

# The Permanent Purge

*Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism*

Zbigniew K. Brzezinski

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Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism

ZBIGNIEW K. BRZEZINSKI

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## **To My Parents**



## **Acknowledgments**

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## ***The Permanent Purge***

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## Introduction

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THIS is a study of the totalitarian purge, one of the most challenging and baffling phenomena of totalitarianism in action. This study does not claim to provide the key to the enigma. It does, however, aspire to probe it. In doing so, it will attempt to develop some general theoretical insights into the nature of totalitarian purges and to provide some additional information on the actual experience of the Soviet purge. In this way, it is our hope, some further light may be shed on the character and dynamics of Soviet totalitarianism.

The total impact of revolutionary changes, both economic and social, launched in several countries by ideologically oriented and disciplined political movements, has given the twentieth century a new form of political community known as totalitarianism. The complete mobilization of all human and material resources and the dogmatic insistence on the pulverization of all opposition for the sake of ideologically proclaimed goals of social reconstruction have produced this *total social impact* which makes totalitarianism a truly unique type of political system.

This system requires from all of its inhabitants the strictest adherence to the standards of behavior it considers necessary for the achievement of the grandiose tasks to which the totalitarian movement is dedicated. Failure to adjust can mean extinction of life. But success in adjusting to and accepting the totalitarian way of life does not guarantee either liberty or safety. For the system has a rationale and a logic of its own, exacting its own price and its own victims even among the initiated, the loyal, and the devoted. Unlike the inhabitant of the Greek *polis*, where diversity was essentially part of uniformity, the totalitarian citizen cannot have a loyalty above that to his state and the party which directs it. He cannot have a faith or a practice above or apart from the dogma preached and the code promulgated by his state and party. He cannot express his individuality except in the way his state and party demand. Being part of the totalitarian society, unless ex-

PLICITLY revolting against it, the totalitarian citizen becomes a robot of the twentieth century's gravest challenge to man, the totalitarian society.

This society offers both a challenge to men living under the traditional moral order of the West and an escape from modern Western society. It threatens the idea of man as a moral being, equal before eternity and capable of independent judgment on issues of good and bad. The profoundly humanistic concept *homo sum nihilque humanum a me alienum puto* is thoroughly alien to it. But this opposition to humanism and individualism, which have been the cornerstones of modern constitutional societies, is also the escape that totalitarianism offers to men. For it holds out the vision of man free from the absorbing and shattering conflicts of Western society, from the contradictions and crises of our age, from the price which liberty and democracy, as institutionalized in our time, seem to extract from people. Totalitarianism holds out a glittering and, to many, appealing conception of a society in which man is not torn by conflicting allegiances, in which he does not suffer from insecurity, in which he belongs to something very tangible—the State, the Nation, the Party, the Leader, the Idea.

Totalitarianism has thus sought to give meaning to a life which for many has rapidly become mechanical, isolated, and frightening. And this desperate need of the individual to feel a sense of belonging and purpose provides the base for totalitarian violence. In the totalitarian system the emotions must be aroused and passions enflamed, proclaimed truth must prevail, and heretics must be vanquished. This simple proposition, placed in its totalitarian setting, and with all the modern technological inventions at its disposal, results in a concentration of coercive instrumentalities hitherto unknown in society. And the element of terror is further accentuated by the most striking characteristic of modern totalitarianism—its attempts to reshape and mold both man and society according to its own blueprint.<sup>1</sup>

Old despotisms and absolutisms were in a sense highly conservative. Although frequently springing up as progressive and even revolutionary forces, they became almost by virtue of necessity essentially conservative once power was theirs. The essence of their existence was power, and its exercise was aimed at the preservation

of the ruling system. Order and internal tranquillity were the trademarks of a successful despotism—not rapid social changes. The phenomenon of drastic internal change, planned to extend into more than the immediate future, is the most outstanding feature of what today is called totalitarianism. For with the full impact of technology at their disposal, with absolute control over the means of communications and over education and the police, with the forced or partially willing mobilization of the masses, totalitarian regimes attempt nothing less than to reshape and reconstruct not only social institutions but also the minds and outlook of the people. The scope of this project challenges human imagination. Its very breadth generates the oppression and violence found in such systems.

This emphasis on change, and change conceived as constant and almost utopian progress, necessitates the totalitarian enthusiasm. It results in a regime “based on the enthusiasm of the amorphous masses; it is a regime inimical to reason and destructive of civilization; it is bound to pitch emotions high. If the original passions fade out, new ones must be substituted.”<sup>2</sup> The totalitarian citizen in actuality thus leads a highly nervous life. He is constantly striving to meet unattainable goals. He is pushing, being pushed, rushing, being rushed. He lives in a constant state of animation. And at all times he is expected to look at himself in the mirror and repeat with fanatic tenacity, “I am getting better and better, I am getting better and better.” Occasionally he is also given a practical demonstration of the capacity of the regime to deal with recalcitrants. He witnesses the elimination or extermination of his fellow-citizens who have become “enemies of the people.” And a system combining ideological certainty with infallible leadership knows only one way to deal with obstacles in its path—remove them. The infallibility of the leader always means that those who are purged must have been exceedingly wrong—and implies that no sacrifice can be questioned, no elimination regretted, no blood-letting shirked. Historical righteousness will justify transient brutality.

Before proceeding any further, we may now attempt to set up some criteria for defining a totalitarian regime in terms of its in-

stitutional framework. This involves, first of all, the broad question of the relationship between power and restraints on political power inherent in every society. The premeditated and endless efforts to revamp the social organization and man's character through revolutionary changes, backed by force, clearly involve a minimization and destruction of any such restraints. Some attention, however, should be devoted to the nature of those restraints which are present in constitutional governments and are subverted by the totalitarian regimes. For the sake of convenience, they may be categorized as direct, indirect, and natural restraints on political power.

The direct restraints, which provide the most obvious and clear-cut indication of the nature of a given political system, are the customary limitations on arbitrary exercise of power by the state. They guarantee protection to the individual and his rights against unilateral encroachments on the part of the state, and establish a reciprocal relationship of rights and duties between the individual and the state. They provide established and promulgated procedures for assuring both continuity and change in government, and encourage the greatest possible public participation in the governmental process. The operation of the system is guided by and subject to a set of rules equally applicable to all, as they are self-imposed, either directly or indirectly, by the citizens of the state.

The indirect restraints are, in a sense, dependent on the above. They are derived from the multiplicity of organizations and groups which coexist with the state and claim the allegiance of many of its citizens. The existence of these competing social organizations constitutes one of the most effective restraints on centralized power. It results in the diffusion of that monopolistic allegiance which can otherwise be demanded by the state. The usual examples are churches, political parties, economic and professional organizations, and various social groups or even classes. Significant also, especially as a form of passive restraint, are the inbred traditions and conventions, rooted deeply in historical experience, culture, and ethos. The spirit of "it's just not done" is often hard to break.

The third form of restraint, the so-called natural, consists of both the physical forces, such as climate and geography, and the more or less permanent social institutions, such as marriage and the family. The family particularly, in its role of a "primary" social

group, has been a source of tension in totalitarian societies, and attitudes towards the family constitute an interesting phase in the development of totalitarianism. The existence of the family unit has been a constant challenge to totalitarian primacy, because it inherently results in a diffusion of power. The inability of totalitarian regimes to cope with this resilient institution (seen in frequent oscillations between attempts to weaken it and benevolent toleration or encouragement) has resulted in the well-known compromises between totalitarianism and the family. Into this general category also falls national character (in the broadest sense). There are clearly some things which can be done with the Russians but not with the Italians. The human and material ingredients affect greatly the quality of the totalitarian product.

Totalitarianism, however, is always engaged in attempts to subvert or overcome, in one way or another, these basic restraints on its power. The direct ones disappear during the embryonic stage of the totalitarian system, for its first onslaughts are invariably directed at the outward forms of the constitutional state, and the totalitarian system enthrones its power through the degradation and purposeful abuse of legal restraints. The principles of "revolutionary justice" and "sound popular instinct," the people's courts, and the unchecked operation of the secret police are the first steps towards full-blown totalitarianism. Technological capabilities replace legal niceties, and might substitutes for right.

Indirect restraints are the next to disappear. But because their roots are found not so much in political institutions as in the overall development of society, they tend to be somewhat more difficult to crush. Fascist Italy is a classic example of a totalitarian movement struggling throughout its brief duration with internal sources of competition for the allegiance of its subjects. The history of Fascism in Italy is the story of the struggle between the monarchy (hated with such sincere intensity by *il Duce* and his traitor-to-be son-in-law) and the Fascist Party; it is the story of constant maneuvers against the Catholic Church and its influence.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between these institutions and the Fascist regime was never one of true cordiality. Rather, there was the atmosphere of an uneasy truce. The Fascist Party could never feel fully secure in its possession of political power and had at all times to be cognizant of

the forces arrayed against it within Italy itself, forces which the Party, for practical reasons, did not dare eliminate. The radically different course of action pursued by both the Nazi and the Soviet regimes shows that these totalitarian movements had a firmer control of a greater number of coercive instrumentalities and were more determined to pursue rapidly their programmatic goals. They had the means and the will to push forward to the elimination of the indirect restraints on their power.<sup>4</sup>

But the greatest difficulties arise when the totalitarian state, or, more accurately, the developing totalitarian state, tries to overcome the natural restraints on its power, and again the family is the best example. In order to achieve a monopoly of allegiance, totalitarianism strives to capture the untarnished loyalty of the nation's youth at the earliest possible opportunity. The *Hitlerjugend*, the Little Octobrists, the *Balilla* are nothing else but socio-political organizations designed to compete with the family unit. Yet at the same time, the leadership is forced to recognize the necessary biological function of the family, especially since most totalitarian regimes emphasize growth in population as a corollary to national power. Thus, on the one hand the family must be weakened and its influence limited; yet on the other it must be harnessed by the regime for its own ends, and be tolerated as a useful social unit. This paradox has been a constant thorn in the side of totalitarian leaders.

There thus appear to be three broad and overlapping stages of totalitarian development: the totalitarian movement operating in a nontotalitarian environment and attempting to subvert the direct restraints on its power; the totalitarian movement launching its programmatic changes and trying to reconstruct society in its own image; and the totalitarian movement operating in a system which, in general, is closely patterned on the broad organizational schemes of the totalitarian movement. And the extent to which a regime succeeds in adjusting and minimizing the restraints discussed in the preceding pages is one way of telling the degree of its "totalitarianization."

Other criteria for defining totalitarianism are the scope of the regime's efforts to revamp the existing social order, the utilization of available technological tools for complete social and political integration, the existence of a monolithic party vested with semire-

ligious insight, and the presence of a leadership which not only leads but interprets the official "truth." All these make totalitarianism very much unlike the absolutisms of a few centuries ago, and preclude the application of this nomenclature to its more primitive imitations, such as those in many states of South America. Totalitarianism can, therefore, be defined as a system where technologically advanced instruments of political power are wielded without restraint by centralized leadership of an elite movement, for the purpose of effecting a total social revolution, on the basis of certain arbitrary ideological assumptions proclaimed by the leadership, in an atmosphere of coerced unanimity of the entire population.

Of course since power is a tool used by human beings, it cannot be infinite, and limits to it naturally exist. But the essential question is whether the authority of the regime is limited by anything other than its own capabilities. And how extensive are those capabilities, how developed are the controls, how efficient are the organs of the state? It remains for the individual analyst to decide where to draw the line, and the following admonition might be of some relevance:

It is a fatal misunderstanding of totalitarian movements to confuse and identify them with authoritarian political regimes. True, authoritarian regimes do not know and accept real democratic institutions and processes, for example, periodical elections based upon universal suffrage which determine the composition of government; they reject constitutional limitations which do not depend upon decisions of the ruler. But they accept (or at least do not reject) an objective traditional social order which is independent of the ruler and the ruling group. Authoritarian regimes do not claim to bring a new faith, an all-embracing doctrine determining the whole of life; though they are non-democratic, opposed to representative government based on universal suffrage, rejecting parties and the political influence of public opinion which expresses itself in free, not controlled, discussions.<sup>5</sup>

The Soviet Union is today the most outstanding example of a totalitarian society. It has grown through many crises and challenges, through periodic blood baths and almost constant coercion, to its present monolithic character. It survived successfully and with undiminished power the titanic fury of the Second World War. It recently celebrated its thirty-seventh anniversary. It is the

only totalitarianism that has survived for a generation, and therefore the only one which has had time to ripen and to become sophisticated. The last twenty-five years have seen a constant striving to perfect the methods of totalitarian control in the USSR. Unlike Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the Soviet Union survived the vicissitudes of war and succession and continues to profess its ideological allegiance to the "science" of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. It seems to be making slow but steady progress in its efforts to mold its citizenry to new social patterns,<sup>6</sup> and ambitious schemes of social reorganization are still being conceived and discussed.<sup>7</sup>

These schemes appear to be in keeping with "the principle of functional rationality which maintains that the components of the social system shall be so constituted and so organized as to contribute maximally to the effective functioning of the system."<sup>8</sup> Such abstractly conceived rational schemes result, as is frequently the case when rigidly rational programs are put in practice, in the intensification of coercion and the accentuation of the purely punitive characteristics of the regime. And because the conception of the functionality of the system involves the entire society, the element of terror becomes a mass phenomenon, and broad categories of people, ideologically defined as socially unfit for membership in the new society, are marked for extinction. Institutionalized terror, however, tends to develop a logic of its own, and is not limited to the actual or suspected opponents of the regime. In time it embraces also its supporters, and, indeed, frequently the regime specifically marks out many of its followers for removal from the political scene.

The great scope of the tasks undertaken, the far-reaching character of the totalitarian revolution, and the intense zeal of its leaders accordingly result in the extension of terror not only to the population as a whole, but also to supporters of the movement themselves. In addition both before and after the seizure of power, the totalitarian movement must strive to keep itself pure of dangerous contamination. It must fight hostile penetration. It must resolve inner power struggles and provide for the inflow of new members. In brief, it must find a substitute for the restraints of the constitutional system it has destroyed.

**It is the purge which meets the requirements of this situation.**

This study is concerned with the role of the purge in the Soviet state. The purge, which has manifested itself repeatedly in the Soviet-controlled countries also, has bewildered many observers, who tend to see it as a symptom either of the system's fragmentation or of a disruptive struggle for power bound to result in the system's general weakening. This study will show that the purge has been until now an inherently permanent process of Soviet totalitarianism, and that its effects have not been completely negative. The purge itself, operating within the changing political and social framework of totalitarian institutions, has undergone a considerable evolution with respect to both its scope and techniques. For this reason discussion of the purge will be in terms of the system in which it occurs, and will strive to point to the close relationship between the purge and the historical position of the regime. It will also suggest that the purge is a technique of government, employed consciously by the totalitarian government, and possessing a dynamic of its own which inevitably tends to feed itself.

The first part of this work will consist of an analytical attempt to relate the existential conditions of the totalitarian system, which generate the purge, to the subjective motivations of totalitarian leaders, which incline them towards its utilization. This section will also draw on the insights obtained from the history of other totalitarisms, particularly the Nazi. The limiting factor in attempts to relate the experience of the Soviet and Nazi regimes is, however, the difference in the length of their existences. The Soviet system has had over thirty years to refine its techniques. It passed through one entire succession phase, and is now undergoing another. It launched an internal social and economic revolution, repercussions of which are still being felt. The Nazi regime, barely at the conclusion of its consolidation of power, and still essentially under its original leadership, engaged in aggressive warfare, thus embarking upon a death struggle commanding all its energy. While creating new problems for the regime, the death struggle at the same time arrested the process of ripening of the regime's power, and prevented the emergence of the problems which ensue from a lengthy exercise of power. It is generally conceded that the preoccupation of the Nazi regime with problems of consolidation of power lasted till about 1938, the year in which the subjugation of the armed

forces was completed. Within one year Germany was at war. The pressures and needs for the purge could not thus fully manifest themselves.

The second section of this work will deal with the development of the technique of the purge in the Soviet state, culminating in the mass purges of 1936 to 1938. Consideration will be given to the impact of the mass purge on the Soviet state, including an attempt to determine some aspects of its actual toll, particularly within the Party, for which relatively more data is available. The third and final section will be devoted to an analysis of the changing pattern of the purge in terms of postwar Soviet developments; and an appraisal of the continuing role of the purge in totalitarian government will conclude the study.

The fate of various individuals, or their roles in the many-sided drama which unfolded during the crucial years of the development and solidification of Soviet power, will not be our concern, unless directly relevant to the general issues and trends under discussion. The historical and personal aspects of the struggle for power, for instance, although admittedly important, will perforce be skipped over. Accordingly this attempted analysis suffers from certain unavoidable shortcomings. The purges are still largely shrouded in mystery: the full story is yet unknown, although speculations on the subject abound. Many personal reminiscences have appeared, and these serve as useful beacons to the researcher. Of special significance in this respect are the Trotsky Archives at Harvard College Library, which contain many important and frequently unexplored items of information. By their very nature, however, they cannot tell the full story, nor do they present a unified and integrated picture of this phenomenon.

Other sources of information are Soviet publications, particularly the press. Careful perusal of Soviet daily newspapers, especially the local ones, does give an insight into the prevailing atmosphere, the gradual build-up of tension, and finally the scope of purges. They always supply some data on the intensity of a purge, the issues raised in various parts of the Soviet Union, the particular problems of a purge, and even on some of the abuses produced by the mass purge. A certain amount of statistical material can also be sifted out and pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle. Reports of Party

conferences or congresses, be it on the local, republican, or national level, are particularly useful in this respect.

Some further insight can be gained through the *émigré* Russian, Ukrainian, etc., publications. Many of these fall into the category of personal memoirs, accounts, and recollections. A number of useful analytical studies have also appeared and are of great help in research like this. Caution, however, must always be exercised, as an understandable tendency exists to magnify and overemphasize the terroristic and purely negative aspects of the Soviet regime. Finally, I must particularly acknowledge the contribution of the Harvard University Interview Project, which is supported, under Contract AF No. 33(038)-12909, by the Human Resources Research Institute, Air Research and Development Command, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama. Through direct contact with many former Soviet citizens the Project has assembled an impressive collection of data, invaluable for any current research on the USSR. The life stories, work histories, personal outlooks of Soviet eyewitnesses — all of these help to fill in the unavoidable gaps left by a mere examination of published sources. A better understanding of the purge can be gained by learning of the existing atmosphere, the tensions, and the apprehensions of those who lived under it. The testimony of this sample group of 2,725 former Soviet citizens, although admittedly they are not a true cross section of Soviet society and are probably subject to distortions of time and political prejudice, helps to create a sense of reality about Soviet Russia, without which any research on the problem of the purge would be sterile and brittle.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Purge and the Totalitarian System**

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THE TOTALITARIAN PURGE is a new phenomenon in the field of politics. It is a product of the totalitarian system, and is continually fed by it. The purge is a complex and dynamic instrument of power, as different from the old methods of absolute rule as modern totalitarianism is from the old benevolent despotisms. Any analysis of the purge must, therefore, acknowledge the fact that the purge itself is influenced by the setting in which it operates. Such an analysis must recognize that any political system involves struggles for power, but that different political systems have found different ways of channeling such struggles, and that the institutional arrangements of the several systems have very much affected the nature of the political struggles within them. The dynamic and the motivations of the totalitarian purge are consequently closely related to the institutions of the totalitarian system, and are directly affected by the problems which the totalitarian system itself generates.

Let us approach the subject by making a cursory analysis of the manner in which constitutional societies resolve their internal political struggles. Constitutionalism is admittedly the most complex and delicate form of government. It attempts to combine a system of restraints on the power of the government, operating under the rule of law, with mechanisms designed to encourage change and mobility in government. This form of limited government grants the greatest possible freedom to the individual for the sake of his own personal development, consonant with his moral dignity and individual worth. The principles of Christianity have in particular made an outstanding contribution to the enshrining of the individual as an end in himself. With these principles providing the philosophical fiber, constitutionalism seeks to establish a form of government combining stability with elasticity. The fundamental assumption being that man should participate in governing himself, the structure of government is so designed as to en-

courage the greatest possible participation in it. This participation in self-government extends to all levels of society, through the channels of the various organizations which compete for the allegiance of the individual. The pluralistic form of social organization channels the individual's ambitions, and disruptive forces are cushioned by a hierarchy of groups, each with a claim on the loyalty of some individual citizens. The necessity for compromise as a substitute for the supremacy of one group or interest is obvious in such a situation, though compromise is not easily attained. The multiplicity of outlets absorbs the strains and tensions of conflicting tendencies.

The electoral system, built around the party system, further enhances the elasticity of the constitutional structure. The provisions for change and for direct participation in the government constantly enforce public accountability and ensure the influx of new people into responsible positions. Admittedly, the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus has somewhat divorced public supervision from the execution of policy, but over-all responsibility is still maintained by the removability of the political heads of the bureaucratic machine. We thus see, with obvious modifications depending on the given party system and the given electoral procedures, a steady movement of the "outs" becoming the "ins," and the "ins" becoming the "outs."

This process is furthered by the fact that the political leadership needs to keep in close touch with the prevailing currents of public opinion. A great deal of policy is actually formulated on the basis of anticipation of popular reaction; hence there is a very close interaction between those who are supposedly leading and those who are supposedly led.<sup>1</sup> The role of the press, the radio, and lately television in molding public opinion is frequently emphasized. But equally important is their role in keeping the political heads of the state close to reality, in preventing them from falling into the isolation which is frequently the fate of absolute rulers. Also not to be neglected is the role of such major intrastate organizations as the churches, which command a moral judgment which few governments can afford to entirely ignore.

The preceding discussion is designed to show how constitutional government, through compromise and adjustment, sets up a struc-

ture which lends itself uniquely to change and internal mobility. The dictum that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" has less chance to operate in a constitutional society. For here power is restrained and limited, and no one wields it for too long a time. Forces out of power operate openly on the surface in order to obtain power. Actions of the government are open to scrutiny and surveillance. Criticism eliminates the loafers, the laggards, the deadwood. The party in power is particularly anxious to rid itself of any potential sources of criticism. Its leaders realize that power remains theirs as long as their administration is efficient, active, and responsive. And, paradoxically, they are assisted in these endeavors by their opponents, who, through criticism and attack, point out the weaknesses and shortcomings in governmental policies. The government is thus kept constantly informed by its own foes about where the weak spots can be located, where the most acute problems are developing, and what measures to ameliorate the situation should be adopted. Constitutional leadership accordingly remains close to the facts of life; it is not faced with the necessity of accepting unreality as truth and then convincing its own population that the unreal is real.

With totalitarian leadership, on the other hand, the more totalitarian it becomes, the more isolated it finds itself to be. The very absoluteness of its power, the very scope of its coercion, the magnitude of its propaganda and agitation tend to have a paradoxical effect on its position vis-à-vis the masses which it controls. Instead of remaining in close contact with them, totalitarian leadership eventually finds itself very much alone, very much out of touch. Having imposed upon the masses the official conception of reality, totalitarian leadership begins to see nothing but the reflection of that "official" reality. This, in some ways, is a rather convenient situation. It permits the leadership to engage in various detours without once appearing to be straying from the official ideology. The masses are often in no position to distinguish reality from unreality, and all courses of action may seem on the surface to be in keeping with the orthodox foundations of the system. And those members of the totalitarian society who are unable to adjust themselves with sufficient rapidity to the zigzags of the official policy,

all of which are always said to be dogma, are cast off as deviants and traitors. A supple backbone is a necessary piece of equipment for a totalitarian citizen.

This position of isolation, however, has some serious shortcomings for totalitarian leadership. It induces a simple but extremely serious defect: lack of adequate information. Totalitarian leadership, particularly one oriented on deep underlying philosophical assumptions, demands that all its subjects accept the official viewpoint, the official interpretations. Thus unavoidably almost all the information which it obtains either is as unreal as the totalitarian picture of reality, or else is easily suspect in the eyes of the leader.<sup>2</sup> Those who supply the information have no choice but to comply with the ideological standard. The correspondence between the former Communist Polish military attaché in Washington, General Modelski, and his Soviet superiors in Warsaw is a particularly illuminating example. A number of his reports on the situation in the United States were criticized or even rejected by his superiors, on the grounds that he had become influenced by his "bourgeois environment" and had failed to draw his analysis in the proper perspective of the iron laws of Marxism.<sup>3</sup> The famous Varga debate in the USSR is another case in point. It is relatively safe to assume that similar pressures exist internally. Undoubtedly measures are taken to combat them. Totalitarian leadership, particularly the Soviet one, is doubtless fully aware of the problem and strives to cope with it by establishing alternate channels of communication and intelligence for purposes of cross-checking.<sup>4</sup> But all of these channels are unavoidably subject to the inherent pressure of the entire system: one simply must conform in order to survive. It is surely safer to report what the regime wishes to hear than what one manages to see through the shadows of totalitarian unreality, thus risking accusations of deviationism or treason. All this results in totalitarian leadership's attempting desperately to grasp reality, or failing that, to make certain that its own conception of reality becomes accepted as fact.

This situation provokes two general consequences, each subject to many local variables. First, totalitarian leadership tends to overestimate the basis of its strength and to be misled by the *appearances* of universal support which it requires from all the citizens as their

normal everyday standard of behavior. Thus it may fail to realize that its real support is dwindling away, until the very structure of the system begins to crumble and crash. It then reacts wildly and in desperation: Hitler's bloody and sadistic revenge following the unsuccessful *coup d'état* of July 1944 was not only the last gasp of a mad tyrant but also the frantic reaction of a totalitarian leader to the realization of his isolation amidst seething hatred. This disappointment was only exceeded a year later when Hitler had to face the fact that his own organization, the thing he valued and trusted most, had betrayed him.<sup>5</sup>

The second characteristic consequence of the isolation of totalitarian leadership is constant suspicion, hence, constant endeavors to eliminate causes of suspicion. A certain type of totalitarian leader, shrewdly realizing the coercive aspects of the apparently unanimous support which his regime enjoys, seeks out the real, imagined, or even potential foes of his organization and proceeds to eliminate them. The history of the Soviet Union, for example, is a singular collection of allegations of plots, conspiracies, and treasons, culminating in the celebrated purges of 1936-1938. Such a totalitarian leader cannot avoid a sense of panic—for to him the real is frequently the unknown, and the unknown is feared. Surrounded by sycophants, enshrined in mass adulation, this type of leader realizes that opposition may still lurk, that foes may still plot. The fact that all visible resistance has been successfully disposed of offers no relief. Treason may easily develop in the ranks of his own party. Some lieutenants may become overambitious; others may merely be disappointed. Careerists and office seekers, whose motivating force is not personal loyalty to the leader and deep philosophical acceptance of the system, may succeed in entering the party. The leader cannot forget that "traitors and capitulators penetrate the combat staff and the Party, the main stronghold of the proletariat. It is well known that citadels are most easily taken from within."<sup>6</sup>

This paranoia produced by the isolation of the leadership also penetrates to the lower levels of the totalitarian hierarchy, as well as to all the members of the community. Fear and suspicion result in a tendency to self-isolation and to the avoidance of all sincere contacts, although the superficial veneer of enthusiasm for the system is maintained. The Nazi wartime policy of executing "defeat-

ists," i.e., those who recognized reality, was a manifestation of this phenomenon of totalitarian artificiality. Totalitarian isolation by necessity leads to a situation in which even the most minute deviation from the enforced norm is considered a threat to the regime, which must be dealt with in the severest fashion.

There thus develops an overwhelming pressure to eliminate all foes — first of all, those who have been defeated but are still in existence (the logic being clear: they are obviously plotting to seize the power they once shared and enjoyed), then all their former or present allies, then all potential foes. The slightest indication of opposition is feared and decried: "Even a mere shadow of opposing oneself to the Party signifies the political death of a fighter for socialism, his going over into the camp of the foreposts of counterrevolution."<sup>7</sup> Totalitarian leadership in this manner finds itself in a somewhat dichotomous situation: enjoying absolute power, it is forced to use it because of the very fact that it has it. Having power makes it isolated; isolation breeds insecurity; insecurity breeds suspicion and fear; suspicion and fear breed violence. For this reason totalitarianism has been characterized by many political scientists as a system of terror — it has to terrorize by reason of its inherent nature.

Totalitarian isolation is closely linked with the leadership's apprehension lest its Party, or even the entire monolithic apparatus of the state, become stagnant and corrupt. The relative isolation of the leadership does little to relieve such fears, which are usually well founded. The totalitarian party in its early revolutionary period is usually composed of power-motivated but frequently also ideologically-minded leaders, of their idealistic supporters, and last, but not least, of brutal and politically ignorant thugs. These elements unite in their desire to seize power and are willing, for various reasons depending on their categorization, to take risks and make sacrifices.

The situation, however, changes drastically once power, to quote Mussolini, "has been picked off the floor." Many of the original followers, particularly the mass following, now desire to taste the fruits of victory and to partake of the spoils. But the totalitarian leadership cannot conceivably tolerate this. There are first of all power considerations — the revolution must go on so that the lead-

ership's own position remains justified. But second and equally important is the ideology which has motivated the leaders—the ideology which points to the ultimate goals of the revolution and hence demands continued efforts for their achievement. A gap accordingly develops between the leadership and many of its followers.

As the regime becomes more stable the old supporters are joined by hordes of opportunists eager to get to the trough.<sup>8</sup> In the absence of external institutions of control such as are found in constitutional societies, totalitarian leadership must proceed in its own way to ensure both loyalty and dynamism. To the suspicions bred by isolation is added the realization that “all revolutionary parties which have hitherto perished did so because they grew conceited, failed to see where their strength lay, and feared to speak of their own weaknesses.”<sup>9</sup> The leadership of the totalitarian state, therefore, must be extremely intolerant of all failures. It must see in them indications of complacency, inefficiency, and, worst of all, hostility towards itself. Nonfulfillment of quotas, for instance, very easily brings on charges of sabotage and wrecking. Failure in any sort of endeavor is a clear indication that personnel has become lazy or disloyal. Corrective measures, even of a drastic nature, must hence be applied. For this reason, the elite and somewhat visionary leadership must purge many of its weary followers and replace them with new ones. And as the latter begin to taste and enjoy the fruits of their new status, the need may again arise for their replacement by fresh and more vigorous cadres.

For unlike the traditional, reactionary dictatorship, the totalitarian system must emphasize a constant progress towards the ultimate good. The former cannot afford to introduce major programmatic changes into its realms, for any such changes are bound to affect its power adversely. Its appeal is based on the *status quo*, and in many cases even on the *status quo ante*. Study of the traditional dictatorship indicates that its power lies in its ability to prevent history from keeping in step with time. When it fails to do so, it itself becomes history.

