov, Zinoviev or Kamenev. There was almost exclusive reference to Party and military victims, hardly a word about peasants and other ordinary people, who also suffered severely. Furthermore, Stalin was presented as having been right up to 1934, and the *Party* as having been right all along. Khrushchev felt unable, it seems, to question the basic infallibility of the Party, which had just gone on doing the things that needed doing despite Stalin.

It was not a very convincing picture. It did not even begin to answer the question: how did it happen that the Party came under the supreme control of a cruel tyrant? How was it that his comrades, who included all the leaders on the congress platform,

allowed such things to happen? Either they were willing helpers or dupes, or they were powerless executants of the Master's will. All this was the more embarrassing for a Marxist, who ought to seek explanations of major historical phenomena not in the evil of an individual but in economic-social circumstances. Khrushchev had no explanation at all, as Togliatti, the Italian Communist leader, among others pointed out.

An apocryphal story went like this. Khrushchev was addressing a meeting and speaking of Stalin's crimes. A member of the audience shouted: 'And what were *you* doing?' Khrushchev snapped back: 'Who said that?' Silence. 'Well,' he replied, 'that is what I was doing too, keeping silent.'

'Destalinisation' may have been, probably was, partly motivated by the desire to discredit Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov, and thereby to strengthen Khrushchev's political position. They were not attacked in Khrushchev's 'secret' speech to the Twentieth Congress. Indeed, Molotov was mentioned as one who suffered from Stalin in his last years. But they were clearly more vulnerable than Khrushchev, who could claim that his purging activities in the Ukraine were in obedience to central orders, while Molotov and Co. were right there at the centre of power. When, later on, they openly came to political blows with Khrushchev, he did not fail to blame them specifically for participation in various crimes of Stalin's.

Destalinisation ran its course, reaching a peak in 1961, at the Twenty-second Congress, where an old woman said that it came to her in a dream that Lenin was unhappy lying beside Stalin in the mausoleum: Stalin was removed and buried elsewhere. In the following year Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published after the editor of *Novyi mir*, Alexander Tvardovsky, succeeded in persuading Khrushchev himself to override the censors. For the first time, some details of the dreadful forced labour camps appeared, in powerful literary form, in a Soviet publication. But this is running ahead. For the moment it is sufficient to note the far-reaching effects of all these relaxations, and the extent to which they had the effect of untying tongues. While censorship remained very much there (albeit less strict than before), speech became very much freer, as people gained confidence and learned that no one was likely any more to be arrested for talking. Times were changing, and optimism spread, about the possibility of what was called 'democratisation with the

brakes on'. The brakes had to be on, because, after so much blood and tyranny, an outburst could have catastrophic results. Here one saw yet again the age-old Russian fear of anarchy lurking just beneath the surface.

In Russia proper the shock-waves of destalinisation could be contained. But it was otherwise in Georgia, and in Poland and Hungary.

Khrushchev could justifiably complain that people are ungrateful. His nationalities policy, internally and externally, was more liberal than Stalin's. Under Stalin's rule whole nations were deported, in defiance of Marxist or any other socialist principle, for allegedly being pro-German during the war. This fate attended the Volga Germans, the Crimean Tartars, the Kalmyks, the Chechens, the Ingushi and some other Caucasian groups. Their republics were erased from the map. The survivors were rehabilitated under Khrushchev, and all but the first two of the above list were allowed to return to their reconstituted autonomous republics. (The Volga Germans are still in Altai and Kazakhstan, and the Crimean Tartars have recently been agitating in vain to be allowed back to the Crimea from Central Asia.) Khrushchev relaxed cultural Russification and spoke out on the subject of the despot's national policies, indicating that Stalin might even have deported the Ukrainians if there had not been so many of them. Georgia had been the scene of Stalin's oppressive actions towards the local Party in 1923 and this had attracted Lenin's attention and indignation in his last lucid days. In the great purge the Georgian Party and *intelligentsia* had been massacred in great numbers. To call Stalin a friend of Georgian nationalism would be the equivalent of confusing an Irish-born member of the British establishment with de Valera or the IRA.

Yet it was a fact that he became a symbol of Georgian nationalism after his death. I happened to be in Tbilisi in June 1956, a few weeks after some major riots had occurred. Though unreported in any Moscow newspaper, unmentioned even in Tbilisi's own publications, they had necessitated the use of troops. I saw the half-torn notices put up by the military commander declaring a state of emergency. I saw also painted and chalked slogans glorifying Stalin, and spoke with eye-witnesses (who, it must be said, disagreed widely with each other. Both said that the troops opened fire, but one said it was in the air, the other that there had been some killed and wounded). Georgians, who are

certainly nationally very self-conscious, deeply resented some distant Muscovite telling them that the eminent local boy who made good was no good. While the agitation simmered down afterwards, it was one warning among many that relaxation can be dangerous to the regime.

The effect on Communists abroad was different, but even more disruptive. Brought up to believe that 'bourgeois' press stories on Stalinist despotism and terror were a pack of lies, many of them were deeply and sincerely shocked at the deception practised on them. There were other shocks to come. The Chinese attitude at first was ambivalent. It was only later that they came in aid of Stalin's memory against the 'revisionists' of the Kremlin. But the most disruptive effects proved to be in Poland and Hungary. Both countries, and especially Poland, were by tradition ill-disposed to Russia. Both had unpopular Communist governments imposed on an anti-Communist people. Both had seen many Communist leaders eliminated (in Hungary they were shot, in Poland merely placed in detention) for suspected National Communism or Titoism. The weakened party was still further weakened by the revelations about Stalin, with their corollary that their own repressions and trials (e.g. of Rajk in Hungary) has also been based on falsehoods. Khrushchev's apology to Tito for Stalin's attacks on him and the resultant reconciliation with Yugoslavia made past executions for Titoist heresy particularly monstrous.

Matters were made worse by economic discontent. In Hungary and in Poland the fall of Malenkov had led to a reassertion of the priority of heavy industry and neglect of consumer interest, in a sort of distorted reflection of what the leaders thought was the Moscow line they ought to be following. All this, plus frustrated and indignant nationalism, proved to be an uncontrollable mixture. Destalinisation contributed to the outburst by weakening the Party and the police. One could say that in the USSR (with exceptions in Georgia and a few other national areas) the cement of nationalism held the structure together, and there were strong objective reasons for relaxing the terror, but in Hungary or Poland the regime required terror to survive, and relaxation was very dangerous indeed.

Poland and Hungary erupted. In Poland there was a shift to a more 'national' Communism of Gomulka, but only after riots and demonstrations led to the collapse of the Party's 'Muscovite' leaders. Khrushchev had to recognise a change in relationships,

symbolised by a payment to compensate for past deliveries of coal to Russia at abnormally low prices. In Hungary the 'national' Communists were led by Nagy, who replaced the hated Rakosi, Nagy endeavoured to establish a more popular Communist government, similar to that of Gomulka in Poland. But he was unable (or possibly unwilling) to control a powerful right-wing nationalist movement, which turned towards armed violence against the hated secret police and which was vehemently anti-Communist in inspiration. Cardinal Mindszenty had been tried and imprisoned under Rakosi. He was released, and became the symbol of the anti-Communist elements. It was then probably too late for the Soviet Union to expect positive results from a conciliatory policy; evidence accumulated that the leadership in Hungary was slipping away from the 'national' Communists, with whom some sort of deal might be made, as had been the case in Poland in the previous month. The last straw was the announcement that Hungary would withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, i.e. from the Soviet-led equivalent of NATO. This was too much. After some hesitation, the Soviet troops finally went in, Nagy was arrested and executed in highly dubious circumstances, and so was the commander of the Hungarian armed resistance, General Maleter. This bloody outcome contrasted with the relatively peaceful transition, with no Soviet armed incursion, in Poland. It is also very interesting and instructive to compare it with Brezhnev's action in Czechoslovakia twelve years later.

These events are not in themselves our subject. They are important for the light they throw on the evolution of the Soviet regime internally, and on the outlook of Khrushchev and his colleagues on their own situation and on the world. In my view, the intervention in Hungary was clearly forced, in the sense that without it the whole Soviet military-political position in the eastern half of Europe would have been in grave danger of collapse. Many Communists in the West left the Party in disgust, but they were thereby showing only their own misunderstanding and credulity. Had they understood the nature of the Soviet regime and of its satellites, the nature also of international relations and the cold war, they might well have found the Hungarian intervention to have been 'necessary'. But evidently they thought that the Hungarian Communist government had been supported by 'the workers and peasants' (or by most of them), and the realisation that this was not so upset them.

It is sometimes said that the Anglo-French adventure in Suez facilitated the Soviet military intervention in Hungary. If by 'facilitated' is meant that it gave a fine opportunity for counter-propaganda, then this was indeed so. But on the evidence it does seem that the arguments for sending in the army carried the day without reference to what the British or the French may have been doing.

### Khrushchev Challenged and Triumphant

All these events in the second half of 1956 shook Khrushchev's position. The following is a probably sound reconstruction of what occurred.

His enemies could not attack him directly on the issue of destalinisation, or at least this would not be the open pretext of their attacks, though many must certainly have felt that he was rocking the boat dangerously on this issue. They chose to criticise his economic management. The Twentieth Party Congress in February had adopted a new (sixth) five-year plan. By December it was clear that it was unsound, and it was in fact announced that it would be amended; soon the whole plan was abandoned; it was replaced two years later by a new 'seven-year plan' to cover 1959–65. The Central Committee, or some group temporarily controlling it, used these difficulties to reorganise industrial planning. They were trying to cope with a real problem: the excessive autonomy of 'empire-building' industrial ministries *vis-à-vis* the co-ordinating organs. This, so it was said, led to the adoption of ill-balanced plans. But in coping with this real problem they strengthened governmental control by appointing a super-minister-overlord, M.G.Pervukhin, with powers over all the ministries (including, in the first version of the proposed reform, the Ministry of Agriculture). It was plain that this arrangement was not to Khrushchev's liking and was in fact designed to curtail his powers. This follows not only from the logic of the situation but also from the fact that Khrushchev scrapped this whole scheme within three months, when he was strong enough to do so.

It may be thought that many years later, with Khrushchev's opponents in power, a full account of the manoeuvres of the winter of 1956–57 would have appeared in some Soviet source. But this is not so. Partly this is because no description of recent factional struggles (or a truthful account of earlier ones) was likely

to be published so long as existing conventions continued; and partly the reason may be that the principal 'oppositionists' in the drama had all left the political stage and did not return to it after Khrushchev's fall. Neither Brezhnev (who was then a Secretary of the Central Committee and a candidate-member of the Politbureau) nor Kosygin (who was in charge of consumer goods industries) played any notable role. The opposition was later called the 'anti-Party' group. We know that they consisted of the old guard—Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, plus Pervukhin and Saburov. Bulganin and Voroshilov voted with them in the confrontation which finally occurred in May 1957. But we will come to this in a moment.

Using the Party machine which he controlled, Khrushchev counter-attacked in February 1957. The pretext was again economic. He had a totally different solution to the problem of inadequate co-ordination between ministries: he proposed to abolish them, and to base planning on over 100 regional economic councils (*sovnarkhozy*), the regions being co-ordinated by the big republics (which contained several regions) and by the central planning agencies.

The 'anti-Party group' objected, on political and practical grounds. The name of the group was an invention of Khrushchev's after his victory over them, reminding us of the English sixteenth-century political-philosophic epigram:

Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?

If it doth prosper, none dare call it treason.

In June 1957 Khrushchev was outvoted in the Politbureau by 7 votes to 4. Instead of admitting defeat, he established the precedent of appealing to a plenary session of the Central Committee. Marshal Zhukov, the prestigious war leader, is said to have helped to get the provincial members to Moscow quickly, and was rewarded with a seat on the Politbureau (though not for long). Khrushchev was victorious, and, so strong was the tradition of public unanimity, that no one in the session voted against and only one man abstained: Molotov did not vote for his own demotion.

The fact that Bulganin and Voroshilov had also sided with the opposition in the Politbureau was not made known at the time, and Bulganin remained Premier until 1958. The others, however,

were removed from high office. None were ever to regain it. But none were the subject of any legal penalty. Molotov went as Ambassador to Mongolia, Malenkov to manage a power-station in Ust-Kamenogorsk, east of the Urals. Kaganovich also became a manager, and soon retired on pension. Pervukhin in due course became Ambassador to East Germany and then a divisional chief within Gosplan, until he died. Saburov faded from the public eye. Voroshilov was long overdue for retirement. When Bulganin was dropped, he became a regional economic official.

So one could act together to outvote the Party chief and suffer neither death nor imprisonment, though of course it did end one's political career. Times had altered.

What new men took the places of the fallen leaders? The minority in the Politbureau had been Khrushchev himself, Mikoyan, Suslov and Kirichenko. He brought Brezhnev into full membership in June 1957, together with Zhukov, Aristov, Belyaev, Ignatov, Kozlov, Kuusinen and Shvernik. (The last two, as well as Mikoyan, were very old war-horses.) It may be significant that they were all to be demoted well before Khrushchev's fall, with the exceptions of Suslov and Brezhnev, while Mikoyan faded into retirement. With their help he carried through the elimination of ministries and the creation of the regional economic councils, though, as will be shown, the measure was basically unsound and created unnecessary difficulties. He went ahead to weaken also the Ministry of Agriculture, ultimately dismissing the Minister, Matskevich. In every field he showed that he was the clear Number One.

The spring of 1957 also saw the launch of the world's first Sputnik, highlighting Soviet scientific achievement. Growth rates were impressive. Agriculture was doing better, though certainly not well enough. Foreign aid was politically effective, especially in the Middle East but also in India and Indonesia in particular. Alarmed Western writers exaggerated the nature and extent of 'Soviet economic warfare'. One example of 'Soviet penetration' reported at the time was that 'a consignment of Czech toothbrushes had arrived in Nigeria'. This nonsense shows the state of mind of some in the West. But Khrushchev himself was as infected by overoptimism, which suited his ebullient character.

When, in August 1958, he got rid of Bulganin and became Premier as well as First Secretary of the Party, he seemed to be all-

powerful. The obedient press reported his lengthy speeches and praised his every action.

What sort of Russia was it over which Khrushchev ruled? What did he want it to become? How far had it changed since the days of Stalin, who had died only five years before.

To some extent any answer to such questions must be speculative, but it is worth while to try an interpretation, if only to stimulate thought and, perhaps, dissent.

First, the elements of continuity. These were (until now) of fundamental importance. One party, hierarchically organised, keeping its discussions largely secret and presenting a unanimous face to the ordinary people. A party, true, which was rapidly increasing in numbers, then about 12 million, but one in which ordinary members had little influence on those above them. The Party Secretariat controlled appointments, not only Party but state, social and trade union appointments. It dominated the government, and it was clearly Khrushchev's wish that it should do so. Local Secretaries were fully in command of their provinces and districts. At all levels this meant Party control over the press and the judiciary. Organisations not under Party control were not allowed to exist, at least in any sphere of the remotest political-social significance. Censorship of books, periodicals, even duplicated factory journals, and of course all newspapers, remained thoroughgoing. Though for the time being the censors were more lenient, Khrushchev himself reminded the writers that, were there to be any danger of a real intellectual dissident movement, his 'hand would not tremble' and he would suppress it firmly. So the basic structure erected by Stalinism was not greatly altered, whatever the attacks on Stalin himself. In many parts of the country obedient routine-bound Party Secretaries obediently made routine speeches criticising the 'cult of personality' to order, as previously they had sung hosannas to Stalin also to order, and they would brook no contradiction in either case. As a Georgian writer said to me once, when I suggested that the literary line had altered for the better: 'That is not the point, the essential point is that there is a line and that it is imposed on us from Moscow'. There was no sign that Khrushchev, brought up wholly within the system, had any intention of changing it in any of the above respects.

But change there was, not least in the party. There was more discussion, if only because it was no longer fatal to express

disagreement. Party organs met regularly. The Central Committee met and talked, and a (no doubt edited) version of its proceedings was published. While naturally not including public attack on the top leadership, quite sharp criticism of ministers, mistakes in planning and also of expenditures did begin to appear, to an extent unknown for decades. Under Stalin criticism was either low-level ('in some parts of Siberia shoes on sale are not of high quality') or inspired from Stalin's entourage, in which case the man criticised trembled for his life and liberty and dared not reply. Under Khrushchev things became gradually more businesslike, and so did criticism. A Hungarian commentator (in private conversation) made the point this way. Under Stalin, a policy idea was associated with faction: that is, policy A was presented as being in the interests of the Party and policy B as being against these interests. Anyone advocating policy B was thus liable to repression. In just this spirit admirals were shot in the thirties for advocating cruisers rather than submarines. If they were wrong, their motives were suspected. Now (said the Hungarian) policies are rationally discussed in most instances: policy A has these advantages and those disadvantages, whereas policy B... Of course the careers of individuals could still be advanced or retarded by the adoption or rejection of policies with which they were personally associated, but this is so in every society. The effect of such changes was to widen greatly the area in which personal initiative could be safely shown.