Totalitarianism must, on the contrary, attempt to keep almost one step ahead of time. In order to maintain the totalitarian character

of their system, the leadership must constantly shuffle and reshuffle society according to an apparently ideologically formulated program. Totalitarian dictatorship cannot allow society to settle down completely to a stable existence and develop stable relationships.<sup>10</sup> Thus with the increasing stability at the top of the totalitarian hierarchy comes an artificial instability on the lower levels—an instability, paradoxically enough, aimed at producing stability for the top. The lower echelons are not permitted to develop stable power relationships, and their personnel is kept in a mobile state.<sup>11</sup> The society as a whole is perpetually given new goals to reach, new objectives to attain. Programs are restated and reformulated. Ideological orthodoxy is stressed at the same time that the grossest departures from such ideology occur. These twists and turns are frequently motivated by pure expediency. But just as frequently they are part of the general totalitarian process of constant internal movement and change.<sup>12</sup> The leadership attempts to anticipate situations before they develop, and the purge is a part of the anticipatory technique. It cleanses the system even before there are clear indications that cleansing is necessary. It produces the necessary momentum and dynamism, fear and enthusiasm, without which efforts at great social changes are bound to fail. It is a rebirth of the initial struggle which gave to the totalitarian leadership its possession of power. The original revolution is thus reincarnated in the purge.<sup>13</sup>

It would be erroneous, however, to imply that the revolutionary quality of totalitarianism is the only determinant of the purge. Totalitarianism is of course very much concerned with problems of stability and security. Instruments of power, seized by the totalitarian leaders and operating within the framework of a complex (or developing) industrialized society, have to be consolidated and sharpened. The totalitarian movement, having latched onto power and having maintained it through an internalized revolution, is not anxious to lose it through anarchy. The regime hence both promotes revolution and seeks security, both expands the purge and limits its scope. This conflict clearly must result in a certain tension: exigencies of administrative efficiency demand a curtailment of the revolution; exigencies of totalitarian dynamics and the sense

of historical destiny demand its expansion. Oscillation between the extremes frequently results in the purging of those unable to escape the swinging pendulum.

These basic pressures for a purge which follow from the monopoly of power and the revolutionary nature of totalitarianism are further accentuated by certain stimuli which reach the leadership from the lower levels. These stimuli can hardly be described as causal; rather their significance lies in their contribution to the spread and intensification of the purge. And here the roots of pressure are to be found more in human nature than in governmental institutions. Totalitarianism, aptly called the closed society, is a system where personal advancement and security are often achieved at the expense of others. While trying to introduce rapid social changes, the regime almost simultaneously stratifies itself into a rigid power hierarchy. Individual careers come to depend to some extent on the ability to arrange for the removal of one's closest competitors or superiors. Totalitarianism is therefore a system of the most vicious in-fighting; the defeat of Nazi Germany has revealed to what an extent a superficially serene totalitarian surface can be torn by internal competition and maneuverings. And while generally these remain shrouded in mystery, they are revealed in their intensity through the purges, which bring out into the open all the pent-up animosity, fear, jealousy, and intrigue. Under these circumstances, it is relatively easy for the purge to pick up a momentum of its own. The more victims it swallows, the more denunciations it encourages. At its most acute stage, as during 1937 in the Soviet Union, one's chance for survival becomes a purely mathematical calculation made in terms of the number of denunciations handed in. Some people denounce willingly, others because they have to.<sup>14</sup> A trickle of denunciations can swiftly become a flood.

It is, therefore, quite conceivable that a purging operation originally intended to be limited in scope may turn out to be much more extensive than the regime expected or desired. But here again, because of its tendency towards a state of relative isolation, the regime is not capable of distinguishing adequately between real and imaginary plots and dangers. It becomes safer, therefore, to eliminate all their potential sources. The purge thus may continue to embrace ever increasing circles, with each arrest leading to many

more.<sup>15</sup> It is symptomatic that one of the heroes of Soviet youth is Pavlik Morozov, noted for the fact that he did not hesitate to denounce his closest family, only to be murdered himself by his fellow villagers. The purge accordingly finds considerable support in three basic emotions of the totalitarian citizen: ambition, fear, and enthusiasm. These three give it a scope and magnitude which no secret police could supply on its own.<sup>16</sup>

Certain institutional developments also tend to further the purge. The system cannot operate without a refined secret police. And although the secret police cannot be solely held responsible for the magnitude of the purge, it still is the most effective instrument of the totalitarian regime. It not only insures the leader's safety or position but is also the chief weapon of internal combat. Its *raison d'être* is to protect the existing regime. Consequently the actual value of the secret police to the regime is measured in terms of the dangers, real or imagined, that it succeeds in eliminating. The greater the alleged threats to the power of the dictatorship, the greater the role the secret police assumes. The example of the Soviet *seksots* cited in note 14 is characteristic of the police emphasis on "achievement." There must be enemies to eliminate. Absence of enemies does not mean that the regime has none, but that the secret police has failed to uncover them. Hence the *agent provocateur*, hence the necessity of denunciations, hence all the imagined plots. And as the secret police realizes that its position within the system depends on the continuation of this continual combat, a tendency towards exaggeration of the opposition easily develops. The chiefs of the secret police, in their maneuvering for power within the totalitarian framework, are thus inclined to perpetuate or extend the terror. And the unreality of the totalitarian existence makes dangers easy to manufacture.

This tendency blends well with the general picture of the struggle for power which is constantly taking place on the upper levels of the totalitarian regime, always supplying added stimulus to the purge. The influence and security of any totalitarian leader or sub-leader are directly dependent on the power he is capable of wielding. All organizational changes and almost all appointments and dismissals are bound to affect the power relationships of the various rivals within the system. The problem of control over the cadres

of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, for instance, is closely related to personal maneuvers and competition. And documents now available on the Nazi regime paint a grim picture of the constant chess game played by Bormann, Goering, Goebbels, and their supporters for various "strategic" positions.

Much more dramatic is the combat for the position of the leader himself—the struggle for succession. So far, totalitarianism has had only one successful transition,<sup>17</sup> and even that was not accomplished without extended struggles and bloodshed. The course of the struggles between Stalin and his opponents has been fully studied by Messrs. Deutscher, Souvarine, Besseches, and others.<sup>18</sup> But it should be noted again that each struggle produced in its wake a purge of all the supporters of the vanquished erstwhile competitors. All protégés and many former appointees and sympathizers paid the price of defeat.<sup>19</sup> The victor, in order to remain victor, had to make certain that the organization he now controlled was truly staffed with elements loyal to him. Thus an important aspect of all Soviet purges has been elimination of those minor figures whose fate was sealed by the defeat of their protectors.

The successful leader is also pushed towards a purge by his lieutenants, who in turn are under pressure from their own supporters, whose personal welfare depends on the solidification of their own positions. The accentuation of political conflicts thus is often caused by the very drive for stability of the lower echelons—a tendency which, it was pointed out, produces new dangers for the leadership and a need for periodic cleansings. It is on this lower level of the totalitarian regime that the least secure and most dependent elements are to be found. It is these that press for the spoils. The lieutenants of a totalitarian leader frequently have only one thing in common: their absolute loyalty to the leader. On all else they may be bitter enemies, constantly engaged in death duels for influence and position. And the lieutenants are themselves subjected to pressures from their supporters, demanding privileges and power.

This hostility among the immediate supporters of the totalitarian dictator seems to increase in direct ratio to the distance from the dictator. For while his immediate aides may have certain experiences in common which tend to bind them together, such as a joint

struggle for power or even imprisonment and suffering, this is not likely to be the case with their own second and third lieutenants. The farther away these are from the center of power, the more they tend to view the situation through the prisms of their own organizations, their own interests, their own power. Each thus puts constant pressure on his sub-leader to improve the position of his given organization. Such improvement can frequently be effected at the expense of competing organizations. The struggles in Germany between the S.S., the Nazi Party, and the Wehrmacht, and between the supporters of Goering and Goebbels, were produced more by the animosity or insecurity of their underlings than by personal enmity between the principal participants.

The same situation, with obvious modifications, probably prevails in the Soviet Union. Although regrettably little is known, it seems that the years following World War II witnessed bitter maneuverings between Zhdanov and Malenkov for influence and power. Zhdanov's death cut short the duel. Soon after Zhdanov's transfer to the catacombs of the Kremlin, his erstwhile supporters, including his own son (who, however, re-emerged from obscurity at the Nineteenth Party Congress), began to fade into the political background. The same is essentially true of the aftermath of Beria's elimination in the summer of 1953 (see Chapter 9). And an analysis of the new central Party bodies, as confirmed by the Nineteenth Congress, reveals that the principal lieutenants did make efforts to promote into these new bodies their own close collaborators. The totalitarian leader, of course, attempts to settle any exceptionally violent conflicts. His own position is dependent on keeping his supporters together, while, at the same time, preventing anyone from ascending too rapidly. But once an ambitious official has fallen, it would be difficult even for the dictator, should he be so inclined, to prevent the rapid elimination of the fallen lieutenant's supporters. The vacuum thus created is rapidly filled by a realignment of power, and the internal struggle continues between new alliances, new leaders, new pretenders. The purge, in the meantime, has swallowed more victims.

The purge is thus inherent in the totalitarian system. The position of the leadership of the system is one of relative isolation,

which results in false conception of reality, the accentuation of violence, and the insistence on eliminating all possible challenges to the leadership's monopoly of power. This tendency is sharpened by the totalitarian emphasis on combat as the ultimate form of moral development, and by the necessity of preserving the original revolutionary fervor and ideological purity. Consequently the leadership continually demands new sacrifices for the sake of new goals, and the progress towards them constantly exacts a new toll of victims—even from the movement itself, as its members grow weary or satiated.

As the purge begins to penetrate the masses, they respond with mixed reactions of fear, ambition, or enthusiasm, and the purge may develop a dangerous momentum of its own, threatening to get out of hand. The police apparatus of the totalitarian state is particularly anxious to magnify the potentiality of subversion, as its own position in the power hierarchy is dependent on the regime's need of it for self-preservation. Finally, the struggles within the regime itself find external expression in the ruthless elimination of fallen idols and their supporters. The continual struggle for power among primary competitors and their second lieutenants results in the increased tendency to settle all conflicts through the total elimination of the losers. Totalitarianism is, accordingly, the system of the purge—bred both by the existential conditions of the system and by the subjective motivations of its leadership.

# 2

## **The Purge as a Technique of Totalitarian Government**

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THE PURGE is not only a unique manifestation arising out of the very nature of the totalitarian system but also a distinctive technique of totalitarian government. This chapter will attempt to point to some of its prerequisites as well as characteristics. The danger in such an attempt, however, is twofold: conceptualization of the purge may be too rigid and so ignore specific variables, sets of historical circumstances, and local situations; or the purge may appear too much a pure design—the conspiratorial plot of the demonic dictator—discounting the elements of irrationality and spontaneity in which the mass purge abounds. The purge must, therefore, be defined in terms sufficiently elastic to apply to varying circumstances, while the distinctive nature of the purge as a new technique of totalitarian government is maintained.

The purge, admittedly, is closely related to such phenomena of the totalitarian regime as civil strife and its aftermath, the struggle for power, and the terror. For totalitarianism itself is, first of all, the child of civil discord. All totalitarianisms have arisen out of social and political tensions. The inadequacies of existing institutions, internal disorder, and social and political strife lead to a revolt against the unsatisfactory *status quo*, and to the supremacy of a movement which at least appears to know where it is going. Even in states where no formal (if the word may be used) civil war was fought, civil strife was generated to such an extent that the denial of the existence of a civil war can be justified only on the most formalistic and legalistic grounds. But more than that, the elements of civil war within totalitarianism do not cease when the regime is set up. Internal strife continues for many years, frequently mounting in intensity with the increased stability of the regime. This has been particularly true of the Soviet Union, where the class struggle reached its peak many years after the Bolshevik Revolution. This extension of internal strife should not be confused with the purge; it is a phenomenon in its own right.

The elimination of the kulaks, for instance, which was largely motivated by political and economic considerations and which formed an integral part of the first Five Year Plan, illustrates this point. From the very inception of the Soviet state, the kulaks were considered as alien to the fabric of the Communist society, and it was merely a matter of time and a question of method before the issue was resolved. The kulaks were not purged—they were exterminated. The Nazi excesses against the Jews and other races during the war years, culminating in a premeditated policy of genocide, also cannot be categorized as falling within the general purging process. The purge is not applied against elements which totalitarianism a priori marks out for destruction. The purge is applied against individuals and groups bred within totalitarianism itself.

In the case of the struggle for power, the problem is more complex and the distinctions not so clear. For the purge is both a consequence of the struggle for power and a part of it. In the initial stages of such a struggle, the purge is a weapon used to dislodge various competitors or their associates from positions of influence. The purge is used to shuffle and rearrange existing power alignments (ordinarily masked by the apparent unity of the system) for the sake of weakening or strengthening rivals. Such crucial posts as those in the central Party machine, for instance, the Party Control Commission of the CPSU, become ramparts to be stormed and assaulted because control of them is a key to victory. At this stage, however, the purge tends to be more restrained, cautious, and delicate, limiting itself to such tools as transfers, demotions, or dismissals. The struggle continues until a given group or individual has succeeded in establishing a definite advantage, and the essential issues have been settled. When the struggle has been resolved, its aftermath is an accentuated purge.

Only then do the actual violent, bloody procedures begin. Only then does the victor set into motion the machinery of total elimination, which hitherto was restrained by the balance of the various forces within the system. Once the balance has been upset by the appearance of a new constellation, the remnants of the vanquished must, by the logic of the system, be obliterated. No alternatives to leadership, no disgruntled elements must be allowed to exist within

the fabric of totalitarian unity. Stalin's struggle for power with Trotsky, for example, resulted in a purging of Trotskyites only after the effective conclusion of the struggle. The same in general is true of the Hitler-Roehm incident, although in this case the situation was somewhat complicated by the extraneous factor of the *Reichswehr*.<sup>1</sup> A consideration of the function of the purge must, therefore, distinguish between the purge which is part of the totalitarian struggle for power and the more violent purge which follows the conclusion of the struggle.

The relationship between terror and the purge is of a different nature. Terror is the most universal characteristic of totalitarianism. It must terrorize in order to achieve the unlimited scope of its authority and the complete submission of the entire population. Totalitarian terror is not merely a technique of intimidation, applied at diverse times against various groups and clearly discernible to transient foreign observers. It is also a constant and pervading process of mass coercion, a continuum which persists throughout the totalitarian era. The degree of its intensity varies; one distinguishes periods of accentuated terror and periods of relative relaxation. But terror cannot totally cease except in the totalitarian millennium, when the state has withered away and society has been reshaped to new patterns and norms. Hannah Arendt, in her extremely provocative study *The Origins of Modern Totalitarianism*, posits the proposition, and there is certainly sufficient documentary data to bear her out, that terror within the totalitarian system actually must increase both in scope and in brutality with the growing stability of the regime. After a totalitarian movement comes to power,

. . . the first stage of ferreting out secret enemies and hunting down former opponents is usually combined with drafting the entire population into front organizations and reeducating old party members for voluntary espionage services, so that the rather dubious sympathies of the drafted sympathizers need not worry the specially trained cadres of the police . . .

The end of the first stage comes with the liquidation of open and secret resistance in any organized form; it can be set at about 1935 in Germany and approximately 1930 in Soviet Russia. Only after the extermination of real enemies has been completed and the hunt for

“potential enemies” begun does terror become the actual content of totalitarian regimes. Under the pretext of building socialism in one country, or using a given territory as a laboratory for a revolutionary experiment, or realizing the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the second claim of totalitarianism, the claim to total domination, is carried out.<sup>2</sup>

Hannah Arendt thus claimed that “. . . terror increased both in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany in inverse ratio to the existence of internal political opposition, so that it looked as though political opposition had not been the pretext of terror . . . but the last impediment of its full fury.”<sup>3</sup> For it is at this second stage that the process of exterminating the “social misfits” of the totalitarian society begins. The secret police not only doubles its efforts to unmask cleverly disguised enemies, but also assumes the role of executioner on behalf of the new system—and removes all those who for biological (e.g., the Jews) or historical (e.g., the *bourgeoisie*) reasons are incapable of adjustment to the new society.

The purge is part of that general process of terror. The pressures leading to it are basically similar; the techniques frequently indistinguishable. But unlike the terror, which is closely related to the civil war and its aftermath of extermination, the purge is more particularized, in spite of the fact that it too can assume mass proportions. The purge strikes against elements which, to all appearances, have already been molded to the totalitarian pattern. It often intimidates those who are intimidating others, and frequently it disposes of them completely. In that sense, the purge is by far the more terrifying phenomenon. Outright foes of the totalitarian regime expect violence and terror, and their resistance is frequently a reaction to it. But the purge cannot be resisted. It often has no clear-cut and evident objectives; there are no direct indications as to who will be purged and when. The nature of human inertia makes the loyal members of the system, although already fearful, still hope that the cataclysm will pass them by.

It is this selective, unfathomable character of the purge which gives it its effectiveness. A purge does not produce so intense a hostility as a massive terror campaign because it strikes at elements essentially loyal—hence opposition does not arise until it is too late. A purge is difficult to oppose because when striking at the loyal elements, it frequently relies on an environment hostile to

them to back the purge—e.g., purges of the Communist Party have been accompanied by simultaneous relaxation of controls over the population, which did not regard the Party with universal sympathy; purges of the police have been accompanied by an easing of tensions within the Party, which was bitter at the police for the bloodiness of the purge. And, it should be added, massive terror campaigns, such as accompanied collectivization in Russia, were paralleled by reduced pressures within the Party and large-scale membership drives. The regime is always careful not to undertake a policy which might meet with universal opposition. The great danger to a purge lies, as will be demonstrated later, in its being too closely associated with the general process of terror. When the two merge, the regime may find itself with a much too limited base of approval.

With this last qualification in mind, we can consider the purge as falling within the general pattern of totalitarian terror. It can be considered as complementary to it; it can be considered as a refinement of it. But as totalitarianism ripens and becomes more firmly established, the purge will become the more general phenomenon, and the terror merely an aspect of the purge. The need for mass intimidation will assume different forms when the totalitarian system has embraced the entire society. The unbridled violence of the “second stage” as defined by H. Arendt (see page 28) is necessary for the destruction of the old social and economic institutions and for the launching of the totalitarian schemes of social organization. The situation changes somewhat when the movement succeeds in imposing on society an operating totalitarian system, even though admittedly the process can never be fully completed. In this “third” stage, the masses, which at first had to be intimidated and terrorized in order to achieve complete obedience, will be more or less integrated into the system. Most areas of independent action will have become extinct. Potential leaders will no longer be sought out of the population and nipped off in order to prevent the emergence of alternatives to totalitarian supremacy, but will be diverted into the system. The more ambitious and the more capable individuals, instead of becoming a source of opposition to the regime and hence suitable objects of totalitarian terror’s attention, will be sucked into the state and party apparatus. It will

be within the apparatus, therefore, that the pressures for the purges will develop, and it will be the apparatus which will be purged. The terror and the purge will then become synonymous.

In the meantime, the purge like the terror remains a constant feature of totalitarianism. It is not merely a sudden occurrence which manifests itself within certain defined periods of time. It is a perpetual process of shifting, reshifting, eliminating, pushing down, promoting, intimidating. The element of internal combat within totalitarianism finds expression in a permanent purge. Totalitarianism is the system of the permanent purge. It promotes mobility and instability within totalitarianism. It necessitates constant reshuffling, and prevents the formation of too rigid lines of power demarcation within the system.

It is within this continuum of purging that one must look for an accentuation of the purging process, an increased emphasis on violence and elimination, to pick out a specific purge from the permanent purging process. To be able to point out a purge, one must be in a position not only to detect an increase in its magnitude but also to determine the particular circumstances and, if possible, specific motives which necessitated it. Each purge tends to have a particular dominating objective of its own, which supplies, at least initially, its momentum. Thus, while the totalitarian system as a whole is characterized by a continuum of purging, one may with some validity attempt to differentiate specific purges.

An attempt to establish some principles concerning the timing of the purges is considerably facilitated by the previous discussion of the purge and its relationship to totalitarianism. Certain factors preceding, influencing, or motivating the purges are clearly variable. They depend on or are closely connected with the local situation, such as political, social, or economic developments, which influence the specific motivation of the leadership in launching a purge. Particular circumstances vary from purge to purge. A significant element may be the sudden assassination of an important leader like Kirov; or it may be the untimely death of an important protagonist like Zhdanov; or it may be a campaign against cosmopolitanism, or the elimination of internal corruption, or simply general dissatisfaction. Not to be neglected either is the impact of international affairs on the domestic scene. Indications of interna-

tional tension lead to a tightening-up of the system of controls within the totalitarian state. They exaggerate the fears inherent in the dictatorship's isolation. In this vein Deutscher posits the following line of reasoning as one possible explanation for Stalin's slaughter of almost his entire immediate entourage: "In the supreme crisis of war, the leaders of the opposition, if they had been alive, might indeed have been driven to action by a conviction, right or wrong, that Stalin's conduct of the war was incompetent and ruinous . . ." <sup>4</sup> Stalin may have, therefore, reasoned: ". . . they want to overthrow me in a crisis — I shall charge them with already having made the attempt. They certainly believe themselves to be better fitted for the conduct of war, which is absurd. A change of government may weaken Russia's fighting capacity; if they succeed, they may be compelled to sign a truce with Hitler, and perhaps even agree to a cession of territory as we once did at Brest Litovsk. I shall accuse them of having already entered into a treacherous alliance with Germany (and Japan) and ceded Soviet territory to those states." <sup>5</sup>

This line of reasoning finds additional support in the totalitarian efforts to eliminate all alternatives to the regime in power. The development of totalitarianism must be accompanied by the erosion and destruction of the opposition, and the pace of that destruction is accelerated with the increase in the power of the regime. It appears paradoxical, but probably one of the factors contributing to the sealing of the fate of the opposition in the Soviet Union was the acceptance by the regime of the opposition's program. This acceptance made it doubly necessary to remove potential competitors, and in this way to re-emphasize the inherent assumption of totalitarianism — that its leadership is always right.

The timing of a purge is thus connected closely with the stability of the regime in power. The totalitarian movement must be in full control of the means of government, and must exercise power without apparent limitations. The purge is an expression of the regime's power, not an effort to achieve it. A purge is thus the supreme example of totalitarian success. It demonstrates the total victory of the regime through the elimination of its own supporters and the transformation of its keenest enthusiasts into venal vermin. The purge indicates that the regime feels its foundations to be

sufficiently well grounded to permit it the luxury of purging itself in order to strengthen itself. It indicates that the first period of the consolidation of power is completed, that the regime considers its position sufficiently stabilized to launch its long-range programs. It indicates that finally no external competition for power is present and that internal tension can be safely resolved.

The emergence of dictatorial leadership in the totalitarian system is a further stimulant for the purge. The power of the regime must be centered in the hands of a dictator on whom all loyalty is focused. He is the exponent and interpreter of the official truth. He is the crystallization of all the forces within the system. He is the balancer and adjuster of conflicts. His lieutenants, competing among themselves, need him in order to be able to compete in relative safety. The dictator is the symbol of their collective welfare, and of the well-being of the entire movement. Without him, the purge could turn into mass conflict. Each subordinate competitor would attempt to harness it for his own sake; it would become a vehicle of open struggle leading to the disruption of the system. Patterns of struggle are, of course, present in all purges. Individuals and organs affected by it, or controlling it, attempt to manipulate and exploit the purge for their own benefit. But such manipulations must be carried out under the guise of compatibility with the general principles and objectives of the system as established by the dictator. When they stray too far away from them, the dictator, with the eager assistance of all endangered lieutenants, will immediately assert his power, and the overly ambitious elements will themselves be purged.

Purges are, therefore, less likely to develop within totalitarianisms ruled by collective forms of leadership. The actual manifestation of a purge then is a clear indication that collective leadership is coming to an end, and that the wheels are being set in motion in preparation for the ultimate emergence of a single dictator. For any purge is bound to affect the precarious balance of interests within the totalitarian system. In a totalitarianism ruled by a collective body, even if narrowly limited to, let us say, three, the power relationships between the central leaders will be extremely delicate. Each will by necessity attempt to increase his influence and stabilize his own position. Each will strive to build up inde-

pendent sources of strength, to enlarge his own organization, to place his supporters in strategic positions. A purge invariably diminishes or strengthens the relative power of such leaders. It follows, therefore, that any active purge shows that some element within the triumvirate (in the case of this example) has gained the upper hand and that the struggle for power is practically over. It is possible, of course, for an abortive attempt at a purge by one of the coleaders to meet with disaster. But the reaction to such an attempt would also be a purge and the emergence of a new realignment of power, from which, given the character of totalitarian combat, one rather than two leaders would be likely to emerge. A totalitarian purge thus augurs the emergence of a unified, clear-cut, personalized dictatorship. And a stabilized totalitarian monopoly of political power, symbolized by a leader with unchallengeable supremacy, forms the basis for the ability of the system to continue to purge itself successfully.

Throughout this process the ultimate basis for justifying the purge is ideology. It sets the standards for determining the gravity of the alleged offenses and it helps to place the deviators from revealed truth in a position of social and political ostracism. In all cases the elimination of "sinners," of "heretics," finds a rationale in the doctrinal certainty provided by the official code of the system. And the leadership's unique monopoly on "truth" permits dogmatic censure of actions which only yesterday might have been called most orthodox and loyal.

Within this framework, the purge performs several positive functions. It revives and stimulates internal activity, and provides an important outlet for accumulated tension. The very rigid patterns of behavior which the totalitarian state demands from its citizens, the elimination of open criticism, the emphasis on constant approval of all governmental actions—all constitute a denial of political self-expression which results in stored-up hostility and aggression. Totalitarianism attempts to cope with this problem through various means. The most common is to channel the hostility of its citizenry towards external objects. The "hate campaign" is highly characteristic of modern totalitarian regimes. George Orwell develops a frighteningly realistic version of it in his celebrated *1984*, which does not deviate too far from the periodic anti-

American campaigns waged in the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> The attention of the totalitarian citizen is focused, with the generous assistance of the state's entire propaganda apparatus, on the foreign enemy, the external dangers, the threatening neighbors. That this phenomenon is universally true of all totalitarianisms is demonstrated by the fact that all their propaganda machines have employed these techniques. Hitler had his international Jewish financial conspiracy and the Communist danger; Stalin the capitalist encirclement; Peron the Yankee dollar imperialism. The external foe is the greatest internal friend of the totalitarian dictator.

The problem, however, cannot be solved entirely by merely diverting hostility towards external objects. The constitutional state offers its citizens many opportunities for self-expression — through its pluralistic system of alternative and sometimes conflicting allegiances, through a constant interplay of interests, and through almost continual negotiation and compromise — but even these fail on occasion, and internal violence occurs. The totalitarian state has no such shock absorbers. All problems, all dissatisfaction and tensions immediately become issues with which the leadership must be vitally concerned. Hence it tries to anticipate hostility so that it can cope with it. It must create artificial outlets within the state for the dissatisfaction which inevitably develops. The technique of the scapegoat here becomes applicable. Be it the Jews in Nazi Germany, or the class enemy or foreign agent in the Soviet Union — here is an object worthy of hate, here is someone who is the cause of all shortcomings and troubles. So the previously outlined hate campaign is extended to the internal enemy.

The more acute the internal pressures become, the greater the need for artificial outlets. The more intense the totalitarian coercion becomes and the greater the scope of its projects, the greater the need for the purge. Outside enemies soon assume a role secondary to that of the great internal cleansing, which attracts and holds the attention of all living within the system. The purge is a substitute for external war; it satisfies the need of the totalitarian masses for expression; it also terrorizes and coerces them. It is interesting to note in this connection that the purge provokes a somewhat favorable popular response when directed against administrative and party personnel. Totalitarian life, by its strong emphasis on obedience, its central-

ization of power, and its general strictness of discipline, frequently engenders in the masses a negative attitude towards the bureaucratic apparatus with which they have most contact. The sufferings and unpleasantness of daily existence are thus sometimes blamed on the viciousness and egocentrism of the so-called middlemen in the power hierarchy. "If only Stalin [or Kalinin] knew, then this would not happen," is a frequent and typical feeling.

This situation the top leadership can easily exploit. The brutal elimination during the purge periods of countless state and party functionaries tends to provoke a feeling that, at least, all are equal and share alike in the burdens of life, and the administrators have finally received their "come-uppance," long due them. This "equalization of suffering" can then be pointed to as an indication of totalitarian democracy, while it simultaneously prevents the emergence of dangerous competitors for power from the lower and middle levels of the hierarchy.<sup>7</sup>

The purge also provides the desirable element of incentive. Opportunist and careerists who have infiltrated the regime and the party are weeded out. New personnel is introduced. The wheels of the machine are oiled and lubricated. Additional stimulus to achieve is introduced into a system which, in any case, is already oriented towards achievement. Promotions become more rapid; additional openings are provided; positions of responsibility become vacated and refilled with increasing frequency. The new totalitarian cadres, mass-produced by the system, thus find room for absorption. The pervading atmosphere is one of struggle, and this is what totalitarianism seeks. For before the seizure of power, the movement is essentially one of revolt. It stresses change and progress. It promises a millennium. But once in power it has to face the reality of government; it has to accommodate itself to the administrative difficulties of the possession of power. And since the roots of its power came from a revolt against the *status quo*, the main concern is how to preserve that revolutionary character. The answer is found in the glorification and sanctification of combat.

Combat is what makes man. Combat is what forges nations. Combat is what makes history. Be it racial warfare or class struggle, totalitarianism implies in its being the necessity of struggling.

There is nothing more objectionable in the eyes of a totalitarian dictator, the leader of a virile horde of supermen, than the picture of contented, peaceloving bourgeois shopkeepers. Revulsion at this disgusting sight is shared in common by Nazis, Communists, and Peronistas. So the purge becomes an important vehicle of combat. It revives, invigorates, cleanses. The party becomes again a sharp instrument of battle, instead of being satisfied to rest on its laurels.