Khrushchev clearly believed that this was good and repeatedly said so. Yet his whole background, and indeed the nature of the regime, made it impossible for him to be consistent. Be businesslike, put forward ideas boldly, advise us what best to do; he would say all this. But when his own pet ideas were at stake, he would force them through and demote or dismiss the objectors. We shall see what harm this caused to agriculture. Yet when in Kiev an agricultural research institute director defended certain technical recommendations on the grounds that they were in accord with the party line, Khrushchev exploded angrily: 'You are the experts, it is your job to tell us, and to be bold in saying what is wrong, not to take shelter behind the party line'. He was certainly being sincere. But the head of an institute in Kazakhstan, whose recommendations on fallow and grasses were uncongenial to Khrushchev, lost his job all the same. And although he first tolerated attacks on Lysenko, and allowed his surviving victims to

revive genetics, Khrushchev in his last years chose to give political support to that pseudo-scientist.

What should be the limits of criticism, in agriculture, in literature, over economic policies? What precise meaning is to be attached to the Party's domination over society? How much disagreement is to be permitted within the Party itself? There could be no easy answer.

A major change, with substantial side-effects, was the obvious one: the end of mass terror. There were very few political arrests under Khrushchev, and no political executions. Fear greatly diminished. Personal feelings of security increased. The police's powers were cut, their great forced-labour economic empire dissolved. Dissident writers wrote poems about retired policemen living on their pensions by the uncontrollable Black Sea and dreaming that they had deported it to Siberia. Needless to say the police were still active. But this was a change which everyone felt, and which loosened many tongues. Khrushchev evidently thought this was desirable. The frozen fears of Stalinism were no good for a dynamic modern society, this was clear to him.

He was more concerned than many of his colleagues about ideology, indeed he felt that the future belonged to 'Communism', though he was unclear and perhaps naïve about what this meant. It did, however, have something to do with greater equality and with making things available to all without payment. Thus he acted to raise up the incomes of the lower paid and to improve their pensions, and he was concerned at the growth of educational privilege. To this end he not only eliminated tuition fees but also launched into a controversial educational reform, designed to introduce more work training ('polytechnisation') and to recruit the bulk of students in higher educational institutes from those with at least two years' work experience. This was clearly unpopular both with educationists and the upper strata of society, and the reform was very largely obstructed and then abandoned. The attempt, however, showed a sort of populist-egalitarian strand in Khrushchev's thinking, far removed from Stalinist privilege-creation. The privileged strata which arose under Stalin proved too strong in the end—though their resistance was fortified by the strength of the genuinely educational objections of having everyone work for the first years after leaving school (what of musicians, talented mathematicians, and so on? Soon exceptions were to multiply). His revised Communist programme, adopted at

the Twenty-second Congress in 1961, contained promises to provide some goods and services free by 1980. It is an indication of his colleagues' disagreement with this undertaking that no word of it has been heard after his fall.

Indeed such ideas have an old-fashioned ring in an increasingly consumer-orientated society; the more prosperous citizens want to be free to buy a wider variety of better goods and services of their choice, not to receive a free issue.

He seemed to have been somewhat 'fundamentalist' also on religion. Stalin had persecuted the Church in the thirties, but became more tolerant during the war, when the Russian Orthodox Church took up a patriotic position. Many churches were also reopened under the German occupation. Therefore in the postwar years religious life was more active than it had been in the thirties. Under Khrushchev measures were taken to obstruct the Church's activities, many churches being again closed. Similar action against synagogues was linked with a more negative policy towards the Jews, after an initial period (1953-7) of relative relaxation. Khrushchev has sometimes been described as an anti-Semite. These words seem to me too strong. His actions are consistent with the sort of petty prejudice widespread among not-too-well-educated people in his part of Russia. But a real Ukrainian anti-Semite was one who joined the Nazis in killing and torturing, or who anticipated them under Simon Petlura in the civil war days. Such terms should be used sparingly. They do not apply to Khrushchev. But his impatience with organised religion, Christian as well as Jewish, was a noticeable feature of his period of rule.

So was a harsher policy towards crime. As already mentioned, *political* executions no longer occurred. However, the death penalty was introduced for criminal activities: not only murder in the first degree but also aggravated rape and a range of economic crimes: embezzlement, stealing large quantities of state property; in one instance a man was sentenced to death for adulterating sausage and selling off some of the meat for his own gain, In another, some state materials were being used for illegal private manufacture. Khrushchev also favoured the activities of non-judicial bodies, which were given powers to punish (e.g. by deportation) individuals alleged to be 'parasites'. He imagined this to be a step towards mass participation in a 'state of the whole people', a formulation dropped after his fall. The idea that crime

needs to be severely punished is not in accord with early Bolshevik ideas, and the death penalty for offences other than treason was exceptional even under the Tsars. Stalin's executions were always ostensibly for real or alleged treasonable activities. However, a man of Khrushchev's 'folk' background does often have rather crude views on punishment, and not only in Russia.

He is also likely to have crude views on art. He seems genuinely to have favoured greater freedom for the painter, the composer, the writer, subject only to political censorship. But when some 'conservative' cultural officials showed him some modern abstract art, Khrushchev was horrified. 'Painted with a donkey's tail,' he shouted. One should not doubt his sincerity, nor yet the fact that his taste was not all that different from that of politicians in other countries. Indeed, the *New Yorker* published a cartoon showing a couple of New Yorkers gazing at an abstract painting. Said one: 'Look, do we have to like it just because Khrushchev doesn't like it?' The difference is that politicians of other countries do not have the duty or power to decide what should be exhibited.

He was convinced that the deficiencies of public life and of the economy would be corrected without changing the basis of Party rule. He thought he could force through reforms, bully or replace slack or stupid officials, urge, harangue, stump the countryside and talk to the locals, and that results would follow quickly. His favourite phrase was... 'in the next two to three years'. Whether it is the supply of meat, or of fertiliser, or of feed grains, his time-horizon was short, his impatience great. Perhaps his age had something to do with it. Stalin had achieved total power before his fiftieth birthday. By 1958 Khrushchev was already 64.

He was certainly a product of his time. His experience was that of a Party Secretary under Stalin, plus the shock of war, when he was in the thick of the early disasters as well as the later triumphs. But while many colleagues in the leadership who had been of humble origin turned into grey bureaucrats, this never happened to Khrushchev. He was the last of a generation of uneducated leaders. The next one would consist of men who were, in the main, the products of technical higher education. Did this contribute to making them prone to greyness and bureaucratisation? Possibly. What is certain is that Khrushchev's style was quite different from theirs. In her fascinating memoirs, Nadezhda Mandelshtam distinguished between three generations of Party 'functionaries': the first could be a 'seminarist' given to

passionate intellectual argument. Stalin shot almost all of them. The second was a much less well-educated, hail-fellow-well-met and rather crude 'doer', 'apt to wear embroidered Ukrainian shirts'. Many were also shot. The third category was the 'tight-lipped diplomat' species. Khrushchev was a survivor of the second category. It is puzzling that such a man should have been in Stalin's Politbureau. Evidently odd man out in character and manner, Khrushchev found himself increasingly frustrated and out of tune with his colleagues as the years went by, even though he exercised much power over the appointment, promotion and dismissal of the men around him. As we shall see, Khrushchev was finally ousted by men who, on 'Kremlinological' grounds, might appear to have been 'his'.

## Chapter 6

### *The Fall of Khrushchev and the Rise of Brezhnev*

Politically Khrushchev reached his apogee in 1958. He was First Secretary and Prime Minister. He had to his credit some popular and socially just legislation. Agricultural output had risen by more than 50 per cent over the depressed and depressing performance of 1953, and the 1958 harvest (aided by good weather) was a record. Industrial advance was satisfactory, and many Western commentators were deeply concerned about Soviet growth and the impact of Soviet aid. The sputnik was still news. Khrushchev's political enemies were scattered. The 'thaw' was limited and under control, the consequences of destalinisation having been safely contained.

Yet the last six years of Khrushchev's rule witnessed an accumulation of troubles. Some were not of his making, but, as the world's statesmen have always known, one gets blamed anyway if things go wrong.

In the field of foreign affairs, Khrushchev's attempt to secure a rapprochement with, or an impact on, America under Eisenhower was not an unqualified success. He visited America in the autumn of 1959, saw Hollywood, Disneyland, shook many hands. He seemed to make some impact on the inept Eisenhower. However, the 'spirit of Camp David' made very little difference to the pursuit of the cold war by either side. An unfortunate phrase, 'we will bury you', was held against him by Western propagandists. (He was often careless in his off-the-cuff statements, in and out of Russia, and must frequently have appalled his advisers and colleagues.) Then in May 1960 the U2 flight over Russia shattered any illusions he may have harboured about a change in us policy. The American high-level spy plane was shot down near Sverdlovsk deep in the Urals, while Khrushchev was meeting Eisenhower at a summit conference in Paris. Eisenhower lamely accepted

responsibility and thereby appeared to be claiming that America had the right to overfly the Soviet Union. Khrushchev walked out of the conference in righteous indignation. His outspoken confidence at the progress of Soviet military power caused Kennedy, before and after he became president, to speak of a 'missile gap': the USSR, on this interpretation, was forging ahead of the United States in modern weapons and the means of delivering them. This, as it turned out, was nonsense. America was still far ahead. But if it was Khrushchev's policy to reassure America and to lower the cold war temperature, he was evidently unsuccessful. Later in the same year he went to the United Nations, argued for an impracticable scheme of total disarmament, and banged his desk with his shoe, which did not help his image.

His meeting with President Kennedy in Vienna in June 1961 was a clear failure. Kennedy carried away the impression of blustering and bullying, which it could not have been Khrushchev's intention to convey. Then another crisis over access to Berlin, while not in itself very acute or dangerous, gratuitously strengthened the anti-Soviet lobbies in the Western alliance. Thus foreign policy was not making much headway, except that Soviet influence in the Middle East was consolidated. Then in the autumn of 1962 the Cuban crisis showed up the hollowness of Khrushchev's pretensions and dealt a blow to his domestic prestige.

His policy was understandable. In 1961 the Americans had sponsored the so-called 'Bay of Pigs' invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles. This was defeated, but a nervous Castro appealed to Moscow for protection. It so happened that Soviet missile development was particularly far behind America's in the intercontinental category (i.e. Russia could not hit America), while America had more and better intercontinental missiles *and* had bases close to Soviet territory, plus Polaris submarines. The USSR had considerable numbers of missiles of shorter range, which could be targeted on Western Europe. If these could be placed in Cuba, then the USSR could achieve two objects at a blow; secure Cuba from American attack and, more important, establish a base near America which could counterbalance American superiority in long-range weapons (and her bases in Turkey, Iran and elsewhere). So Khrushchev took a calculated risk: he would secretly place these missiles in Cuba.

American intelligence discovered what was happening, while the missiles were being installed. Kennedy demanded their withdrawal

under threat of nuclear war. (At this critical moment I happened to be in Washington and giving a lecture which was attended by some civil and military officers; I was surprised when members of my audience were called out one by one. I was not in on the secret, but Kennedy's ultimatum was due that evening.) His bluff called, what could Khrushchev do? He would point to American bases around Russia, but 'fairness' is irrelevant in love or cold war. He had no alternative but to withdraw the missiles, with Kennedy helpfully providing some face-saving formula to help him do it. He had to withdraw because of American superiority—and perhaps also because the Russians were more likely than the Americans to recoil at the thought of a nuclear holocaust. Khrushchev was left to explain to his colleagues why he decided to adopt so dangerous and unsuccessful a policy.

By then he had openly quarrelled with China. Just as the cold war problems had been inherited by Khrushchev, but he mishandled them, so trouble with China was highly probable whoever ruled in the Kremlin. Mao Tse-tung saw himself as the world's leading Communist revolutionary. Although he must have been well aware of Stalin's bureaucratic authoritarianism, he respected him as a revolutionary and a builder of socialism. Stalin's successors were inevitably men who were children or not born at the time of the Russian revolution, and the efforts these successors would make to modify Stalinism would inevitably be adapted to the needs of a post-revolutionary and developed society. China was at a quite different and earlier stage of development and its leaders were much closer to the revolution. Mao could scarcely have wished to treat a Malenkov or a Bulganin as an equal, let alone concede to them the leadership of the world Communist movement. As for Khrushchev, he seemed to Mao to be a bungling revisionist, and a Russian nationalist to boot. His manner was offensive to Mao. As polemics grew, Khrushchev decided in 1960 to withdraw Soviet technicians from China, causing grave difficulties to Chinese investment projects; China's 'great leap forward' was criticised as adventurism. By then the public slanging match was in full swing. The 'world Communist movement' had irredeemably split. Khrushchev could hardly have done much to prevent it, but his argumentative and rather crude style can be said to have made things worse. His lack of finesse, his shrewd but philosophically naïve arguments, failed to impress the more intellectual Communists in the West also; for instance, the Italian

Communist Party felt more and more free of Moscow's tutelage and began cautiously to criticise the Soviet system. So came Communist 'polycentrism', a partial breakdown of Moscow control over Communists, which was at first denied by dedicated Western cold-warriors but became increasingly evident as the years passed.

At home, Khrushchev made blunders, creating in the process several sets of enemies in the Party. He interfered too much in agriculture, he contributed to the troubles of industrial planning, and finally his methods were threatening intolerable administrative confusion. His handling of these matters convinced his comrades that it was time for a change, though all the problems which Khrushchev tackled were real enough, and would give trouble also to his successors.

Khrushchev's policies for agriculture up to 1958 were successful. This must have gone to his head, giving him faith in his methods and in the growth prospects of farming. The seven-year plan (1959–65) for agriculture envisaged impossible growth rates: given the quantity of machinery, fertiliser and irrigation works, the proposed increase of 70 per cent or so in output was beyond the bounds of reason. Khrushchev pressed his harassed officials to achieve what could not be achieved, and in doing so made things unnecessarily difficult. His agricultural 'campaigns' followed hard upon each other. There was the growing of maize. There was 'catch up the United States in production of meat and milk'. There was the plough-up-the-grass-lands campaign. There were imposed methods of cultivation: peat-compost pots, two-stage harvesting, reduction of fallowing. He even told the Uzbeks, who love lamb, that it did not matter if they bred sheep for wool, because the taste of meat depends on the cooking.

Nearly all his ideas had point. However, they were applied by petty officials accustomed to do Moscow's bidding. The *svodka* (report made to headquarters) was what mattered. Someone quipped: 'the trouble in our villages is due to *vodka* and *svodka*'. Take as a first example the virgin lands campaign, launched initially in 1954. It secured important quantities of wheat in favourable years. But, as the experts on the spot well knew (for they told me so when I visited Kazakhstan in 1955 with a British agricultural delegation), there is danger in monoculture in these marginal lands, danger of soil exhaustion, erosion, weed infestation. On similar soil in Saskatchewan great care is taken,

with up to half the land left without crops in any one year. An excellent analysis, citing the Saskatchewan experience, in fact appeared in the literary journal *Novyi mir*. Yet Khrushchev insisted that the sown area could not be reduced, opposed expansion of fallow, refused to heed advice. Damage was done to soil and crops in consequence.

Maize became a 'political' crop. It had to be grown whatever the soil conditions or the availability of equipment or of labour. While certainly needed in much greater quantity, its imposition through Party orders on the whole country caused unnecessary losses in many areas. In one case cited in the Soviet press a farm manager was reprimanded for 'political underestimation of silage'. This was no way to run agriculture. Khrushchev of all people should have known the consequences of using Party-run campaigns to achieve results in agriculture. Thus a Party Secretary instructed a farm to plough up a field of growing clover, even though there were no other uses for that field. He was concerned that the *svodka* from his district should show a reduction in the area under grass, for that was what Moscow wanted to hear since Khrushchev was known to be against grasses. Now obviously this actual piece of nonsense was not due to any order by Khrushchev personally. He would not do so silly a thing. But the orders he *did* issue led Party Secretaries in the localities to act in this way, and he should have anticipated this. Just so, to take a very different example, a general order by Stalin to remove certain categories of suspects eventually translated itself into a quantitative arrest plan which local police officials tried to fulfil in individually ludicrous as well as tragic ways.