To sum up the argument thus far presented: the purge performs certain positive functions in so far as the entire totalitarian system is concerned. It supplies an element of security for the leadership by the constant and unremitting elimination of potential opposition, actual or imagined. It keeps the foes of the regime in a state of permanent insecurity by penetrating ever wider circles of the population, sometimes without any apparent pattern. At the same time, it effectively eliminates any source of potential alternatives to the regime. A leaderless opposition tends to become, at most, a passive one. The purge also cleanses the system of infiltrators and careerists who forget that "there is nothing above the interests of the Party."<sup>8</sup> The struggle for survival initiated by the purge eliminates stagnation and furthers the elements of social mobility and promotion. Finally, it channels pent-up aggression and dissatisfaction away from the regime.

The prerequisites for such a purge are, first of all, the existence of a relatively developed and ideologically oriented totalitarian system, with the power of the regime consolidated, and dictatorial in nature. Competing allegiances and organizations must have been duly eliminated. The regime must enjoy a monopoly of power. The purge, arising as a combination of the rational motivations of the totalitarian leadership and the irrational stresses of the system, satisfies the need of the system for continued dynamism and energy. Without minimizing the dangers for the system which a purge produces, and which will be examined in the latter part of this book, the purge can be recognized as a utilization of coercive techniques of totalitarian government for the achievement of not only the negative objectives (elimination, intimidation) but also the positive objectives (efficiency, discipline, loyalty) of the totalitarian regime. This strengthens the regime's power and removes alternatives to

it. In so far as the purge is inherent in the totalitarian system itself, because of the system's structural and ideological forms, it can be considered as part of the totalitarian process of government.

The purge is thus a technique of government of a developed totalitarian dictatorship, for the achievement of specific political and socio-economic objectives, and arising as a consequence of the strains in the system. It manifests itself primarily in the ruthless elimination or removal of apparently loyal supporters of the regime. With this formulation in mind, let us direct our attention to the specific experiences of the Soviet purges.

# 3

## The Soviet Concept of the Purge

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“. . . Party struggles lend a Party strength and vitality; the best proof of the weakness of a Party is the diffuseness and the blurring of clearly defined boundaries, a Party becomes stronger by purging itself . . .” (From a letter by Lasalle to Marx, June 24, 1852, V. I. Lenin, “What Is to Be Done?”).

“I believe that sometime, from time to time, the master must without fail go through the ranks of the Party with a broom in his hands” (J. Stalin, Thirteenth Party Congress).

THE USE OF THE PURGE for the achievement of certain specific objectives has been openly admitted by the Soviet leaders. According to them the purge is an instrument, employed in a rational fashion by the Party, for the cleansing of its system of undesirable elements, and a method of democratic control over the totalitarian organization. The factors of violence and terror are not mentioned. The main emphasis is on the first goal: that of maintaining the purity and efficiency of the movement and of the state organization. This objective is to be achieved by a coldly rational operation, made possible through elaborate and clearly defined plans. The course of the purge is to be plotted in advance, the machinery for it prepared, the victims categorized and spotted.

Very characteristic of this attitude is a booklet entitled *Kak provodit chistku partii*, published in Moscow in 1929 under the editorial guidance of E. Yaroslavsky, the chief “theoretician” of the purge. It contains a full discussion of the forthcoming Party purge (ordered by the Sixteenth Party Conference), outlining the problems and the methods of tackling them. The booklet dis-

cusses the roles to be played in the purge by the various social and political groups in the Soviet Union, and generally seems to conceive of the purge as a normal and quite efficient technique of government, to be used periodically in response to new conditions and needs. Also symptomatic of this attitude is the lengthy directive of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the CPSU issued on the eve of the 1933 purge. It discusses in detail the organization of the purge, the procedures to be followed, and the duration of the purging period.<sup>1</sup>

In the early years of the Soviet state, the purge was limited to the Party, as the Party and the state were at the time two distinct organisms. The Party in its role as the vanguard of the proletariat, striving for the inevitable revolution, had to be highly disciplined and militantly devoted to the cause. As early as 1905 Lenin emphasized that "a revolutionary army is needed because great historical questions can be solved only by *violence*, and the *organization of violence* in the modern struggle is a military organization."<sup>2</sup> In this army only one mind and one will would prevail. There would be no room for negotiation, divergences, or compromise. "Freedom of criticism," demanded by Lenin's less militant colleagues like Martov, was rejected categorically in Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* and the early congresses between the years 1903 and the outbreak of the war became arenas for Lenin's uncompromising factional struggle in behalf of his concept of paramilitary Party organization. The need for discipline and complete submission to centralized control was constantly repeated.

In the present epoch of acute civil war a Communist Party will be able to perform its duty only if it is organized in the most centralized manner, only if iron discipline bordering on military discipline prevails in it, and if its Party center is a powerful and authoritative organ, welding wide powers and enjoying the universal confidence of the members of the Party.<sup>3</sup>

The exigencies of the underground struggle were considered ample justification for this combination of dogmatic theory and centrally directed political action. For this reason,

The Bolshevik Party in the underground period purged its ranks of people who betrayed the line of revolutionary Marxism and Lenin-

ism, who departed from it and fought against this line. In the conditions of underground work, this self-cleansing required a severe struggle against the splitting groups and coteries which were forming around the Party and were disintegrating it. Without such self-cleansing, the Party could not move ahead. Therefore the Party fought every kind of conciliation towards these anti-Party groups, against a liberal attitude towards them in underground conditions. It was necessary carefully to examine every Party member, to purge the ranks of unreliable fellow travellers, of those who had joined the movement by chance, and still more of people who had penetrated our Party with the direct purpose of disintegrating it — the agents of the class enemy and even the agents of the tsarist government.<sup>4</sup>

And so the Party grew and matured in an atmosphere in which compromise was equivalent to treason, in which disobedience was the worst crime, in which unquestioned acceptance of the Party's course, as defined by the leader, was the highest virtue. The psychological basis for the purge of the deviants was thus laid rather early.

The need for the purge did not diminish after the Revolution. "The same, but to an even greater degree, must be said about discipline in the Party after the dictatorship has been achieved," maintained Stalin.<sup>5</sup> The Party was faced with the stupendous task of carrying out its program. It had to strain every ounce of its energy to overcome mass inertia, suspicion, ignorance, and, of course, hostility, subversion, sabotage. The Party was never to be allowed to forget that "when the old society dies, the corpse of bourgeois society cannot be nailed down in a coffin and put in the grave. It decomposes in our midst, this corpse rots and contaminates us ourselves."<sup>6</sup> This demanded a united, determined Party. Membership had to be devoted, unified, idealistic. But power also would attract to the Party elements which hitherto would not have lifted a finger to help in its struggle. Vigilance therefore had to be increased. The privilege of membership could be granted only to those who truly merited it.

In an interesting front-page article which appeared during the Civil War years, "Over-filling of the Party," *Pravda* attacked suggestions for increasing Party membership, calling them absurd. The Party must not be increased too rapidly and members must

be particularly instructed not to recommend individuals for membership merely on the basis of acquaintance (*po znakomstvu*).<sup>7</sup> Otherwise the Party will be penetrated by careerists desirous of jumping on the bandwagon. This point of view soon found an echo in a letter to *Pravda* printed under the rubric *Partiinaia zhizn* (Party life), devoted purely to the discussion of Party matters. The correspondent agrees with the article and calls for concrete "filters and controls" to prevent the flow of undesirable elements into the Party. He specifically recommends a system of "three filters" to insure the high quality of membership. Furthermore, in an interesting anticipation of later developments, the writer calls for an extensive series of lectures and courses for the membership, and for a Party school of political education. Otherwise the danger of infiltration will grow, and, he adds ominously, the Party already contains too many elements from which it ought to divorce itself.<sup>8</sup>

The exhortations of loyal Communists cited here have been echoed over and over again by Soviet leaders. The purge has been acclaimed as a salutary and beneficial operation increasing Soviet might.

The Party is strengthened by purging itself of opportunist elements . . . Our Party succeeded in creating internal unity and unexampled cohesion in its ranks primarily because it was able in good time to purge itself of the opportunist pollution, because it was able to rid its ranks of the Liquidators, the Mensheviks. Proletarian parties develop and become strong by purging themselves of opportunists and reformists, social-imperialists and social-chauvinists, social-patriots and social-pacifists. The Party becomes consolidated by purging itself of opportunist elements.<sup>9</sup>

But as suggested previously, the need for the purge increases as the Party and the masses march towards socialism. For the class struggle does not cease with the seizure of power. On the contrary, it becomes more intense and vicious. External enemies find allies within the Party. In a discussion of this problem which appeared during the height of the 1937-1938 purge, it was pointed out that every step towards socialism is met by intensified resistance from the inside. The Trotskyites, for example, were accused of having been active in their wrecking activities for many years without being detected. The Party must therefore always remain vigilant

and be ready to purge itself.<sup>10</sup> Complacency and lack of perception of the existing dangers are bound to undermine the Soviet system. The Party must strive to make the Soviet masses keenly cognizant of lurking plotters, particularly since so many Soviet citizens have no personal connection with the sacrifices and battles of the Revolution. The official Party journal states on the eve of the great purges:

It is known that 43% of the entire population is composed of people born after the October Revolution. This figure is in itself significant. It shows that we have to do with an entirely new generation of Soviet youth grown up in conditions of a socialist regime. The Soviet youth does not know all the horrors of the past and does not have the same temper as the grown up workers who have been tempered in their fight against the class enemy . . .

And the writer adds with indignation:

It is known, for instance, that in the course of discussions about the Trotskyite-Zinovievite counter-revolutionary centers a large group of Komsomolites showed complete ignorance of the most elementary facts and events in the history of the fight of the Party against counter-revolutionary Trotskyism.<sup>11</sup>

It had clearly become imperative that the purges be performed in cooperation with the greatest possible number of Soviet citizens. They should assist, and should feel morally bound to assist, the state in its struggle against all foes, not considering the purge merely a mechanism of elimination, but the concern of every Party member and every citizen. And such concern must manifest itself in *active* participation.<sup>12</sup> In this manner the purge would become a mechanism of popular control over the monolithic organs of the state and the Party. This official formulation was facilitated by the originally democratic assumptions of Marxist thought, and the purge was held forth as another indication of the populist character of the system. Mr. Deutscher even concludes that "the original motive behind the purges was almost quixotic. It was to enable the people to crack periodically a whip over their rulers. But since the ruling party was convinced that in all essentials of policy it could not really submit to popular control, these new devices for reviving popular control were a priori irrelevant and could not but prove ineffective."<sup>13</sup> And, indeed, the nature of the

Leninist teachings and the available documentation on Lenin's personal attitude suggest that the rulers had absolutely no desire to have a whip cracked periodically over their heads. Despite their official celebration of the democratic aspect, they conceived of the role of the masses in the purge as being like beaters flushing the foxes out in a fox-hunt, whose goal is to assist in locating the victims. But it is the hunters on horseback (or the secret police) who make the kill.<sup>14</sup>

The mass hunt is not the only desirable characteristic of the purge from the standpoint of its organizers. The Soviet system has developed a very useful mechanism known as self-critique, which provides a significant basis for the mass-participation concept of the purge.<sup>15</sup> The function of self-critique, according to a recent Soviet definition, is essentially in "exposing the deficiencies and errors in the work of particular persons, organizations, and institutions on the basis of a free, businesslike discussion by the toilers of all the problems of economic-political work . . . [and] developing the ability to see, to uncover, to acknowledge one's mistakes and to learn from them."<sup>16</sup> Such self-critique is supposed to be practiced by all Soviet citizens in all walks of life. It should be a mass operation, aiming at constant improvement. In effect, however, self-critique is subject to many limitations inherent in the totalitarian nature of the Soviet state. Official policy, by the very fact that it is official, cannot be subjected to a critique unless the regime specifically desires to test public responses to contemplated projects (for example, the 1950 discussion of the agrogorods). In such a case self-critique is encouraged, in order to let the regime crystallize its own viewpoint on certain specific subjects. Once, however, the policy has been determined, no deviation can be tolerated.

The execution of policy, particularly on the lower levels, is subject to frequent critiques. They presumably result in increased efficiency and direct "public vigilance" against actual or potential slackers, and they are also useful in divorcing the regime from the less popular aspects of its own policies. During the purge, for instance, specific state or Party functionaries may be criticized for exceeding their authority, or for undue haste in exposing all sorts of enemies of the people.<sup>17</sup> The regime can thus view the execution of its own policies with a certain degree of detached objectivity.

As a result, self-critique, although a constant feature of the system, reaches its peak during the purge periods. An analysis of the Soviet press, the main vehicle of self-critique, reveals an acute accentuation of it both in content and in tone immediately prior to and during the purge. The organizations of the Party and the state are in this manner steeled for the coming battle, and potential issues receive due airing. The ground for the battle is laid, the participants are briefed, the victims are chosen.

In this task a very important part must be played by the press. The press must pay serious attention to explaining both the political significance of the purging and the significance of the participation of the masses in the purging. The press should correctly organize public opinion by explaining widely the principles of the cleansing . . . Particularly great will be the part played by the "lower" press—the district papers, the factory newspapers, the wall newspapers, the collective farm newspapers.<sup>18</sup>

And as the purge is set in motion, shrill appeals are issued for intensified self-critique:

There are still many cases of direct suppression of self-critique, of repressions against the critics, of firing from work and even expulsion from the Party. Every such act, every repression for justified critique of shortcomings constitutes an anti-Party act. One should remember: in many cases it is the enemy who adopts measures of repression against those who criticize . . . Bolshevik self-critique and revolutionary vigilance are blood sisters . . .<sup>19</sup>

With the spread of the purge increased vigilance is stressed, and self-critique gains in violence and frequency.<sup>20</sup>

This close connection between propaganda and terror is frequently overlooked by students of totalitarianism, who tend to analyze them as two separate processes. Actually, each depends on the other for full effectiveness.<sup>21</sup> The propaganda campaign, of which self-critique is a part, is also an intrinsic element of the purge and aims to dehumanize the enemy and develop an atmosphere of inevitability strong enough to make resistance seem futile. Soviet leaders have long recognized that public opinion, even when shackled, is still a factor to be reckoned with. People cannot be allowed to remain silent, for silence in totalitarianism is a form of

negation or opposition. Public opinion must therefore be mobilized for the purpose of "enthusiastically" supporting the policies of the regime. The Party congress, for instance, has become a convenient method of symbolizing popular support for the policies of the system; and it is of interest to note that purges have usually been accompanied by national or republican Party congresses, which emphasized the unity of the Party even while the purging process was underway.

The propaganda campaign, furthermore, permits the utilization of the purge for political education. The purge serves to crystallize and dramatize the policies of the regime (and also the fate of deviants) in the eyes of the population, and all the means of mass communication are mobilized for that purpose. The press and radio carry complete accounts of the various trials, confessions, testimony. It was not uncommon during 1936, 1937, and 1938 for a four-page Soviet daily, be it in Moscow or in the provinces, to carry for many days complete accounts of the purge trials, devoting about three pages daily to them. Mass meetings were also held, in which the public was exhorted to hatred and contempt for the miserable creatures who "betrayed" the country of socialism.<sup>22</sup> The press carried photographs of masses of sullen Soviet citizens, led by agitators and carrying slogans like "Shoot the mad fascist dogs."<sup>23</sup>

At such meetings appropriately vitriolic and vociferous resolutions were usually passed. *Pravda* on August 20, 1937, for instance, had an editorial entitled "Stamp Out the Snakes," and carried the texts of the following resolutions: "Shoot the Murderers," "Destroy the Enemies of the People," "Punish the Thieves Mercilessly," etc. Resolutions worded almost the same appeared in various local newspapers throughout the USSR. Particularly swift and outraged was the reaction of the "masses" to the news of the trial *in camera* and the execution of the alleged military conspirators. On June 11, 1937 a brief announcement was made of the arrest of Marshal Tukhachevsky and his colleagues. On June 12 the verdict was published, together with the statement that the death sentences imposed had been carried out. The very edition of *Pravda* carrying the news of the execution exhibited on its front page a picture of grim-faced instructors and officers of the Moscow Military Academy, listening to a fist-waving colonel discuss this development.

Resolutions of the night shifts of Moscow factories likewise managed to make the presses. They were entitled: "For the Dogs — a Dog's Death," "Destroy the Scum," "Shoot the Mad Dogs." The poet Demian Bednyi dashed off several inspired verses, with references by name to the "traitors," which likewise appeared in the June 12 edition.<sup>24</sup>

During the purges the press displayed many letters from its readers, expressing their approval of the measures taken against the uncovered "plotters" and "saboteurs." Most of the letters did not deviate from the style set by the resolutions. A number of interviews with those who personally attended various trials were likewise published. Reactions varied only in the intensity of the language; the sentiment was uniformly bloodthirsty. A series of books about the trials and the operation of hostile espionage agencies was also made available to the reading public, and received "favorable" reviews.<sup>25</sup> Soviet citizens were asked to acquaint themselves with their contents, especially since, it was pointed out, no specific methods for capturing spies could possibly be suggested. Soviet citizens must be vigilant, alert; the best method that could be recommended was wide-open eyes.<sup>26</sup> The attention of the people was particularly drawn to the major trials, which emphasized the need for increased vigilance.

In considering the role of the trials as a means of political education, one should draw a distinction between national and local trials. The major national trials tended to emphasize conspiracies against the leadership of the Soviet state, attempts to sabotage the Soviet economy, plots to partition the Soviet Union in collaboration with foreign powers, etc. The main actors in these trials were former competitors for power and their close associates, who were now reduced to confessing most despicable plots to destroy the fruits of the Revolution that they themselves helped to bring about.<sup>27</sup> The supreme correctness of the totalitarian regime was thus again asserted, and any failings in its policies were shouldered by the accused. The population could not avoid drawing the desired moral from such proceedings: resistance is useless, the system is unchallengeable, its leadership is infallible. The trials on the local level, although basically similar in character, involved issues which were more narrowly defined. They depended, naturally,

more on local circumstances and were adapted to local conditions, complaints, or deficiencies. In one trial "nationalist deviation" was scourged; in another professional or technical personnel were utilized as scapegoats.<sup>28</sup> In this manner burning local issues were aired, and the people presented with an opportunity to draw the expected deductions.

It is the educative function of the trials that makes the Soviets insist on confessions. The spectacle of once powerful and admittedly courageous men biting the dust before the titan who is about to destroy them has baffled the world, and many have ascribed it to some inherent qualities of the "Russian soul" or to the vestiges of Orientalism which are presumably the heritage of the Mongol yoke. Confessions, however, are politically important only in so far as they contribute to mass education. Not all political cases are brought to public trial in the Soviet Union, and those that are settled on a public forum are purposely selected for their propaganda content. The confession thus becomes important to the ritual of the trial, which, by necessity, must avoid creating martyrs and heroes and must insist that the victims collaborate in their own moral and physical destruction. Such collaboration is the last contribution they can make to the system, and, doubtless, some of them cooperate in order to at least give a meaning to their death. The interrogators are aware of this possibility and exploit the advantage fully. In the words of Anton Ciliga, who personally experienced this procedure and who, as a Communist, was considered susceptible to this kind of an appeal: "All the time the authorities insisted on my admitting having committed acts of sabotage I had never done. I refused. I was told: 'If you are in favor of the Soviet Government, as you pretend you are, prove it by your actions; the Government needs your confession.'" <sup>29</sup> Many Communists probably find such requests difficult to reject. In the personal accounts of former Soviet forced laborers, one invariably reads of a fanatical Communist who shares all the hardships and sufferings of his fellow-prisoners yet still clings desperately to his vision of the Communist reality, condemning the other inmates as "enemies of the people" who are receiving their due from the Soviet power.<sup>30</sup> Men like these, or on a higher level like the old Bolsheviks, might have been willing to publicly confess as a last

contribution to the cause in which they believed. And for those less cooperative, the system has developed elaborate techniques of inducement.<sup>31</sup> Such accused men die the way they have been pictured as living—cringing, fearful, cowardly.

The purge thus becomes more than a mere mechanism for cleansing the Party. From a restricted operation limited only to the ruling elite, the Soviet concept of the purge has undergone an evolution which extends it to the entire society and demands the participation of every citizen. In the eyes of the leadership the purge is not only a useful instrument of government but also a method of encouraging public support through mass propaganda and political education. The regime thus indicates its recognition of the fact that totalitarian power cannot rest on coercion alone, but must also strive to develop elements of consent, even if forcibly induced, among the population. The purge, as a controlled operation, appears to be a suitable technique of attaining that objective, while at the same time revitalizing the system and eliminating any alternatives to the existing leadership. And the history of the last thirty years shows the extent to which the Soviet regime has relied, with varying degrees of success, on the purges to insure its power and to prevent the degeneration of revolutionary fervor.

# 4

## ***The Expansion and Evolution of the Stalinist Purge, 1930–1936***

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**“It should be remembered that the more hopeless the position of the enemies, the more eagerly will they clutch at ‘extreme measures’ as the only recourse of the doomed in their struggles against the Soviet power. We must remember this and be vigilant” (Statement of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) on the assassination of S. M. Kirov).**

THE TOTALITARIAN PURGE EVOLVES, expands, and changes as the process of stabilization of the totalitarian regime advances through time. In the initial stages of the regime’s development, its enemies can be easily identified, categorized, and disposed of by the coercive institutions of the state. In the beginning of the totalitarian era, the purge efficiently takes care of certain categories of members who are judged unsuitable for continued membership and are expelled from the movement by competent Party boards. This process parallels closely the final stages of the elimination of “counterrevolutionary” elements by the secret police. But as the regime stabilizes itself, the “enemies” become more difficult to locate. The secret police must redouble its efforts and search for them vigorously. The “enemies,” because they are weaker, make increasing efforts to mask themselves. They may succeed in penetrating the totalitarian movement and fooling its authorities; hence ever more energetic efforts are required to trace, detect, and eliminate them. And so the secret police begins to search among the Party membership, and the purge itself becomes more violent and more bloody in its consequences.

The history of the Soviet purges is, therefore, characterized by a gradual but steady accentuation of the role of the secret police in the purging process, by the numerical expansion of the purge, and

by a growing lack of concern for the welfare of the individuals involved in it. The peak in the purging continuum was reached with the completion of the transition of the Soviet regime from a merely dictatorial system to a totalitarian dictatorship. With the power of the system solidified in the hands of one man, and with its reach slowly extending into every facet of the life of the Soviet citizens, the long-planned programmatic changes in the entire social, economic, and political structure of the country began to be implemented. Industrialization and collectivization not only brought about the first fruits of the socialist construction but also produced many new victims of the system and many new privations for the people. Simultaneously the new political and economic system was demanding a new type of administrator, a new kind of Party member. The purge of 1936-1938 was thus the logical conclusion to the pressures building up within the Soviet state, as well as the final aftermath of the struggle for power which had just been victoriously concluded by Stalin. That struggle had been waged incessantly for almost fifteen years and provided a suitable background for the blood bath which was to follow.

The earlier Soviet purges of the twenties had been more limited in scope, with more narrowly defined objectives. The regime was then faced with the necessity of establishing an administrative apparatus of its own, of overcoming many centers of local resistance, and of solidifying its hold on the country. The totalitarian nature of the regime was not yet fully apparent. The early purges were thus marginal in nature. Infiltrators and opportunists, members of the old Tsarist administration, and former members of opposition parties who gained admission into the Bolshevik Party were the first on the list. Furthermore, the Party had to deal with developing internal revolts and factions. At the Tenth Party Congress, held in March 1921, special control commissions were established to carry out purges of the membership on the local level. This first purge, ordered by the Central Committee of the Party on July 21, 1921, yielded unexpectedly high results. In the course of the year, 156,931 members were expelled, out of the total Party membership of 585,000.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously with the expulsions, more formalized procedures for entry into the Party were set up to prevent mass infiltration by hostile elements.

The need for cleansing the Party membership was dramatically accentuated by the spectacular Kronstadt revolt, initiated and staged by the backbone of the Bolshevik Revolution — the Kronstadt sailors.<sup>2</sup> The Party suppressed the revolt brutally and thereby demonstrated its determination to assert complete control over its membership. “Whoever in the least weakens the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship) aids in reality the bourgeoisie against the proletariat,” Lenin had declared.<sup>3</sup> The Party was determined not to tolerate factions or any other violations of Party unity. The unity, however, was soon to be sorely tried by the struggle for power precipitated by Lenin’s serious illness and death.<sup>4</sup> Already by 1923 the secret police, under Felix Dzerzhinski, was beginning to show its hand by dealing summarily with Party members. The members’ autonomy was gradually diminishing, and the personnel department of the Central Committee was busy compiling personal data on the members of the Party.<sup>5</sup> “Every blemish in a member’s record was duly registered. ‘It is necessary to study every worker through and through,’ said Stalin, ‘in every detail.’”<sup>6</sup> Those found unreliable were purged, and 1924 was marked by growing purges of the universities (where the students tended to side with Trotsky) and the soviets. In the following year the village Party cells were subjected to a close check-up.

It is not within the scope of this study to sketch the course of the struggle for power between the Secretary General and his various competitors. A number of works, some of which will be cited in this book, have done so already in detail. By 1927 Trotsky and Zinoviev were exiled from Moscow, together with some seventy-five of their leading supporters. Stalin next turned his attention against the so-called right wing, and, by the late fall of 1928, he was in a position to declare: “We came across representatives of the Right danger in our lower Party organization during the grain purchasing crisis last year, when a number of Communists in the volosts and villages opposed the Party’s policy and pursued a policy of forming a bond with kulak elements. As you know, such people were cleared out of the Party last spring . . .”<sup>7</sup> The Moscow Party organization, headed by N. A. Uglanov, was purged, and by 1929 the opposition estimated that some 5,000 of its supporters were in

prison.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, according to official statistics, not less than 260,144 individuals were weeded out of the Party in a series of "screenings" between 1921 and 1928.<sup>9</sup> Trotsky was exiled to Turkey and many of his close collaborators were arrested. His former secretary, Gregory Butov, died of a hunger strike while imprisoned;<sup>10</sup> J. Blumkin, member of the foreign intelligence section of the GPU, was executed for illegal contacts with Trotsky. The opposition was terrorized and scattered. Bukharin, in a famous quotation, spoke of Stalin as suffocating the opposition.

But even if Bukharin's melodramatic statement was somewhat premature, the opposition was being thwarted in an equally effective way—namely, its roots in the Party were being gradually chopped off through the elimination of its supporters and protégés. The Party was again subjected to an intensified purge, made mandatory, according to Stalin's address to the Plenum of the Central Committee which met between April 16 and 23, 1929, by the accentuation of the struggle against "capitalist" elements.<sup>11</sup> Stalin added that it would be ridiculous to assume that a cleansing of the state and economic apparatus could be effected (in 1930 some 450,000 civil servants had been screened for security and about 30 per cent dismissed)<sup>12</sup> with the Party remaining "infected." According to official statistics the purge resulted by mid-July, the time of the Sixteenth Party Congress, in the expulsion of 130,500 Communists—about 10 per cent of the total membership.<sup>13</sup>

As the regime grew in power, so did the repressions. The years 1928 and 1929 saw the first trials of professional personnel, signaling the beginning of the lengthy process of displacing the old professional cadres by the new technical intelligentsia. The first great "sabotage" trial was staged between May 18 and July 5, 1928. Forty-seven Donets Basin engineers, many of whom had held high posts in Soviet industry, were convicted of wrecking. Eleven were sentenced to death and five actually executed. Shortly afterwards, in May 1929, a number of prominent Russian technicians were arrested, charged with wrecking and counterrevolutionary activities, condemned, and executed. In 1930 came the trial and elimination of the so-called Industrial Party, headed by Riabushinsky, Denisov, and others. Many Gosplan officials were also charged with wrecking, and the Soviet people were given a foretaste of mass confes-

sions and recantations. The accused piled guilt upon guilt on themselves and competed with the prosecution in proving their perversity. In 1931 the GPU proudly announced the unmasking and destruction of a Menshevik "spy" organization.

In 1932 a new effort was launched to eliminate ex-Trotskyites as well as former members of the right-wing opposition. Ciliga reports that in that year "the first batches of convicted 'terrorists' arrived at Verkhne-Uralsk," where he himself was imprisoned. "The people concerned were fairly unimportant members of the right-wing opposition, former members of the Government and of the Central Committee: Riutin, Uglanov, Tolmatchev, Eismonte and a few younger Communists. The papers had announced that they had been expelled from the Party for having tried to form 'counter-revolutionary organizations of bourgeois and kulaks' in order to 'restore capitalism and kulaks in particular in the USSR.'" <sup>14</sup> In 1933 the Commissariat of Agriculture was purged, shortly after the relaxation in collectivization policy. Throughout this period stricter attention was also devoted to intellectual and scientific endeavors, with growing emphasis on ideological orthodoxy. Scholars were subjected to intensified criticism and closer surveillance. In 1935, in a symbolic move indicating the new era, a number of old Communist societies were abolished. The Society of Old Bolsheviks, the Association of Former Political Prisoners, and the renowned Communist Academy (in 1936) fell into the dustbin of history.

These early purges and trials were part of the general pattern of shifting fronts in the struggle between Stalin and the opposition forces. The aftermath of every skirmish was a rapid purge of the fallen victims and their allies.<sup>15</sup> The sufferings caused by coercive collectivization and rapid industrialization were piled on the shoulders of the victims, who were conveniently blamed for all the hardships caused by such policies. Into their places stepped the new cadres which the regime was beginning to produce. The top leadership was now in a position to launch a more intensive effort.

In 1934 Stalin boasted to the Seventeenth Party Congress:

The present Congress is taking place under the flag of the complete victory of Leninism; under the flag of the liquidation of the remnants of the anti-Leninist groups. The anti-Leninist Trotskyite group has

been defeated and scattered. Its organizers are now to be found in the backyards of the bourgeois parties abroad. The anti-Leninist group of the Right deviationists has been defeated and scattered. Its organizers have long since renounced their views and are now trying in various ways to expiate the sins they committed against the Party. The national deviationist groups have been defeated and scattered. Their organizers have either completely merged with the interventionist emigres, or else recanted . . . It must be admitted that the Party is united today as it has never been before.<sup>16</sup>

However, at that very moment, a new purge, begun as early as January 1933,<sup>17</sup> was thinning the ranks of the Party and had already accounted for about 850,000 Party members and candidates.<sup>18</sup>

The ostensible motive for the purge begun in 1933 (and lasting until 1935) was the rapid growth of the Party, which had resulted in weakened vigilance and lower political acumen of the membership. Many members were said to have been admitted into the Party without prior training and without fulfilling the requirements for membership. (Members admitted into the Party in the course of the preceding four years amounted to over 1,300,000, while the total of those purged during the same period numbered 382,587.)<sup>19</sup> Particularly undesirable elements were said to have penetrated the agricultural cells of the Party. A Central Purgings Commission, chaired by Ia. E. Rudzutak and containing such Party stalwarts as Lazar Kaganovich and Sergei Kirov as well as N. I. Yezhov, was accordingly set up. The purge was to "achieve a higher ideological standard of Party members, to strengthen the Party organization politically, to secure further confidence in the Party on the part of millions of non-Party men and women."<sup>20</sup> The following categories were to be expelled from the Party: "alien and hostile elements" who had infiltrated; violators of Party discipline, including those "who express doubts as to the wisdom of the Party decisions and the plans marked out by the Party"; "degenerate individuals" who were unwilling to fight the kulaks and other enemies of the people; careerists who promoted their own welfare to the detriment of the Party and the people; "the moral degenerates" who "besmirch the banner of the Party."<sup>21</sup>

The need for such a purge was felt acutely by the Soviet leadership. Having concluded a struggle for power, and having set in mo-

tion the ambitious schemes rapidly changing the face of Soviet society, the leaders were fearful that the Party's morale may have been weakened and undermined. The Party had grown rapidly after the Sixteenth Party Congress, but the indescribable sufferings of collectivization had led to a great deal of disillusionment and dissatisfaction. At the same time, a new generation of young Communists, reared by the regime, was seeking its place in the Party, in the administrative apparatus, and in the growing economic enterprises. Thus with the temporary relaxation in the economic policies of the system, inaugurated by the famous "Dizzy with Success" statement of Stalin, came an almost simultaneous tightening-up in the system of controls and the purging of the Party and other Soviet institutions. Purging commissions, set up over the entire Soviet Union, commenced their operations in the various economic establishments, in administrative offices, in schools, in social institutions.

All Party members had to pass through the purging process. The Central Purging Commission, in its "Instructions to the Regional, District and Lower Party Purging Commissions," stated clearly that:

Every Communist shall pass the purging in the cell where he pays his membership dues and where he is registered . . . The appearance of all members and candidates of the Party upon the summons of the purging commissions is obligatory. Should any member or candidate of the Party be unable, for sufficient cause (illness, absence on out-of-town business, etc.) to appear on the date fixed for the purging, such member shall undergo the purging separately upon his return to the place of his work . . . Every member or candidate of the Party shall submit to the purging commission a short autobiography and information about his past and present work.<sup>22</sup>

At an appointed day a purging commission would visit a given Party cell, and in an open meeting, frequently attended by hundreds of onlookers, would question the cell members. The questions were based on information derived from their autobiographies and from written denunciations. Onlookers were allowed to participate. After completing the examination, the commission would announce its verdict: cleared, cleared with a reprimand, or excluded from the Party. A report would then be prepared, and the commission was required to fill out elaborate statistical forms for

each cell, giving the results of its labors. Voluminous archives, which in later years frequently served as the basis for arrest, were gathered in this manner.

The main impact of the purge was directed at the Party's agricultural cadres. The reasons were apparently twofold: first, the Party was attempting to alleviate some of the burdens imposed on the agricultural population through forceful and speedy collectivization, and to dissociate itself from the abuses which its own policy had initiated;<sup>23</sup> and second, this purge was a further effort to redress the balance of social composition within the Party in favor of the industrial proletariat. On the basis of the decisions adopted at the Fifteenth Congress, the Party had been making strenuous efforts to attract the workers into its ranks,<sup>24</sup> and the elimination from the Party of proportionately large numbers of peasants was bound to increase the ratio of workers. In his report to the Seventeenth Party Congress, Rudzutak explicitly stated that the peasant cadres, particularly those who had joined the Party in the preceding three or four years, were most affected by the purge.<sup>25</sup> The relative number of workers in the Party grew accordingly, as the following list of the percentage of workers in Party organizations suggests.<sup>26</sup>

<i>Regional Organization</i>	<i>Before Purge</i>	<i>By 1934</i>
Kiev	60.0%	63.0%
Odessa	64.0%	67.0%
East Siberia	47.0%	52.0%
DVK	58.0%	62.0%
Vinnitsa	48.0%	50.0%
Ten regional organizations taken as a whole	67.7%	69.4%

This policy, various speakers emphasized, was bound to strengthen the Party and result in similar improvements in the remaining regions where the purge was not yet concluded.

An announcement of more severe legal provisions for dealing with political opposition added a timely element of further intimidation. A decree on "Counterrevolution and High Treason," announced in June 1934, provided for collective responsibility of the family in cases of flight of military personnel abroad.<sup>27</sup> Severe

penalties were likewise established for failure to inform the authorities about an act of treason, whether actually committed or merely planned. The disposition of political cases involving alleged "terrorism" was accelerated, and death sentences were to be executed immediately after their imposition.<sup>28</sup> The GPU was expanded into the All-Union Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), and placed in charge of all existing labor camps.<sup>29</sup> In this manner adequate machinery for executing the purge was set up.

The specter of nationalism was raised. Particularly heavy blows struck Byelorussia and the Ukraine, where the famine had left an especially painful mark and loyalty to the Party had been severely tried. The native intelligentsia was especially affected.<sup>30</sup> In 1933, in a desperate gesture of protest against the purge, Mykola Skrypnyk, commissar of education in the Ukrainian republican government and an old Bolshevik, committed suicide. He was immediately accused of having plotted the submission of the Ukraine to Polish landlords. The ranks of the Party were swept by expulsions and arrests. The official figures state that by January 1, 1936, 97.4 per cent of the Party members and 86 per cent of the candidates had been inspected and 10 per cent expelled.<sup>31</sup> These figures do not include the earlier period during which the rate of expulsion was much higher, involving, for instance, about half of all the Ukrainian district Party secretaries and over half of all the district executive committee chairmen.<sup>32</sup>

The purge in Byelorussia did not lag behind. It was spurred on by the internal struggle for power between N. F. Gikalo, the Party secretary, and the head of the republican government, N. M. Goloded. Gikalo, in order to strengthen his position after his appointment in 1931, proceeded to weed out ruthlessly all unreliable elements both from the Party and the administration. In keeping with the trend of the purging operation to become increasingly a concern of the secret police, Gikalo's right hand in this process was his NKVD Commissar Leonid Zakovsky, who later became Yezhov's close associate. By early 1934 roughly 25 per cent of the Byelorussian Party organization had been purged. Prior to the purge the Communist Party of Byelorussia numbered 53,753; by 1934 the Party had only 39,817 members and candidates.<sup>33</sup> Similar developments occurred in the other national republics, especially in

the regions where opposition to Soviet agricultural policies was most evident.<sup>34</sup> The underlying factor in the purge of the nationalities (which will be considered in more detail in the discussion of the 1936–1938 purge) was, however, the desire on the part of the Soviet leadership, with the struggle for power behind them, to weld the various nationalities more tightly together under central control. The achievement of this policy was dependent on the elimination of the older local Bolshevik leaders, who were unduly inclined to assert the federative nature of the Soviet Union. The purge of 1936–1938 concluded this process.

The purge became more violent and widespread after the assassination of Kirov in December 1934. The assassin and forty-nine of his alleged accomplices were summarily executed. Other executions followed in various parts of the Soviet Union, particularly in Moscow, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine. Zinoviev and Kamenev were charged with complicity (although they refused to confess) and sentenced to prison terms. Zhdanov moved into Leningrad, and a mass purge of the city organization commenced. Numberless “Kirov’s assassins” were deported and sent to forced labor camps or resettled in the eastern Soviet Union. Within the Party organizations efforts were made to effect closer control over the membership,<sup>35</sup> and the current purging performance of various Party organizations was attacked as being formalistic and ineffective. “There is no guarantee that hostile elements will not continue to remain within the ranks of the CPSU(B) after the screening,” warned the Central Committee on May 13, 1935, when ordering continuation of the purge.<sup>36</sup>

An intensive campaign of self-critique was immediately begun. The emphasis was on disorganization, lack of vigilance, and the penetration of Party ranks by Trotskyite infiltrators and spineless careerists. “It is known that a number of Party organizations committed serious mistakes with respect to the growth of the Party. There were cases of entire collectives being accepted into the Party, there were cases of Party organizations increasing several times over in a very short period of time.”<sup>37</sup> Local leaders were accused of having permitted their organizations to degenerate into a state of semianarchy, in which Party discipline was a thing of the past.

The screening shows that our Party management is in the most horrible state of disorder. The order of issuance of documents and the accounting of Party members are organized in the worst possible way. Many leaders of the primary organizations do not know how many members they have in their organizations. Considerable discrepancies are found between the data of the district Party committees and the actual number of members. The transfer of Communists from one Party organization to another is carried out without proper registration and accounting. Cases of "dead souls," when Party cards of deceased Party members are used, are frequent.<sup>38</sup>

In another equally illuminating case, the Secretary of the Novosibirsk City Party Committee complained bitterly that in many districts Party cards were easily accessible to all. In one locality a woman named Zhutaieva, who was not even a Party member, used to hand out Party cards to members and candidates purely on her own initiative and finally became so bold as to sign them herself.<sup>39</sup> Discrepancies in Party accounting were running into the thousands.<sup>40</sup> The Party, therefore, felt the need for increased discipline and for tighter measures of control over the membership.

Party organizations which were considered to have screened their membership inadequately were ordered to check their membership again. With the prevailing atmosphere so encouraging, the results accomplished in the second screening were indeed impressive. Thus, for instance, while the first screening in the 22 districts of the Chernigov region resulted in only 15 expulsions from the Party, the second led to 362 expulsions; three districts of the Sverdlovsk region reported 30 expulsions the first time and 225 the second; 36 districts of the East Siberian Party organization expelled 218 members on the first try and 784 on the second;<sup>41</sup> and the Western Region, ordered on June 27, 1935 by the Central Committee to conduct a rescreening, reported that out of some 4000 members checked, 1768 or 22 per cent lost their Party cards, as contrasted with a mere 150 on the first screening.<sup>42</sup>

By the middle of 1935 Soviet publications began to publish some preliminary data on the results of the purge. Most of the figures were restricted to Party membership, and, of course, no official statement was ever issued about removals from work, arrests, or

deportations. Former Soviet citizens now living abroad insist that the 1933-1935 purge was exceeded in scope only by the later purges of the Yezhov period. The frequent references made by these informants to arrests of members of their families during this period bear witness to the extended reach of the purge. The severity and irrationality of the suppression accompanying the purge was on the increase. One former Soviet citizen testified that he was arrested and held for three days for drawing a caricature of Kirov (the respondent's age was then fifteen);<sup>43</sup> a number mentioned that their fathers were arrested for social incompatibility with the new regime.<sup>44</sup>

No data is available on the number of those seized in these large-scale arrests accompanying the purge. However, the Soviet publications are of help in determining the impact of the purge on the Party itself. The various Party organizations made periodic reports on their performance, and the purge certainly provides opportunity to demonstrate one's vigilance and ability. These scattered reports are also extremely valuable in determining the general pattern of the purge and in checking the reliability of the overall summary. For instance, the Crimean Party organization reported in the middle of May 1935 that its twenty district and urban purging commissions were ready to cite their accomplishments, which were said to include an increase in production, greater interest and participation in socialist construction, and improvements in the political education of Soviet laborers. As an illustration, shockworker Rudenko, a Crimean longshoreman, is quoted as saying: "I want to appear at the purge fully prepared, not only with good results in my work, but also having assimilated the decisions of the XVII Party Congress, of the statute and programme. That is why I buy political literature and study it at home."<sup>45</sup> A more earthy reference reports that of the Party organization's 22,060 members 21,558 had been screened and 2,926 (or 13.6 per cent) expelled.<sup>46</sup>

A report from the other end of the Soviet Union, given by the Secretary of the West Siberian *Krai* Committee, stated that during the purge 3,576 Party cards were taken away from various members, which represents about 11 per cent of those involved. The outcasts were characterized as "kulaks, white-guards, trotskyites,

zinovievites, and all other dirt." The educational institutions of the Party were said to have been particularly penetrated by the Trotskyites, and consequently about 7 per cent of the Party instructors and 9 per cent of the *partorgi* had to be expelled.<sup>47</sup> In the city of Novosibirsk 14.7 per cent of those examined were reported to have been expelled.<sup>48</sup> These figures seem to be in addition to the report given to the Seventeenth Party Congress early in 1934, where the number of purged Party members of the West Siberian organization already stood at 21,000, or about 17 per cent of the Party organization's membership.<sup>49</sup> Similarly the Yaroslav Party organization reported by July 1934 that in nine regions 17,087 members, or 18.3 per cent of the 93,401 members subjected to the screening, had been expelled.<sup>50</sup> And finally, the Party organization of the transport workers reported that it had checked 144,000 members and 48,000 candidates; and 24,000 (16.6 per cent) of the Party members and 11,500 (24 per cent) of the candidates had their cards withdrawn. Several regional railroad heads were also dismissed from their posts.<sup>51</sup>

Many more figures could be cited, but these, along with the statistics given previously for Byelorussia and the Ukraine, should suffice to indicate a certain pattern, useful for an over-all analysis. It would seem that the average of expulsions in the various scattered regions of the Soviet Union oscillated between about 12 per cent and 25 per cent of the membership, with the majority of the reports falling somewhere in the vicinity of 15 per cent. With this ratio in mind, we can attempt an analysis of the entire Party purge on the basis of published Soviet data.

Statistics published shortly after Kirov's death, but because of the complicated nature of Party accounting probably valid for the period just preceding his death, indicate that the purge had "transferred to candidates and sympathizers 64,371 Communists, that is 12.3% of all people under purge."<sup>52</sup> These figures mean that the purge involved about 536,500 Party members, or about 20 per cent of the entire Party. This picture changed rapidly after Kirov's assassination. An article published in the October 1935 issue of the official Party journal, *Partinoe Stroitel'stvo*, claimed that by the first of October 1,174,200 Party members and 241,000 candidates had been screened. It added that: "The checking helped the

Party cleanse its ranks of rogues, kulaks, white-guards, counter-revolutionary trotskyites, zinovievites, double-crossers and other hostile elements. As a consequence 38,940 or 3.3% of the members' cards and 6.1% of the candidates' cards had been taken away."<sup>53</sup> Shortly afterwards, on December 25, 1935, the Central Committee of the Party, having heard a full account of the results of the purge from comrade Yezhov, declared the purge to be over. According to Yezhov's report the screening had affected 81.1 per cent of the Party personnel; and of these, 9.1 per cent had been expelled.<sup>54</sup> The "screening" was pronounced a success.

The question, therefore, arises: what is the significance of these percentages? The Seventeenth Congress of the Party revealed that the Party membership consisted of 1,872,488 members and 935,398 candidates.<sup>55</sup> Of these, 81.1 per cent, or about 1,517,000 members and 757,600 candidates, had been checked. If the percentage of expulsions is correct, the number of expellees from the Party totaled 206,934. Two more figures, however, have not been included in these totals: the previously cited 64,371 Communists "transferred to candidates and sympathizers" (which is a demotion for a member, and was probably a disciplinary step for lack of proper membership qualifications); and the 47,000 Party cards mentioned by Malenkov as being without accounting cards.<sup>56</sup> These figures, added to the previous total of about 207,000, bring the grand total of Party members involved in the purge during 1934 and 1935 to about 315,000, or about 12 per cent of the membership (which corresponds closely to the regional and local averages previously cited).<sup>57</sup>

Soviet totalitarianism could now look back at the accomplishments of its first great purge. Resistance to its economic policies had collapsed. Hostile economic groups were dispersed and broken. Many administrators and professionals of the old regime had been eliminated. Supporters of the former opposition were further weakened, and the process of shaping the Party to the Stalinist mold had been given additional impetus. The operations of a mass purge had for the first time been successfully tested. Unreliable elements within the Party were given a practical demonstration of the fact that the essential criterion of good standing within the Party was absolute devotion to the regime. It is of interest to note that a great

many expelled members had joined the Party between 1929 and 1932,<sup>58</sup> which means that they hastened into the ranks of the Party after the conclusion of the struggle for power. Such band-wagon climbers were among the first to fall victim to the purge.

Essentially, however, the purge was meant to solidify Stalinist leadership over the Party after the traumatic experiences of the early thirties, which had caused many a foreign observer to forecast the early collapse of the Soviet state and of the Stalinist regime. But the system did not collapse. The loyalty of the Party to Stalin and his close collaborators was preserved by the launching of the ambitious economic projects of the system. In such an hour of crisis a betrayal of the leadership would have been tantamount to a betrayal of Communism. Few Party members were willing to pay that price. Some probably hoped that the achievement of Communism would per se eliminate the dangerous tendency towards centralization, absolutism, totalitarianism. Others welcomed such developments and were only too anxious to hitch their wagons to the Stalinist star. Struggle, suffering, and opposition welded the Party together. And a political party engaged in a struggle for survival is not likely to turn against its leadership.

The danger of that development was further minimized by the caution and foresight exercised by the regime in not ever committing itself entirely to a policy of violence and suppression. The noteworthy fact about the Soviet government is that it has always striven to use measures of repression and relaxation simultaneously, in this manner maintaining at all times a balance of support. In times of major political changes, like the NEP period, significant economic concessions were made. In times of economic upheaval, like the collectivization, the ranks of the Party were opened to new recruits and the base of political support broadened. The development of political repressions during the late thirties was accompanied by an analogous improvement in the general standard of living.<sup>59</sup> The beginning of the great purge in 1936 was also marked by nationwide discussions of the "Stalin Constitution"—hailed as a landmark in Soviet democracy. The balance was at times precarious, but it was always there.

For the essence of leadership is to avoid becoming the captive of one's own organization. The leader who becomes a slave of the

policies he has launched and the organization he has created ceases to be a leader and becomes merely a symbol. And Stalin could never afford to be only a façade. Too many enemies and too many friends would be only too ready to replace the façade with a new face. Stalin put it thus: "The art of leadership is a serious matter. One must not lag behind the movement, because to do so is to become isolated from the masses. But neither must one rush ahead, for to rush ahead is to lose contact with the masses. He who wants to lead a movement and at the same time keep in touch with the vast masses must wage a fight on two fronts—against those who lag behind and against those who rush on ahead." <sup>60</sup> Stalin was ready and willing to fight on two fronts—but not on two fronts at the same time. It was only after the opposition, both political and economic, was broken that the regime was ready to turn "against those who rush on ahead." The alleged careerists and opportunists, the overambitious and the sluggards, both in the Party and in the state apparatus, were now purged. But in the final analysis it did not matter too much who the victims were—so long as the purge could liberate the rulers from the Party, so long as it could establish the independence of the dictator from his own system.

The stage was now set for the next act. The Seventh Soviet passed a resolution calling for a new constitution, and the country was called upon to participate in shaping the "great Stalin Constitution." At the same time the vast projects of the Second Five Year Plan were beginning to be implemented. But few expected that the next two years would be marked by a display of violence hitherto unprecedented, that the Yezhov period was about to become history, and that Stalin was getting ready to "wage a fight on two fronts."

# 5

## **The Mass Purge and Terror Coalesce: The Violent Stage, 1936–1938**

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“. . . a revolution is an austere process and does not spare its human vertebrae” (Leon Trotsky, “On Lenin’s Testament”).

BETWEEN THE YEARS 1936 and 1938 the Soviet Union was subjected to terror and purges on a scale unprecedented in modern history. Terror, applied on a vast scope and embracing the entire society, paralleled and supplemented the purges, which themselves were collecting their toll in the Party and in the state administration. Indeed, at the height of this massive operation, the all-pervading terror and the accentuated purge merged into one gigantic operation in which to be purged meant to be subjected to terroristic procedures and to be terrorized meant for many to live in the dread of the purge.

The new blood bath followed immediately after the purge of 1933–1935 (officially declared over by the decree of the Central Committee of the Party on December 25, 1935), which was both a prelude to and an integral part of what was to come. It was a prelude in the sense that it laid the groundwork for the gigantic operation of the Yezhov purge through the elimination of the more active enemies, through the coerced capitulation of Stalin’s erstwhile competitors for power, through the increased centralization and concentration of power within the hands of a limited and tightly knit crew of Stalin’s personal followers, and finally through the terrorization of the population and even the Party personnel, whose will to resist was thoroughly weakened by the constant oscillation between sudden onslaughts of purging and terror, and brief unexpected respites.<sup>1</sup> But the earlier purge was also an integral part of the so-called *Yezhovshchina* for the simple reason that it had never really ceased, despite the announcement of December 25. On the contrary it continued (at a somewhat reduced rate of intensity)

right through 1936, merging with the Yezhov period, which began early in 1937 and lasted through most of 1938.

The scale of arrests diminished somewhat after the December announcement, and the press triumphantly proclaimed the unmasking of the enemy and the strengthening of the Party and state. But any Party member who breathed with joyful relief at this news was soon to be sorely disappointed. The very manner of announcement carried ominous rumblings, for it was accompanied by Yezhov's declaration that "Party membership and Party organizations have badly mastered the frequent instructions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (B) on the constant necessity of improving Bolshevik vigilance."<sup>2</sup> The Party "cleansing" thus continued throughout 1936, with the exchange of old membership cards for a new type (ordered on December 25, 1935) providing an excellent and easily manipulatable instrument for the continued elimination of undesirable members.<sup>3</sup>

The need for continued purging of Party members, as well as of individuals outside the Party, grew also out of the growing stability of the regime itself. In almost all aspects of Soviet life efforts were being directed towards the attainment of two objectives: the stabilization of the system, and greater efficiency in the controls exercised over it by the government. In education the so-called progressive methods, stressing absence of discipline and freedom of expression, were replaced by more traditional pedagogical techniques, emphasizing obedience and authority. The school system was no longer to train individuals capable of handling themselves once the state "withers away," but to mass-produce citizens able and willing to submit and adjust themselves to the state, which controlled their entire existence. The existing limitations on scientific discussions were further tightened, and strict adherence to the philosophical interpretations of the system was enjoined. In a characteristic development, the view that the individual citizen is responsible for his actions and behavior replaced the former deterministic views with respect to the role of the environment on the development of individual personality. The individual thus became personally accountable for his inability to adjust to the totalitarian pattern, and responsibility for maladjustment could be laid squarely on the shoulders of the person directly concerned.

In almost all aspects of Soviet life, the increasing political stability of the regime and the gradual re-emergence of more traditional social patterns (admittedly closely controlled by the regime) demanded the replacement of the old Bolsheviks, as well as the earlier products of the Bolshevik education, by the "new Soviet man." Without this, echoes of the earlier ideological conflicts would continue to linger among the lower echelons, and the "monolithic" unity of the system would not be attained. This situation was as true of the Party as of industry, of the army as of the state functionaries. The revolution, having changed its demeanor, now needed not revolutionaries but disciplined workers, willing and determined to strive for the goals of the state and not for its withering away. The old revolutionaries were to be replaced by rulers; the theorists and visionaries by administrators and bureaucrats.

In the field of administration and government, a new constitution was to be granted, ostensibly more democratic and more in keeping with the new social and political realities of the Soviet Union. The mass propaganda campaigns connected with the preparation of the constitution provided the Soviet leadership a welcome opportunity to gauge public opinion, especially after the developments of the early thirties. A parallel reorganization of the army resulted both in its increased efficiency and in the adoption of greater distinctions between the commanding personnel and the ranks. Military tradition and a sense of hierarchy and discipline were stressed in place of the old emphasis on revolutionary zeal and proletarian consciousness. Similar tendencies were manifested in the internal operations of the local Party organizations. Unanimity of opinion and standardized enthusiasm for the policies of the leadership began to characterize Party meetings and discussions. The emergence of Stalin as the undisputed leader and master was now coupled with increasing personal glorification and deification of him. Stalin was rapidly becoming the symbol of power, and the constant attempts to focus all attention on him were characteristic of the growing dictatorial nature of Soviet power.

The regime was now in a somewhat paradoxical position. Its power was apparently secure. The first stage of its program for the reshaping of Soviet society had been successfully concluded with the completion of the collectivization and the first Five Year Plan.

In brief, the initial period of revolution and transition was slowly being replaced by internal stability. Similar trends were visible on the international plane—the policy of revolution was, at least officially, abandoned, and collective security and cooperation against the Fascist danger became the standard motifs of Soviet foreign policy pronouncements. But the regime could not yet permit this stability to develop into inactivity, into a complacent satisfaction with the present. The totalitarian nature of the system demanded further goals, further gigantic operations, further social and economic plans. And analogous drives had also to be maintained on the political plane, through political means, to insure the revival of revolutionary fervor and to prevent the degeneration of the Party and the state.

The beginning of the new purge was both slow and premeditated. The first step was to complete the overhauling of the Party, from the standpoint both of membership and machinery. The exchange of Party documents permitted the Party, without openly declaring a new purge, to continue expelling its members; and reports to this effect persisted in various Party and government publications throughout 1936. Complete figures on such expulsions are unavailable, and only scattered items can be reported. These tend to indicate that, although the pace was much slower, the purge of Party membership continued to be a rather general phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Party organizations in many corners of the Soviet Union were furthermore called upon to render a full accounting for missing Party cards,<sup>5</sup> a process which indicated a degree of continuing confusion in their operations. Party organizations were also urged to exercise the greatest caution in handing out cards to new members. The Party journals cited a number of illuminating examples of the political blindness of local leaders who, having permitted hostile elements to infiltrate the membership, had had their careers come to an untimely end for lack of vigilance. Party members could easily draw the proper conclusions.<sup>6</sup>

Certain institutional changes were also effected to insure adequate facilities for the maintenance of true Bolshevik vigilance and for the elimination of the “counterrevolutionary” infiltrators. Discipline was tightened and the powers of the Party officials over the mem-

bership increased. Procedures connected with the issuing of Party cards were streamlined, and strict adherence to the new regulations was demanded from all Party organizations. As noted previously, it was emphasized that only the first secretaries of the district and city Party committees were authorized to issue new documents, in an effort to prevent confusion with respect to this rather important prerogative.<sup>7</sup> It had hitherto been a standard complaint against various Party organizations that unauthorized personnel were given free access to membership cards, thereby facilitating the infiltration of the Party by hostile elements.<sup>8</sup>

Closely related to these developments were the new regulations governing the transfer of members from one organization to another. Considerable irregularities had existed until that time, and in consequence not only was the accounting of Party membership unnecessarily complicated but there were many cases of duplication of figures and uncertainty about the actual size of various Party organizations. Strict rules were laid down for the latest procedures in the dispatch of Party cards to new organizations, the method of receipts, the obligation to report the roll, etc.<sup>9</sup>

The final step was the decision to declare the old membership cards invalid, and to threaten with expulsion those who lagged behind in submitting themselves to screening. Threats to this effect were sounded frequently throughout 1936, but the rather slow pace of the exchange, due mostly to unavoidable technical difficulties, prevented their execution. However, by the end of 1936 the first purge trials had already been held, and the regime was no longer inclined to wait. It was peremptorily announced that, according to the resolution of the Central Committee of the Party of December 26, 1936: "as of February 1, 1937, Party cards of the 1926 stage as well as the candidates' cards of the old type are considered invalid. Members and candidates who have by that date not exchanged their old cards for the new are automatically considered to be out of the Party."<sup>10</sup> Screening, which had been essentially a Party function,<sup>11</sup> was hailed in the press as having been instrumental in the unmasking of many enemies of the Soviet Union, and as having contributed to the awakened interest and activity of many hitherto lukewarm and passive Party members.

The beginning of the purge was also highlighted by a major reorganization of the actual purging machinery. Officially the reorganization limited itself to a brief but meaningful press announcement that Yagoda, already deposed as the NKVD head, had been arrested: "The C. E. C. of the USSR announces that in view of the discovery of crimes of a criminal character the People's Commissar of Communications, G. G. Yagoda, is committed to investigation and removed from his post."<sup>12</sup> Yagoda was replaced by Yezhov, whose major responsibility for the preceding four years had been the direction of the Party purges. Yagoda's removal paved the way for the amalgamation of the NKVD with the parallel purging organ, gradually built up by Yezhov since about 1933. At that time Yezhov had been entrusted by Stalin with the task of supervising the purge, while the NKVD, under Yagoda, took care of the "technical" details: arrests, detentions, executions. Yagoda's elimination, followed by a thorough purging of the top NKVD personnel and replacement of them by Yezhov's men, resulted in the NKVD's undertaking undivided responsibility for the conduct of the purge; and, doubtless, this contributed to the subsequent rapid expansion of the purge's scope.

Another important preliminary to the new purge was the increased vigor of the campaign for greater vigilance. All the various techniques of molding public opinion were employed: mass agitation by literally millions of Party activists; propaganda; countless *prorabotka* (orientation-indoctrination) meetings in the factories, collective farms, and communities of the Soviet Union; and, of course, intensified radio and press campaigns. Admittedly this beating of the drums constituted nothing essentially new in the totalitarian pattern, which cannot justify internal difficulties except in terms of the external foe or his agents, sabotaging and wrecking the constructive achievements of the regime. The accumulating political discontent is in this way funneled off, and the infallibility of the leadership reasserted. It is of interest to note, however, that such campaigns are markedly intensified before the purges, and become the themes of mass meetings, personal agitation, and press discussions. Party journals in every issue carried lengthy stories, either of a critical nature in cases where enemies of the people were treated "liberally" by lax Party officials, or on the contrary glow-

ingly favorable towards the unmasking of an enemy by the watchful eyes of the Party.<sup>13</sup> "Revolutionary watchfulness — the fighting weapon of the Party in its merciless struggle against all hostile class elements, the fighting weapon of unmasking, banishment and complete destruction of the enemies of the people and socialism"<sup>14</sup> — this the Party members were asked to remember at all times, for "revolutionary watchfulness," according to the same source, is the "holy duty and obligation of every Bolshevik."

This "vigilance" campaign began to assume overwhelming proportions by the late summer of 1936, and was not to cease until the conclusion of the purge. With the commencement of the sabotage and espionage trials, Party organizations throughout the country began to compete in asserting their loyalty and watchful vigilance, not only by launching their own purges but also by passing numerous resolutions stressing the need for increased vigilance. The trials provided suitable material for raising the pitch of the campaign against the enemy, and the vituperative expressions of the rich and colorful Russian language were not unduly restrained in their description of the "enemies of the people." In the majority of cases, a virulent and vitriolic press campaign against an individual usually implied that the object of the campaign was already imprisoned. The point of the campaign was to provide the *ex post facto* rationale for his elimination. Some exceptions, however, occurred on the lower levels, where the press would sometimes actually point out a prospective victim and launch a campaign against him.<sup>15</sup> R. Beck and W. Godin, in their *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession*, claim, on the basis of personal experience, that "if a man is denounced, his best chance of escaping arrest was to change his place of work or, better still, to move to another town. Speaking generally, however, there was undoubtedly a connection between public accusations and subsequent interventions by the NKVD."<sup>16</sup> The opportunity to escape was clearly not open to persons on higher levels of the Party or state hierarchy, who had to remain on the spot and could not possibly conceal themselves. In such cases, if they were by chance at liberty at the time when publicly attacked, the only possible path was to recant publicly and quickly and then hope for mercy.