Similar kinds of nonsense followed from the 'meat and milk' campaign. More meat was—and is—certainly needed. But to expand output two or even threefold takes time and much increased supplies of fodder. Otherwise local comrades would either order excessive slaughtering to fulfil short-term plans, or breed more animals than could be fed properly. In fact both happened, at different times and in different places. The Party Secretary of Ryazan province, Larionov, became famous for trebling meat deliveries to the state in one year. How foolish was it of Khrushchev to praise him! How obvious that he will only have done this either by excessive slaughtering or by cheating. It was in fact cheating, as it later turned out: he bought livestock from neighbouring provinces and from peasants. Khrushchev expressed

his disappointment when he heard this, and denounced false reporting. Yet his own actions had encouraged these excesses.

It was not so very different when he ordered the abolition of the Machine Tractor Stations (MTS) and the sale of tractors and combines to the collective farms. The measure, decreed in 1958, was soundly based. The MTS had been used simultaneously as political controllers and as suppliers of equipment to farms on hire. The two functions coexisted uneasily. As early as 1951 two economists proposed the elimination of the MTS, but Stalin rejected this on principle. It would mean selling state-owned machines to collective (co-operative) farms, which was an ideologically retrograde step. Khrushchev was not concerned about this aspect, and he saw no danger to political control in the abolition of the MTS, since it could be exercised in other ways, for instance through the Party groups in the greatly enlarged collective farms. He saw the defects of the system clearly: 'two masters in the fields', the farm management not having the machinery they needed under their control. The MTS were abolished.

Later I spoke with a Soviet farm manager who described the measure as a mistake. Yes, he said, the old system had been wrong because farms were *forbidden* to own tractors and were *compelled* to hire them whether they wanted to or not. Now, however, they *had* to buy them and could not hire them, even if they had no maintenance personnel or workshops. The correct solution would have been to let the farms choose whether to buy or hire. Even in America (he said, rightly) many farmers *hire* combine-harvesters.

Let the farms choose. This is what Khrushchev (and other party administrators before him) would not do. Their whole training and experience inclined them to the view that nothing would happen unless ordered, and it was the Party's job to ensure that the right things were done. Yet Khrushchev knew that more local initiative, and flexible adaptation to the local conditions, were essential, and frequently said so. Another contradiction, explicable by the past experience of party officialdom, particularly in the agricultural sector, where coercion had for so long replaced incentives.

Khrushchev also upset the peasants by taking fiscal and administrative measures against private livestock, and this after he himself had reduced in 1953 the burdens imposed in Stalin's last years. His motive seems to have been the usual one: to encourage collective and to discourage private activity. But it so happened that peasants' collective incomes ceased to rise, even fell slightly, in

the years 1958–63, and peasant irritation contributed to the poor showing of agriculture in these years.

When, in 1963, the weather was bad, the crop was clearly inadequate to feed the humans and animals who needed it. Embarrassingly large imports of grain from the West were still insufficient to maintain the inflated livestock population, and the number of pigs dropped precipitately from 70 million to 40 million head. The weather was not Khrushchev's fault, but there seemed to be hardly any reserves to cope with a bad year. The 1963 harvest proved a major factor in weakening his political position.

Industrial planning suffered less from Khrushchev's personal interference. 'Unfortunately he thinks he knows a lot about agriculture,' grumbled one expert whom I met. He had no such pretensions in respect of steel, heavy engineering or textiles. He did, however, cause two kinds of upsets. The first arose from his reorganisation of planning in 1957. The second concerned priorities.

We have already described the regionalisation measures, the *sovnarkhoz* reform. It contained one fatal flaw. In a system in which production is planned, in which there is no market, and which is industrially developed, it is not possible to give major powers to *regional* authorities. Every large factory draws many of its supplies from outside its own region (and let us recall that the number of regions exceeded 100). It is also bound to supply its products to numerous customers located in other regions. Consequently the region could not effectively control, or be informed about, either input or output requirements. The one thing it knew was the needs of the region itself. Consequently, either detailed orders were received from the centre about what was to be produced and for whom, or, in the absence of such orders, the regional authority produced for the region itself, frequently disrupting established supply arrangements with other regions. There were bitter complaints about this, with denunciations from Moscow of *mestnichestvo*, 'localism'. Local Party Secretaries were supposed to help impose national as against local interest, but in practice a regional Party Secretary is an integral part of his region's interest and pressure group, and is in any case judged largely by his region's plan fulfilment statistics.

To cope with these defects it proved necessary to set up a multitude of sectoral 'state committees', to take care of the common problems of major industries, a bewildering array of co-

ordinating bodies, and finally co-ordinators of the co-ordinators. It may be said that the 'ministerial' system of centralised planning has many weaknesses, and this was (and is) indeed so. But the regionalisation led to chaos, to confused reorganisations and finally, after Khrushchev's downfall, to the restoration of the Central ministries.

It must be added that confusion reigned also in agricultural planning, following Khrushchev's deliberate destruction of the powers of the ministry of agriculture.

Economic priorities are, and must be, a source of conflict in all societies. That there were arguments on this topic in Khrushchev's years of power is a statement of the obvious. However, in his last years, Khrushchev offended some important groups, firstly by the extent of the stress on agriculture, secondly by his espousal of totally impractical plans for the chemical industry, part of which (i.e. fertiliser) also served agriculture. He seemed to the professionals to be dangerously unbalancing the economy: not enough steel, inadequate supplies of solid fuel, too little invested in building materials, and too much in chemicals. 'Too much' not because the industry was not in need of major expansion; it was indeed very backward. But it was being expanded too quickly, so that the machines, materials and trained manpower could not be provided in time. Chemical plans were very greatly underfulfilled, and the efforts to fulfil them had disruptive effects. Khrushchev counter-attacked the allegedly conservative planners, denounced 'metal-eaters' who demanded more and more steel. He probably also offended the military, who had been shocked by the Cuban fiasco and were anxious to achieve parity with the United States; they wanted more arms, and eventually got much more, under Brezhnev.

Errors of policy may have contributed to a slowing down in industrial growth, which was noticeable in the years after 1958. There were certainly other causes for this, and lower growth rates have persisted since Khrushchev's fall. But all this represented arguments against his methods and his management of the economy.

Finally, his administrative methods offended and disorganised. We have already referred to the planning chaos. It remains to dwell upon his reorganisation of the Party, which must have turned the bulk of the Party machine very much against him. He was dissatisfied with the way the local Party officials were working. They were not carrying out his intentions satisfactorily, there were

too many cases of irresponsibility and failure to defend all-Union interests, in both industry and agriculture. Now it must be admitted that the weaknesses were real, but they arose out of a chronic and continuing ambiguity in the position of the Party official, especially in the economy: how far should he directly rule, thereby replacing the ministerial or local authorities? Repeatedly the Party officials were told to supervise without exercising 'petty tutelage' over those government officials who had formal responsibility for this or that sector of social, political and economic affairs. Khrushchev's policies seemed to have strengthened the party as against state organisation, but this led to difficulties. The point is that whereas a *state* official usually has direct responsibility for some one thing (say agricultural procurements in a province, or supplies of ball-bearings), a provincial Party Secretary is responsible for all things in his bailiwick, which meant he could be master of none, tending to concentrate attention on current campaigns. This situation needed to be improved, but Khrushchev's cure was worse than the disease. He divided the Party into two parts: one was to be concerned with industry, transport, construction, trade; the other with agriculture. With some exceptions, republican and local Party organisations were split along these lines, to the dismay of many comrades.

To make confusion worse confounded, Khrushchev also disrupted rural Party organs by setting up territorial Production Administrations in agriculture, whose boundaries did not coincide with the districts (*raiony*) which had been the basis of local Party organs. He also ordered the reduction in the number of *sovnarkhozy* (regional economic councils for industry) from over 100 to 47, so they no longer coincided with provincial borders. He also tried to organise larger regional units, combining several smaller republics. In Central Asia this was accompanied by the setting up of a party bureau covering Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Kirghizia and Turkmenistan, with a Russian at its head.

This was a truly remarkable exercise in losing friends and influence. Let us look at the consequences of these measures. Suppose that you were First Party Secretary in the province of Kaluga; you would then be responsible for the whole province. If it were divided between an industrial party and an agricultural Party committee, you must lose part of your functions and powers. Furthermore, some of these functions do not divide logically between 'agriculture' and 'industry'. Whose, for instance, is the

task of worrying about supplies of locally made spare parts for farm machinery. There would be bound to be demarcation disputes. The whole thing smacked of thoughtless improvisation.

The *raion* (district) Secretaries protested semi-publicly; Khrushchev referred to their protest in a published speech. The Central Asian republican Secretaries' opinions can readily be imagined. How could Khrushchev have been so heedless of the effect on his own power-position of creating so many opponents, so much irritated frustration?

The last straw for some was personal diplomacy. In 1964 he tried to negotiate with West Germany. His aims were almost certainly identical with those of his successors: to encourage a settlement that included the recognition of the *status quo* in Europe and of East Germany. But he sent his son-in-law, Adzhubei, editor of *Izvestiya*, to negotiate. This was offensive both to the other Party leaders and to the Foreign Office.

The man was wilful, crude, lacking in dignity, unpredictable, a muddler. His fellow-members of the Politbureau must have reasoned, quietly and in private, that he could rock the boat with excessive anti-Stalinism. He allowed the publication of such works as the dangerous exposure of labour camps by Solzhenitsyn. He interfered with privilege by his abortive educational reforms. He was a muddler in economic policy, in agriculture especially. He reorganised and disorganised the party. Therefore he must go.

These fellow-members were, moreover, changing, not always to Khrushchev's advantage. Early in 1960 out went Kirichenko, followed by Aristov, Belyaev and Mukhitdinov, all thought to be favourable to him. Brezhnev, who at that time was considered a Khrushchev man, was moved to the chairmanship of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, certainly a temporary demotion.

Kozlov was promoted to a senior post in the Party Secretariat, and he had the reputation of a conservative or neo-Stalinist; however, he had to retire through illness in 1963, and Brezhnev then returned to the Secretariat. It was also in 1960 that Kosygin returned to the Politbureau. Despite all these manoeuvres, many of them still obscure, a number of important leaders could be regarded as being Khrushchev nominees: Podgorny, Polyanski, Voronov, Kirilenko, Brezhnev.

On such grounds, Kremlinologists saw no danger to Khrushchev. I attended a discussion at Oxford a week before his fall. No one expected it. Nor, it must be said, did Khrushchev, who was resting

in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in October 1964 when the blow fell. In his absence his comrades voted to oust him and called a meeting of the Central Committee to confirm that he was indeed out. Khrushchev, unsuspecting and unprepared, could only retire and become a pensioner, 'on health grounds'. The fact that not a single leader went to the wilderness with him, all of the Politbureau retaining their seats, suggests that he had no support among them.

It is worth dwelling on the possible sources of error in the minds of Kremlinologists. If a man owes his position to a stronger colleague, it might mean that he is indeed his grateful supporter, but he may also be harbouring jealous resentment. If two men worked together for some years in the Ukraine or elsewhere, this could mean that they are political friends, but they could also have learnt to hate each other. If they came from the same district—well, as someone pointed out, Lenin and Kerensky were both born in the small town of Simbirsk....

It must also be added that some traditional aids to Kremlinological analysis had vanished. A leader's absence from a formal occasion was not necessarily a sign that he was no longer a leader: he could be on holiday, or have a cold, or dislike opera. Also it became the practice (maintained until 1973) to print the names of the Polit-bureau in alphabetical order. True, other indices of relative importance remained: position on a photograph, or the number of organisations nominating a leader for Supreme Soviet elections. Nonetheless, the fixed conventions inherited from Stalinism were becoming less fixed.

Khrushchev became a private citizen. The change was peaceful. No one was arrested. Occasionally the deposed leader could be seen in Moscow. Then he died, a natural death, in 1971. The authorities did not know what to do. No *retired* First Secretary and Premier had ever died. Their solution was embarrassingly timid and evasive: they put out a four-line announcement of his death, without comment and with no obituary, no blame, no praise. He was buried at the Novodevichi cemetery with no official speech and none of his successors and erstwhile colleagues present. How typical this was of the spirit, and attitude to history, of the then leadership! Awkward questions were best unanswered. Even to attempt an official estimation of Khrushchev's achievements and deficiencies would be a very complex political task, and there were other and perhaps more important things to do. To allow an

*unofficial* estimation of the services to his country of a major Party figure was contrary to Soviet political tradition and practice. So what remains is—silence. An undeserved epitaph for this most talkative of Soviet leaders. It was not until March 1988 that one of his former assistants, Fedor Burlatsky, published in *Literaturnaya gazeta* a full and fair evaluation of Krushchev and his policies.

### The Brezhnev Regime

Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev was 58 in 1964. He had had a somewhat zig-zag career. Though of humble origin, he (like Kosygin and most others of this generation of leaders) had received a higher technological education. His first Party posts were in the Ukraine (he was Secretary of Dnepropetrovsk Provincial Committee just before the war). During the war he was a political officer, reaching in this capacity the rank of Major-General. He resumed the Secretaryship at Dnepropetrovsk in 1947, moving from there to the Party Secretaryship of the small republic of Moldavia. Just after Stalin's death, as we have seen, he became deputy chief of the political department of the armed forces, now as Lieutenant-General. He was then moved, in 1954, to Kazakhstan, as Second and then as First Secretary, of that republic's Party Committee, to carry out Khrushchev's virgin lands campaign. Khrushchev must have been satisfied, since in February 1956 he was brought into the Party Secretariat in Moscow and became candidate-member of the Politbureau, becoming a full member in June 1957. He also worked with Khrushchev in the Russian republic (RSFSR) bureau of the party. According to the Soviet encyclopaedia, his special responsibilities included heavy industry, supplies of the most modern weapons to the armed forces and 'cosmonautics'. As we have seen, in May 1960 he was suddenly given the more decorative post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (the job now held by Gromyko), but he was brought back to the Central Committee as a Secretary in June 1963, as one of Khrushchev's deputies. Now, with Khrushchev gone, he took over the Party First Secretaryship. Alexei Kosygin became Prime Minister. With Podgorny, who was Chairman of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet and formally the President of the Union, they formed another triumvirate, and with it came a reaffirmation of collective leadership. No senior Party official was removed. None of Khrushchev's political victims were restored to Politbureau

membership. The formalities and decencies were carefully observed. Khrushchev was not criticised by name, but was accused (in a circumlocutory way) of hatching 'harebrained schemes' and making 'voluntarist' policy errors. ('Voluntarist' here means arbitrarily placing personal ideas and preferences above a sober and objective analysis of the situation.) One can see what the new leaders most wanted altered by the steps they took to correct what they regarded as errors. The division of the Party into two parts was speedily eliminated. Agricultural policies and organisation were altered: the Ministry restored to power, and with it the former Minister, Matskevich; an end was promised to arbitrary interference from the centre with agricultural practices. The north and west of the Union would get a fairer share of available capital and fertiliser, having been neglected under Khrushchev. Tax measures hitting peasant private livestock were repealed. Farm prices were increased, and farm machinery output also. However, for reasons already explained, it was necessary to cut back on the impractically high projected levels of investment in fertiliser and in other chemicals.

It took a little longer to decide what to do about industry. The regionalisation had certainly been a fiasco, but to return to the old centralised ministries was also unsatisfactory. Khrushchev may have had the wrong remedy, but Stalinist centralisation did constitute a malady requiring a cure. Economists and planners had been engaged for years in a hard-hitting and fascinating discussion about how best to reform the economy; Khrushchev had tolerated this, though he did not adopt any of the far-reaching proposals. Some argued for a form of market socialism, with managers far freer to respond to consumer demand and to find their own suppliers, instead of having them designated by the planners. Others stressed the potentialities of the computer, of linear programming, of the 'mathematisation' of planning. Some of the mathematicians also supported a market, because their computers could not possibly cope with the millions of variables that occur if one tries to cope centrally with fully disaggregated detail. There was also a strong 'conservative' tendency, resistant to change, which partly reflected the vested interests of the controlling apparatus, whose jobs and career prospects were bound to be affected by rapid change, and partly genuine concern lest the advantages of central planning be lost. Needless to say, recent Western experience does not suggest that guided market

economies can always achieve stability or avoid inflationary and balance of payments crises. So the problems were real.

It took until September 1965 to decide the next steps. The regional economic councils were abolished. A new and complex system of managerial incentives was introduced, with some cautious steps towards a bigger role for the profit motive and for commercial considerations. There would be bigger scope for scientific planning with wider use of computers. There would be no more 'voluntarism', and every effort would be made to achieve efficiency and technical progress. It seemed at first sight a moderately progressive document. The first year of the new leadership was very properly devoted to putting right the errors and distortions that marred Khrushchev's last years.

However, it soon became increasingly evident that domestic policy was veering in a conservative direction, that the group that overthrew Khrushchev included many who believed that he had been a dangerous experimenting radical—albeit an inconsistent one. On cultural matters they took several steps backwards. Khrushchev allowed Solzhenitsyn, and a few others, to mention forced-labour camps and prisons; biographies of rehabilitated victims of Stalinist terror could mention their fate: Tvardovsky, the courageous editor of the monthly *Novyi mir*, could use the journal as a vehicle for serious social and literary criticism. True, Khrushchev had his bad moments, as when he attacked modern art or particular writers who upset him, and he did put a stop to what he regarded as 'excessive' use of the concentration-camp theme. The censorship apparatus remained. Yet in retrospect the years 1956–64 must appear to be comparatively liberal. Gradually but inexorably, the 'conservative' and cautious line triumphed. Solzhenitsyn was silenced, criticised and then ignored: in due course he was expelled from the Soviet Union, and now resides in America. The bolder kind of writing was eliminated. Tvardovsky was dismissed as editor and died (a natural death) not long after. There was a reaffirmation of orthodoxy also in historical writing; no more lifting of the curtain on disagreeable episodes such as collectivisation. There was a strong reassertion of the correctness of the Party line, at all times and places, including renewed attacks on Trotsky, Bukharin and other non-rehabilitated old oppositionists. The chances of publishing an original novel, or historical work, receded. More and more authors turned to *samizdat*, or self-publishing, this being the circulation in typescript of unpublishable

material. Some of this found its way abroad, and almost every Soviet work of real social and literary interest between 1965 and 1985 was printed only abroad. This included Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward* (which was ready for publication in *Novyi mir* when the censors stopped it), *The First Circle* and *August 1914*, but also the works of many less well-known authors.

The one area where historical studies made some headway was in writing on the war. Here too there was an avoidance of awkward questions, this time about the disasters of 1941, which reflected or were thought to reflect on party infallibility. However, the flow of memoirs continued, and did at least give a more realistic picture of Stalin's role. Khrushchev went too far, blaming any failures on Stalin and attributing successes to the headquarters staff or particular generals (there were difficulties with the role of Zhukov after Khrushchev got rid of him in 1957). Now we had some more balanced accounts, of which Zhukov's own memoirs were an outstanding example.

Brezhnev and his comrades quickly altered the official attitude to Stalin and Stalinism. Attacks on him were stopped, or were limited to carefully drafted admissions that there were innocent victims of repressions. There was a petition circulating among the liberals to warn against a rehabilitation of Stalin, and this certainly suggests that this was proposed or considered. It did not occur in a formal sense; he was not re-promoted to the rank of demi-god. Instead the policy was followed of banning any public or printed discussion of Stalin or any part of his system, while he was quietly put back into the list of acceptable leaders, who had done many correct things and who led the Soviet Union in very difficult times with considerable success. His new status as a positive (but not divine) figure found expression in the erection of a statue to him behind the Mausoleum, by the Kremlin wall, alongside other important but secondary leaders. Much thought must have been devoted to this statue. He is shown in no Napoleonic pose, but gazing downwards modestly. This was partial reassertion of Stalin's historic role, but with no direct glorification and with an all-but-total ban on discussion of him, his role, his crimes, or his achievements, in public. The lowest common denominator of a way out, typical of the Brezhnev leadership, and analogous to what was done in respect of Khrushchev's non-obituary. Intellectually neither courageous nor satisfactory.

The internal security policy of the Brezhnev group was somewhat more repressive than that of Khrushchev. There were repeated declarations against the alleged penetration of bourgeois ideology, and on the need to struggle against ideological deviations. Although political arrests were still a small fraction of what they had been under Stalin, they nonetheless increased. The writers Sinyavsky and Daniel were sentenced in 1966 for sending critical works to be published in the West under a pseudonym. The distinguished poet Brodsky (who later was allowed to leave Russia) was disgracefully treated, being deported from Leningrad to a remote northern farm for being a 'parasite', this offence being due to his not being a member of the Writers' Union and not making enough to live on by his writings (his poetry was almost all refused publication). There were arrests for real or alleged Zionism, for Ukrainian nationalism, and instances of the misuse of psychiatry to detain dissidents in asylums. Perhaps the authorities believed that anyone openly willing to oppose them must be mad. Cultural controls were tightened, and the original thinker was obstructed at every turn. These policies attracted adverse publicity in the West. Total secrecy makes it impossible to make any estimate as to the numbers who have been arrested. In my possibly incorrect judgement, Russia had about as many political prisoners as had Tsarist Russia in 1900. This is no cause for congratulation, especially as their numbers doubtless exceeded those of 1960. But even these numbers were still a small fraction of those in prison camps and exile in 1950 and 1938 when they must surely have exceeded anything known to world history. Instead of Stalin's millions there were Brezhnev's thousands.

The Brezhnev regime, then, from the standpoint of freedom of the individual and of the human spirit, had been more consistent, less flexible, less tolerant than Khrushchev, and its repressive tendencies were strengthened by the shock effects of the Czechoslovak events of 1968. From the standpoint of developing Marxist (or any other) ideas, progress was zero. No wonder that the distinguished old scientist, Academician Kapitsa, pointed out that ideas flourish in an atmosphere of fundamental argument and challenge, and that Soviet Marxist philosophers have been notably absent from the process of devising new adaptations of Marxism to the problems of the contemporary world (Kapitsa's words were printed, though probably in modified form). More succinctly the same thought was expressed by an old literary critic: *sporit*

*razuchilis*, 'we have forgotten how to argue'. Indeed, how can anyone keep their intellectual powder dry when, for two generations, no one was allowed to challenge the basic assumptions?

Symbolic of a return to a more negative policy was the re-labelling of the Ministry for the Protection of Public Order (so called-under Khrushchev) with its old and feared name: 'Ministry of the Interior' (MVD), though internal security remained under the separate and active Committee of State Security (KGB).

It became clear that the security of the regime did not require either terror or mass arrests. Other forms of control and persuasion, not excluding the threat of arrest, were deemed sufficient. The KGB is no longer a law unto itself, and its methods are much less brutal and more intelligent than they were in Stalin's time. The illegal circulation of uncensored materials continued. Solzhenitsyn took up a critical stand, eventually challenging the basic principles of the whole Soviet regime. He was abused, ostracised, and in the end expelled. Some other dissidents were given exit visas, or were compelled to emigrate. Sakharov, the physicist, who publicly urged the West not to respond favourably to Soviet foreign-policy overtures, was attacked in the press, and eventually exiled to Gorky.

Of course, the world-wide fame of Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn did help to preserve them from prison. Lesser individuals who defied the authorities could get into very serious trouble. However, the KGB was not as sure as it was in Stalin's time that it had the right to ignore human rights totally. The leadership liked to present itself as a group of reasonable men who conformed to the country's laws, even while it cracked down on dissidents and firmly refused to allow any organisation to exist outside the area of strict Party control.

A good example of the ambivalent attitude of the leadership was the case of the Jews. Under the Stalin terror it was clear that mere suspicion of a desire to go abroad was likely to lead to the suspect's disappearance. Some Jews wanted to leave but did not dare even to imagine the possibility. Restriction on Jewish activity continued after Stalin; under Khrushchev such activity consisted only of synagogues (some of which were closed down), occasional concerts of Yiddish songs and a periodical in Yiddish, *Sovietisch Heimland*, plus a newspaper in the remote 'Jewish autonomous area' on the borders of Manchuria. Connections with Israel were

frowned upon, particularly as Soviet Middle East policy was pro-Arab. Complaints about educational and job discrimination were numerous. Criticism of this from abroad included some from foreign Communists, who were puzzled and irritated by the persistence of discriminatory practices.

This is not the place to go into the complex theme of the East European anti-Semitic tradition and its role in Communist-ruled countries. What concerns us now is the policy of Brezhnev and his comrades, faced with foreign criticism and the emergence of a demand from some Jews to be allowed to go. The demand was one result of the elimination of mass terror: the risks were now much smaller. At first the authorities reacted by arrests and threats. Then they decided that the principal 'agitators' could after all be allowed out, as that would take the steam out of the emigration campaign. The result surprised everyone; the news spread that there was a way out, that exit visas might be granted. Applications to go increased in number. Again there were detentions, threats, dismissals, refusals, financial penalties (such as the 'education tax', ostensibly to repay the state for the amount spent on educating the emigrants). But exit visas were granted in increasing numbers. Pressure from the West, especially America, was one factor, but in my view at least as important is a desire by the regime to avoid or evade awkward situations within the USSR. However, when relations with America were soured, especially from 1979, emigration was reduced to a trickle, and was resumed at higher levels when relations improved under Gorbachev.

Let us now look at the economic priorities of the Brezhnev leadership. They inherited the same imperatives as Malenkov and Khrushchev did. More had to be done for the citizens, the housing programme had to be continued, more consumer goods and services were essential, of better quality. Khrushchev accepted the need for greater availability of consumer durables (and watches, radios, TV sets, refrigerators, washing machines became objects of mass consumption), but drew the line at cars. He thought that it was sufficient to have more taxis and car hire services. And indeed car ownership carries with it major consequences, social as well as economic, and ill accords with the image of a Communist country interested in world revolution. Brezhnev changed course, no doubt under the pressure of the upper strata of society, who were and are extremely interested in possessing a car. Of course, mass car ownership is still for the future, but output has risen greatly, with

the erection of a Fiat factory bought from Italy, and more will come. Brezhnev was also personally identified with the priority of agriculture, and more resources have been devoted to it, though success was modest. The last ten years of Brezhnev's rule (1974–84) saw massive investments in agriculture, but these were largely wasted, and stagnation set in, with ever larger imports from the West of grain and also meat, which remained in short supply, though this was partly due to the policy of low retail prices, at which demand and supply cannot possibly balance. At the Twenty-fourth Congress (1971) much stress was laid on agriculture, consumer goods and services. The 'Malenkov' heresy was repeated; consumer goods were to grow faster than the output of producer goods: this pattern was adhered to in the years of 1968–71, and was enshrined in the five-year plan of 1971–75. However, agricultural difficulties and an unbalanced investment plan (including shortages of building materials) led to a slowdown and to a reversal of priorities in 1972 and 1973.

One cause of the economic strains which emerged was the high priority of the arms programme. Soviet missile and naval expansion has been rapid, and it is the unanimous view of Western experts that, from being well behind America in 1964, the USSR achieved overall parity. It is significant that this was the sector for which Brezhnev had been responsible for several years when Khrushchev ruled. For a weaker Soviet industry to overtake the stronger Americans in the field of advanced military technology required, at least for a period, higher production of such technology than in America. This inevitably imposed a strain on this weaker economy, and must logically have affected the supply of civilian machinery and equipment, and therefore investment.

Why this great effort in the military field? This brings us to an assessment of the foreign policy of Brezhnev and his team. Let us begin with relations with other Communist-ruled states.

The quarrel with China continued, and even erupted for a time into border incidents. The Chinese repeatedly accused the Soviets of concentrating large military forces on their borders, and on their side the Chinese invested much effort into making their own nuclear weapons. This could be part of the explanation of the high level of Soviet military expenditure: America *and* China have to be considered, and the possibility of the two coming to an agreement was in Soviet official minds several years before Nixon visited Peking. There are many mysteries and uncertainties in Soviet-

Chinese relations which could be the subject of a large book. The cultural revolution in China was sharply condemned by Moscow, but one of its principal architects, Lin Piao, was reported to have died in a plane crash fleeing to Russia. Some observers considered that a war between the USSR and China was probable, while the Chinese directed a stream of abuse at Moscow: 'new tsars', 'social imperialists', even 'Hitlers'. The USSR replied in kind. China urged the strengthening of NATO. However, by 1980 relations returned to a more even keel.

Brezhnev inherited an uncertain relationship with the European Communist states. They had acquired greater independence, and were undertaking experiments of their own. East Germany, vocally loyal to Moscow, tried out a new industrial planning structure based on cartel-like industrial associations. Hungary, after the 1956 cataclysm, turned easy-going and tolerant under Kadar's skilful leadership, and Moscow tolerated Hungary's adoption of a far-reaching move towards a market-orientated economy, radically distinct from the Soviet model and the East German variant. Romania adopted a nationalistic pose, with anti-Russian overtones, taking an independent line both over China and over economic integration. In Poland an ageing and cantankerous Gomulka went gradually back on the liberal promises of 1956, until falling victim to riots by indignant workers in December 1970. These and other varieties of behaviour were tolerated by Brezhnev, or were handled quietly by pressure behind the scenes. The exception was Czechoslovakia.

The Czech leadership had been the most consistently Stalinist. In 1952 they had massacred numerous leading Communists at Moscow's bidding, and they were least affected by subsequent destalinisation. However, the end of terror loosened tongues, and economic failures in what was a relatively advanced industrial country caused widespread demoralisation. After the discredited Novotny was finally ousted as Party Secretary, the choice of the party hierarchy fell surprisingly upon the relatively unknown Alexander Dubek, and the Moscow leadership accepted this, not knowing that this would open the floodgates. The 'Prague spring' followed, with the emergence of democratic freedom and a model of 'socialism with a human face'.

The events in Prague are of interest in the present context in so far as they show us the nature and content of Soviet policy. We know that, after several warnings and two meetings with the Czech

leaders, the Soviet Union sent in troops and destroyed the Czech reformers. The destruction was political, not personal. Dub ek did not suffer the fate of Hungary's Nagy, though he was roughly treated, detained and threatened in the first days after the invasion. There was minimum bloodshed, because, though there were very wide-spread and bitter protests, there was no armed resistance in the face of overwhelming force.

Why did they invade? After all, Dub ek was a Communist who had been a friend of the USSR, and who swore loyalty to the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet alliance. The contrast with Hungary in 1956, when the invasion was precipitated by Hungary leaving the Warsaw Pact and by open anti-Communist activities, springs to mind.

It is said, with no firm evidence to support this, that the final decision to intervene was taken by a narrow majority and on exaggerated information supplied by the Ukrainian Party Secretary, Shelest. Such, at least, was the inspired leak in Moscow, noted by several foreign correspondents, after Shelest himself had been demoted, i.e. in the winter of 1972-73. This may have been just a lame excuse for an embarrassing action which outraged many friends of the Soviet Union. Even some normally 'muscovite' Communist Parties in the West expressed dismay.

In the Soviet view the Czechs had gone too far. What *was* too far? Not, it seems, adopting economic reforms of the market type, since Hungary had done so (in 1967) without a single Soviet soldier being placed on alert. Not because of too much independence from Moscow, for Romania under Ceausescu had gone further and survived with no more than some veiled warnings. The answer must be that the claim to have a new model of 'human socialism', a free press, the abandonment of censorship, toleration of non-Party associations with claims to political influence, was a mixture which was felt to be disruptive of the political balance in Eastern Europe and perhaps in Russia herself. The domination of the Communist Party over society, the suppression of free expression, these turned out to be essential to the survival of Soviet Communism in the sixties and seventies. For Brezhnev or anyone like him, freedom to oppose the Party, or freedom to advocate such freedoms within the Party, was self-evidently dangerous as well as heretical. Infectious, too, so it had to be stamped out. But the real reasons could not be openly given or discussed. A scenario was worked out which would have enabled Brezhnev to pretend

that the troops were called in by a group of Czech party leaders to defend Czechoslovakia against 'imperialism' and 'reaction'. The scenario went wrong, as the world knows. The 'danger threatening Czechoslovak socialism' could not be described, defined or identified. The dangers to the Soviet system were, however, felt to have been real, so much so that the negative effects to be expected from sending 600,000 armed men into an allied country were accepted as inevitable.

The Czech events of 1968 influenced the Soviet leadership in the direction of demanding stricter ideological conformity at home. It caused a setback for economic reform also, since the fact that Czechs had proposed it in 1968 would be used as an argument against. These same events led to greater consciousness of the need to set limits to the autonomy of the lesser countries in the Soviet sphere. ('We can't really blame them; they've got an empire,' said an East European official in private conversation.)

How much difference to these policies did Brezhnev and Kosygin make? Would Khrushchev also have sent troops to Prague and imposed greater conformity? Possibly. He would surely have received such advice from his military and ideological apparatus. He did himself initiate attempts to achieve greater economic integration among Communist states, though he did not succeed in making much progress in this direction.

Relations with Cuba were correct, but a little cool. Castro was greatly dependent on Soviet aid, but hardly concealed his critical attitude to Soviet policy, which does not appeal to a revolutionary spirit. Soviet aid to North Vietnam was continued, and propaganda exploitation of American involvement persisted.