## THE TRIALS

As the terror increased so did the charges of terrorism against the victims. The accused were now charged not only with espionage, treason, and subversion, but also with engaging in conspiracies involving murder against the top leadership of the Soviet state. In the cases of the leading accused, special efforts were made to distort and vilify their revolutionary past, thus emphasizing once and for all their alleged complete break with the Party, at whose helm many of them had stood through the most trying years of the conspiracy and revolution. Indeed the highlights of the Yezhov purges were the major trials, in which the amazed and shocked world witnessed the spectacle of once brave and feared men paying their last respects to the totalitarian Frankenstein they themselves had helped to erect.

Western observers have tended to focus almost entirely on these trials and have sought to find the meaning of the purges from the testimony and courtroom behavior of the accused. The importance of the trials, however, easily can be overestimated, particularly in terms of their significance to the purge itself. An element of distortion would be introduced into this analysis should the theme of the purge be made to center on these trials. They were in effect the frosting on the cake. A characteristic of this purge was the unprecedented depth of its penetration into the Soviet society, into the state administration, and into the Communist Party. The trials merely keynoted the purge.

There were three major public trials which attracted world-wide attention.<sup>17</sup> Two were held during the Yezhov era, while one was immediately prior to it. In all of them the main actors were former leading members of the state administration and the Party. The great majority were sentenced to death. The first trial, serving almost as an inaugural to the purge, was held in August 1936 and involved Kamenev, Zinoviev, Smirnov, Mrachkovsky, and twelve other leading Communists, allegedly part of a Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center. The two main accused were brought to the dock in Moscow from solitary confinement at Verkhne-Uralsk, to play out the last act in the tragedy. Within four days, amid thun-

derous applause of the press, sentences of death were imposed and carried out.

Four months later another group, this time composed of seventeen men led by Radek, Piatakov, Sokolnikov, and Serebiakov, made its appearance before the court. The accused were Communists who, despite their initial sympathy for the opposition, finally sided with Stalin and attempted to readjust themselves to the new political realities of the Soviet system. Thirteen were sentenced to death; Radek miraculously escaped execution, allegedly by convenient disclosures implicating the leadership of the Red Army.<sup>18</sup>

And finally in March of 1938 came the trial of twenty-one accused, including such masterminds of Communism as Bukharin and Rykov, as well as the former police boss, Yagoda, and a number of national leaders (whose fall will be discussed separately). To the standard accusations a new touch was added: Yagoda and a doctor Levin, the former physician of the Kremlin, were accused of maintaining a regular murder laboratory for the purpose of extinguishing the leading lights of the Soviet system. Indeed, the deaths of Gorky and Kuibyshev were ascribed to the efforts of these "monsters."<sup>19</sup> The expected confessions (with the exception of the sudden repudiation of his confession by one Krestinsky and his subsequent capitulation) followed, and the "judicial" process took its normal course.

The nature of the victims of the major trials mentioned here itself provides the basis for asserting that the trials did not constitute the central theme of the purge. The great majority of the accused were brought to trial from varying stages of obscurity to provide the necessary dramatization for the purge. The charges made against them were ludicrous and in many points have been clearly exposed as fraudulent.<sup>20</sup> The conspiracy they were charged with was never established, and indeed it is questionable whether it was even possible within the given system.

The trials represented essentially the last step in the power struggle which had been underway since Lenin's death and which, in so far as the power position was concerned, had been settled by the time of Kirov's assassination. The accused were men whose fall from power had already been completed and visibly demonstrated

to the masses. That they may have plotted in their own minds a possible revenge against the victorious leader can be neither denied nor proven. But it may be assumed that their complete destruction was both facilitated and inspired by their separation from existing Soviet reality and by their inability to maintain (largely because of imposed obstructions) adequate contact with the ranks of the Party, the orientation and membership of which had radically changed.

The Party as well as Soviet society was by 1936 rather different from what it had been in the twenties, and the purges were rapidly completing the change. The Party membership was now directed to focus its energy on the development of the Soviet state; the energies of the country were fully diverted to that purpose. The men to achieve the new goals had to be engineers and administrators, bureaucrats and disciplined officials, and not ideologists. Zinoviev and Kamenev to them represented the remote past, and the regime could easily demonstrate its omnipotence by destroying them. The magnified scope of the alleged conspiracy merely emphasized further the power of the regime and the futility of resisting it. The brutal and humiliating destruction of the alleged conspiracy served to paralyze any potential sympathizers, and elimination of them could now proceed stage by stage.

A notable variation in the preceding pattern was introduced by the trial *in camera* and the execution of the leaders of the Soviet military establishment in June of 1937. This is by far the least known and the most intriguing aspect of the purge. The full fury of the purge in this case was telescoped into an exceedingly brief period — unlike the other major trials where the time which elapsed between fall from power and appearance in the Moscow dock was sometimes a question of years. Here the purge struck not at men isolated and ostracized both politically and socially, not against a series of political “has-beens,” but against a group of men skilled and respected in their profession and supposedly in command of the military branch of the Soviet state.

The secrecy and the swiftness of the blows applied against the Red Army High Command are, however, revealing. It suggests that the regime did not feel itself capable of submitting the high officers

of its army to a process of purging which would involve their participation in a public trial and public humiliation. It must have felt that such circumstances (including the possibility that extraction of confession might prove to be a lengthy process) could create an undue strain on the loyalty of the Red Army, and encourage remaining command personnel to show greater concern for their own welfare.

The method chosen was similar to the one Hitler used to eliminate Major Roehm in 1934. In each case the regime was dealing with personalities enjoying considerable popularity within the country as a whole;<sup>21</sup> in each case the individuals involved commanded organizations with which they had considerable emotional bonds; in each case these organizations, given time, had the necessary power to defend their interests. The only way of dealing with the situation was to present all concerned with a *fait accompli*, and this solution was in fact adopted. The Red Army was decapitated in one swift blow.<sup>22</sup> The stunned military personnel was informed of the alleged conspiracy of its leaders, and called upon to maintain strict discipline and intense Bolshevik vigilance. The only possible source of independent action against the regime was thus rendered impotent, and henceforward the regime could pursue its policies unhampered by fears of a "Bonapartist" *coup d'état*.

It is not known whether such a coup was plotted or had even been envisaged. Opinions vary from one extreme to another—Deutscher, for instance, seems convinced that such a conspiracy in fact did exist.<sup>23</sup> But no evidence has so far been uncovered to link such a conspiracy, if indeed it did exist, to foreign powers, particularly Nazi Germany. Captured German archives are notably devoid of information.<sup>24</sup>

The essential fact, however, from the standpoint of this analysis, is that the regime was able by relying on its secret police and the loyalty of the Party to coerce the military branch and destroy its commanders. This humiliation of the army indicates the extent to which totalitarian regimes have been able to divorce themselves from the traditional dependency of dictators on the army, and how far they have established independent sources of power. But more than that, modern totalitarianisms not only have achieved inde-

pendence of the armed forces, which for years supplied the basis for authoritarian forms of government, but have actually endeavored to integrate the armed forces within the system.<sup>25</sup>

The foregoing has particular relevance to the purge of the Soviet armed forces. The regime had been trying for years to absorb the military into its own system, without at the same time unduly weakening its battle potential. The early thirties saw energetic efforts made to modernize the Red Army. Its organization was streamlined, and some of the "proletarian, revolutionary" patterns were eliminated. These measures, in general, ran counter to the contemporaneous insistence on strengthening Party controls over military personnel, particularly the commanding staffs, to insure the loyalty of the army to the system.<sup>26</sup> And since the two policies might conflict, a third necessity became paramount: the elimination of men who were thought to oppose the regime's efforts at politicizing the army, men like Tukhachevsky, who had a long-standing (dating back to 1920) feud with Stalin. Only by eliminating potentially disloyal or unduly independent commanders could the regime fulfill the efforts to absorb the army into the totalitarian system, while at the same time developing it as a potent and efficient weapon.

Within this setting, the question of whether the eliminated generals were actually guilty of the crimes for which they were made to pay with their lives loses meaning. For sooner or later their elimination would have become necessary. This view finds additional support in the scope of the purge of the officer corps, which is estimated as having affected from 20 to 30 per cent of the total officer complement. Clearly, military conspiracy and foreign espionage involving this many people were impossible within the totalitarian system — and had they in fact taken place, the system would have had somewhat more difficulty in coping with them. On the contrary, the relative facility with which the regime was able to purge its military establishment suggests that an organized conspiracy did not exist, but was merely fabricated as a by-product of the propaganda campaign to justify the executions, which, in this case as in the case of the three other trials, were made necessary both by the development of the totalitarian system itself and by the coldly rational power-calculations of its leaders.

## THE NATIONALITIES

The purge of the nationality leaders, which reached a peak between 1936 and 1938, had certain historical and doctrinal antecedents. In the struggle to wipe out local nationalism and to substitute for it native patriotism "national in form but socialist in content," the Soviet leadership was acting on the theory that nationalism is a myth designed by the oppressing classes to exploit the oppressed. This emotional smoke screen was to be swept away by the achievement of true equality among the various nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union, and by the elimination of all violent nationalists. An international community was to be the final goal, and world progress was to be achieved on the basis of large-scale industrialized economies, which would cut across national frontiers and would in time supplant national economies.

In keeping with these principles a great deal of attention was initially devoted to the danger of "Great Russian chauvinism," considered to be the principal danger to the unity of the Soviet nationalities. The Sixteenth Party Congress denounced "Great Russian chauvinism" as the major obstacle to the achievement of the Party's objectives in the realm of nationality policy. But this emphasis soon began to wane. The Seventeenth Party Congress is notably silent on this score, while the Eighteenth Party Congress reported "victories" not over "Great Russian chauvinism" but rather over various "nationalist deviations." This shift in emphasis occurred parallel to the growing conflict between the gradually developing national consciousness of the nationalities and the increasing centralization of power (hence diminution of regional or local autonomy). The desire of the regime to maintain close control over the indigenous parties led to the dispatching of trained Russian personnel to assist with and supervise the development of local cadres and administrators. It became a practice for the first secretaries of the republican Party organizations to be "assisted" by second secretaries of Russian nationality.<sup>27</sup> Under the circumstances resentment, gradually growing into a national hostility, was likely to manifest itself.

It was made more acute, paradoxically, by Soviet efforts to create a local, national, but Soviet intelligentsia. As these efforts met with

increasing success quantitatively speaking, they created greater pressures for the absorption of this intelligentsia into the local ruling apparatus, both of the Party and the state. Efforts to displace foreign (i.e., Russian) intruders and loosen the bonds of central control thus gained increasing support.<sup>28</sup> Such tendencies must have convinced Moscow that local nationalism was being abetted by the newly raised national cadres, and that local leaders, although once instrumental in assuring the subservience of these regions to Moscow, had now outlived their usefulness and even worse were developing a vested interest in their positions and power. The atmosphere then was conducive to an exaggeration of these fears into a discovery of heinous plots and conspiracies among the nationalities. The axe, therefore, fell.

It fell primarily on old native Communist leaders. The ones mentioned previously were not alone. Almost the entire leadership of the Ukrainian Communist Party, with men like Kossior, Grinko, Demchenko, Chubar, Petrovsky — who reappeared mysteriously in 1953 (see Chapter 10), and others, disappeared from the scene. The secretary of the Byelorussian Central Committee, Sharangovich, was tried with Grinko and F. Khodzhaev and A. Ikramov in the famous March 1938 trial, together with Rykov and Bukharin, on charges of separatism and espionage. The purge was particularly intensive in the Ukraine, where resistance to centralized control had the deepest roots.<sup>29</sup> The Ukrainian Communist Party was therefore thoroughly cleansed, for the second time in five years. The chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Liubchenko, committed suicide, and his successor, Bondarenko, was arrested within two months. More than half of the Party secretaries and *partorgi* (Party organizers) were changed between 1937 and 1938.<sup>30</sup> The work of the Ukrainian Komsomol was severely criticized and the secretary, Klinkov, unmasked as an enemy of the people.<sup>31</sup> The Central Committee of the Ukrainian Party was held responsible for these shortcomings, for "it is hard to understand how these people could tolerate the subversive work of the enemy among the youth."<sup>32</sup> The heads of the press and radio sections of the Party were severely criticized, and the personnel purged.<sup>33</sup> The climax was reached with the announcement of Kossior's removal from

office on January 29, 1938, and Khrushchev's appointment to the post of First Secretary of the Party.

The timing of the attack on "nationalist deviation" seems to have been coordinated throughout the entire Soviet Union. An analysis of the press campaign and reports of triumphs over "nationalist deviators" corresponds closely to the testimony of former Soviet citizens, who place the beginning of the attack at mid-1937. It thus followed closely the conclusion of the first stage of the purge and the sudden slaughter of the Red Army leaders. The regime had in this way assured itself of the loyalty (and incapacity) of its key organs, and was capable of turning against wider and wider circles of the Party and the administration. The campaign was launched almost simultaneously throughout the various republics and regions of the Soviet Union. The local leaders became objects of a vitriolic press campaign.

In Kirgizia, for instance, the heads of the communal economy and the press, as well as the political leadership, were charged with submission to nationalist infiltration.<sup>34</sup> "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kirgizia has until now not taken the necessary measures to root out and destroy all enemies, who have penetrated the leading positions, are disrupting the work, and are preventing the further development of the Kirgiz republic."<sup>35</sup> The sequel followed shortly. In an article suitably entitled "The Decayed Policy of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Kirgizia," *Pravda* announced that the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars had already been "replaced," following his expulsion from the Central Committee. But lest the Kirgizian Party be inclined to rest on its laurels, *Pravda* added that still, to this day, "the Central Committee of the Kirgizian Communist Party is conducting the decayed policy of liberalism towards, and of even sheltering, the enemies of the people,"<sup>36</sup> and added that the Kirgizian Party organizations were demanding a clean-up of the Central Committee.<sup>37</sup>

A similar pattern emerges in Uzbekistan. In July 1937 the Tashkent newspaper, *Pravda vostoka*, the official organ of the Uzbek Central Committee, opened an attack against certain organs of the Uzbek administration. Shortly afterwards the removal from office

of Khodzaev, one of the old Bolsheviks of Uzbekistan and a moving spirit of the Bolshevik conquest of Central Asia, was announced.<sup>38</sup> The Politburo dispatched to Tashkent one of its principal lieutenants, Andreiev, to personally supervise the purge and to effect the removal of Central Committee Secretary Ikramov, who had been accused of leading a national independence movement, attempting to build up a personal following, and encouraging his personal glorification. *Pravda vostoka* was criticized in this connection for making the report of the Sixth Uzbek Party Congress sound like an account of Ikramov's life, and of calling him "elder brother," instead of exposing known nationalists and Trotskyites.<sup>39</sup> The editor was fittingly described as a "champion" of the bourgeois nationalists.

Within a few days a further report stated that the foregoing story, sent to Tashkent by telegraph, "has had a tremendous impact on the Party *actif*, on the Party masses." It added that "the criticism of the paper *Pravda vostoka* and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Uzbekistan, who have been sheltering for a long time the intrigues of the bourgeois nationalists, was met here with great satisfaction."<sup>40</sup> In a special resolution the Uzbek Central Committee took cognizance of these failures and stated: "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan demands from all Party organizations of Uzbekistan a return to a determined struggle with the Fascist mercenaries, nationalist trotskyite-bukharinite gang and all their supporters, sincere abandonment of silence or of liberal critique [and] the elimination and uprooting of all the enemies of the people."<sup>41</sup> The unfortunate editor of *Pravda vostoka* was relieved of all his functions and joined the growing number of expellees from the Party. His paper was called upon to study attentively *Pravda's* criticisms and to learn from them.

After a further series of denunciations,<sup>42</sup> it was announced triumphantly that Ikramov had been finally unmasked, and the meeting of the Tashkent *actif* was informed "of the resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Uzbekistan on the removal of Ikramov from the position of first Secretary, on his expulsion from the Party, and on the handing over of the matter to investigating authorities." The Party

members were reported to have greeted the news of the arrest of their leader "with warm applause."<sup>43</sup> Khodzaev and Ikramov were both sentenced to death in the March 1938 trial.

Denunciations of nationalist deviation continued during this period with amazing regularity and striking similarity in pattern. *Pravda* continued its monotonous repetition of various crimes, changing merely the locale and the names of the criminals. The turn of the Tadzhiks was next. Here again enemies of the people were reported to have penetrated almost the entire administration: agriculture was headed by a counterrevolutionary Trotskyite, while local and light industries and the educational institutions were said to be controlled by nationalists. The two secretaries of the Central Committee, Amurov and Florov, as well as the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Rakhimbaev, were unmasked as nationalists,<sup>44</sup> while Ryzhov, chairman of the Stalinabad City Council, and Shotemor, chairman of the Tadzhik Central Executive Committee, were merely described as spies.<sup>45</sup>

Risking the dullness of repetition, we might add that the same period saw the uncovering of a spy ring which operated in the north, in Karelia, where local "nationalists" penetrated the Council of People's Commissars, the Commissariat of Enlightenment, the State Planning Commission, the city and regional Party Committees, and the local papers. The "enemies of the people," supported by "foreign Fascists," were said to have sabotaged local industry and even liquidated some collective farms. Fortunately, the Karelian proletariat was reported to be aware of the danger, and to be eliminating it.<sup>46</sup> Several thousand miles to the southeast, in the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR, Japanese spies and local nationalists were also said to be in the process of being exposed. The Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee, including Regional Party Committee Secretary Erbanov, were purged for "bourgeois nationalism" and for tolerating the "foul work" of the enemies of the people. Here again almost the entire administrative apparatus was purged: Commissariat of Enlightenment, Culture Institute, Writers' Union, the Buryat Mongolian *Pravda*, the State Publishing House, the agricultural institutions—all were infiltrated by enemies who included kulaks, white-guards, twenty further unidentified "adventurers," and even four Mongolian princes.<sup>47</sup>

The purge and the terror were similarly linked in a joint mass operation against the Byelorussian and Caucasian nationalities and their leaders. The preceding description, however, should suffice to establish a general pattern, which has been outlined more fully for one or two specific areas in the Appendix.<sup>48</sup> The preceding, it is hoped, has demonstrated that the purge embraced almost the entire nationality leadership in the USSR. With the process of solidification of power concluded in Moscow, it was necessary to solidify centralized authority in the provinces. The purge was thus meant to eliminate sources of independent leadership on the provincial-national level.

All these purges of the nationalities had certain common characteristics, which emerge more clearly in the somewhat more detailed analysis of the Byelorussian and Caucasian purges. These characteristics, briefly, are: considerable acceleration of the timetable for the actual operation of the purge; personal direction and supervision from Moscow, revealing the planned character of the purge; rapid removal of the top national leadership; elimination of potential alternatives to centralized rule—namely, the intelligentsia. From there the next step, impersonal elimination of thousands of suspects who were frequently condemned merely on the basis of categories, follows easily.

#### THE ADMINISTRATIVE-ECONOMIC CADRES

The total number of arrests cannot even be estimated—unless one is willing to risk erring by hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people.<sup>49</sup> The atmosphere of all-pervading terror engulfed the country, and arrests were made at an unprecedented rate for reasons ranging from the most serious to the most ludicrous. The testimony of Soviet *émigrés* is almost unanimous in the assertions that arrests were frequently made on very trivial charges, as if for the mere sake of arresting.<sup>50</sup> The apprehension of one member of a family frequently resulted in further arrests of relatives and friends. Such tendencies were manifested more clearly on the upper levels, where an arrested man formerly would have enjoyed a degree of authority and influence permitting him to build up a following, which had to be destroyed.<sup>51</sup> In many cases entire families perished—sometimes because of actual anti-Soviet tendencies, sometimes

because of the caprice of a local NKVD functionary,<sup>52</sup> and most often because it was assumed that family resentment of the arrest would result in disloyalty. A former high government official, arrested at the peak of the purge in August 1937, thus explains his arrest: "Since I was not a Party member, and since I had training, they thought that I might be anti-Soviet because I had not joined the Party . . . Of my family of eleven, that is the family I come from, seven were either shot or exiled . . . My brother was shot. My brother-in-law was shot. An uncle was exiled and his two sons were exiled. Then one sister and her husband were exiled."<sup>53</sup>

Constant announcements of the unmasking of plots maintained a state of intense nervousness among the masses, who followed the developments with increasing feelings of personal insecurity. The disappearance of officials was frequently marked only by the silent removal of their portraits from public places.<sup>54</sup> The very scale and lack of apparently rational pattern in the arrests resulted in an acute state of apprehension among the populace, as the following testimony illustrates: "My husband and I both kept a small bag by our beds in the event of arrest. We knew that if they would come to arrest us they would not give us time to even pack a few basic necessities like socks, needle and thread and a few toilet articles. They gave you no time to pack so we had prepared these for each of us ahead of time. Naturally every night when we went to bed, we thought that it might be our last night in our living quarters."<sup>55</sup> Arrests were much more prevalent in the cities than in the countryside, and tended generally to strike against the professional intelligentsia and the skilled workers more than the unskilled workers and collective farmers. Indeed, it might be asserted that the higher a man's position or degree of professional skill, the greater was his exposure to charges of subversion. The countryside, however, did not escape completely unscathed, for the purge struck also against the collective farms, where all sorts of abuses and deficiencies were said to have been exposed.

The campaign against various aspects of the operations of the collective farms became intensified in the spring of 1937, with increased emphasis on technical inefficiency, nefarious practices, and even sabotage, which were said to have been prevalent in many regions. The criticisms varied with the season—early spring saw

vigorous attacks on deficient seeding, resulting in serious losses to the forthcoming harvest; the summer saw outbursts against poor harvesting operations, with obvious inferences of premeditated sabotage of the state agricultural policy.

The response of Party organizations to the criticisms was drastic, and summary firings of collective farm chairmen were frequent, thereby introducing an additional element of confusion into the already unsatisfactory operations of many collective farms. In the Yaroslav region, for instance, some 60 to 65 per cent of all chairmen were changed in the course of nine months, and about 6000 collective farmers were driven off the farms.<sup>56</sup> As such draconic measures resulted in the further lowering of productivity, the Party became concerned and issued a warning to the effect that "expulsion from a collective farm — as is known — is a serious measure which should be taken in only extreme cases."<sup>57</sup> These expulsions and the resulting collapse in Party discipline had led to the liquidation of a number of collective farms — a development which the regime could not possibly tolerate. As an antidote several show trials of the so-called agricultural saboteurs were promptly staged, and the liquidators, usually identified as Trotskyites, were duly penalized.<sup>58</sup> New and ideologically minded leadership was said to have been introduced in their places as rapidly as possible.<sup>59</sup>

The Party, however, remained concerned with another aspect of the collective farm system — an aspect which has plagued it to this day. This is the relative weakness of Party organizations throughout the rural areas and the opposition and inertia many farmers feel towards efforts to acquaint them with the Party and the desirability of belonging to it.<sup>60</sup> Such concern was particularly understandable during the purge period, when the Party had to mobilize every ounce of its strength, and when areas of weakness were particularly dangerous. Here again the "scapegoat" for the failings of the Party was the perennial enemy, who had managed to penetrate the agricultural apparatus of the Party for the sole purpose of destroying it. In the Western Region Party organization, for instance, "the enemy undertook to liquidate Party organizations and candidate groups. In the last two years 71 collective farm Party organizations and 345 candidate groups were liquidated in the region" by the "Trotskyite-Bukharinite wreckers."<sup>61</sup> This was by

no means an isolated case, and the relative weakness of the Party organizations is further attested to by some statistics for 1938 given in Table 1.

This numerical weakness of the Party in the agricultural areas constituted a serious challenge to Party control over the countryside, particularly during the period of the purge, and necessitated an intensive drive to strengthen the Party's hold. Characteristically, it was the chairmen of the collective farms, the MTS directors, and the local Party heads who were charged with responsibility for this unsatisfactory state of affairs and who became the objects of the regime's wrath. The great masses of the agricultural population, however, suffered relatively less than the urban dwellers, and the purge period is remembered by the agricultural population with somewhat less fear and hate than are the years of collectivization, which involved them much more directly.

The impact of the purge in the urban areas was felt in a particularly acute way by the professional classes and the intelligentsia. The professional technician or engineer, because of his proximity to and ability to control the means of production, and the intellectual, because of his developed mental capacity and corresponding critical acumen, are considered by totalitarian regimes to be possible sources

TABLE 1 Party organizations in collective farms: selected statistics for 1938

Area	Number of collective farms	Number of Party members	Number of Party organizations
District in Leningrad region	253	...	2 <sup>a</sup>
District in Smolensk region	150	61 <sup>b</sup>	... <sup>b</sup>
Voronezh region	5,328	...	319 <sup>c</sup>
District in Kirov region	386	140 <sup>d</sup>	...
Moscow region	6,556	...	304 <sup>e</sup>
Yaroslav region	7,783	...	33 <sup>e</sup>
USSR	243,000	153,000 <sup>f</sup>	12,000 <sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Pravda*, September 7, 1938, p. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.*, July 14, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>e</sup> *XVIII Party Congress*, Stenographic Report (Moscow, 1939), pp. 322, 555, 109.

<sup>f</sup> This includes candidates.

of opposition, and efforts must be directed at insuring their complete submission to the system. This submission is further necessitated by the stress which totalitarian regimes lay on technological advancement, which inevitably results in key positions being held by the professional technical personnel. In the collectivist state the elimination of distinctions between the political and economic processes results in a functional fusion of political and professional responsibility.<sup>62</sup> Failure in the latter thus automatically becomes a case of political accountability, and the totalitarian system is not renowned for its political tolerance.

It should be noted also that, according to testimony of former Soviet technicians and administrators, in most cases where charges of sabotage and the like were involved, the accused were charged with failures in matters completely outside their occupational jurisdiction. But not only such allegedly premeditated acts of "economic sabotage" have consequences so dire — a system such as the Soviet, which is achievement oriented, demands constant successes, and failure to produce successfully is tantamount to sabotage. And failure then demands retribution, *pour décourager les autres*, to produce additional stimulus for greater endeavors. A former Soviet citizen thus describes the situation: "In the Soviet Union whenever there is a breakdown in any industry, such as happens anywhere in every country, someone has to be arrested. There can be no breakdown without guilt being found somewhere. And when the breakdown occurs they begin looking not for the real guilty ones, because usually there are no guilty ones, but they begin to select candidates from among the politically unreliable."<sup>63</sup> A very similar conception, but applied to the field of science, was openly postulated in a Soviet pedagogical publication, which stated with frightening frankness that: "One of the inescapable conclusions to be drawn from the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of the unity of theory and practice and of Party vigilance in science is that every theoretical mistake, every error in the field of methodology is inescapably transferred into a political error. Similarly, in the present state of things, every such error not only weakens the front of socialist construction, but it arms our enemies."<sup>64</sup> The seriousness of the charge of "arming the enemy," particularly during the purge period, cannot be overemphasized.

The existing industrial difficulties inherent in the rapid development initiated by the Five Year Plans, coupled with the political responsibility of economic workers, provided additional stimulus to the purge of the industrial personnel. Frequent criticisms of capital development in the Donbas area, for example, were mingled with triumphant announcements of the "unmasking" of spies and saboteurs who had delayed the fulfillment of plans and norms. In a special press interview, the USSR Procurator Vishinsky declared that remedial measures were being adopted to insure the adequate operation of the industrial machine, despite wrecking activities.<sup>65</sup> But as late as March 1939, the nonfulfillment of certain provisions of the Second Five Year Plan was ascribed to wrecking, which was said to aim at producing internal confusion and preventing new productive methods and factory construction.<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, the purge of industrial specialists, engineers, and technicians, as well as of their political superiors, was particularly heavy. A number of them made their appearance in the big purge trials, where they confessed to various acts of sabotage, dynamiting, etc., that frequently resulted in heavy loss of life. The derailing of trains appeared to be a particularly popular method of "wrecking," according to the indictments. The "wreckers" included the chief of the Central Administration of the Soviet chemical industry, Rataichak; the Deputy Commissar for Railways, Livshitz; various sectional heads of the railroads; and other "captains of industry."<sup>67</sup> But the purge did not limit itself to the "commanding heights" of the Soviet industry—it struck almost as severely against the engineers and section heads, chief mechanics and senior foremen. Its extent is well illustrated by the following list, compiled by a former Soviet engineer who was requested to name some of his associates who had been arrested or had perished during the purge.

1. the chief of construction, the one who had my job, an engineer, was arrested;
2. the first secretary of the district Party committee;
3. the secretary of the . . . Region Party Committee, by the name of . . . ;
4. the second secretary of the . . . Region Party Committee hanged himself;
5. the secretary of the Komsomol organization shot himself;

6. one of my employees;
7. Trade Union Committee chairman;
8. chief mechanic of the Trust;
9. the director of the Trust;
10. the engineer of the Trust;
11. the manager of mine No. 1;
12. the director of the electric station next to us;
13. the chief engineer of this electric station;
14. the manager of the construction work in this electric station;
15. the secretary of the Party committee;
16. a few rank and file workers, about two or three, only one of whom was a member of the Party.<sup>68</sup>

Other *émigrés* also mention the frequency and scope of arrests in the Soviet industrial establishment, and emphasize that the general pattern did not show any marked discrimination in the choice of the victims.

A very similar situation prevailed in the intellectual world. This period was marked by a further accentuation in the pressures which had been applied against the writers, historians, actors, etc., since the early thirties.<sup>69</sup> The virulence and irrationality of the attacks on the intellectuals is ludicrously demonstrated by the published critique of a new edition of the *Academic Dictionary*, which was described as Trotskyite in leanings because it carried citations from various "enemies of the people" (including Bukharin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev). The dictionary, which was published in late 1936 and which, therefore, could not have anticipated the course of the purge, was further accused of giving unnecessarily large space to the explanation of the meaning of such words as "altar" and "amen."<sup>70</sup> In the eyes of the regime, now more solidly established, the function of the intellectual was to forge his creative genius into a weapon of the regime's policies, and failure to do so was viewed as opposition and negation.<sup>71</sup>

Within this general framework the scope of the arrests grew rapidly. The purge was developing a momentum of its own and was constantly branching out, as the nerves and power of resistance of the people began to give way. Moral and ethical considerations were pushed aside by the brutal struggle for survival, and denunciations became more and more frequent. Indeed, a partial explanation

for the large number of arrests is to be found in the fact that the NKVD was literally swamped with reports; and, given the existing situation, few officials were likely to chance the accusation of dereliction of duty by ignoring them. Besides, the purge provided many people with a unique and welcome opportunity for settling old scores and for enhancing their own careers. Denunciation became a useful vehicle of promotion, and a number of former Soviet citizens tell with bitterness of incidents illustrating this fact. One young former citizen, brought up during the Stalin era, expresses this view:

The best way in the Soviet Union to get ahead is to inform on your superior. If he makes a mistake a political reason must be found for it. The Party organization is always closely connected with the NKVD. Suppose the plant fails to fulfill its norm. Then you write a letter to the Party explaining how your boss, how your superior failed to fulfill his norm. Then the Party will tell it to the NKVD . . . Your superior will be arrested and there is a place open. Who is to fill it? I, of course. This is a very common Soviet occurrence. All who make a Soviet career know this well. It is an unwritten law of Soviet life.<sup>72</sup>

This statement, even if exaggerated, is highly symptomatic of the general attitude towards denunciations, and applies not only to the professional fields but also to the Party and government.

Denunciation as a vehicle of promotion was not the product of the perversity of human nature alone. The mid-thirties saw the emergence on the scene of thousands of young Communist technicians, economists, and would-be administrators, mass-produced by the state technical and professional schools. The graduates of these various institutes amounted to about one million during the years 1933 to 1938.<sup>73</sup> Despite the great progress already achieved, which certainly provided jobs for many of the graduates, the placement problem must have been acute. The choice before the Party was, therefore, clear: should the new Stalinist cadres be allowed to waste, or should they be placed at the expense of older and hence less dependable elements? The purge gave an unequivocal answer to this question, and sacrificed not only the prerevolutionary elements but also quite frequently the earlier Bolsheviks of the pre-Stalin era.<sup>74</sup>

Stalin, in his report to the Eighteenth Party Congress, stated that more than half a million "young Bolsheviks," both Party and non-Party, were elevated during the years 1934 and 1938 to "leading posts in the field of government and Party."<sup>75</sup> Many of these included replacements for the expelled, demoted, or arrested Party personnel. The turnover, furthermore, was not uniform in all industries. The hardest hit were the "key" industries of the developing Soviet economy: transportation, heavy industry, and the fuel industry. Speaking to the same congress, Lazar Kaganovich stated that: "During the period of 1936-1937 there occurred a great renovation of the leading cadres in the heavy and particularly in the fuel industry and railroad transport, the *promotion of new people in the place of the defeated wreckers*. Thousands of new people were promoted."<sup>76</sup> As a result, out of the 70,000 specialists employed in heavy industry subject to the People's Commissariat of Fuel Industry, 76.1 per cent, or 51,000, were by 1939 under 40 years of age; and about 80 per cent, or 54,720, of the technical intelligentsia of the heavy industry had finished the higher technical schools only during the years of the first or second Five Year Plans (i.e., 1929-1938). In the fuel industry the analogous percentage was 85.9, or 10,447 people.<sup>77</sup>

It would be misleading, however, to equate these percentages with the rate of arrests or dismissals. These industries were subject to a considerable expansion during this period and naturally attracted many young specialists. On the other hand, Lazar Kaganovich specifically stated in his report that the process of "cleansing" the industrial apparatus had resulted in the removal of cadres unable to adjust themselves to the new realities of Soviet life, not to mention the "wreckers," whose activities, especially in such crucially important areas as transport, had caused serious deficiencies and frequent loss of life. They were duly removed, and "we now have cadres which carry out every directive of the Party, of the Central Committee, of the Soviet power, every directive of comrade Stalin."<sup>78</sup>

And indeed, the nature of the cadres had changed. Many of the Soviet *émigrés* testify that the purge brought into being a new type of Soviet administrator or executive. The old Bolshevik, the "man of the people," was replaced by young, hard, and ambitious prod-

ucts of the Stalinist school.<sup>79</sup> H. V. Dicks, reporting on his interviews with former Soviet citizens, states that: "It was one of the quarrels with the USSR of many of the interviewed subjects that this fine type of Bolshevik 'of the good old stuff,' stern but sterling, close to his people and knowing their minds, was fast being superseded by the cold, careerist zealot, promoted for his mastery of dialectic from the academies of Communism, a 'fine gentleman' who only aped ritually what was once felt to be genuine revolutionary inspiration."<sup>80</sup> The new administrators emphasized, by their bearing and behavior, their distinctiveness from the workers; and concern for the welfare of the industrial proletariat was supplanted by an emphasis on the fulfillment of norms, plans, and "socialist competitions." The system of controls operating within the factory system was accordingly tightened, and the presence of young Communists in key administrative posts resulted in increased cooperation between the factory Party cells and the administration.<sup>81</sup> In a number of cases the new "bosses" were elected to head the Party cells, thereby effectively merging the two. This combination of the political-professional leadership was one of the more important consequences of the purge, and a decisive step forward in asserting the complete integration of the totalitarian system.

#### THE PURGE OF THE PARTY CADRES

The major effort of the purge was directed at the Communist Party itself.<sup>82</sup> The screening of Party membership and the accompanying expulsions provided a most suitable basis for the purging of the Party, which had assumed considerable proportions by late 1936 and lasted until about the middle of 1938, when the various regional Party conferences reported on the accomplishments of the purge. The period was marked by exceedingly intensive efforts both at stimulating the membership to increase its Party activity and at introducing younger members into the leading posts of Party organizations, not only on the higher but also on the lower levels of the Party hierarchy. Purging commissions operated ceaselessly and, with the enthusiastic support of the NKVD, assisted by generous doses of denunciations,<sup>83</sup> proceeded to "renovate" the Party cadres.

The purge was spurred on by Stalin's speech to the Plenum of

the Party's Central Committee, made early in March 1937, and suitably entitled "About the Deficiencies in Party Work and Measures of Liquidating Trotskyite and Other Double-Dealers."<sup>84</sup> In it Stalin stated that diversion had penetrated all organizations in all walks of life, and that many Party members had proven themselves unable or too naïve to recognize the danger. To illustrate the point he cited some prevalent "rotten theories" which tended to perpetuate this serious state of affairs: the first was that the elimination of classes would lead to the conclusion of the class struggle, which, according to Stalin, is completely untrue; the second was that lack of sabotage is an indication of complete loyalty, while, again according to Stalin, enemies frequently "mask" themselves and appear to be loyal; the third was that the fulfillment of plans would make further sabotage impossible, a false theory because fulfillment is not quite so ideal and, besides, sabotage could easily develop in case of war; finally, some claimed that the Trotskyites were not overly dangerous because they lacked reserves — ignoring the fact that they had allies abroad. Stalin thus demanded results from the Party, and the sophism recounted here left no room for argument or reason. The Party had to unmask the enemies.

The purging of the leading Party cadres was officially given a very democratic veneer. Elections, with all the trappings of voluntary participation, were said to have been held, and a given number of Party committee members or secretaries were merely reported as having been deprived of their posts. The press carried accounts of the meritorious background of the replacements, stressing usually their relative youthfulness, their previous service in the armed forces (but not in the Revolution), and, characteristically, the rather recent date of their acceptance into the Party.<sup>85</sup> Such men were to fill the void created by the expulsion of "politically bankrupt" individuals, "enemies of the people," or other unqualified personnel. Many of the replacements, however, stepped into shoes made empty not only by an "electoral defeat" but also by a subsequent quiet arrest. Cases of suicides were also relatively frequent, and had to be admitted even in the press. The intensity of the purge increased with the major public trials held by mid-1937, and the first results of the cleansing of the various Party organizations, published early in the summer of 1937, testified to the extent of the purge.

Table 2 indicates the turnover of the leading cadres from a number of regional primary Party organizations. It should be noted that if the percentages of those who were not secretaries or Party organizers in the same primary Party organization and the percentages of those who were elected to serve for the first time are added, the total turnover for only one year is much higher, running between 50 and 65 per cent. Some other scattered returns, published at various times, similarly showed the high percentage of removals: in Novosibirsk, for instance, one district reported a "renovation" of its leadership to the tune of 70 per cent, another 49 per cent,

TABLE 2 Leadership turnover in primary Party organizations, 1937

	No. of secretaries and partorgs	Transferred from office in other PPO's	Elected to serve for the first time
Omsk	704	270 (38.3%)	129 (18.3%)
Kiev	853	335 (39.3%)	233 (27.3%)
Donets	3,243	1,336 (41.2%)	884 (27.3%)
Sverdlovsk	1,891	744 (39.3%)	390 (26.6%)
Odessa	1,827	667 (36.5%)	285 (21.1%)
Chernigov	684	243 (35.5%)	123 (18.0%)
Crimea	1,026	475 (46.3%)	196 (19.1%)
Chelyabinsk	984	349 (35.5%)	225 (22.9%)
Kalinin	693	259 (37.4%)	149 (21.5%)
Vinnitsa	1,485	527 (35.5%)	306 (20.6%)
Ivanov	1,828	691 (37.8%)	428 (23.4%)
Yaroslav	1,234	450 (36.5%)	254 (20.6%)
Kirov	904	348 (38.5%)	203 (22.5%)
Kursk	1,288	423 (32.8%)	255 (19.8%)
Bashkiria	954	362 (37.9%)	191 (20.0%)
Kharkov	2,872	1,054 (36.7%)	555 (19.3%)
Azov-Black Sea	3,124	1,008 (32.3%)	690 (19.3%)
Gorky	1,862	632 (33.9%)	307 (16.5%)
Dnepropetrovsk	1,542	504 (32.7%)	268 (17.4%)
Moscow	7,430	2,538 (34.2%)	1,777 (23.9%)
Leningrad	1,485	564 (38.0%)	322 (21.7%)
Western	2,146	723 (33.7%)	416 (19.4%)
Stalingrad	1,131	457 (40.4%)	241 (21.3%)

Source: "Some Results of the Elections of Party Organs," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 10 (May 1937), p. 30.

another 50 per cent. In two districts of that region 78 per cent and 60 per cent of Party committee secretaries and organizers had had only six months' experience of Party work.<sup>86</sup>

The purge likewise affected the membership of Party committees, not their secretaries only. In Moscow the total number of Party members serving on committees in 1937 was 11,017, and of these, after the "elections," 4,434 were new replacements for old members.<sup>87</sup> In other areas of the Soviet Union the results were equally impressive. The following list shows what percentage of Party Committee members were not "re-elected."

Chernigov	66%
Crimea	64%
Kirov	61%
Kiev	57%
Krasnoiarsk	62%
Donets	57%
Sverdlovsk	56%
Bashkiria	55%

The total for some 54,000 primary Party organizations (about half of all Party organizations),<sup>88</sup> as announced in May 1937, stood at 55 per cent, which must have amounted to many thousands of Party members.<sup>89</sup>

The Komsomol was similarly attacked. The organization was accused of having grown fat and corrupt, and its leadership was said to have demonstrated "intolerable lack of vigilance and overlooked the special methods of subversive work of the enemies of the people in the Komsomol . . . In the Komsomol organizations facts of hostile, destructive work of the Trotskyite-Bukharinite dregs of society have been discovered."<sup>90</sup> The Central Committee of the League duly castigated itself and acted upon the criticism. By early 1938 the committee was thoroughly purged, and the older elements, not prepared to view the Komsomol merely as a *Stalin-jugend*, were pushed aside. Regional and local Komsomol organizations were exhorted to join the Party in cleansing its ranks, and "fighting tasks" were set before the various Komsomol units.

The purge of the Komsomol, initiated by the Fourth Plenum of its Central Committee, lasted more or less from September of 1937

to late spring of 1938, when general expulsions from the Party and the Komsomol were brought to an end. The first reports of the purge, published early in 1938, gave only scattered items of information. However, from the figures available,<sup>91</sup> it would seem that the purge of the Komsomol was not as thorough as of the Party, and involved relatively fewer members. This situation follows quite logically from the nature of the organization, which concerned itself with the younger generation and hence could not be penetrated by the "enemies of the people" to the extent that the Party was. Furthermore, the purge of the Komsomol began at a somewhat later stage and consequently ran into the period of "easing off" which began in 1938. As in the Party, the hardest hit were the upper cadres, starting with the top leadership, while the rank and file suffered relatively less. Indeed, during 1938 strenuous efforts were made to bring as many Komsomolites as possible into the Party, and by March 1939 some 320,000 were so promoted.<sup>92</sup>

By mid-1938 the purge began to taper off and lose its ferocity. Occasional trials still occurred, but more and more concern was paid to the induction of new blood into the Party and to filling the gaps created by the purge. The momentum of the purge, however, was not yet totally exhausted. Expulsions continued until at least the summer and early fall, when the local and regional Party conferences were held. These gatherings gave the Party an opportunity to take stock of its membership and to analyze the results of the purge. Published statistics on expulsions and changes in leadership showed that, while the tempo of the purge diminished, it still took its toll among the Party cadres. A good many of the expulsions, however, took place during the latter half of 1937 and early months of 1938, and were hence included in the annual reports (which cover the inter-conference periods).

Efforts continued, but now on a larger scale than in 1937, to attract new members into the Party; in Moscow, for instance, the Party organization ". . . cleansing itself of the enemies of the people . . . raised to leading positions in Party work new cadres, devoted to the work of Lenin-Stalin. In the course of the year 1,128 comrades were promoted: 695 as secretaries of Party committees; 251 as managers of sections and instructors in the Moscow district

Party committees; 44 as managers of sections and instructors in the Moscow City Party Committee; and 96 of our comrades were promoted to leading positions of other *krais*, regions.”<sup>93</sup> In addition, 5,206 Communists were elected for the first time to serve on Party committees,<sup>94</sup> this being a somewhat higher number than that of the preceding year. The majority were probably replacements for members removed during the later months of 1937, when the purge was still in full swing.<sup>95</sup>

The data available for the Leningrad Party organization does not deviate far from the same pattern. The period under review still involved considerable changes in leadership. The composition of the Party committees changed by about 35-45 per cent,<sup>96</sup> while the number of new secretaries of Party committees was put at 570.<sup>97</sup> In addition, 12,813 Party members were said to have been promoted to more responsible, but otherwise unspecified, positions.<sup>98</sup> Other areas of the Soviet Union likewise reported continuing expulsions, although at a gradually diminishing rate.<sup>99</sup>

But while such reports were still coming in, efforts were being exerted to bring the grinding machinery of the purge to a stop. The necessity for a halt was finally becoming apparent to the leadership, which began to realize the potential danger inherent in the mass purge. The first omen of the change was the decree of the Central Committee of the Party, made public on January 19, 1938, and entitled somewhat clumsily “On Mistakes of Party Organizations with Respect to the Expulsion of Communists from the Party, with Respect to the Formalistic-Bureaucratic Attitude towards Appeals of the Expellees from the CPSU(B) and with Respect to the Measures to Improve these Deficiencies.”<sup>100</sup> The resolution cited various abuses, particularly with respect to mass expulsions from the Party, as well as frequent cases of employment discrimination against those who had been expelled.<sup>101</sup> The Party organizations were strongly directed to take immediate corrective measures and to report on them to the Central Committee.

Shortly afterwards, on April 20, a directive in the form of a governmental decree was published against similar abuses on the collective farms, particularly against expulsions from them.<sup>102</sup> Expulsion was described “as an extreme measure against obviously incorrigible members who undermine and disorganize the collec-

tive farm," and was to be employed sparingly and in accordance with prescribed procedures. Failure would make the responsible officials "liable to prosecution on criminal charges."

The purge was thus being halted. Indeed, even more determined efforts to bring the operation to a stop soon manifested themselves, and the regime proceeded to take action against the "abuses" of the purge. But before attention can be given to this new phase of the purge, the impact and the toll of the Great Purge merit special consideration.

# 6

## *The Impact*

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“Fear is maintained by a dread of punishment which never fails” (Machiavelli).

THE MASS PURGE and the mass terror were unprecedented both in their pervasiveness and in the actual physical toll taken. For this was no longer a Party purge run by the Party with secret police assistance. It was a large-scale process of elimination, marked by considerable violence and brutality. Its toll and impact, for this reason, merit special consideration.<sup>1</sup>

The vast scope of the purge was, to a considerable degree, produced by the linking of the purge with a general and frequently quite hysterical effort to find and eliminate all the remaining opponents of the system in all social strata and in all walks of life. An inner logic to the purge, self-feeding and frequently self-directing, was in consequence promptly manifested, and the human toll grew larger and larger. The scope of the purge was also influenced by the total nature of the power wielded by the leadership, which through the elimination of all institutional as well as traditional limitations on its power not only gave a free reign to the purge but tended to magnify the assumed conspiracies.

Our point of departure for the attempt to assess some aspects of the toll of the purge will be the Party, to whose loyalty and militancy the Soviet regime pays special attention. The following information is available: at the end of 1935, when the purge was again beginning to exact its toll, the total membership of the Communist Party stood at 2,358,714 members and candidates. By the end of 1938, when the purge was finally halted, the total membership was 1,920,002.<sup>2</sup> The Party ranks had been reduced by 445,712 members and candidates. This number, however, does not represent the total loss during the purge, for it does not take into consideration any new members accepted during this period. In fact, although the scale of admission of new members during 1937 was

somewhat insignificant, it assumed considerable proportions during 1938. In that year a determined membership drive was launched to fill the void created by indiscriminate purging. In order, therefore, to arrive at some adequate approximation of the total number of Party members purged, the number of admissions must be established and added to the preceding figure. The "new members," however, must be limited in this case to new candidates, as the majority of the new full Party members were usually former candidates and therefore listed on the Party rolls.<sup>3</sup>

The following calculation can therefore be made: according to an official source, the total of new candidates admitted between January and June 1938 stood at 108,518.<sup>4</sup> During October, November, and December, 135,000 candidates were admitted.<sup>5</sup> If the rate of admissions for the missing months of July, August, and September was more or less similar, as is likely, the total admissions for the year 1938 should have amounted to about 320,000. The determination of admissions for the year 1937 is slightly more complicated. Fortunately, some headway can be made even here with the available Soviet data. An article appearing in June of 1938, discussing the entry of new members into the Party, stated that, since the reopening of the Party ranks to admissions in November of 1936, more than 200,000 people had joined.<sup>6</sup> But according to the source cited previously, the total of new admissions between January and June 1938 stood at 108,518. It would follow, therefore, that admissions for 1937 amounted to about 90,000; and the total admissions for the two years must have been in the vicinity of 410,000. This estimate, added to the net loss between the years 1936 and 1938, which totaled 445,712, will then represent, with a slight margin of error, the number of Party members who were purged during the so-called Great Purge. The figure of 850,000, or about 36 per cent of the Party membership, is thus a relatively close estimate of the toll exacted from the Party by the purge in the course of a mere year and a half.

The next level in the Party hierarchy, above that of the ordinary members, is composed of secretaries of the primary Party organizations and members of the committees. These, according to Stalin, are the "noncommissioned" officers of the Communist Party, and their total stood in 1937 at about 100,000-150,000.<sup>7</sup> It is impossible

to compute an over-all total of expulsions of these "NCO's," as complete statistics are not available. Some partial results, however, were cited in the preceding chapter, and these would indicate that the turnover was about 50-65 per cent in the year 1937 and about 30-40 per cent during the audit year of 1938, putting the combined percentage in the vicinity of 70-75 per cent for the two years. But an unknown number of these must have been involved in normal transfers, recalls, or promotions to positions vacated higher up by the purge.

The next strata to be considered are, to use Stalin's analogy again, the "officer corps," consisting of about thirty to forty thousand men. These include the district and town secretaries, the heads of the various sections of the district Party committees, the instructing and agitation personnel on the district level, and some of the less important officials of higher Party bodies (such as the rank and file of the regional or city Party committee). Information gathered from the interviews with former Soviet inhabitants, as well as scattered items in Soviet publications, indicate (although not conclusively) that the relative toll was still higher on this level than on the strata below it.<sup>8</sup> In some of the more exposed national areas the toll was particularly acute and exceeded the normal complement.<sup>9</sup> A very general estimate of the turnover is approximately 80 per cent.

The curtain of uncertainty can be swept aside somewhat more easily from the next level of the hierarchy which, again according to Stalin, is the "high command," numbering three to four thousand key individuals. They presumably include the members of the Central Committee, members of the *Sovnarkom* (Council of People's Commissars), leaders of the Republican Parties and members of their leading organs, heads of the large city Party organizations, heads of the larger regional Party organizations, and their immediate staffs. Since a great many of these men necessarily receive some degree of publicity, it is relatively easier to trace their disappearance from the public scene by a study of Soviet publications. Furthermore, the major show trials tended to draw on this general category of Party officials. These combined factors permit some observations to be made on the extent of the purge of the "high command," and reveal its rather exposed position.

It is to be noted, however, that the "high command" was in fact subordinate to the central power, wielded by Stalin and the Politburo; it represented merely the first, although admittedly significant, link in the chain of authority. But its proximity to the top makes it a potential substitute for the leadership itself and the breeding ground for overambitious elements within the regime. It is the focus of all intrigues, maneuvers, and schemes which, as the post-mortems of the Nazi regime have revealed, develop to a fine point in a totalitarian society. The top leadership must accordingly feel that its confidence in the loyalty as well as in the political-ideological orthodoxy of its "high command" should be complete; and any lapse of confidence must immediately lead to the introduction of new cadres. The need for such measures is further heightened by the tendency of such next-to-the-top organs to be affected immediately by any shifts in the top leadership's orientation. The top leadership, particularly the dictator, is therefore prone to supplant his former revolutionary collaborators with younger products, made according to the dictator's own mold.

The turnover of membership within the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party between the years 1934 and 1939 is rather indicative of the trend suggested above. Apart from the members whose fate was decided directly by the purge trials, almost the entire membership was revamped, and new Party leaders, younger both in age and in Party standing, replaced the old. A comparison of the two Central Committees elected after the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Party Congresses reveals that 55 of the 68 names appearing in 1934 cannot be found in 1939;<sup>10</sup> of the 68 candidates listed in 1934 only seven can still be found in the ranks of the Central Committee in 1939. Six of these (Bulganin, Lozovsky, Bagirov, Mekhliis, Budenny, Poskrebyshv) were promoted to full membership and one (Veinberg) remained a candidate-member.<sup>11</sup> The great majority of those dropped from the Central Committee were old Bolsheviks, whose complete loyalty to Stalin could be questioned, and some of whom had been clearly sympathetic to the opposition. The Seventeenth Party Congress, although firmly consolidating Stalin's power in such key organs as the Politburo and the Orgburo, did not achieve true homogeneity on the Party Central Committee, which remained a haven for a number of

future participants in the purge trials. Their total elimination from the Party by 1939 marked the final stage in the Hamlet-like tragedy of the opposition — torn between loyalty to the Bolshevik cause and distrust and hostility to the emerging new leadership.

The eclipse of this old Bolshevik, pre-Stalinist generation is shown by the following list. Of the 55 Central Committee members in the 1934 Central Committee not appearing on the 1939 Central Committee, 4 joined the Party before 1900, 12 between 1900 and 1905, 22 between 1906 and 1917, 5 between 1918 and 1920, and 1 after 1920. No date is known for 11. Their place was taken by new men, steeled not by the Revolution but by the Stalinist purges, bearing memories not of the revolutionary struggles but of the collectivization and industrialization, dreaming not of the world revolution but of the glories of the Soviet Union and its leader. Their length of membership in the Party, as compared with the two preceding Central Committees, is shown in the following list.

<i>Period when Central Committee members joined Party</i>	<i>No. of members after XVI Congress (1930)</i>	<i>No. of members after XVII Congress (1934)</i>	<i>No. of members after XVIII Congress (1939)</i>
Before 1900	9	7	5
1900-1905	21	16	6
1906-1910	12	9	4
1911-1917	23	22	11
1918-1920	0	7	22
1921-1925	0	1	8
1925-	0	0	10
No date	6	9	5

A certain degree of change was due merely to the normal passage of time. But the premeditated character of most changes is revealed by an analysis of the rate of change from congress to congress between the years 1917 and 1939. It demonstrates an amazing acceleration in change of membership, as shown in Table 3.

Changes of similar magnitude also occurred in the Council of People's Commissars, with only about one third of that body weathering the storm. A check of the officially announced changes

in the top administrative personnel for the last six months of 1937 alone reveals that in seventeen USSR Commissariats, eleven commissars and thirty-one deputies were removed. It should be noted that the total number of Commissariats in 1936 was eighteen.<sup>12</sup> The impact of the purge on the administrative cadres oscillated with the shifts in the emphasis of the purge. In the initial stages, when the main brunt of the charges was directed at political and economic subversion on behalf of foreign powers, the purge struck first of all at the officials in actual contact with foreign states, and second at those responsible for the operations of the state economy. The year 1937 was thus marked by a thorough purge of Soviet diplomatic representatives abroad. At home the Commissariats of Agriculture, Lumber, Industry, Internal Trade, and Defence Production were particularly affected, although other governmental agencies were also struck by the purge.

Even membership in the Politburo did not constitute a guarantee of safety, with six of its 1934 members suffering an eclipse. This, however, should be qualified by the statement that the Stalinist hard core of the Politburo, with the uncertain exception of Ordzhonikidze, was not affected by it. Further down the line, nine of the eleven secretaries of the Communist Parties of the national republics were deprived of their positions, as well as the majority of the republican People's Commissars.<sup>13</sup> Trotskyite sources, which scrutinized the events of the purge closely, stated that with two exceptions, not a single regional Party secretary of 1937 could still be located in the same post in 1938.<sup>14</sup>

The toll of the central Party cadres was so heavy that an amendment to the Party rules was made necessary, providing for the selection of younger Party members to fill the numerous vacancies by cutting the length of membership in the Party necessary to hold office. "The length of Party membership required in the case of secretaries of Regional Committees, territorial committees and Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the national republics shall not be less than five years instead of twelve years, in the case of secretaries of City Committees not less than three years instead of ten years . . ." <sup>15</sup> (Similar changes were made in the provisions applicable to lower Party echelons.) The net effect of

the amendment was the replacement of leaders whose entry into the Party dated at least back to 1924 or 1926 by members who entered the Party in the early or even middle 1930's.

The complexion of the Party was thus radically reformed. The center of gravity shifted from the older Bolshevik to the younger Soviet generation, and the composition of the Party reflects the change. Party membership between the years 1933 and 1939 suffered

TABLE 3 Turnover in Central Committee membership, 1917-1939

Party Congresses	No. of CC members elected	No. who had served on previous CC
VI — August 1917	21	
VII — March 1918	15	13 (86.6%)
VIII — March 1919	19	12 (63.0%)
IX — March 1920	19	13 (68.4%)
X — March 1921	24	15 (62.5%)
XI — March 1922	27	20 (74.0%)
XII — April 1923	40	24 (60.0%)
XIII — May 1924	53	37 (69.8%)
XIV — December 1925	63	49 (77.7%)
XV — December 1927	71	52 (73.2%)
XVI — June 1930	71	57 (80.3%)
XVII — February 1934	71	56 (78.9%)
XVIII — March 1939	71	16 (22.5%)

*Biulleten oppositsii*, no. 77-78 (1939), p. 19. An even more startling result is obtained when one checks the percentages of Central Committee members re-elected to a subsequent Central Committee, e.g., percentage of 1917 members elected to the 1918 Committee. These are: of the members in 1917, 62.4% were re-elected in 1918; of 1918 — 80%; of 1919 — 68.1%; of 1920 — 78.7%; of 1921 — 88.8%; of 1922 — 88.8%; of 1923 — 92.5%; of 1924 — 92.4%; of 1925 — 82.5%; of 1927 — 80.3%; of 1930 — 78.9%; of 1934 — 22.5%.

a loss of about 2,155,000 members and candidates, who were replaced by about 1,000,000 new men. The total strength of the Party diminished from 3,500,000 in 1933 to 2,500,000 at the time of the Eighteenth Party Congress. Of this latter total, about 1,000,000 were admitted into the Party during the period of the major purges; they were mostly younger elements, with at least a third being promoted into the Party from the Komsomol.<sup>16</sup> By 1939 about 40 per cent

of the membership consisted of those admitted into the Party within the last five or six years, and of the remaining 60 per cent about one half dated their membership back only to the late 1920's.<sup>17</sup>

Comparable data for the delegates to the Eighteenth Party Congress, although not necessarily representative of the entire Party, also stress both the youthfulness of the delegates<sup>18</sup> and the relative brevity of their service in the Party, in sharp contrast to the Seventeenth Party Congress. Thus while in the Seventeenth Party Congress only 2.6 per cent of the delegates had joined the Party during or after 1929, the comparable figure for the Eighteenth Party Congress was 43 per cent. Eighty per cent of the delegates to the Seventeenth Congress had been members by 1920, while in the Eighteenth Party Congress only 19.4 per cent had been members by 1920 (this was still twice as high a percentage as for the total Party membership in 1939); in 1934 three fourths of the delegates were veterans of the Civil War, while in 1939 only 8.1 per cent could claim this by then dubious distinction.<sup>19</sup> The growing respectability of the regime was also demonstrated by the preponderance of administrators and professionals among the delegates. The Eighteenth Party Congress no longer listed among the delegates "the direct production workers" but instead emphasized the educational background of the delegates, 54 per cent of whom were said to have had higher, middle, or incomplete higher training.<sup>20</sup> The vanguard of the proletariat was thus becoming the elite of the proletariat.