It is arguable that Brezhnev was continuing his predecessor's policy, towards the United States, West Germany and Japan, and that the main change has been in *Western* policy. Let us again recall that the recognition of the *status quo* in Europe and the recognition of East Germany have been Soviet policy aims for a decade if not two decades. It was equally firmly the aim of American and West German policy, especially in the Adenauer-Dulles era, to prevent any such thing. American policy was opposed to any large increase in trade with or credits to the USSR, on the grounds that it would strengthen an enemy country. (An impressive book by a Swede, Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, has been written on *Western* economic warfare.) An episode typical of the outlook of America under President Johnson was the abortive

German steel pipe deal. The point was that large-diameter steel pipe was needed for Soviet pipelines, and this item was not on the list of strategic goods whose export to the USSR was forbidden. The Soviet Union placed an order for it in West Germany. The Americans objected, because it was seen that to deny them pipe would impose economic loss, or alternatively that supplying the pipe would strengthen the Soviet economy 'too much'. The Germans complied, and the deal was cancelled. Contrast this with the trade-and-credits discussions conducted with Nixon in 1973. American influence was paramount in Japan in the sixties, and this also restrained the Japanese from making any major move to improve their political and trading relations with the USSR.

Soviet economic relations with some Western countries were quite satisfactory. Italy was buying large quantities of Soviet oil. France left NATO and pursued an independent policy, to the evident pleasure of the Kremlin. Relations with Britain remained cool, since British leaders took a sceptical view of Soviet policy, opposed the European security conference which the Russians had proposed repeatedly, and finally (in 1971) expelled a large number of Soviet

diplomatic and trade personnel from London on spying charges.

The new elements in the Soviet attitude to America were doubtless explicable by the consequences of the quarrel with China, and the fear of the emergence of an American-Chinese line-up hostile to the USSR. Economic considerations also played some role: the arms race is a burden on the economy, hence the desirability of slowing it down. There would also be clear advantages to be gained from expansion of East-West trade, especially if modern technology can be obtained. Large-scale ideas also emerged for developing Soviet raw material resources with the help of Western credits. However, the biggest policy changes were in the West.

The German settlement is the most striking example of this. Soviet propaganda for many years cast West Germany in the role of devil-warmonger. While such propaganda was an unrecognisable caricature of reality, it was based not only on the memory of 1941 but also on the fact that the Adenauer-Erhard regime refused to recognise either East Germany (described in official German publications as *Die Sowjetzone* or as *Mitteldeutschland*) or the eastern frontiers of Germany. It was committed to alter the *status quo*. True, this was to be 'by peaceful

means', but these would have included pressure exercised jointly with the powerful United States. A German devil was also useful to the USSR in its relations with Poland and Czecho-slovakia, who had every reason to fear a nationalist German revival. Brandt changed all that. By agreeing to recognise East Germany and the eastern frontiers he provided a basis for agreement, on terms which, we may be sure, Khrushchev would gladly have accepted ten years earlier, but which the West would have rejected out of hand at that time. The West also accepted the proposal for a European security conference.

The USSR found political and economic advantage in *détente*, and relations with Nixon and Kissinger were better than those which developed in more recent years. Indeed, when Watergate toppled Nixon some Soviet observers thought he was being punished by the right wing for being too cordial to the USSR! For a while the Soviets soft-pedalled criticism of American policies. However, the Soviet arms build-up continued; the aim was still that of catching up, of achieving 'parity'. As Soviet military power drew closer to that of the United States voices were raised to sound the alarm, which undoubtedly contributed to the subsequent deterioration of relations.

Soviet policy in the Middle East, while outspokenly anti-Israel, tries to minimise risks. While succeeding in weakening the Western position in the area, which was originally based upon anti-Soviet alliances, the Soviet's own position in Egypt proved to be dependent upon active support for a campaign against Israel, and Egyptians resented Soviet military advisers when Soviet policy was against military action. When Egypt and Syria attacked in October 1973, the Soviet Union had supplied the bulk of the attackers' weapons, replaced losses and backed the Arab cause. Yet, despite the dangerous moment when the Americans declared a world-wide alert, Soviet policy was to avoid a confrontation with America, to preserve the *détente* and to devise a peaceful settlement, while at the same time maintaining a pro-Arab posture and, with it, political influence in the region. These aims were to some extent inconsistent. So was the Soviet attitude on the Arab use of the oil weapon against America and Western Europe. On the one hand, the economic troubles of the Western world were a source of satisfaction for Moscow. On the other, the economic and political advantages of *détente* could not be exploited if the Western countries were hard hit by Arab oil embargoes if there is Soviet

encouragement for such policies. The USSR is also embarrassed by the intransigence of the Arab extremists, indeed, it seems to be in the Soviet interest to keep Israel in being, so as to be able to exploit politically the Arab resentment at her existence. The USSR supported and still supports Syria, but tries to moderate its policies. In more recent years much embarrassment has been caused by the Iran-Iraq war. Soviet policy being not to quarrel with either. As one of the two super-powers, the USSR can scarcely be indifferent to the Middle East and its immense strategic and economic importance, but she is also very anxious to avoid a confrontation with the United States. The pursuit of all these aims can cause some logical incongruities and upset statesmen in and out of the region, which remains dangerous because a conflagration can break out there beyond the control of either super-power.

The most successful Soviet policy in Asia has been in relations with India, where America is unpopular because of its backing of Pakistan, while the Chinese are a feared neighbour. It is an open question whether Soviet activities in India are directed more to block China than to oppose America.

In fact the whole Soviet posture in the Third World in recent years is ambiguous. On the one hand the large Soviet fleet has been showing the flag in all the seas and oceans, causing alarm in some Western quarters. On the other, Soviet economic aid has been modest, and has not been increasing. Apart from supporting Cuba, Soviet policies in Latin America have been cautious to the point of inactivity, with minimal support (except in words) to Allende's socialist government in Chile, though maximum propaganda exploitation was made of his fall. Despite American statements to the contrary, Soviet support for Nicaragua has been modest, though again Reagan's support for the 'contras' provided Moscow with easily exploitable propaganda opportunities.

Relations with the United States have been soured by a number of circumstances, some not of Soviet making, but some a consequence of Soviet policies, including that towards weapon production and deployment. Internal change in America has been towards a harder line, with Carter exploiting the issue of human rights and the us Senate unwilling to ratify SALT II. There was alarm at Soviet gains in Africa, the setting-up of governments beholden to Moscow, and supported by Cuban troops, in Mozambique, Angola and Ethiopia. Finally there was the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Though, as seen in Moscow, the

troops went in to prop up a regime which was already a Soviet satellite, the movement of Soviet armed forces into an area not previously held by them had a very negative effect on Western opinion and on us-Soviet relations in particular. It contributed to the victory of Reagan and the hard-liners, who advocated greatly increased arms expenditure in the belief that the Soviet Union was engaged in a world-wide offensive and sought superiority in order to win a nuclear war. My own view is that this was not so, if only because of the evident dangers that nuclear weapons pose for the survival of the human race. However, the horizon darkened.

### Brezhnevism

It is worth while turning Marxist class analysis onto the Soviet state itself. This the Russians themselves could do. '*Le Marxisme, c'est pour les autres.*' Soviet ruling stratum became a self-perpetuating oligarchy which co-opted able citizens into its own ranks, and which, after decades of blood, strife and terror, sets a high value on tranquillity. It controls the instruments of production, which the state owns. Its right to rule and to suppress others was based upon allegiance to 'Communism', which it must profess. Indeed, while some may be cynical careerists, it is perfectly possible that most of the leaders believed they were building a better world with the aid of the 'sure compass' of Marxism-Leninism, while (in their view) the Western world was run by clever but compass-less opportunists whose ship is unseaworthy. It is a common feature of all political and social systems that those whose benefit most from their existence tend to identify the preservation of their privileges with the good of society. Nor are they always wrong. Some left-wing critics of the Soviet order adopt an unreal, utopian standard of judgement, as if society in the 1970s could have been run with no bureaucracy, no police, no managers or officials who tell others what to do. True, Lenin's original vision included Utopian elements, but Brezhnev had to cope with reality. One recalls Dostoevsky's brilliant parable, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, on the Grand Inquisitor, who was certain that Christ, who returned to earth, had to be burnt as a heretic, in the interests of good order, organisation and *Realpolitik*. The same would surely apply to Lenin. Given Russian political traditions, a Brezhnev or a Kosygin could not envisage allowing Western-style freedom, not only because this might threaten them,

but because it could lead to chaos. Indeed, as the Grand Inquisitor pointed out, freedom is a burden most men prefer to do without. Many Soviet citizens were so fearful of chaos that they were prepared to tolerate Brezhnev and Kosygin, whatever they think of them, lest worse befall.

On this interpretation of the attitude of the Brezhnev leadership and of their comrades in the full-time Party apparatus, it is clear why the policy of détente with the West could coexist, indeed coincide, with repression at home. While repression is facilitated and justified by external danger, it has its own internal logic. It became all the more necessary in the eyes of Brezhnev, when threats from outside recede, because then 'the penetration of alien ideas' can be more dangerous, more dissolving. The ideological struggle had to continue.

Lenin's dream had to be drastically modified by Lenin himself in the midst of chaos, civil war, hunger, pestilence. 'Dictatorship of the proletariat' exercised by a centralised Party in a backward peasant society became institutionalised under Stalin, who deliberately created a privileged stratum, while also terrorising the individuals that composed it. A modern powerful industrial-military state was created, and called socialism. Brezhnev and his associates were brought up politically under Stalin, where they served as junior or middle-grade functionaries at the worst period of his despotism. Party and state officialdom was formed at this time. A man like Brezhnev was a product of this school, and represented it well. It lacked originality and brilliance, was philosophically almost null and void, and was without revolutionary élan. It was made up of conscientious administrators. They were also aware of the importance to their own political security of improvements of living standards; a huge subsidy kept the retail prices of livestock products well below costs of production, because price rises are unpopular and therefore dangerous. Their outlook on the arts, on women, on the family, was entirely conventional. Nor should this surprise us. The original revolutionaries were mainly intellectuals who knew the world and had lived abroad. Such men as Trotsky and Bukharin were talented literary critics. Their successors, and the successors of their successors, have been selected for qualities such as administrative flair, the ability to organise people and to carry out decisions. In the present generation they are in a formal sense educated men: a high proportion of party functionaries at all levels

have degrees. But very few come from an intellectual family background, and therefore they must be expected to reflect conventional ideas current among the people. The conservatism of many of them springs also from the fact that they are first-generation elite, i.e. their fathers were, as a rule, workers or peasants with little education. As a wise Polish professor observed, men of humble origin who move up the ladder are often resistant to change.

It may be objected that if Brezhnev and co. were not exactly cultured or intellectual, nor are most other statesmen. Johnson, Nixon, Reagan, were or are at least as conventional and philistine (and just as capable of lying if political convenience requires it). But the point is that they are not concerned *ex officio* to change the world, do not claim to be inspired by a subtle revolutionary philosophy. Perhaps the lesson to be drawn is that if revolutions bring to power men of the people, there is no reason why they should not bring with them the attitudes of the people, and these are in fact, and everywhere, much more conventional and conservative than revolutionary intellectuals imagine them to be. This process cannot be prevented merely because the individuals concerned read *Das Kapital* or other selected passages from the works of Marx and Engels. If in addition their control over the state, and over the means of production which the state owns, gives them a dominating position in society and power over the allocation of resources, this must be expected to reinforce cautious conservatism. Revolutionaries 'have nothing to lose but their chains'; these men were interested in preserving the system as it is. To expect anything else to have happened is surely idealism rather than Marxist materialism. Marxism teaches that, with only individual exceptions, people will in general pursue their material interests and invent or adopt ideologies to show that this is right. Why should most holders of Communist Party cards, long years after the revolution, behave differently?

The intellectual opposition included some admirable and courageous people, but was small and weak. Its links with the working classes were minimal, with the peasants even smaller. The ablest and more ambitious worker was often able to climb the educational ladder, or took pride in his children doing so, and the Party was able to utilise him and so avoid a situation where he can become a leader of discontent. Though official political slogans were seen everywhere, there are few countries in the world where

political passivity became so great as in the Soviet Union, or the chances of political action from below so remote.

Not so the chances of political action from above. It remains to record the climb of Brezhnev to a power position as strong as Khrushchev's at his apogee. By stages he achieved clear dominance over his colleagues in the Politbureau. In April 1966 his job as First Secretary became recategorised as General Secretary, a designation last used by Stalin. More and more fulsome press references to him culminated in the award to him of the Lenin peace prize in April 1973, which was followed by a burst of orchestrated glorification in the press. Then, also in April, some changes were made in the Politbureau. Shelest and Voronov went out, Andropov (Security), Gromyko (Foreign Affairs) and Marshal Grechko (Defence) came in. One consequence was to bring these key sectors more directly under the General Secretary's eye. But it had one side-effect. As already noted, the old practice of publishing ranking lists of party leaders had been dropped, and for eighteen years the Politbureau's names appeared always in alphabetical order. Brezhnev's came first because his name began with B, but it had done so under Khrushchev too, after the demotion of Aristov and Belyaev. But now we had Andropov, who certainly had to head an alphabetical list. In May 1973, when the first such list appeared, Brezhnev's name came first, while everyone else was in alphabetical order. The rule had been always *either* a ranking-list *or* alphabetical order. So in this way Brezhnev's dominance was asserted for all who know their *Pravda* to see. And, of course, it was Brezhnev who conducted negotiations with Nixon, with Brandt, with Pompidou. Khrushchev before he himself became Premier, took Bulganin, Brezhnev did not take Kosygin. Brezhnev finally 'regularised' his position by himself taking the job of Chairman of the Presidium, a position corresponding to head of state, previously held by Podgorny.



## Chapter 7

### *Brezhnev's Death and Gorbachev's Rise*

#### Enter Gorbachev

In the second half of Brezhnev's long reign, as is now widely recognised in the Soviet Union itself, stagnation and decay set in. The ageing leadership lacked dynamism. Symbolic of the 'gerontocratic' attitudes was the replacement of Kosygin as prime minister, when he died in 1980, by the even older and more colourless Tikhonov. Growth rates declined, living standards ceased to rise, shortages and imbalances became worse, giving increased opportunities for corruption at all levels. Alcoholism, crime, even drug-taking, increased in scope and were seen by Soviet critics as directly related to a sort of creeping demoralisation. This was a 'precrisis situation', to use Gorbachev's own words. Falling growth rates were but one of the signs of what was going on; unofficial recomputations showed that official statistical series were significantly exaggerated, so that (for instance) real growth per capita had fallen to zero in 1981–5. And this despite the big improvement in terms of trade due to rise in the price of oil, the USSR'S largest export to the West. To cite N. Shmelyov (*Novyi mir*, No. 6, 1987):

Today we have an economy characterised by shortages, imbalances, in many respects unmanageable and, if we were to be honest, almost unplannable... We have one of the lowest levels of labour productivity of any industrial nation... [and] through the years of stagnation the working masses have reached a state of almost total disinterestedness in freely committed and honest labour... Apathy, indifference, thieving have become mass phenomena... There have

appeared signs of a sort of physical degradation of a sizeable part of the population, through drunkenness and idleness. Finally, there is a lack of belief in the officially-announced objectives and purposes, in the very possibility of a more rational economic and social organisation of life.

Interestingly, when Gorbachev was asked what he thought of this article, he expressed disagreement with one of its practical recommendations (that there be some unemployment), but specifically expressed his approval of the author's diagnosis of present ills.

Troubles in foreign affairs accumulated too. Reagan's rapid arms build-up, the failure of Soviet efforts to halt the deployment of us medium-range missiles in Europe, the stalemate in Afghanistan, were bad enough. The Polish crisis, economic collapse, the rise of *Solidarnos*, the virtual collapse of the Polish communist party presented some very awkward dilemmas. To invade Poland would risk a bloodbath: many Poles would fight what for them was an ancestral enemy. Rather than risk such unpleasantness the Soviet leadership held back, even though what was going on in Poland in 1980–1 was more challenging than the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968. In the end, General Jaruzelski declared martial law and no Soviet invasion was needed. However, the entire episode underlined the extent to which the working class in a major communist-ruled country had become alienated. The Soviet authorities could see that all was not well, that reform was urgently necessary. The inefficiencies of the system were the subject of books, articles and speeches and, indeed, these formed the basis of my own analysis of the malfunctioning of centralised planning. To be sure, organisational changes were numerous: there was a policy of merging enterprises into large 'associations' (*ob'yedineniya*), plan-indicators were modified, greater emphasis was placed on fulfilment of delivery obligations. However, the essence of the centralised planning system remained unaltered: plans were imposed on enterprises in respect of output, costs, wage-bills, material utilisation, investment and much else besides, and rewards were attached to fulfilling these plans, while material inputs were allocated (rationed) by increasingly overstrained bureaucratic procedures of 'material—technical supply'.