Similar changes took place in other agencies of the Soviet power. The industrial machinery was supplied with new leading personnel, symbolizing not only the new age but also the closer integration between the new professional cadres and the Party. An equally thorough but much more dramatic purge occurred in the Red Army, which resulted in the almost total elimination of its former leadership and the thinning out of its officer corps. Here, unfortunately, information is extremely sparse, and only limited items can be obtained from secondary sources or from personal accounts of former Soviet citizens and members of the armed forces.<sup>21</sup> As in the case of the Party, the heaviest toll was suffered by the immediate military subordinates of the top political leadership of the Soviet state, gradually decreasing percentage-wise as it embraced

the lower echelons of the officer corps. The years 1937 to 1938 saw the disappearance of seven deputy Commissars of Defence, three Marshals of the Soviet Union, 13 of the 15 army commanders of the first and second rank (including General Putna, who, together with Tukhachevsky, had a long-standing strategic feud with Stalin, dating back to the 1920 Polish campaign), 30 of the 58 corps commanders, and 110 of the 195 divisional commanders. The head of the Political Administration of the Army, commander Gamarnik, committed suicide to avoid arrest. General estimates of the arrests vary greatly, and no complete lists are available.<sup>22</sup> One source makes an estimate of about 25 per cent, or 20,000 men.<sup>23</sup> A more conservative estimate, made by the Polish General Staff (which, clearly, was vitally concerned with these developments), puts the total of those purged at 15,000 officers. This would seem to correspond with the Party averages. The arrested were replaced by younger graduates of Soviet military academies. The relaxation of the purge in late 1938 resulted in the release of a number of imprisoned officers, but many remained incarcerated, frequently without a trial, until the outbreak of the German-Soviet war.<sup>24</sup>

The last statistical source which might be given a cursory examination is the limited and, as previously conceded, not fully representative data compiled on the basis of a sample of 2,725 Soviet defectors and nonreturners. It is quoted here essentially for illustrative purposes. These people indicated in their interviews that a total of 546 of their relatives suffered arrest during the years 1936–1940; and of these, in an interesting contrast to the previous period, a relatively high proportion were to be found in the upper levels of the Soviet social system. Thus while the Soviet defectors and nonreturners indicated the arrest of 447 of their relatives for the years 1930–1935 and 185 of these as belonging to the intelligentsia or employee (white-collar) class, analogous figures for the following five years place 346 of the arrested 546 in the intelligentsia-employee class. There was a corresponding decrease in the later period in the number of workers and farmers listed as arrested.<sup>25</sup>

The change in emphasis was consistent with the urgent need to place the new Soviet cadres in responsible positions, as well as with the stress on completely cleansing the apparatus of “overlappers” from the pretotalitarian era. It would bear out further,

but to a limited extent, the suggestion that the purges between 1929 and 1935 were basically aimed at eliminating the weaker and more passive elements within the Party as well as the dogmatically doomed economic classes; while the 1936 to 1938 purge, at least in its conscious purposes, strove to rid the system of potentially politically dangerous elements. This change in emphasis is further illustrated by a change in the nature of the charges proffered against the victims of the purge, from a rather equal distribution between those who were charged with hostile economic activity, with inimical social-economic background, and with political charges during the 1930 to 1935 period, to an emphasis on the general political charge in the later period. The following data was extracted from the sample at hand. It gives the grounds for arrest of 415 people during 1930-1935, and 496 people during 1935-1940.

	1930-1935	1935-1940
Economic activity	104 (24.5%)	55 (11.1%)
Social-economic origins	109 (26.2%)	59 (11.9%)
General political charge	131 (31.4%)	248 (50.0%)
Specific political charge	44 (10.5%)	65 (13.1%)
Charge unknown	27 (7.4%)	69 (13.8%)

All this tends to illustrate the growing concern of the regime with the political aspects of power and with the political loyalty of the populace.

The intensity of the impact of the purge on the entire society was closely related to the actual disposition of the arrested persons. Here again data is extremely limited, although it is known now that imprisonment and confinement to labor camps without a trial, and often without specific delimitation of the duration of confinement, were frequent. The majority of the cases were disposed in an administrative fashion by administrative panels of the NKVD and by the so-called *troiki*, composed of the local NKVD head, the district committee Party secretary, and the local Soviet chairman.<sup>26</sup> In most cases, according to testimony of former Soviet forced laborers, decision as to the final disposition of the case was made by the police itself, and the prisoner was arbitrarily informed that, on the basis of paragraph such and such, he was to be confined to a labor camp for a period of so many years.<sup>27</sup> The severity of the

sentences imposed varied not only with the nature of the crime alleged, but also with the general intensity of the purges. "When the Yezhov period was at its height, sentences of less than five years' forced labor were very rare. Normally they were for eight to ten years' forced labor, but sentences of twenty-five years' forced labor or imprisonment were not uncommon. Death sentences were said to have been frequent, but our impression is that they did not exceed ten per cent."<sup>28</sup>

Data obtained from the sample tends to confirm the estimate of the competent eyewitness (Godin) cited above. The years 1935-1940 showed an increase in the number of individuals sentenced to five to ten years of imprisonment, as contrasted with the previously more common five years' sentence. The shift to political charges from the more sweeping social and economic accusations naturally brought about greater severity. The rate of death sentences, in so far as the sample was concerned, remained approximately constant between the years 1930 and 1940: the first five years resulted in 47 death sentences out of 445 arrests; while in the second half-decade 52 were said to have been sentenced to death out of 471 arrests. The death rate of the arrested relatives in labor camps likewise remained constant, and relatively high, during these years, with 131 reported as dying out of 455 arrests during 1930-1935, and 127 out of 471 during 1935-1940.

One of the more frightening consequences of arrest was the complete severance of all contacts between the prisoners and their relatives. Soviet justice provides, among other penalties, for sentences of imprisonment without the right of correspondence, which in effect eliminates all contacts with the outside world. With the mortality rate high as it was (and is), the mental anguish of all parties involved must have been acute, giving rise to most pessimistic speculations concerning the prisoners' well-being and the jailers' intentions. That such fears were not entirely the product of emotionalism was unfortunately proven by the events of the war, which led to the discovery of a number of mass graves containing people arrested during the purges and shot secretly by the NKVD. We may quote the testimony of one former Soviet citizen, which is particularly illustrative as it lends itself to corroboration from other sources.

I forgot to tell you one thing yesterday . . . My uncle, the brother of my father, told me about that. That there was a park in Vinnitsa, where he lived. A park, a place to walk. Then once they closed it up and put a big fence around it so that you could not see into it. Every night cars went to that park. Some people saw what was going on, although they feared to talk about it. Finally the Soviets opened it up and it was very beautiful, with many flowers. But later . . . when the Germans came, they dug it up and uncovered many graves. There were many people buried there. They were buried in lime and concrete, and then they were covered over. Many still had clothes on them, and people came in from kolхозes, and many found their relatives. They could identify them by their underclothing. Very often a person's initials would be sewn on his underclothing . . . They were people who were shot in 1937 and 1938.<sup>29</sup>

The total number of bodies recovered numbered 9,432, including 169 women. The majority of the identified victims had been sentenced to forced labor during the purge period, with the terrifying provision "without privilege of correspondence."<sup>30</sup> It would be rash to assume that Vinnitsa constituted an isolated case; the likelihood of other such mass executions is extremely real.<sup>31</sup> The intimidating influence of such disappearances and the resulting circulation of wild rumors constituted thus an additional terrorizing force of the purge.

The impact of the purge was further magnified by the indirect repercussions that the arrests or expulsions from the Party produced on the relatives of the people involved. These repercussions varied to some extent with the seriousness of the alleged offense, but nonetheless they were usually unpleasant in one way or another for the immediate relatives of the accused. The pressing realities of Soviet life tended naturally to direct such repressions into areas of greatest urgency, and hence the most frequent consequence was the loss of lodging, including total expulsion from one's home or, at least, severe curtailment of living quarters. This form of punishment was more applicable to families of administrators or higher officials who, because of their status, were provided with more generous accommodation than is customary for the great masses of the Soviet population.

In many cases the arrest of a person resulted in the total isolation

of his family, who were ostracized by former friends, shunned and avoided by colleagues and associates.<sup>32</sup> Quite possibly an undercurrent of sympathy did exist, but overwhelming fear of denunciations and unjustified accusations completely overshadowed any factors of human sympathy. The epidemic of persecution even transmitted itself to the schools, and a number of former Soviet citizens recall various forms of ostracism and juvenile persecution which developed. Arrests of the more important Soviet luminaries were frequently followed by imprisonment of their immediate families, and former inmates of Soviet prisons recall having met various relatives of purged Soviet leaders.<sup>33</sup> Many of these manifestations varied, however, according to the time and the place, late 1936 and 1937 being the worst years, and the major cities being more apt to develop an atmosphere of depression and hysteria than the countryside.

This extension of the purge, through such indirect chain reactions, tended to exaggerate its actual scope in the eyes of its countless witnesses. Many Soviet citizens whom the purge did not touch at all and whose relatives were in no way involved became very much aware of the presence and operation of the purge, not only through the trials and the wide publicity surrounding them, but also through the obvious suffering of their neighbors and colleagues, or the neighbors and colleagues of their friends and relatives.

A closed totalitarian system, with strict censorship and total monopoly of normal means of communications, develops, as the experience of Nazi Germany and the occupied countries has shown, substitute forms of contact and exchange of news. Gossip, based on a "reliable" but otherwise unnamed source, becomes a standard source of "real" and "true" information; it is carried by word of mouth from place to place and undergoes inescapable embellishments and exaggerations through the prejudices, biases, and imaginative powers of its carriers, operating without any objective tests of validity and accuracy. The additional element of fear and the normal human desire to share it with others provide additional stimulus to garble and exaggerate facts. The scope of the arrests or sudden and mysterious disappearances is in this manner magnified, and the terroristic aspects of the purge thus further mass anxiety.

The totalitarian process of intimidation is aided by the lack of clearly apparent pattern in the destruction of countless individuals, the majority of whom appear guiltless. In one way this tends to increase the latent resentment against the regime, but simultaneously it paralyzes potential opposition by denying it its chief source of appeal—common self-interest. Unlike the Nazi persecutions, where both open, boastful declarations of the intent to eliminate entire categories of people and public executions immediately provoked the desperate resistance of those attacked, the Soviet purge gave rise to a feeling of acute ambivalence and indecision. Its mass character, increased further by gossip, magnified fears and terrorized the impotent population. But its apparent irrationality and lack of clearly defined goals did not encourage group resistance on an organized basis, because basis for resistance was lacking. Relatively few Soviet citizens felt that they were personally involved in the “Trotskyite-Bukharinite-Fascist-wrecking-espionage deviation,” and attacks so phrased did not appear to be directly aimed at themselves. The normal tendency was to “lie low” and hope that the storm would pass by. After all, there was no reason to believe that it would strike home. It was safer, therefore, to wait and hope, rather than to expose oneself by conspiracy and resistance. Reasoning based on prudence and passivity may have further concluded that, despite the magnitude of the purge, it was still unable to affect everyone. So why provoke it without undue cause?

It is of interest to note that the foregoing is borne out to some extent by the fact that the sole identified source of opposition operating on an organized basis has been found on the national level, where the feeling of national self-interest provided a common basis for resistance or conspiracy against the Soviet regime. Otherwise Soviet terror has been highly successful in establishing itself as unchallengeable; Soviet defectors and nonreturners always emphasize the impossibility of internal revolution. This estimate of reality is probably accurate; the interesting feature is the almost universal state of mind which by excluding the possibility of revolt strengthens the view that it cannot come about. Terror thus achieves its purpose.

The course of behavior advocated by most of the former Soviet citizens on the basis of their experience with the Soviet purges is

thus a complete withdrawal within one's self, and the passive acceptance of existing conditions with simulated enthusiasm for them. The following quotations are representative of a sentiment frequently expressed: "I was never arrested . . . That was only because I manoeuvred between the reefs of their Communist policy . . . So I was silent. But I was never secure." His advice: "Be smart, don't do foolish things, don't express your sincere thoughts, and then everything will be all right. Talk like everyone else does."<sup>34</sup> Another respondent, a defector, gave the following counsel: ". . . do not speak long, because you can make a slip of the tongue. Speak often in public but make your speeches brief, and do not engage in discussion . . . If you make short speeches very often, you are regarded as being active. This is something of a guarantee. I see no better guarantee than this one. The other guarantee of sorts is if you have absolutely nothing to do with anybody. However, if you follow this policy and then say something out of line just once you are lost."<sup>35</sup> The Soviet *émigrés* warned also against too free an exchange of thought even with members of one's families and friends.<sup>36</sup>

But this very emphasis on personal inactivity and apparently active acceptance of the system is one of the system's strengths. Nothing is more depressing to an opponent of the system than the feeling of isolation and displacement in the society in which he lives. The impression of complete support which the regime seems to enjoy not only results in such isolation but also challenges one's critical faculties and creates a tendency to re-examine one's objections to the system. The purge thus helps to create a mass fraud, in which many latent opponents of the system actually weaken one another's hostility to the regime by simulating, admittedly under duress, enthusiasm for its policies and support even for its terror.

Simulated enthusiasm arises, naturally, more easily among those who have a personal motive for or vested interest in believing (or wanting to believe) that the system is basically just and that the existing sufferings which have been imposed upon them are mere accidents, unavoidable in operations of such magnitude. Some Party members are prone to feel, when subjected to the purge, that their personal eclipse is a momentary and unfortunate episode in a necessary historical process, and will soon be rectified by the regime. The

previously cited example of the army officers who believed, despite an imprisonment of three years without trial, that they would soon be made free and re-established in their former ranks is characteristic of a conscious and willful tendency on the part of some to completely ignore the negative aspects of the purge. Under these circumstances the Party can feel that even indiscriminate purging constitutes a source of strength, and that the purge results in greater cohesion in its ranks and tighter discipline of its members.

In his report to the Eighteenth Party Congress, Stalin stated: "The strengthening of the Party and of its leading bodies during the period under review proceeded chiefly along two lines: along the line of regulating the composition of the Party, ejecting unreliable elements and selecting the best elements, and along the line of dividing up the organizations, reducing their size, and bringing the leading bodies closer to the concrete, day-to-day work of the lower bodies."<sup>37</sup> The purge thus resulted in the setting up of a much tighter system of controls within the Party over its various organizational levels as well as over its membership directly. The elimination of the older cadres and the introduction of new members into the Party and the administration were accompanied by increased centralization of authority and the growing efficacy of its supervisory machinery. The manner in which this was achieved was basically twofold: organizational diffusion and centralization of control. The first was achieved by breaking up the larger Party units and setting up additional Party organizations, despite diminished membership. Party organizations thus became smaller and the contact between the members and their superiors closer. Eighty new city Party organizations, 1256 district Party organizations, and 2255 primary Party organizations were established; and in addition the number of regional Party organizations increased from 70 to 110.<sup>38</sup> This process was paralleled by the breaking up of the previously existing seven national republics into eleven (giving rise to charges that the national leaders concerned opposed such changes), and the administrative reorganization of the regions, increasing their number by about 50 per cent.<sup>39</sup>

This administrative-organizational diffusion, preventing the development of local centers of power in the form of political satrapies, was accompanied by a decree of the Central Committee of

the Party on August 22, 1938. It provided that selections for the following posts be submitted to the Central Committee for confirmation: first, second, and third secretaries of all *okrug*, city, and district Party organizations by the republican, *krai*, and regional Central Committees.<sup>40</sup> The Cadres Administration of the Central Committee was thus officially granted power to check the operations of its district committees, of which there were in 1939 some 3800,<sup>41</sup> and which hitherto had been supervised by the regional committees.

As a result, the regime claimed that the purge, in so far as the regime itself was concerned, strengthened the Soviet state and the Communist Party. The accuracy of that claim is subject to challenge and, indeed, sufficient evidence exists to provide an adequate basis for challenge. It is indisputable that the purge resulted in great confusion and demoralization among industrial and military personnel. Eyewitnesses recall how the operations of Soviet industry were handicapped by the elimination of skilled technicians and engineers. Many experts place the blame for the failure of Soviet military operations in Finland and in the initial stages of the German-Soviet conflict on the lack of an adequate officer corps and on the fear and dissatisfaction which prevailed among many of the survivors of the purge. The hasty release and reinstatement of many of the former prisoners further attests to this.

All this, however, was not the primary concern of the Soviet leadership. The rational and conscious motivations which, together with the existential pressures for a purge inherent in a totalitarian system, produced the purge were overshadowed by considerations involving, above all, the survival of the regime and of Stalin and his immediate colleagues in particular. Barrington Moore thus analyzed Soviet policy formulation:

. . . there is abundant evidence to show that the primary considerations in any decision made by Stalin and his associates between various possible courses of action have to do with their own power. Each major decision and a host of minor ones are made with the purpose of increasing the rulers' power. No ethical and social principles, derived from the Marxist or any other intellectual tradition, are permitted to overrule power considerations. Apparent conflicts between such principles and the imperatives of power can be rationalized out of existence through appeal to the familiar Leninist versions of the maxim that the end justified the means.<sup>42</sup>

It is not really relevant whether this concern with power was for the sake of power alone, or for power to achieve higher goals set by the leader. In so far as power was defined in terms of conformity to the Stalinist line, all those considered as potential deviants were naturally tending to weaken the Soviet system. In this context, the consideration that the purge might result in economic or military dislocation lost its significance.

Put in these terms the purge might indeed be construed as having strengthened the position of the Soviet regime, increased its power, and eliminated any possible and potential alternatives to it. Stalin accordingly boasted to the Eighteenth Party Congress:

In the face of the imposing achievement, the opponents of the general line of our Party, and all the various "Left" and "Right" trends, all the Trotsky-Piatakov and Bukharin-Rykov degenerates were forced to creep into their shells, to tuck away their hackneyed "platforms," and to retreat into hiding. Lacking the manhood to submit to the will of the people, they preferred to merge with the Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Fascists, to become the tools of foreign espionage services, to hire themselves out as spies, and to obligate themselves to help the enemies of the Soviet Union to dismember our country and restore capitalist slavery in it. Such was the inglorious end of the opponents of the line of our Party, who finished up as enemies of the people. When it had smashed the enemies of the people and purged the Party and Soviet organizations of degenerates, the Party became still more united in its political and organizational work and rallied even more solidly around its Central Committee.<sup>43</sup>

(This report was greeted, according to the official transcript, with "tumultuous applause. All delegates rise and give a standing ovation. Voices: 'Hurrah for comrade Stalin, Cheers for comrade Stalin! Cheers for the Central Committee of our Party! Hurrah!'" ) Stalin's conclusions, stripped of their vituperative and doctrinal dressing, might thus be viewed as a generally accurate analysis of the situation in so far as the position of the leadership of the Party was concerned. But before Stalin could mount the rostrum and publicly proclaim the triumph of his purge, he and his Party had to weather a crisis which the purge itself had conceived.

# 7

## **The Safety Values**

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**“The method of chopping off and blood letting . . . is dangerous and infectious. You chop off one head today, another one tomorrow, still another one the day after — what in the end will be left of the party?” (J. Stalin, “Sochineniya,” vol. VII, p. 380).**

THE PURGE as a technique of government can assure to the leadership of the regime continued obedience of its subjects, can provide added stimulus to its supporters, and can lead to an increase in the power of the leadership. But it can easily cease to be a technique of government, and suddenly develop an energy of its own. The series of purges begun on a large scale in the early thirties gradually developed momentum, and by late 1937 the Yezhov purge not only constituted an actual or potential threat to the lives or livelihoods of countless Soviet citizens, but indeed had become a definite menace to the stability of the system itself. The Soviet regime almost purged itself to death.

The nature of the power structure of a totalitarian regime (despite the apparent absence of that maze of institutions so characteristic of many constitutional states) is highly complex. This power structure includes the application of terror techniques for coercing obedience and allegiance. At the same time, the regime is the outcome of the combined self-interest of its many followers and supporters, who are either directly responsible for the seizure of power by the totalitarian movement or personally involved in the continued maintenance of the existing power situation. The totalitarian Party, being the central mechanism of totalitarian rule, sees in its leaders the symbol of its own well-being, the symbol of its monopoly of power, the symbol of the privileged position of its members. The Party expects from the leadership protection of the values that the leadership symbolizes, and the unquestioning accept-

ance of the primacy of the leadership is to some extent influenced by the leadership's fulfillment of these basic expectations which provide the Party with some of its cohesive force. And although totalitarianism demands from its followers total compliance and acceptance of all imposed duties and sacrifices, the element of self-interest cannot be erased completely, and manifests itself in the behavior of even the most devoted supporters of the system. With the passage of time and the fading into memory of the revolutionary past, self-interest tends to become the outstanding motive for many in joining the dominant group, and for giving total obedience to the leadership of the regime.

The purge of the Party and of the system as a whole challenges the egoistic instincts which originally led many into the fold of the totalitarian movement. That challenge, however, stimulates no more than passive resentment mingled with fear, as long as the leadership is able to control and manipulate the purge, apply it skillfully, and carry it through periodic oscillations and relaxations. But the purge is an extremely elastic mechanism, depending very much for the extent and manner of its operations on the purely human aspects involved. It lends itself to the pressures of hysteria and mass intimidation, and can be swept along easily by the forces it has itself produced.

In time, the functionaries responsible for the operation of a purge realize that stopping it is an impossible and probably undesirable task for them. Impossible because their own functioning is closely related to the maintenance of the purge; undesirable because all bridges have been burned, and any halt would probably result in a reaction against the thoroughly disliked and socially isolated "purgers." The totalitarian secret police thus becomes vitally involved in the continuation and even extension of the purge. But simultaneously there is a growing pressure, direct and indirect, on the top political leadership from its own supporters and followers, from the various organizations and lieutenants of the Party, to call a halt to the purge, to stop the process which is destroying the egoistic motives of their allegiance to the regime.

Such was the situation in the Soviet Union in late 1937 and early 1938. The secret police (known then as the NKVD) had overreached itself, and was endangering the hitherto undisputed su-

premacry of the Party. The purge of the Party organizations, until then a function of the Party purging commissions and the control commissions,<sup>1</sup> had passed into the hands of the police, which alone decided, frequently on the basis of sources of doubtful reliability, the scope and the timing of the arrests. The key role of the secret police manifested itself much more clearly on the lower levels of the Party hierarchy, and the local police "boss" frequently became the undisputed master of the situation, with the secretaries of the local Party organizations doing their utmost to accommodate him, sacrificing their members without a murmur and often falling victim themselves.

The arrests of local Party leaders by the secret police, without prior expulsion from the Party, became commonplace. Release of arrested relatives or friends through the intercession of the Party organization became more and more difficult, and, indeed, fewer and fewer local Party leaders were willing to intervene on behalf of imprisoned members. Intimidation reached such a point that effective power was slipping from the hands of Party officials into the hands of the police, who themselves had become unable to stop the purge. Nor, indeed, did they apparently desire to do so. The arrests of even the regional Party secretaries (although these were probably not carried out entirely on the initiative of the police) demonstrated to the membership of the Party that no position, no individual, was immune from the grasping reach of the secret police.<sup>2</sup>

There are no sources available to indicate that all this was part of a conscious scheme on the part of the secret police, and particularly its chief, Yezhov, to maximize its power. There is no confirmed information to indicate that the top political leadership felt that Yezhov and his subordinates had overreached themselves and had abused their power. There are no clear indications that Yezhov actually had any designs on power or that motives of personal ambition led him to encourage his subordinates' invasion of the prerogatives of the Party. In fact, it is quite possible to claim that Yezhov and his organization were swept along in the inevitable current which the system produced by opening up the dams to terror, and that their own personal salvation lay in swimming at the head of it, instead of attempting to stop it. There is some evi-

dence, however, that, no matter what the causal relationships may have been, the Party, including the top leadership, became seriously concerned about the situation, and by early 1938 was determined to apply remedial measures of no mean consequence.

Any objective assessment of the situation would certainly have pointed to the necessity of stopping the mass purge. Loyalty to the regime was shaky; the flow of new members into the Party was practically nil; support of the system was no longer the guarantee of a privileged position; the Party was seemingly becoming the tool of the now thoroughly hated secret police. The operation of the industrial machine was becoming more and more difficult because of the lack of trained personnel and the dislocation caused by the mass arrests. Eyewitnesses cite examples of increasing demoralization in the armed forces, the entire leadership of which was brusquely eliminated on the not too reassuring charge that it had been penetrated by foreign espionage services. In brief, the purge was ceasing to perform its key function and was showing alarming tendencies to create disruptive forces, which, in the final analysis, could lead either to an open outbreak of desperate resistance or to the passing of power into the hands of the terror agencies. Either case would adversely affect the position of the Party; and mounting pressures on the Politburo doubtless emphasized the seriousness of the developing situation. It was rendered all the more acute by the growing international crisis. This was the period of the *Anschluss*, the collapse of the Popular Front, the civil strife in Spain, and the coming Czech debacle. War loomed large on the horizon.

The leadership decided to act. Its decision may not have crystallized all at once, but already by early 1938 some efforts to tone down the purge could be discerned. Trials and accusations began to fade into the background, as did efforts to glorify the secret police and Yezhov. Suggestions, initially extremely timid ones, began to be made that possibly there had been some injustices committed in the purge, and a too "formalistic" handling of the purging process. The almost universal dislike for the secret police made the task of the regime that much easier; and the leadership began to open, one by one, the "safety valves" available to it to relieve the strains which the excesses of the purge had developed.

The first safety valve to be opened was the control of the flow of new people into the system. Replacements were sorely needed for the unmasked "enemies of the people," and the initial efforts to draw the younger elements into the Party were probably motivated by this need. In time, however, the Politburo must have become convinced that the purge had dangerously thinned the Party ranks, and more energetic efforts were launched to overcome this shortcoming. As early as the second half of 1937 various Party organizations came under severe criticism for lagging behind in the membership drive. *Pravda*, in a revealing editorial, attacked the Kharkov, Kiev, Azerbaidzhan, and Azev-Black Sea Party organizations, stating that 80 to 90 per cent of their primary organizations had not accepted a single candidate since admissions had been reopened. In a whimsical note, the editors added with striking logic that "one should not forget that Party members do not fall from heaven. One should remember that Party members were once non-members."<sup>3</sup>

The campaign was promptly picked up in various areas of the Soviet Union, and reports from all sections emphasized the inadequacy of the membership drive. *Sovetskaia Belorussia* regretfully cited the example of a factory employing many hundreds of Stakhanovites, not a single one of whom joined the Party in the last fourteen months.<sup>4</sup> A report from Murmansk pointed an accusing finger at another factory, in which there were only four Party members out of some four thousand employees.<sup>5</sup> Similar shortcomings were reported from various collective farms, where membership had generally been below the average.

Some of the blame for this over-all situation was laid on the shoulders of the Party members themselves, whose attitude, it was thought, left something to be desired. The Party journal, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, cites with indignation the reply of a member who, when asked why he never recommended anyone for membership, said: "Suppose something happens to him and then I will have to answer."<sup>6</sup> This cautious approach was shared by many members of the Party; the organ of the Byelorussian Communist Party devoted several articles to this topic,<sup>7</sup> while *Pravda* angrily stated that some Party members actually boast that they never give recommendations (one is cited as having proudly claimed that in his twenty years of

membership he had never recommended a single individual).<sup>8</sup> "And regrettably this anti-Bolshevik practice of self-intimidation does not encounter adequate counter-measures on the part of many leaders of the Party organizations," noted the Party journal.<sup>9</sup>

The Party organizations did not remain unresponsive to this pressure. Party secretaries hastened to report the numbers of new members admitted, and drew impressive contrasts with the previous year, in which admission of new members was said to have been hampered by saboteurs.<sup>10</sup> Additional incentive was supplied by the resolution of the Central Committee of the Party of July 14, 1938, categorically demanding an acceleration in the process of admission and full explanations from those organizations which were lagging behind. This provoked a veritable shower of reports: the head of the Cadres Section of the Ukrainian Communist Party quickly reported that, while between November 1936 and January 1938 the Party accepted only 4,018 members and 3,432 candidates, in the first six months of 1938 it had accepted 8,147 as members and 13,714 as candidates.<sup>11</sup> Similar claims were made by the "new leadership of the Donbas";<sup>12</sup> by the Kiev and Baku organizations (citing again duly contrasting figures for 1938 and for the period 1936 to 1938);<sup>13</sup> by Kursk (November 1936 to January 1938, 257 members accepted; January to November 1938, 3,657 members accepted);<sup>14</sup> and by tens of other regional and city organizations. According to the conservative estimate arrived at previously, the number accepted during this period was at least 415,000, and it must be remembered that the membership drive continued after that well into 1939.<sup>15</sup>

Efforts were exerted to draw into political activity and occupational responsibility those still outside the Party but loyal to the regime. The basis for this was provided by the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of March 4, 1938, "On the Promotion of Non-Party people to Leading Work in the Soviets and in the Economy," which opened the posts of judges, MTS directors, factory managers, etc., to nonmembers.<sup>16</sup> The resolution provided a hitherto somewhat neglected source from which the weakened leading cadres of the regime could draw new strength; and, together with the membership drive, it broadened the base of the regime's support. The assignment of new Party

members as well as non-Party sympathizers to various responsible positions thus created an entire stratum who owed their new status to the leadership, and who would pay this debt with unflinching loyalty.

Further measures were required, however, to curb the excesses of the purge and to solidify the position of the regime. The next safety valve, connected closely with the first, was therefore opened. It was the rehabilitation and reacceptance, at considerable effort, of some of the many who had been expelled from the Party or removed from work. The famous decree of the Central Committee of January 19, 1938 was the opening gun in the campaign to bring back into the fold the "fallen angels" whose offenses were not considered severe enough to warrant their perpetual exclusion. The decree marked also the official conclusion of the mass purge by specifically putting an end to the practice of mass expulsions (although these continued in some places until the summer). It emphasized that expulsions could only be effected on an individual basis, called to account those leaders who were guilty of expelling members without sufficient evidence, demanded prompt consideration of all appeals, ordered full rehabilitation for those who had been unjustly accused, and forbade the practice of firing expelled Party members from work.<sup>17</sup> A similar resolution was passed shortly afterwards by the Komsomol Central Committee, re-echoing in the main the provisions outlined above.<sup>18</sup>

Additional emphasis was put on these efforts by a joint Party-Government decree outlawing arbitrary expulsion of farmers from the collective farms. Such expulsions were said to have occurred because of "the formalistic and soulless bureaucratic attitude of many leading collective farm workers towards the fate of human beings." The decree warned "that those guilty of an infringement of the present decree will be liable to prosecution on criminal charges."<sup>19</sup> The widespread practice of purging entire collective farms was specifically forbidden, and expulsions were to be limited strictly to individual cases, on the basis of prescribed procedures.<sup>20</sup>

The Party organizations were exhorted to remember that admission of past mistakes "does not diminish authority but, on the contrary, actually raises it,"<sup>21</sup> and were urged to give full and prompt consideration to appeals of expelled Party members. The members

were instructed to bear in mind that it is relatively easy to expel a member, but that the real challenge is in educating and training members so that they will not have to be expelled.