As several Soviet authors have pointed out, centralised planning came into being over fifty years ago; in the 1930s it did have a

species of rationality, in that a few key priorities were ruthlessly imposed, and it could be argued that without this there would not have been created the basis of a modern arms industry. But whatever the validity of such arguments, the situation was now completely different. A much larger and more sophisticated economy called for much greater flexibility, more initiative and enterprise from below, direct links between customer and supplier, innovation. In a challenging analysis the Soviet economist G. Popov pointed to the logic of what he called the 'Administrative System'. This was headed by a despot-boss, Stalin, who was served by loyal and devoted executants, ready to work round the clock in the cause of industrialisation, while the terror mechanism ('Beria') enforced obedience at all levels. Now not only are the tasks vastly different, but Stalin is dead (so no despot-boss), Beria is dead too (no mass terror), and so are the devoted executants (their successors are a quite different breed, who take their privileges for granted).

Brezhnev's last years were painful to behold, as he held on to the secretaryship and showered himself with honours, while becoming increasingly incapable even of walking a few hundred yards without support. His policy of 'cadre stability' led to the growth of corrupt local mafias (so described in recent *Pravda* denunciations). Necessary reforms were snuffed out by the forces of conservatism and inertia. When he finally died (in 1984) he was succeeded by Andropov, who despite (or because of) his long tenure of office as head of the KGB, spoke of the need for radical change: tighter discipline, economic reform, measures against corruption at all levels. But his health broke down. He had given support to the promotion of Mikhail Gorbachev from a provincial party secretaryship to a secretaryship in the central committee, where he was put in charge of agriculture. He was being groomed for the succession. However, Andropov's premature death (in 1984) led to the decision to appoint one of Brezhnev's aged cronies, the colourless Chernenko, as general secretary. He too died, in April 1985, and Gorbachev succeeded him, brushing aside the candidatures of conservatives such as Romanov and Grishin, both of whom speedily lost their posts. A majority of party functionaries evidently felt that major changes could no longer be delayed, though the radicalism of Gorbachev's reform programme may well have subsequently shocked many of them.

Gorbachev represents a new spirit and a new generation. During the years of stagnation many in and out of the USSR came to despair of the very possibility of change: the system was 'petrified', the forces of conservatism and vested interest were overwhelmingly strong. Political scientists were apt to be ironical when economists argued that change was necessary for reasons of efficiency; the aim of the regime, they asserted, is not efficiency but power, and the existing system maximises the party's grip on material and human resources. However, Gorbachev in his many speeches has challenged this whole conception, and for one very solid reason: stagnation and economic decay threaten power. As he said very soon after becoming general secretary, 'the fate of our country, the future of socialism in the world, depends in large measure on how we tackle our task'. Hence the need for 'radical reform', even 'revolutionary change'.

His programme has highlighted four Russian words: *perestroika* ('restructuring', or radical reform'), *glasnost* ('openness'), *demokratizatsiya*, and *uskoteniye* (growth-acceleration). It is meant to put the Soviet Union on the path of modernisation of a new kind, not the despotic sort associated with Peter the Great and Stalin, but one attuned to the needs of the last part of the present century. His task is formidable. It is appropriate to quote Machiavelli's *The Prince*, 'There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things'.

What he intends is to achieve a new and more effective balance between plan and market, with a much larger role for the market, i.e. for commercial contract as the basis of the bulk of current transactions and so of current production. Administered allocation is to be replaced by trade in means of production. A radical reform of prices is to achieve greater flexibility, a more direct influence of the customer on profitability and thus on the product mix. This is particularly important for machinery and equipment, as well as for consumers' goods. Enterprises are to stand on their own financial feet ('full *khozraschyot*'), no longer able to count on soft credits and subsidies, and no longer liable to have their profits arbitrarily transferred elsewhere. Wages will depend to a greater degree on financial performance of the enterprise. Foreign trade is to be liberalised, allowing many Soviet enterprises to enter into direct deals with foreign firms, and currency convertibility is seen as a

(distant) prospect. Joint ventures with foreign firms are also to be encouraged. Co-operative enterprise is to be allowed in many fields, especially services, and the desirability of competition with and between state enterprises is recognised. Family private enterprise (though without the right to employ anyone) has also been legitimated, and proposals include the leasing of land for up to 15 years to conduct family farming. If all this were to be introduced, this would be a radical *perestroika* indeed. At the time of writing, however (April 1988), much is still on the drawing-board.

To make such a reform a reality requires not only institutional changes, important though they are. It requires a *perestroika* of human attitudes, from top to bottom. Workers and peasants are to shed their passivity and indifference (and the habit of stealing whatever is carryable), and participate in the election of management. Their pay is to be more differentiated, in relation to skill, productivity and profitability—though these criteria can conflict. Party functionaries are to observe laws and cease to interfere arbitrarily with management, while being themselves subject to (apparently genuine) election. 'Democratisation' is intended to stimulate criticism. *Glasnost* has been interpreted not only as more open government, but as a drastic cutback on censorship, part of a deliberate appeal for support to the creative intelligentsia. So, for the first time for fifty years, the press can report accidents (not only the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, but also collisions at sea, plane and rail crashes, attempted hijacks and other events previously concealed). The literary journals have been publishing long-banned books and stories, which led to a spectacular rise in their circulation. Pasternak's *Dr Zhivago* appeared at the beginning of 1988, and the bulk of its readers must have thought: 'What *was* the fuss about? Far more challenging works are appearing every day now.' Not only the Brezhnev years, but also Stalinism and the terror, have been frankly discussed, described, debated, in mass-circulation journals. I will return later to the way the past is being reinterpreted. At this point I will stress only that an honest reappraisal of the Stalin years is seen as an integral part of the reform process, thus affecting both the present and the future.

Gorbachev was able to project, at home and abroad, an image of an eloquent reformer ready to wield a new broom. Among his personnel changes was the 'promotion' to the chairmanship of the

Supreme Soviet presidium of Gromyko, who had served Stalin and his successors as Foreign Minister; he was replaced by an amiable Georgian, E. Shevardnadze. The long-serving Soviet ambassador in Washington, Dobrynin, was recalled to a key post in the party's central committee to deal with foreign affairs. The new team signalled their willingness to withdraw from Afghanistan, their willingness too to slow down or reverse the arms race, implicitly admitting that their arms build-up had been excessive. ('We are now offering to scrap the 8820 missiles targeted on Europe. But why did we deploy so many of them in the first place?' These were among unofficial but significant signals.) Arms limitation agreements have been signed, though many problems and suspicions remain.

These are linked with some quite fundamental questions as to the nature of the Soviet Union, and to the extent and purpose of the reforms launched by Gorbachev. Some who accept his sincerity also doubt his ability to enforce fundamental change upon a conservative society. Their doubts have to some extent been reinforced by the extreme slowness with which the economic reform has (so far) been implemented. Does this mean that the system will continue to resist change? Will Gorbachev survive? What exactly does he stand for? What is the role of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and/or of the vested interest of the ruling stratum of the party-state machine? Is the Soviet Union a new kind of class society? (A Soviet commentator, A. Nuikin, wrote in *Novyi mir* of 'a class of bureaucratic allocators'.) What does this tell us of the prospect for a new and more tolerant (and tolerable) Soviet Union in its internal and foreign policy manifestations?

It must be stressed that, at the time of writing (April 1988), there have been many declarations of intentions, even some new laws, but little change either in economic organisation or performance. Indeed there has been some 'transitional' confusion. It can be illustrated by a 'non-economic' but typical example. A Soviet publication (*Moscow News*) reported that someone tried to get access to a copy of the *Guinness Book of Records*. This had been in the *spekskhran* (a part of the library to which public access was limited). Together with thousands of other books it was in the process of being transferred to the open shelves, but in the meantime it proved extremely difficult to find, being in a temporary limbo. Foreign businessmen report similar troubles in the area of foreign trade, with no one sure who is responsible for

what. Many managers cling to the old and tried procedures and actually welcome being told what to do, fearful of an (for them) unknown world in which they could have to find their own customers and negotiate for their own supplies. It is this, and not only the interests of the central planners and ministries, which has led to the preservation of most of the old system. Declarations concerning the autonomy of industrial enterprises, criticisms of party and state officials for interfering with farm management, have not prevented a spate of published complaints that arbitrary orders continue to descend from ministries, local party offices, the 'agro-industrial complex' bureaucracy. A price reform has been promised for 1990–1, and meanwhile it is not possible to rely on the profit motive as a guideline for managerial decision-making, since prices still have no connection with relative scarcity or with use-value. Yet there is still no clear decision about the basis of a new price mechanism. There is understandable reluctance to tackle the sensitive question of the highly subsidised prices of many foodstuffs (especially meat and dairy produce), or the very low level of rents, which fail to cover even routine maintenance of state housing. There is danger of discontent not only over the (much overdue) price rises, but also because of the effects of tighter financial discipline, making it harder for financially less successful enterprises to borrow to pay wages. Above all, chronic shortages of both producers' goods and consumers' goods render difficult the promised replacement of administered allocation by 'trade in means of production', while the effectiveness of wage incentives is undermined by the difficulty of finding the goods and services one wants to buy. Furthermore, incomes of white-collar workers of almost every description—in education, health, engineering, design, banking—have fallen far behind; thus a Moscow trolley-bus driver earns roughly double the salary of a district medical officer. Resources are also urgently needed to replace the largely obsolete machinery of a large part of civilian industry, to correct the consequences of the prolonged underfunding of the medical services, to implement the promise to solve the still-acute housing problem. How can resources for all these purposes be made available?

Hence the desirability of cuts in military spending, and the need for *uskoreniye*, growth acceleration. This has become the more urgent because of the recognition that growth rates and price indices were distorted, that the picture was much less favourable

than was presented by official statistics. To cite one example, Academician Bogomolov estimated that the cost of living had doubled in the previous twenty-seven years, while the official price index showed a rise of less than 10 per cent. Accepting that more rapid growth is indeed needed to provide the resources to satisfy all these urgent and legitimate claimants, there is evident danger that, by imposing high-growth plans from above, the planners will preserve a key element of the old system: plan-targets in roubles, tons, square metres... For how can one measure acceleration? Some Soviet economists have shown themselves aware of this danger.

It will also be necessary to see how the law on co-operatives, adopted in 1988, will in fact be implemented. On paper it promises much: real market-related competition, genuine autonomy, a wide variety of shapes and sizes (the smallest co-operative need have only three members), and with state and collective farms subdivided into mini-co-operatives. Much will depend on the possibility of acquiring the necessary materials and premises. In any case it is too soon to pass any definite judgement on the economic reform process; let us wait until at least 1992.

As I write these lines, a danger to *glasnost* has emerged from quite another quarter: nationalism is becoming a potentially explosive issue. Some demonstrations in the Baltic States were followed, in March 1988, by open conflict between Armenia and Azerbaidzhan, with a number of Armenians killed in race riots. Moscow is in the unhappy position of would-be arbitrator in a racial dispute. There has also been a rise in Russian nationalism, with anti-semitic overtones, typified by the unofficial organisation *Pamyat* ('Memory'). In Central Asia local corrupt mafias use nationalism and Islam as a way of combating interference with their rackets from Moscow. Enemies of *glasnost* are doubtless saying 'I told you so! That is what comes of allowing people to speak and write freely!' The very fact that unofficial organisations are now tolerated is in itself a fundamental and important innovation. It used to be asserted that a key element in the ideology of the regime was that no organisation could exist that was not under party control. Now (1988) they number thousands, and cover a variety of areas and topics, from the preservation of ancient monuments and discussion groups on economics to neo-socialist pressure groups and religious associations. The last of these, taking advantage of the fact that 1988 marks a thousand

years of Christianity in Russia, are urging the repeal of the law passed in 1929, which severely restricted the activities of the Church.

Innovations are to affect also the party itself. While no one is seriously proposing a multi-party system, there are pressures developing to recognise the existence of discordant voices within the communist party itself. The press refers to 'Socialist *pluralism*'. As one bold publicist expressed it, 'for the second time in our history we have dual power (*dvoevlastiye*)'. The first time was in 1917, when the Provisional government shared power with the Soviet. Now, in 1988, the author (Nuikin) had in mind the conflict over the entire reform process that is occurring within the party, a conflict whose outcome is still uncertain. Also uncertain is the role which the party is supposed to have within the reform process itself. Thus how is the election of management to be reconciled with the party's role in appointments of all kinds under the *nomenklatura* system? Only pressure from above, through the party machine, can enforce the needed changes, yet important elements of that same machine represent obstacles to these changes.

It is these many uncertainties and contradictions which render so difficult an adequate appreciation of the nature of the Soviet system today. It may be changing, under Gorbachev's leadership, into something quite unlike what preceded it. A remarkable article by the historian S. Gefter, published in January 1988, was entitled: 'Stalin died yesterday'. Not in 1953, but 'yesterday', i.e. much of his system survived until very recently. It was and is no simple matter to overcome the many resistances to a really radical reform.

This brings us back to foreign affairs, and to the attitude to Gorbachev and his reforms on the part of Western statesmen. Some at first obstinately refused to believe that the changes proposed were other than cosmetic. Such views are now confined to a few extremists, especially in France. It requires a rare degree of ideological blindness not to see that large-scale reforms are intended, though it is too early to pronounce on their success. However, one view encountered in the United States, is as follows:

'Sure, Gorbachev wants to concentrate on putting the economy and society back into shape. Sure, he wishes to diminish the burden of the arms race, and is willing to make concessions to that end. But suppose he succeeds? Then the

bear will become a stronger bear and thus a more dangerous enemy. So we really would like him to fail.'

Such a view, which I do not share, rests upon the assumption that the 'bear' is inherently and permanently hostile, with world-wide ambitions which are ideologically motivated and thus different in kind from that of other world-powers. The bear is thus dangerous if the reform succeeds, but then a hungry bear is even more dangerous, so we must be alarmed also if the reform fails. In either case we must spend more on defence and repeat endlessly the phrase about the Soviets' 'overwhelming superiority in conventional weapons', despite evidence that it is not overwhelming. But in any case why should we *assume* that, over seventy years after the Revolution, the Soviet regime has an unalterably hostile, ideologically inspired view of the world? Whence comes the driving force which leads to expansionism? In a world of nuclear weapons, why should they take risks? If they do take their own ideology seriously (which perhaps some of them do), does this not tell them that the capitalist West will eventually founder under the weight of its own contradictions? Might the stock exchange crash of October 1987 not be heralding such an outcome? But, above all, Gorbachev and his associates look inwards, at the huge task of modernising the USSR. In that task they clearly desire the collaboration of Western businessmen and technologists, and they show willingness to open many doors—to verifiers of arms control agreements, to the inflow of unorthodox ideas (I was invited to give lectures!), even to allowing the open sale of the—strongly anti-Soviet—London *Times*. Bears remain bears by definition, leopards do not change their spots, wolves do not become vegetarians. All of which suggests that zoological metaphors could usefully be discarded. Gorbachev's kind of Russia is one in which repression is minimal, most dissidents are released (some are even published!), censorship is loosened, the creative intelligentsia are allowed a degree of freedom which, a few short years ago, would have seemed utterly beyond belief. All this is not yet irreversible. But we should welcome the process, do nothing to obstruct it, and hope that we are on the way to a new *modus vivendi*, a *détente* more genuine than was ever possible under Brezhnev.

### Gorbachev and Stalin

At first Gorbachev refrained from tackling the issue of Stalinism. Indeed, he told a French reporter, from the communist newspaper *L'Humanité*, that there was no such thing as Stalinism. However, *glasnost* meant that others could go much further and have their ideas printed. Gorbachev himself, in his widely publicised speech on the seventieth anniversary of the Revolution (November 1987), was more open about the crimes of Stalin, referred positively to Bukharin, deplored the 'blank pages' of history, but insisted that the basic lines of party policy had been right, including collectivisation, even while admitting that brutal methods had been wrongfully used. Gorbachev, unlike men of the Brezhnev generation, had played no part in Stalin's regime, but it was difficult for him to state directly that for twenty-five years the USSR had been governed by a sanguinary tyrant, or that the basic policies pursued had been wrong. It seemed safer, especially on an anniversary speech, to speak of seventy glorious years—though with blemishes for which Stalin could be held responsible.

Meanwhile public discussion, articles in literary journals, dug far deeper than had been possible under Khrushchev's 'destalinisation'. Was not Stalin's abandonment of NEP a crime? Was not collectivisation a 'catastrophe'? The popular illustrated weekly *Ogonyok* published an article which gave statistics of the military purges of 1937–8: 3 out of 5 marshals, 13 out of 15 army commanders, 50 out of 57 corps commanders, 154 out of 186 divisional commanders, 16 out of 16 army commissars of the first and second rank... The survival of the unfittest? In his *Children of the Arbat*, a novel set in 1934, Anatoli Rybakov presented a Stalin determined physically to wipe out not only old oppositionists, but also those of his supporters whose support was conditional, who had ambitions of their own. It is strongly hinted that Stalin was an accessory to Kirov's murder. Numerous articles refer to the false accusations of Moscow trials of the 1930s, to the odious behaviour of Vyshinsky as the Prosecutor, to the tragedy of Bukharin. Even Trotsky can be presented fairly, as in Shatrov's documentary play about the Brest-Litovsk negotiations of 1918. The 'Leningrad affair' of 1949 was the subject of a powerful and well-documented article published in January 1988. The virtues and the sad fate of such eminent victims as Chayanov (agricultural economist of world stature), Kondratiev (well known in the West

for his 'long-wave theory of economic cycles'), Vavilov (great geneticist done to death by Lysenko), were all presented to the public as consequences of Stalinist terror. Akhmatova's *Requiem*, quoted on page 55 above, appeared at last, in two mass-circulation journals. Tvardovsky, courageous editor of *Novyi mir*, who was dismissed in 1970, had his anti-Stalinist poem published posthumously in 1987. The balladeer Okudzhava wrote of his father, brothers and uncles, done to death by the despot, of his mother who suffered years of imprisonment. A poem by Zabolotsky, a survivor of the notorious camp-complex of Kolyma, appeared in *Ogonyok*, and recounted most movingly the death of aged prisoners 'on a road near Magadan'. Devastating exposures of collectivisation brutalities have appeared, one written long ago by Andrei Platonov, others more recently by Mozhaev and Belov. The large-scale novel by Vasili Grossman, *Life and Fate*, which Suslov declared (in 1960) to be unpublishable for hundreds of years, is being serialised in a popular monthly, though it raises the gravest doubts about the nature of the regime (one of the characters, admittedly a Nazi officer, pointed to the similarity of Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany). An able journalist named Klyamkin suggested that Stalin's admittedly dreadful policies allowed for no alternative. Nuikin, and also Gefter, disputed this: one of them pointing out that collectivisation could not be justified by reference to the menace of Hitler, who had not yet come to power; the other stressed that Stalin by his own actions and choices deliberately rendered himself necessary, but as late as 1935 could still have chosen the path of conciliation rather than mass murder.

The point of all these references to recent published work, which could be multiplied, is to highlight the sheer scale and fundamental nature of the debate over the past. It has not yet directly put Lenin in question, at least not in print, but Shatrov's play *Dalshe, dalshe, dalshe* (*On, On and On*) does have Lenin apologising to the people for his part in the rise to power of Stalin. In the same play, the question is explicitly raised whether what was built was socialism at all.

There is a striking contrast between the very slow progress of economic reform, and the dramatic transformation of the intellectual atmosphere. Can the process of *perestroika* and *glasnost* be halted or reversed? If so, by whom, in the name of what? Rumour puts Ligachev, widely regarded as Number Two in the party, on the side of caution, and his position was strengthened

in 1987 by the fall from grace of the energetic but tactless secretary of the Moscow party, Yeltsin. Is Gorbachev's power position secure? What would happen if major disorders broke out over nationalist issues, or price rises, or wage cuts? What is to happen next in Eastern Europe, where several countries are in serious trouble? Who can answer these and similar questions with any confidence?

This is the time to shed old stereotypes. Even if Stalin only 'died yesterday', his system really does seem to be dying today. To be replaced by what, precisely? The desired 'mix' of plan and market has still to be found, and so has a combination of one-party political leadership and a more democratic society with a legal order and a much freer press. When the first edition of this book was being written, such notions would have seemed absurd. They are now seriously on the agenda. The outcome is uncertain. Let us watch carefully and see what happens. This is a particularly good and rewarding time to be studying the Soviet Union.



# Appendix 1

## *Biographical Data*

The following are brief biographical details on the principal 'actors' in the Soviet political drama. Lenin and Stalin are omitted, since they are amply discussed in the text.

### NOTE ON RUSSIAN NAMES

Russians have, apart from surnames, one first or Christian name and 'patronymic', the latter being derived from their father's first name. Thus if Ivan Smirnov's father was called Ivan, he would be known as Ivan Ivanovich Smirnov. Women also use the patronymic, but with a feminine ending, which also affects those surnames which end in the letters V and N. Thus his sister might be Vera Ivanovna Smirnova.

BERIA, Lavrenti Pavlovich (1899–1953). Georgian. Joined Party in 1917. Became a leading member of police in Caucasus. In 1931 First Secretary of Party in Georgia. Wrote book propagating myths about Stalin's revolutionary activities. In 1938 became head of NKVD (secret police) of USSR. Member of wartime State Defence Committee, also of Politbureau. In postwar years Deputy-Premier, and made Marshal of the Soviet Union. In ruling triumvirate at death of Stalin, but arrested in July 1953 and later shot. Unsavoury reputation, feared by his 'comrades', but apparently seeking relaxations after Stalin's death.

BREZHNEV, Leonid Ilyich (1906–1984). Career given in text. General Secretary and leader of the Party.

BUKHARIN, Nikolai Ivanovich (1888–1938). Son of a teacher. Arrested for Bolshevik revolutionary activities in 1909. Fled abroad in 1911. Attended economics courses in Vienna. Later went to USA. Returned to Russia in 1917. Prolific writer and journalist. Key moments of career described in text. Executed on false charges in 1938. Rehabilitated 1988.

BULGANIN, Nikolai (1895–1975). Party member from 1917. Economic administrator in 1920s. Rose to be Chairman of Moscow Soviet, 1936, and to Deputy Premier in 1938. Held high party-military posts during war. Politbureau member, 1952–58. Marshal of the Soviet Union, 1947. Minister of Defence, 1947–49, 1953–55. Made Premier by Khrushchev after Malenkov's fall in 1955. Supported 'anti-Party group' (i.e. Molotov and co.) in 1957, dismissed 1958. Became Chairman of State Bank and then demoted into insignificance.

EIKHE, Robert Indrikovich (1890–1940). Latvian. Member of Party from 1905. Party official in Latvia during revolution, then in Moscow and Siberia. Became deputy-member of the Politbureau in 1936, and minister of Agriculture. Arrested in 1938 (?) and shot in 1940. Typical of upper stratum of Stalinist victims of Stalin's purges.

GORBACHEV, Mikhail Sergeyevich (1931– ). General Secretary of CPSU. Lawyer and agronomist by profession and best educated Soviet leader since Lenin. Various party posts in the Stavropol' region from the 1950s. Brought to Moscow as a Central Committee Secretary in 1978, rose rapidly thereafter (with reputed patronage of Suslov, Andropov and Brezhnev), Candidate-member of Politbureau in 1979, full member from October 1980. Proposed for General Secretary by Gromyko and elected 1985. Moving to ever bolder reforms in Party, state and society.

GROMYKO, Andrei Andreyevich (1909– ). Formerly a Professor of Economics, Soviet ambassador to USA in the First World War and active in strengthening alliance against Hitler and able negotiator at Yalta. From 1957 to 1985, USSR Foreign Minister and member of Politbureau from 1973. Something of an ideological pragmatist. Proposed Gorbachev for General Secretary in 1985. Moved to essentially ceremonial post of President of the Praesidium of Supreme Soviet in 1985.

KAGANOVICH, Lazar Moiseyevich (1889– ). Only Jew to retain senior Party post after 1938. Joined Party in 1911. Active agitator before 1917. After many Party jobs in the provinces, became Secretary of Ukrainian Party in 1925. Member of Politbureau from 1930, also Secretary of Moscow Party Committee. In charge of transport and Deputy-Premier in thirties. Held many other posts during and after the war, including Aviation Industry and in Ukraine. Joined Molotov and Malenkov in opposing Khrushchev in 1957. Lost all official positions.

KAMENEV, Lev Borisovich (1883–1936). Real name ROSENFELD. Jewish. Expelled from Moscow University, 1902. Arrested, emigrated, returned, re-arrested and sent to Siberia as a leading Bolshevik. Returned in 1917. Opposed Lenin over timing of October revolution. Held leading posts as a close associate of Zinoviev. Supported him and Stalin against Trotsky, and then (1926–7) supported Trotsky against Stalin. Short spell as Ambassador to Italy, 1927. Several times expelled from Party and re-admitted. Arrested 1935, tried and shot, 1936.

KHRUSHCHEV, Nikita Sergeevich (1894–1971). Career given in text. Played dominant role in 1954–64.

KIROV, Sergei Mironovich (1886–1934) (real name Kostrikov). Joined Party in 1905. Revolutionary activities especially in Siberia and Caucasus. Senior political officer in Civil war. Party Secretary in Baku, then (1926) in Leningrad. Joined Politbureau after defeat of Trotsky as a strong supporter of Stalin. Leading role in seventeenth Congress (1934) may have caused Stalin's jealousy. Assassinated, December 1934. Great purge followed.

KOLLONTAI, Alexandra Mikhailovna (1872–1952). Daughter of general, educated in Zurich university. Revolutionary activity in 1903–08, then emigrated. Returned to Russia in 1917. Member of Central Committee in 1917, in charge of work among women. In 1920–21 a leading member of the so-called 'workers' opposition' to the Party majority. Also advocated free love. Became diplomatist, mostly in Scandinavia, incl. Ambassador to Sweden. Later worked in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow. She abjured her oppositionist past and supported Stalin.

KRYLENKO, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1885–1938). Joined Party 1904, as a student in St Petersburg. Many times arrested. Served in army in war, and carried out propaganda among soldiers. In November 1917 appointed by Lenin as Commander-in-Chief of Russian army, in place of General Dukhonin, who was murdered. From 1918 worked in judicial organs. Acted as Prosecutor in many political cases, wrote books on socialist legality. Also leading organiser of chess and mountaineering. Arrested and shot, 1938,

LIGACHEV, Egor Kuz'mich (1920– ). Party Secretary under Gorbachev with special responsibilities for ideology and work of the Secretariat. Engineer by profession, he held various party posts in Siberia from the 1940s on. Member of Central Committee from 1976. Elevated to Secretariat under Andropov. Member of Politbureau from 1985. Considered a cautious reformer.

LITVINOV, Maksim Maksimovich (real name Vallakh). (1876–1951). Jew. Joined Party in 1898. Remarkable record of illegal activities before revolution. Lived in Switzerland for some years. Diplomatic representative in Great Britain on behalf of Bolshevik Government, 1918. In 1921 Deputy-Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Commissar from 1930 to 1939, again briefly from 1941. Well known for speeches at the League of Nations in 1935–39 on collective security. Kept away from affairs after 1943.

LUNACHARSKY, Anatoly Vasilevich (1875–1935). Intellectual and Party pioneer. Arrested, emigrated. Parted company with Lenin in 1907, over philosophical differences, but returned to Bolsheviks in 1912. Commissar for Education after the Revolution. Author of works on art and literature. Political influence waned after middle twenties.

MIKOYAN, Anastas Ivanovich (1895–1978). Armenian. Religious education. Revolutionary activities in Caucasus, 1918–19. Then Party Secretary in North Caucasus. From 1926 to 1955 was Commissar (later Minister) for Internal and/or Foreign Trade for long periods, also for Food Industry (1934–38). While a member of the Politbureau for most years after 1939, his principal role was ‘overlord’ of trade and supplies. Supported Khrushchev in 1957. Gradually withdrew from political life.

MOLOTOV, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich (1890–1986). Real name SCRIABIN. Bolshevik student activities from 1906. Arrested and exiled, and escaped (1916). Rose to high Party position in 1917. From then onwards worked closely with Stalin in party committee. Became Premier in 1930–41, Commissar for Foreign Affairs 1939–49 and Minister 1953–56. Member of the Politbureau from 1926 until 1957. Member of State Committee of Defence during war. Continued to play leading role after Stalin’s death until his fall in 1957. Became Ambassador to Mongolia, and finally retired on pension. Readmitted to Party 1984.

ORDZHONIKIDZE, Grigori Konstantinovich (1886–1937). Georgian. Revolutionary activities in Caucasus from 1903. Active Bokhevik within Russia, arrested, imprisoned, exiled. Important role in Revolution and civil war in many functions. Then leader in Caucasus to 1930, when he became top economic functionary. Commissar for Heavy Industry from 1932. Politbureau member from 1930. Repeatedly opposed purges. Committed suicide 1937.

PERVUKHIN, Mikhail Georgievich (1904–1978). Party ‘technocrat’ who carried out important function in directing

economic planning. Deputy Premier 1940 and again in 1950–3 and 1955–7. Also served as Minister of Chemical Industry and Electric Power. Rose high in Party in last years of Stalin's life. In December 1956 was nominated to be economic overlord, but was superseded when Khrushchev counter-attacked. Demoted 1957. After spell as Ambassador to East Germany, became an official in the State Planning Commission.

POKROVSKY, Mikhail Nikolaevich (1868–1932). Joined Party in 1905. Leading Marxist historian even before the Revolution. Emigrated 1908. Returned 1917. Held some official posts, but chiefly famous for his academic writings on history. These were denounced after his death.

PREOBRAZHENSKY, Evgeny Alexeyevich (1886–1937). Son of a Russian priest. Party work and arrests from 1901. During Revolution was a leader in Siberia and Urals. Member of Central Committee and of Politbureau in 1919–21. Supported Trotsky against Stalin, and produced theoretical works of importance (notably *The New Economics*). Prolific writer. Expelled from party in 1927, readmitted and expelled again. Arrested in 1936 (?) and shot in the following year, without any public trial.

PYATAKOV, Yuri Leonidovich (1890–1937). Student revolutionary activities in St Petersburg. Joined Bolsheviks in 1910. Arrested, escaped. Important role in Bolshevik seizure of power. Political work in armies during civil war. Thereafter senior planner and finance official. Sided with Trotsky, but later co-operated with dominant Stalin faction. Deputy-Commissar for Heavy Industry 1933. Tried and executed, 1937.

RYKOV, Alexei Ivanovich (1881–1938). Party activities began while student at Kazan in 1901. Repeatedly arrested, imprisoned, exiled. From 1918 played leading role in economic affairs, notably as head of Supreme Council of National Economy, Premier, 1924–9. Close associate of Bukharin. Dropped with him from Politbureau in 1929. Held minor posts until arrested, tried, condemned and shot in 1938.

SABUROV, Maksim Zakharovich (1900–1974), Rose to high position as Voznesensky's deputy when latter was chief planner (1938 and after). For many years head of State Planning Commission. Achieved Politbureau status in 1952. Demoted in 1957 when he formed part of so-called 'anti-Party group'. Insignificant thereafter.

SUSLOV, Mikhail Andreyevich (1902–1982). Party Secretary in Rostov and Stavropol before the war. Secretary of the Central Committee from 1947. Party theoretician. Promoted to Politbureau rank in 1955, and has remained there. Supported Khrushchev, then Brezhnev. Has played big role in relations with foreign Communist parties.

TOMSKY, Mikhail Pavlovich (1880–1936). Real name: YEFREMOV. Printing worker and trade unionist. Joined Party in 1904. Arrested and imprisoned. Active Bolshevik in 1917. Became trade union leader after revolution. Well known also in international trade union circles. Supported Bukharin in split with Stalin (1928–29) and dismissed from his union posts. Committed suicide to avoid arrest, 1936.

TROTSKY, Lev Davydovich (1879–1940). Real name Bronshtein. Jewish. Revolutionary activity from 1897. Chairman of Petrograd Soviet in 1905 revolution. Arrested, exiled, went abroad. Returned from America in 1917. Joined Bolsheviks in July 1917. Played important role in Bolshevik seizure of power. Commissar for Foreign Affairs, then War. Major role in organising Red Army. Ceased to be Commissar for War in 1925, expelled from Politbureau 1926, exiled to Alma Ata 1928, deported from USSR in 1929, murdered in Mexico, 1940. Vilified by Stalin. Author of *History of Russian Revolution* and numerous other works. Founded anti-Stalinist ‘Fourth’ International when in exile. Still inspires ‘Trotskyists’ in many countries.

TUKHACHEVSKY, Mikhail Nikolaevich (1893–1937). Guards officer in Tsarist army. Rose rapidly to high command positions in Civil war. Commanded Soviet army against Poles at age of 27 (1920). Played leading part in organising modernisation of Red Army in thirties. Became First Deputy-Commissar for Defence and Marshal of the Soviet Union, but arrested and shot in 1937 on false charges. Rehabilitated after Stalin’s death.

VOROSHILOV, Klimenti Efremovich (1881–1969). Joined Party in 1903 and worked at Lugansk, now Voroshilovgrad. Arrested repeatedly. Rose to senior military command in Civil War, as an associate of Stalin. Commissar of Defence from 1925. Unsuccessful commander in World War II. Close crony of Stalin’s in the dictator’s last years. Member of Politbureau from 1926 until removed by Khrushchev in 1958. Served as Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Soviet (nominal ‘president’) in his declining years.

VOZNESENSKY, Nikolai Alekseyevich (1903–1950). Joined Party in 1919. After holding official positions, notably in Leningrad, he was suddenly promoted after arrests of most senior planners to be head of State Planning Commission (December 1937). Deputy-Premier from 1939, member of wartime State Defence Committee, and of Polit-bureau (full member 1947). Wrote book on war economy. Fell from favour mysteriously in 1949, shot in 1950.

VYSHINSKY, Andrei Yanuarievich (1885–1954). Revolutionary activities from 1905. Studied law. Served in Red Army in civil war. Joined Bolsheviks in 1920 (previously Menshevik). Became leading professor of law. Prosecutor (*Prokuror*) in 1935, performed this task in the great purge trials. In 1939 became Deputy Foreign Minister. Minister 1953–4. Frequently appeared in United Nations and international conferences.

YAGODA, Genrikh Grigoryevich (1891–1938). Joined Party in 1907. Served as a political chief in civil war. Became a Deputy-head of Cheka/OGPU (Secret Police) in 1920. Became Commissar and Head of Police (renamed NKVD) in 1934. Prepared first purge trials. Then himself purged, tried and executed. YAKIR, Yona Emmanuilovich (1896–1937). Jewish. Distinguished service in Red Army in civil war, commanded armies at age of 24. Played important part, along with Tukhachevsky, in modernising Red Army in thirties. Arrested January 1937, later shot.

YEZHOV, Nikolai Ivanovich (1895–1939?). Political duties with Red Army in civil war. Various party official posts until rapidly promoted to Commissar of Internal Affairs (NKVD, secret police) in September 1936. Arranged for arrest and execution of predecessor, Yagoda. Launched intense purge and blood-bath, on Stalin's orders (it is still known as the 'Yezhovshchina'). Politbureau, 1937. Publicly extolled as 'iron commissar'. Suddenly appointed Commissar of Water Transport in 1938 and then vanished. Fate unknown, presumably shot.

ZHDANOV, Andrei Aleksandrovich (1896–1948). Revolutionary activity in army in World War I. Political work in Red Army. Then various Party and official posts, Secretary at Gorky, 1925, at Leningrad 1934 (succeeding Kirov), Politbureau member from 1939. Chief political officer in Leningrad during siege. Took major part in cultural repression in 1946–8.

ZHUKOV, Georgi Konstantinovich (1896–1974). Marshal of the Soviet Union. Distinguished soldier. Served in Tsarist army in

World War I, and in civil war as cavalryman. Rose rapidly to senior command. In 1939 commanded Soviet troops in 'unofficial' battle with Japanese in Mongolia. Distinguished record in war with Germany, on Moscow, Stalingrad and many other fronts. Often acted as Stalin's deputy. Demoted after war, but became Minister of Defence after Stalin's death. Helped Khrushchev in 1957, briefly held seat in Politbureau. Was then retired.

ZINOVIEV, Grigori Evseyevich (1883–1936). Real name RADOMYSLSKY. Jewish. Joined Party in 1901. Emigrated. Worked closely with Lenin abroad, returned with him through Germany to Russia in 1917. Together with Kamenev, opposed Lenin over October rising. Leader in Petrograd (Leningrad), and Chairman of Comintern, until removed from both posts in 1926. Worked with Stalin against Trotsky, but joined Trotsky in 1926. Expelled and readmitted and expelled again from Party. Arrested 1935, tried, condemned and shot, 1936.

## Appendix 2

### *Chronological List of Events, 1917–85*

1917	November	Seizure of power by Bolsheviks
	7 December	Cheka (the future secret police) founded
1918	18–19 January	Constituent Assembly meets, and is dissolved
	3 March	Brest-Litovsk treaty ends war with Germany and Austria—Hungary. Civil war grows in intensity
	11 March	Soviet government moved from Petrograd (Leningrad) to Moscow
	28 June	Decree nationalising large-scale industry
1919	2–6 March	First Congress of Communist International, Moscow
	October–December	Defeat of General Denikin's 'White' armies in the south. Admiral Kolchak in retreat in Siberia. British and other foreign armies withdrawn from Russia
1920	January–February	Final defeat of Denikin and Kolchak
	April	Polish offensive in Ukraine, followed by successful Red Army counter-offensive
	July	Polish counterblow drives back Red Army
	October	Peace with Poland
	November	Baron Wrangel driven out of Crimea. End of Civil War
1921	January	Soviet troops overthrow Menshevik government in Georgia, which becomes a Soviet republic
	8–16 March	Tenth Congress of Communist Party; end of 'war communism'. Suppression of Kronstadt sailors' rebellion

1922	April	Stalin becomes General Secretary of Central Committee
	May	Lenin's first serious illness
	30 December	The several existing Soviet republics form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
1923	March	Lenin's second stroke removes him from political life. Ruling triumvirate formed by Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin
1924	21 January	Lenin dies
	2 February	Diplomatic relations established with Great Britain
1925	December	Fourteenth Congress of Party. Zinoviev and Kamenev join Trotsky in opposing Stalin
1927	May	Great Britain breaks off diplomatic relations
	December	Fifteenth Congress of Party adopts plans for speedier industrialisation and collectivisation. Trotsky expelled from Party. Many supporters exiled
1928	January–February	Stalin uses coercion in grain collection crisis
	October	First month of first five-year plan
1929	February	Trotsky deported from USSR
	November	Bukharin removed from Politbureau
	November	Stalin's article in Pravda announced full-scale agricultural collectivisation
1930	January	Decree 'on tempos of collectivisation'
5	14 March	Decree on 'distortions' in collectivising peasants
	17 June	Stalingrad tractor factory starts production
	November–December	Trial of alleged 'Industrial party'; prisoners confess to sabotage, etc.
1931	10 December	Giant Magnitogorsk metallurgical works completed
1932	December	First five-year plan completed, years after launching
1933	Spring	Famine in the south. Hitler in power in Germany
	16 November	Diplomatic relations established with USA
1934	January–February	Seventeenth Party Congress; Stalin's post renamed 'Secretary'. 'Softer' policies expected

1934	18 September	USSR enters League of Nations
	1 December	Assassination of Kirov heralds wave of repression
1935	July–August	Seventh Congress of Comintern adopts anti-Fascist Popular-Front policy
1936	August	Trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev, etc. Prisoners plead guilty and are shot
	September	Yezhov appointed Commissar for Interior (head of NKVD) and speeds up the purge and intensifies terror
	December	Adoption of new (‘Stalin’) Constitution
1937	January	Purges and terror reach their height under Yezhov
	June	Marshal Tukhachevsky and other senior officers shot. Purge extends throughout armed forces
	December	End of second five-year plan
1938	March	Bukharin, Rykov and others sentenced and shot
	October	Munich agreement to dismember Czechoslovakia; Soviet Union ignored
	December	Yezhov dismissed from NKVD, replaced by Beria
1939	May	Litvinov replaced by Molotov as Foreign Minister
	23 August	Nazi-Soviet pact signed. Negotiations with Britain and France broken off
	1 September	German attack on Poland
	17 September	Soviet troops attack and occupy Eastern Poland by agreement with Hitler
	29 November	Soviet attack on Finland
1940		Stalin becomes Chairman of Council of People’s Commissars (Premier)
	12 March	End of war with Finland
	May–June	Hitler’s armies overwhelm France
	28 June	Bessarabia annexed from Romania
	21 July	Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia become Soviet republics
	October	Labour decrees impose severe discipline
	November	Molotov visits Berlin, sees Hitler
1941	22 June	German attack. War

1941	30 June	State committee of defence created: Stalin, Molotov, Beria, Malenkov, Voroshilov
	September	Soviet disaster in Ukraine
	19 October	Critical days in Moscow. State of siege declared in city
	6 December	Successful Soviet counter-offensive drives Germans away from Moscow
1942	26 May	Treaty of alliance signed with Great Britain
	June–August	Soviet retreat in South, to Stalingrad and Caucasus mountains
	November	Soviet attacks cut off German 6th army at Stalingrad
1943	18 January	Leningrad relieved
	2 February	End of German resistance at Stalingrad. Rapid advances in south
	6 November	Kiev re-captured by Soviet troops
	28 November	Teheran conference opens (Stalin, Roosevelt, Churchill)
1944	6 June	American and British troops land in Normandy. Soviet advances along whole front
	31 August	Soviet troops in Bucharest
	16 September	Soviet troops in Sofia
	13 October	Soviet troops return to Riga (Latvia)
	20 October	Soviet and Yugoslav forces reach Belgrade
1945	17 January	Soviet troops occupy Warsaw
	February	Yalta conference (Stalin, Roosevelt, Churchill)
	17 February	Soviet troops in Budapest
	13 April	Soviet troops in Vienna
	2 May	End of German resistance in Berlin, after successful offensives by Marshals Zhukov and Konev
	9 May	End of war with Germany
	July–August	Potsdam conference (Stalin, Truman, Attlee)
	9 August	Soviet declaration of war on Japan; invasion of Manchuria
	2 September	End of war with Japan
1946	March	Fourth (first postwar) five-year plan adopted
	15 March	Peoples' Commissariats renamed Ministries
1947		Marshall plan prepared, Molotov rejects it at conference in Paris

1947	14 December	Monetary reforms and abolition of rationing
1948	April	Conference of Soviet composers hears attacks on musical 'formalism' by Zhdanov
	August	Zhdanov dies
1949	April	Voznesensky (Chief planner and deputy-premier) dismissed, later arrested (shot in 1950)
		Chinese Communists succeed in Civil War. Chiang Kai-shek flees to Taiwan
		'Stalin plan for transformation of nature' launched
1950	14 February	Treaty of friendship and advance signed with People's Republic of China
1952	31 May	Opening of Volga-Don ship canal
	October	Nineteenth Party Congress. Malenkov presents main report in Stalin's presence
1953	January	'Discovery' of the doctors' plot to kill Soviet leaders
	March	Death of Stalin. Malenkov retains Prime Ministership, but relinquishes Party Secretaryship. Khrushchev senior of Party Secretaries
	September	Plenum of Central Committee decides on agricultural reforms in Khrushchev's report
		Announcement that USSR has H-bomb
1954	7 March	Virgin lands campaign launched
1955	February	Malenkov resigns as Premier; Bulganin succeeds him
1956	February	Twentieth Congress of Party, Khrushchev's 'secret speech' attacking Stalin
	June-July	Decrees abolishing fees for secondary and higher education, and increasing pensions
	October	Soviet troops intervene in Hungary
	December	Central Committee adopts economic reorganisation, establishing Pervukhin as overlord
1957	May	Economic reorganisation pushed through by Khrushchev; regional economic councils (sovnarkhozy) created
	June	'Anti-Party group' (Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, etc.) defeated

1957	4 October	First sputnik circles the earth
1958	March	Bulganin resigns; Khrushchev Premier as well as First Secretary
	March	Measures to abolish Machine Tractor Stations and raise farm prices
1959	27 January– 5 February September	Party Congress (Twenty-first) adopt seven-year plan Khrushchev visits United States, sees Eisenhower. Addressed UN
1960	May	U2 plane over Soviet territory, denounced by Khrushchev at Paris summit conference
	November	Conference of Communist Parties. Quarrel with China discussed
1961	17 April	Gagarin makes first manned flight into space
	June	Khrushchev meets Kennedy in Vienna
	August and after	Tension over Berlin
	October	Twenty-second Party Congress: Stalin sharply attacked, new party programme adopted. Stalin removed from Mausoleum
1962	March	Khrushchev reorganises agricultural administration
	October	Cuban missile crisis
	November	Party divided into two parts
1963	September– October	Agreement on nuclear test ban treaty
	December	Speed-up in expansion of chemical industry
1964	14 October	Khrushchev out. Brezhnev becomes First Secretary, Kosygin Prime Minister
1965	March	Plenum of central committee adopt new agricultural policies
	September	Adoption of economic reform measures; regional councils abolished, industrial ministries reinstated
1966	February	Trial of Daniel and Sinyavsky
	March/April	XXIII Congress of CPSU
1967	May	Andropov head of KGB
	June	Arab-Israeli War
1968	January	Economic Reforms in Hungary
	April	Beginning of 'Prague Spring'
	August	Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia

1969	March	Sino-Soviet border clashes
	June	Crimean Tartars demonstrate in Moscow
1970	February	Tvardovsky dismissed as editor of <i>Novyi mir</i>
	4 November	'Human Rights' committee formed in Moscow
	December	Riots in Poland. Gomulka replaced by Gierek
		Creation of USSR Ministry of Justice SALT 1 treaty signed
1971	February— 30 March/ 9 April	Start of large-scale Jewish emigrations
	11 September	XXIV Congress of CPSU
		Death of Khrushchev
1972	May	Scherbitsky First Secretary of Ukraine
	September	Shevardnadze First Secretary of Georgian CP
1973	April	Andropov, Gromyko, Grechko members of Politbureau
	May/June	Brezhnev visits to Federal German Republic and USA
1974	12–13 February	Solzhenitsyn deported
		Resumption of BAM project
	December	New international passport regulations extend rights to peasantry
1975		Helsinki 'Accords' on human rights signed by USSR
	9 October	Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Sakharov
1976	25 February— 5 March	XXV Congress of CPSU
1977	June	Brezhnev replaced Podgorny as President of USSR
	November	New All-Union Constitution
1978	April	Nationalist demonstrations in Georgian capital
1979		All-Union census Brezhnev-Carter meeting in Vienna
	December	Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan
1980	January	Internal exile of Sakharov
	July—August	Moscow Olympics
	August	Formation of 'Solidarity' union in Poland
	October	Death of Tito. Death of Kosygin
1981	February— March	XXVI Congress of CPSU

	December	Martial law declared in Poland
1982	January	Death of Suslov
	May	Andropov moves to Secretariat of CC. New 'Food Programme'
	November	Death of Brezhnev. Andropov First Secretary of CPSU
1983	August	Shooting down of Korean airliner
1984	February	Death of Andropov. Chernenko First Secretary of CPSU
		Dismissal of Ogarkov as Chief of Staff BAM completion
1985	March	Death of Chernenko. M.S. Gorbachev First Secretary of CPSU
	April	Plenum of Central Committee and beginning of 'perestroika' Gorbachev-Reagan meeting in Geneva

# Appendix 3

## *Membership of the Party*

April 1917	80,000	
March 1918	300,000	
March 1920	732,000	
March 1922	532,000*	
May 1924	863,600	(of which 127,700 probationary†)
December 1927	1,236,000	(of which 549,000 probationary)
January 1934	2,810,000	(of which 935,000 probationary)
March 1939	2,478,000‡	(of which 889,000 probationary)
February 1956,	7,215,000	(of which 420,000 probationary)
March 1971	14,455,000	(of which 645,000 probationary)
January 1980	17,082,289	(of which 683,949 probationary)
January 1987	19,267,715	(of which 700,928 probationary)

\*Reduction due to removal of real or alleged careerists and corrupt elements.

†Applicants for membership undergo a period as probationary ('candidate') members.

‡Reduction due to great purge.



## Appendix 4

### *Notes for Further Reading*

#### HISTORY

- E.H.CARR, *A History of Soviet Russia*. A multi-volume magnum opus, irreplaceable for the specialist. Ends in 1929 (Macmillan, 1950–71 and Penguin, 1966–73).
- G.HOSKING, *A History of the Soviet Union* (Collins, 1985).
- M McCAULEY, *The Soviet Union Since 1917* (Longman, 1981).
- A.NOVE, *Economic History of the USSR* (Penguin, 1972). Mercifully short.
- L.H.SCHAPIRO, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Blackwell, 1960, 2nd edn Methuen, 1970). The one-volume history of the party.

#### STALIN AND STALINISM

- R.CONQUEST, *The Great Terror* (Penguin, 1971). Full and well-document account of terrible years.
- I.DEUTSCHER, *Stalin* (Penguin, 1970), remains a first-rate political biography.
- E.GINSBURG, *Into the Whirlwind* (Penguin, 1968). The terror of 1937 admirably described by a victim.
- N.KHRUSHCHEV, the so-called ‘secret speech’, in (*inter alia*) T.P. Whitney (ed.), *Khrushchev Speaks* (Univ. of Michigan Press, 1963).
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- N.MANDELSHTAM, *Hope against Hope* (Collins and Harvill, 1971). The outstanding picture of Stalinist rule as seen by the best of the literary intelligentsia.
- R.MEDVEDEV, *Let History Judge* (Macmillan, 1971). The only comprehensive account written in Russia—but not published there—of what Stalinism was.
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- R.C.TUCKER, *Stalin as Revolutionary 1879–1929* (Chatto & Windus, 1974).
- R.TUCKER (ed.), *Stalinism* (New York, 1977).
- A.ULAM, *Stalin: The man and his era* (Allen Lane, 1974). Imaginative and controversial.
- B.WOLFE, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (Penguin, 1966). Deals critically and vividly with Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky.

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- M.MATTHEWS, *Class and Society in Soviet Russia* (Penguin, 1972).
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