The reaction was indeed prompt, even if not entirely satisfactory. Reports from various Party organizations began again to pour in, giving detailed accounts of the process of readmission into the Party, and, incidentally, again bearing witness to the scale of the purge. In Georgia, for instance, 485 of 840 appeals had already been considered, but some 1700 still remained on the books; in Kazakhstan 524 members were taken back out of 1021 appealing, but 3724 were yet to be processed;<sup>22</sup> Kiev region had 2452 appeals still pending,<sup>23</sup> and so on, through the many organizations reporting. One of the major preoccupations of the Party conferences held that year was discussion of what measures would expedite the processing of the thousands of appeals from gradually more emboldened ex-Party workers. The Politburo, through the Central Committee, was forced repeatedly to urge the Party organizations to accelerate the handling of appeals; and charges of inefficiency and laggardness became frequent.

The local Party organizations, on the other hand, were initially somewhat wary about launching wholesale readmissions, as such a policy in their minds might have easily provoked charges of "liberalism" towards "the enemies of the people." The Party journal accordingly black-listed various organizations which, in the eyes of the leadership, were mishandling the process of rehabilitation and were approaching the problem in a bureaucratic and formalistic manner.<sup>24</sup> Characteristically, the regime blamed all the shortcomings of this process on "the enemies of the people" who penetrated the state and Party organs. "The hateful enemies of the people succeeded in excluding from the Party quite a few Communists," blandly stated the Party journal,<sup>25</sup> and it cited the following example. A factory worker had been expelled for suggesting during the purge that the director of his factory ought to be watched. And, in fact, the director later did turn out to be an enemy of the people. But the Party organization, instead of reinstating the worker, now declared that he must have been an accomplice, and gave as evidence the fact that he had incited his colleagues to revolt by reading to them a story published in the Soviet papers,

entitled "The Revolt of the Elephants in India."<sup>26</sup> Another report stated that in the Kuibyshev region alone, "due to slandering and shouting of the skillfully camouflaged enemy," some 3200 Party members, including 52 deputies to the city Soviet, had been unjustly expelled during 1937.<sup>27</sup> And a report from Byelorussia bemoaned the fate of a teacher who had been deprived of his position because his young son, on joining the Komsomol, admitted that his father was not a Party member.<sup>28</sup>

In its efforts to divorce itself from the negative consequences of the purge, the leadership assured its followers that the excesses of the purge were provoked by hostile elements desirous of crippling the Party. The theme was now that enemies, having penetrated the Party, purposely stimulated the mass denunciations (admitted publicly for the first time), thereby causing mass expulsions from the Party and even effecting the dissolution of a number of Party organizations, which died simply because all their members were expelled or arrested.<sup>29</sup> The Central Committee, speaking for the Politburo, accused the local Party committees of having engaged in mass expulsions in which literally hundreds of Party members were expelled at a single sitting. Party secretaries, frequently already purged and therefore suitable as scapegoats, were accused of having manipulated the purge for their own motives and of having arbitrarily expelled loyal members from the Party. Members of the Party were called upon to expose these "slanderers" and "careerists" who were making a profession out of denouncing their colleagues.<sup>30</sup>

The central leadership was pictured as being sincerely concerned with the welfare of each individual member, and the boundless magnanimity of Stalin was extolled. In keeping with this general theme the organ of the Commissariat of Justice and of the Supreme Court told the story of a student at the Frunze Academy, who had been expelled by the Party *actif* on the grounds that his father was a socially dangerous individual. The student, naturally, turned to Stalin for help. And indeed, he was not disappointed. For Stalin at once personally telephoned the Commissar of the Second Course of the Academy (who recounted this incident in the press) and in a lengthy discourse attempted, not by command but by wise supplication, to convince the said Commissar of the injustice of the

case. And (not unexpectedly) the Commissar let himself be persuaded, stating that "comrade Stalin showed us a picture of Bolshevik concern for the human being. Without regard for his tremendous state and Party responsibilities Stalin found time . . ." to phone and discuss the case of one poor student, caught in the web of the injustices of the purge.<sup>31</sup>

A logical corollary to the reacceptance and rehabilitation of expelled personnel was the release from imprisonment of the "smaller-fry" arrested during the purge by the NKVD. Official information on this subject is naturally rather sparse, as the regime never conceded that mass arrests had occurred, beyond admitting that mass expulsions from the Party "unfortunately" took place. Some insight, however, can be acquired from at least two items found in Soviet publications. The first is a critique of the "bureaucratic procedures" adopted by the "enemies of the people" in the lower courts, which prevented rapid disposition of cases and appeals.<sup>32</sup> But many of these cases probably involved criminal offenses, and the complaint was probably part of the standard self-critique process.

Another article, despite some ambivalence, is more revealing. For although it criticizes the judicial apparatus for alleged leniency to criminals and attacks the procurators for appealing only 3 per cent of the sentences imposed, it also states that the judicial institutions had been penetrated by the "enemies of the people," who tolerated wrecking activities and attempted to sabotage the judicial process. This situation naturally led to the weakening of the loyal cadres, especially since appeals were not given any consideration whatsoever.<sup>33</sup> The article seems to admit the existence of large-scale irregularities and abuses, going beyond the expulsion stage, which the Party was now attempting to correct.

And indeed some progress was made. Eyewitnesses report that appeals became both more frequent and more successful. A number of death sentences were commuted, and some prisoners became so bold as to withdraw their previous confessions.<sup>34</sup> Gradually some were even released and reinstated in their former positions. One Soviet defector cites the following rather illuminating case:

. . . the deputy director of our resort trust was arrested in 1937, and he sat six months, and was then released. Prior to his arrest he was a

big, healthy man, but he returned all swollen. When they released him they restored to him all his rights and they paid him his salary for the six months that he had been sitting in jail. They restored him to Party membership, and they restored all of the rights that he had had prior to his arrest, but he died within two months after they released him, and then they buried him with honor.<sup>35</sup>

A very similar experience is reported by another former Soviet citizen:

. . . a secretary, a very polite and jolly woman was arrested. Nobody knew why, but you cannot defend such people who get arrested. You must declare that you always criticised them. After the arrest of this woman they all accused her. Imagine that after one year she returned because the Central Committee of the Party reversed the decision of arrest . . . This woman came back and got back pay for the year and two months that she was away. They gave her old job back and they reinstated her into the Party. She had a daughter who had gone mad after the arrest of her mother . . .<sup>36</sup>

Simultaneously, accounts of proceedings against “unmasked slanderers and liars” began to appear in the Soviet press. Two cases should suffice to illustrate the new approach. A report from Minsk announced that the former head of the chemical administration in the local beer industry had been charged with sending out provocative denunciations against his colleagues, which he supported by anonymous letters. Fortunately, the Party unmasked him as an enemy of the people, and the procurator’s office instituted criminal proceedings against him.<sup>37</sup> Another report, this time from Leningrad, entitled “Slanderers,” told the sad tale of an eager Soviet economist who criticized the ineffective administration of his trust. The manager and his political associates, instead of taking measures for improvement, deprived this economist of his employment and stated that he was “a wrecker, and enemy of the people, one who caused the state millions of rubles of losses.” He was arrested, but again, luckily, the investigation cleared him, and the parties responsible for this slander were obliged to face Soviet justice.<sup>38</sup>

In this way the regime attempted to restore some measure of popular support and to eradicate at least some of the ill effects of the purge. The aim was to channel away from the Party, particularly from its leaders, the accumulated resentment of the popu-

lace and to isolate those elements which the Politburo now felt it ought to sacrifice. By the late fall of 1938 the third safety valve could be turned. The turning point came with a brief and highly inconspicuous item which appeared on the back page of *Pravda*, in the rubric headed *kħronika*, and which succinctly stated: "Comrade N. I. Yezhov has been relieved on his own request of the responsibilities of the office of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs and appointed People's Commissar of Water Transport."<sup>39</sup> Yezhov's place was taken by L. P. Beria, a trusted associate of Stalin and formerly responsible for the Party in Georgia. His appointment involved analogous changes in the top personnel of the NKVD, insuring the complete subordination of the police to the Party. Stalin had again weathered a crisis and, in a sense, had brought to completion the cycle of events which began at the Sixteenth Party Congress, where the opposition had been intimidated by Stalin's skillful reliance on the army, then led by Voroshilov.<sup>40</sup> In 1937 Stalin employed the NKVD to crush the army; and in 1938 the combined forces of the Party, relying on public resentment against the secret police, thwarted any disruptive developments emanating from the latter.

Indeed, eyewitnesses tell of numerous arrests among the NKVD personnel, who frequently joined their former victims in the cells.<sup>41</sup> Beck and Godin state that by mid-1939 "the highest officers in the People's Commissariat (for Internal Affairs), apart from the People's Commissar himself, were majors, and it was quite usual for sergeants to act as examining magistrates in cases which in 1937 would have been conducted by majors at least."<sup>42</sup> Both Weissberg and Beck and Godin cite also the case of the Moldavian NKVD heads who were reported to have been tried publicly in Tiraspol and shot for abuse of authority.<sup>43</sup> This case, if true, did not find coverage in the national press. *Pravda*, however, carried a story with a similar moral from Omsk, where the regional procurator and his assistant, in charge of special investigation, were said to have been tried for abuse of authority, for unjustified arrests, and for detaining innocent people in prison sometimes for as long as five months (*sic!*). The sentence passed, however, was only two years.<sup>44</sup>

The intensity of the countermeasures notwithstanding, it is

clear that the leadership of the Party had decided to seize the initiative from the secret police. Such a step had two strategic purposes: first of all, it provided a most suitable and plausible scapegoat for the purge, and gave the people a long-awaited sense of retribution; second, it eliminated the overambitious elements within the secret police, and again effected its complete subordination to the Party. The police could not resist. The Party posed as the champion of justice and equity. Resistance would have placed the police in the position of struggling to perpetuate the purge — a cause with few supporters, even, possibly, within the rank and file of the secret police itself. The internal crisis was thus nipped in the bud; and the Party, having prepared the ground by large-scale admissions and readmissions, could now convoke the Party Congress in which official assessments of the purge would be made.

The discussion of the purge at the Eighteenth Party Congress centered basically on two issues: that its mass character had exhausted its usefulness, and that it had been a complete success. The latter attitude, however, did not prevent speaker after speaker from admitting that mistakes had been made, and that, indeed, too many mistakes were committed by various organs of the Party and the state. Mekhlis, the chief of the Political Administration of the Red Army, put it this way: "There are many shortcomings in the work of our Party commissions. The political organs and Party organizations approach frequently in an extraordinarily light-headed manner the expulsion of members from the Party. About 50% of the expellees incorrectly excluded have to be reinstated by the Party commissions of the Political Administration of the Red Army . . . We must admit that the number of improperly expelled from the Party is quite high."<sup>45</sup> Zhdanov, while justifying the mass purge as a necessity introduced as early as the NEP because the Party had been penetrated by bourgeois-capitalistic elements, stated that the total elimination of hostile elements from the Party and government organs had made this technique superfluous.<sup>46</sup> Stalin was even more explicit: ". . . it cannot be said that the purge was not accompanied by grave mistakes. There were unfortunately more mistakes than might have been expected. Undoubtedly, we shall have no further need of resorting to the method

of the mass purge.”<sup>47</sup> Both Stalin and Zhdanov agreed, however, that the purge was a success; and, to use Stalin’s words, “its results, on the whole, were beneficial.”<sup>48</sup> Zhdanov added “that mass purges have played a great role in the strengthening of the Party,” and in making it what it is. The purge was hailed as having rid the Party and the Soviet society of “dregs” and “dross,” and of having achieved unprecedented homogeneity and cohesion.

The resolution of the Congress on Zhdanov’s report is, however, somewhat more critical of the mass purge, and states that “the method of the mass purge was of very little effect and did not achieve its purpose with regard to hostile elements who had wormed their way into the Party and who masked their true character by double-dealing and deceiving the Party.”<sup>49</sup> This apparent conflict in evaluation of the mass purge was probably produced by the leadership’s determination to impress upon its followers its detachment from the excesses of the purge, and to reassure them that any future purge would be a controlled operation, supervised and directed by the Party. This assurance seems to be the essence of the declaration that the mass purge was formally abolished, and that it would be replaced by a “differentiated approach,” on an individual basis. The events of the years 1933 to 1938 would never reoccur, and any future purges would be characterized by restraint. As a final guarantee two additional paragraphs were inserted into the Party statute, clearly announcing the new attitude:

11. When the question of the expulsion of a Party member or the reinstatement of an expelled member is discussed, the maximum caution and comradely consideration must be exercised and the grounds for the accusations brought against the Party member thoroughly investigated . . .

12. Appeals against expulsion from the Party must be examined by the Party bodies to which they are addressed within not more than two weeks from the date of receipt.<sup>50</sup>

These provisions were intended to symbolize the regime’s renunciation of its key weapon and to guarantee to its supporters a limited measure of security. The nature of that security was, of course, shaped by the totalitarian reality of the system, and only

limited comfort could be derived from such guarantees and procedural rights. Totalitarian existence, however, has few certainties to offer; and the overbearing strength of the regime makes any provisions limiting arbitrary power, even if only symbolically, seem like a concession. The extent of popular acceptance of such assurances is, however, problematical. Former Soviet citizens, with the benefit of hindsight, assure us that it is limited. And indeed it is perhaps reasonable to assume that the popular attitude towards such promises would be like that of a patient told by his doctor that the amputation of his leg, although highly successful, had not been necessarily the best course of action, and that it would not happen again.

From the standpoint of the regime, however, the official assessments of the purge can be construed as basically corresponding to reality. Through amputations the Party had become solidified under a totalitarian leader of demonstrated brutality and skill, and had turned aside challenges for supremacy not only from disgruntled or hostile ex-competitors but also from its own ambitious police, whose appetites had been whetted by the taste of blood.

The purge, however, did not resolve the inherent ambivalence of the regime, characteristic also of other totalitarian systems, towards the masses it controls and leads. In their efforts to gain the greatest possible support for their policies, totalitarian regimes have attempted to enlist into the ranks of their movements the most energetic and usually the youthful elements of the population. They have attempted to widen the base of their support by expanding the ranks of the totalitarian Party. At the same time, however, totalitarian regimes have shown remarkable suspicion of numbers and have emphasized elitism, which calls for a rejection of the masses in favor of a movement strictly limited both quantitatively and qualitatively. Soviet experience shows considerable oscillation between the two views, and the periodic cleansing of the Party was to no small extent produced by shifts from one emphasis to the other. In periods of crisis the leadership would open the ranks to thousands of newcomers, who would then provide the leadership with a suitable basis for overcoming the danger. Victory would signify the need of purging the Party: thousands would again be driven out, and the purity of the "vanguard" restored.

By 1939, however, it was felt that the technique of the mass purge could be declared antiquated. But the official denunciation of the mass purge, which had been employed sporadically since the inception of the Soviet state and almost without interruption between the years 1933 and 1938, was not caused by a sudden realization of its immoral attributes or by recognition of the miseries and sufferings it causes. The denunciation was the product of an evaluation of the utility of the mass purge to the regime. The mass purges of the six years prior to the Eighteenth Party Congress were, in the eyes of the Politburo, clearly necessary to cleanse the Party, to deprive the former oppositionists of any possible base for future operations, to make room for the emerging Stalinist cadres. The 1933-1935 purge, by thoroughly cleansing the Party, laid the groundwork for the major purges of 1936 to 1938, which embraced not only the cadres of the Party but the entire Soviet system. The completion, however, of the economic and political transition of the thirties and also the demonstrated tendency of the mass purge to favor, in terms of power relationships, the agency responsible for the execution of the mass purge made the Party leaders reluctant to employ it again.

The purge, however, as a technique of government could not but remain an important weapon in the totalitarian arsenal. The nature of the weapon changed with the change in the purpose for which it was employed. The political realities of Soviet life did not remain static; the struggle for power of the thirties generated a different dynamics from the war years of the forties and from the postwar period when international strife abroad and economic reconstruction at home were accentuated. By the late thirties the purge had solidified Stalin's undisputed control over the Soviet state. It placed on all levels of the power hierarchy individuals who, by their background, age, and training, could be relied upon to pursue Stalinist policies with determination and devotion. It was a Stalinist Soviet Union that was attacked in the Second World War, and its victorious emergence from that conflict created new problems of government, and new solutions to them. And the purge again was one of the solutions.

# 8

## *The Delicate Stage, 1946–1952*

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“Greatly mistaken are those who think that one can live on the merits of the past and rest on one’s laurels. Wise history shelves such people in the archives . . .”  
(Georgi M. Malenkov).

THE WAR HEALED many of the wounds left by the great purge. The sufferings, the fear, the deprivations of the years 1936 to 1938 were overshadowed by the events of the German attack, by the retreat and seeming collapse of the Soviet regime, and finally by its victory. The challenge of the historic enemy coupled by the brutality of his occupation solidified the Soviet people in a common effort which seemed to augur a happier and brighter future.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet regime did all it could to promote such optimism. The ideological nature of the system was cloaked with a patriotic veneer intended to appeal to the historic sense and pride of the people, particularly the Russians. The various nationalities were permitted to draw on their traditions and sense of distinctiveness for further strength in the common battle. Characteristic of the general relaxation was the increased scope granted to religious activity, which also was harnessed for the war effort.

The official pronouncements of the leaders of the regime emphasized the democratic, libertarian character of the struggle against Nazidom and stressed the common ideological basis of the Grand Alliance with the West against Fascist criminality. Democracy and liberty were proclaimed the goals of the war, and many Soviet citizens took these pronouncements literally. They believed that the war was being fought not only to vanquish the enemy but also to improve the conditions of their own existence. They felt that in view of their sacrifices and efforts the regime could relax its reins, could afford to trust its people. Victory was thus a goal worth fighting for.

This was the period of the "great expectations." The Soviet people waited hopefully for the conclusion of hostilities, which was to be the signal for a better future. They expected considerable reforms, both political and economic. It is of interest to note how frequently this sentiment was expressed later on by former Soviet citizens when they wished to indicate the acuteness of their subsequent disappointment with the re-established Soviet rule. A former soldier of the Red Army states, for example, that "when the Germans retreated we came pouring in and all along, wherever we went, the peasants kept asking us, will there be collective farms again, or will there not be any more. And workers too asked whether there would be late laws."<sup>2</sup> Such feelings were held not only by those under the German occupation but also by those who had remained under Soviet control. This hopeful outlook even penetrated the Party ranks. The son of a relatively high Party worker in the Moscow region, having fled to the West, accounts in the following manner for his break with the past:

If you remember, during the war in 1943 when Mr. Churchill and Mr. Harriman came to Moscow it's very interesting. Lots of people, including myself, including my father, lots of other clever people were thinking that now some things will change and what way? America and England would press Stalin, to make him, by force if necessary, to change his policy. In what ways? To close the concentration camps, to give just, normal freedom to the people. You see, it was the great hope of my country at that time. But as soon as the war finished and especially in 1946 when Stalin started to bring good relations with Americans and the British to an end, then it was clear absolutely to me that all hope was lost.<sup>3</sup>

The Soviet regime was probably not unaware of the temper of its citizens. But overriding considerations led the leaders to embark upon a different course of action. The Soviet Union, so they may have reasoned, cannot and must not relax. It has emerged from the war weary and shaken, but politically a world power with a growing sphere of influence. To relax would be to stop or, even worse, to go counter to the course of history. The Soviet Union must, therefore, remain the militant backbone of continued Communist expansion. Communist victories in Czechoslovakia and China appeared to them the vindication of this point of view. And, as a

foreign policy predicated on assumptions of hostility and conflict tends to bring the prognosticated hostility and conflict about, the continued Soviet expansion produced, through its own logic, the need for greater armament, for greater unity, and for total political integration.

These needs were made all the more acute by the wartime relaxation and dislocation. Political "vigilance," previously defined purely in ideological terms, had been supplanted by historically oriented nationalism; the Party as the vanguard of the proletariat was overshadowed by the victorious army; the state-Party monopoly of mass communications was suddenly challenged by hundreds of thousands of returning *Ostarbeiter* (Nazi term for drafted labor from East Europe), prisoners of war, and former soldiers, each with a story to tell, each with a personal acquaintance with the West. The Party itself was not immune. It had grown lax in many respects, it had grown large, it had even grown apathetic. Its membership increased from almost four million in 1940 to almost six million by 1945, and "over six millions" by January of 1947.<sup>4</sup> During some months of the war the membership of the Party was growing at a rate of well over a hundred thousand per month.<sup>5</sup> Various Party organizations were literally swamped with new members, whose claim to membership was not ideological acceptance of Communism but exploits on the field of battle. These members were now returning to their homes, and the local Party organizations were extremely hard pressed to absorb them.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many of the regional Party organizations and their leading cadres were now predominantly composed of new members, who entered the Party during and immediately after the war.<sup>7</sup>

The complexion of the Party was thus radically changed. It was predominantly composed of extremely young members,<sup>8</sup> at least half of whom had experienced military service but very few of whom had a sophisticated knowledge of Communist doctrine. Accordingly it was a great source of distress to the Soviet leadership that political illiteracy among Party members was reaching large-scale proportions. The war brought into the Party a considerable number of peasants, as well as officers, administrators, intellectuals, and technicians who had previously abstained from Party work but who, under the stress of the war and "subtle" suggestions

from the regime, felt obligated to join the Party. It became a frequent source of complaint that Party organizations were ignoring the important consideration of social origin and political consciousness in admitting members, and that the leading industrial proletarians (the Stakhanovites) were being outnumbered among the new members.<sup>9</sup> This unbalance was bound, it was felt, to have negative repercussions in the further operations of the Party organizations, and would lead to a weakening in class consciousness of the members.

Some general measures to alleviate the situation were therefore adopted. More care in admissions to the Party was demanded.<sup>10</sup> Party organizations were called upon to display increased vigor in their political activities and to devote more attention to political agitation.<sup>11</sup> They were particularly instructed to make every effort to draw new members into active participation in Party life. They were ordered to adopt immediate measures for the improvement of their internal management, which often was functioning in an undisciplined and careless fashion. In July of 1946 the Central Committee of the Party announced the adoption of a resolution outlining the measures to be taken to increase the efficiency of the Party organizations and, at the same time, tightening up the admissions to the Party.<sup>12</sup> This was followed shortly by another decree, "On Shortcomings in Keeping the Records of Party Members and Candidates and Measures for Improving the Record Keeping of Communists," announced in November 1946, which was designed to improve the actual operations of the Party machine and to eliminate wartime departures from established procedures.

A closely related problem was created by the wartime tendency of the Party to undertake direct control of economic operations and supplant the professionals responsible for them. "This faulty practice of supplanting Soviet and economic agencies is especially widespread in the supervision of agricultural work where district Party committees undertake to solve all operational matter relating to the current work of the collective farms."<sup>13</sup> This resulted in an overburdening of the Party organizations with nonessential activities: one regional Party organization, it was reported, had to deal apart from its normal activities with fuel for the MTS, spare parts for tractors, and lumber for building barns.<sup>14</sup> Party activities

became overly diffuse, and political work suffered accordingly. Increasing stress was therefore placed on the separation of Party activities from the actual management of various economic operations. The theoretical journal of the Party, *Bol'shevik*, stated:

The Party has firmly and consistently abided by the principle that the direct administration of the economy must be in the hands of the state agencies, and the Party, as the directing and guiding force of the proletarian dictatorship, carries out the management of the economy through the economic agencies; in this connection, confusing the functions of the Party and economic agencies, driving the latter from management of the economy, or, above all, replacing them by Party bodies is not permitted.<sup>15</sup>

In the strictly economic field, wartime destruction and economic dislocation necessitated long-range construction programs, in which the Soviet people were expected to lend a helping hand. Growing international tension gave these plans a sense of unprecedented urgency, and the regime was inclined to view economic deficiencies with an increasingly stern eye. Shortcomings were particularly prevalent in the agricultural areas, where relaxed wartime controls had permitted the farmers to circumvent the generally disliked collective farm regulations. The Party, never too strong in the countryside, was now determined to put a stop to the growing list of abuses, which ranged from appropriation of collective land by private individuals to financial frauds; and stringent measures were forthwith adopted. On September 19, 1946 the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee passed a decree outlining the measures to be adopted against the violators of agricultural regulations,<sup>16</sup> and shortly afterwards a Council on Collective Farms Affairs was established to make certain that the abuses were halted.<sup>17</sup>

The leadership of the Soviet state was in this manner attempting to re-establish an effective system of controls over the complex operations of the Party and the state. It was determined that wartime compromises and concessions were not to become permanent and that existing shortcomings were to be removed rapidly and resolutely.

Each area, however, presented specific problems of its own. For example, in the western areas the hostilities, the headlong flight

of the early months of the war, and the German occupation had created special difficulties. In regions untouched by combat, the prolonged war and the need to exploit to the fullest the great energies of the Soviet people had created problems of a somewhat different nature. And although the response of the leadership was basically the same in all areas concerned, and involved, *inter alia*, a cautious recourse to the technique of the purge, a separate consideration of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian republics will make for a clearer perception of the actual difficulties and of the nature of the purge during this delicate period.

With the conclusion of the war the Communist Parties of the Ukraine and Byelorussia were faced with the imposing task of providing the backbone for the returned Soviet administration. Both republics were swamped by returning prisoners of war and especially by *Ostarbeiter*, the great majority of whom came from these regions. Literally thousands of people were living without identification papers or with false ones. The system of internal passports was no longer operative, and many former political prisoners were now at large. Even the Party became infected with questionable and unreliable characters.

The first task was, therefore, the establishment of Soviet law and order. Elements disruptive of the totalitarian unity had to be removed. The former *Ostarbeiter* and prisoners of war were subjected to close scrutiny. Many were placed in isolation, others were enjoined to keep silent on their experiences in the West.<sup>18</sup> But even more disruptive and more demanding of energetic measures were the guerrillas, who continued their operations in the western regions until about 1948. Apart from the bandit gangs of roaming deserters and criminals, they were essentially the remnants of the nationalist forces, whose hopes that the Germans would assist them in setting up independent statehood had been bitterly disappointed by the Nazi intransigence. In the immediate postwar period their operations received a certain degree of support from the populace especially in the newly acquired Polish territories.<sup>19</sup>

Equally great difficulties faced the regime on the important agricultural front. Besides the usual aftermath of war, including the famine of 1945-1946 in the Ukraine, the entire network of collec-

tive farms and state enterprises was in a state of total dissolution. The problem was exacerbated by the increased weakness of the Party in the agricultural regions and the resulting lack of local Communist cadres.<sup>20</sup> It was a source of frequent complaint that unqualified or even hostile elements had infiltrated the leading agricultural positions in the two Soviet republics. Their presence was said to have undesirable repercussions on the progress of the reconstruction, as well as to impede the development of ideological consciousness among the agricultural masses. Recurring mishaps were cited as evidence, and the Plenums of the Central Committees of the Ukraine and Byelorussia issued, over and over again, new exhortations and new instructions.<sup>21</sup> These were rapidly picked up by the various local and regional organizations, and their actifs were called to join in the crescendo of self-critique.

The critique was not limited to economic deficiencies alone. A similarly undesirable state of affairs was said to prevail in the local administration and in various Party organizations. The roots of the trouble were similar: wartime destruction and dislocation, and a resulting confusion and apathy. Both the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian Communist Parties grew rapidly during the war: two thirds of the Byelorussian Communists entered the Party during the hostilities,<sup>22</sup> while in the Ukraine the number of demobilized Communists alone constituted over two thirds of the Party.<sup>23</sup> This influx of new members was reflected in the quality of Party work. "In the majority of primary Party organizations young Communists are not drawn into active Party life, and have no duties," complained the organ of the Byelorussian Central Committee.<sup>24</sup> In many areas unqualified personnel were said to occupy posts for which they were unsuited due to lack of training and experience.<sup>25</sup> This practice naturally resulted in the further lowering of the caliber of Party work, and in growing political apathy among the members.<sup>26</sup>

The situation was further aggravated by the previously discussed tendency of these areas to be nationalistically inclined. Party organizations were accordingly ordered to wage an incessant struggle against "bourgeois nationalism," the persistence of which was indicated by the frequency of the Party's condemnations of it.<sup>27</sup>

The response to all this was energetic and familiar. The Plenum of the Ukrainian Central Committee was informed in August 1946 that "as a consequence of these mistakes in the recruitment of cadres and insufficient regard to newly raised workers there is now taking place a mass change of leading cadres."<sup>28</sup> The statement was not an exaggeration. Both in the Ukraine and in Byelorussia a purge of the cadres was quietly taking place. By mid-1946 in the Ukraine the "mass change" had already accounted for some 38 per cent of district Party secretaries, 64 per cent of district executive committee chairmen, and 66 $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent of MTS chairmen.<sup>29</sup> The turnover in the administrative industrial cadres, on the basis of available evidence, was also high. An extreme example of this was a factory in Lvov which had its director changed ten times within the space of a year and a half.<sup>30</sup>

In Byelorussia the agricultural cadres were similarly affected. In some districts of the Gomel region all collective farm chairmen were replaced.<sup>31</sup> In the Mogilev region some 115 village chairmen were changed.<sup>32</sup> In the Minsk region 1724 collective farm chairmen were removed, and some collective farms experienced changes in chairmen two or three times a year.<sup>33</sup> The extent of these changes is demonstrated by the fact that by the middle of 1946, 90 per cent of the district Party secretaries, 96 per cent of district and city administrative officials, and 82 per cent of the collective farm chairmen had been removed from their posts in Byelorussia.<sup>34</sup>

The press continued to cite from time to time additional data on the persisting changes in Party ranks, indicating their extensive scope. In a follow-up of the August 23 statement, *Pravda Ukraïny* supplied some further details:

Kharkov region: 57.4% of all Party workers changed in last year and a half.

Voroshilovgrad region: 50.0% of the Party workers changed.

Lvov region: 57.4% of the Party workers changed.<sup>35</sup>

Zaporozhe region: 22.7% of the regional Party committee workers, including the Secretary, removed.

41.9% of district and city Party Committee workers removed.<sup>36</sup>

Vinnitsa region: 27.0% of the leading Party workers changed.<sup>37</sup>

Stalinsk city: 33.0% of the Party committee workers changed.<sup>38</sup>

Kiev City: 62.0% of the cadres said to lack qualifications for their posts.

74.0% of the district Party Committees *propagit* heads removed.

55.0% of the organizing-instructing departments' heads removed.

100.0% of the *raishchetorg* heads removed.<sup>39</sup>

A somewhat later announcement from Byelorussia put the total of Party workers removed from the central Minsk apparatus at 40 per cent.<sup>40</sup>

These changes, extensive as they are, did not cure all the existing ills in the Party and administration. They did, however, help the regime during this delicate postwar stage to re-establish more effective controls over formerly alienated territories and to rid the Party and the administration of unreliable elements. They also demonstrated to all concerned that the Soviet system was not prepared to compromise its program and would exert every effort to maximize its political and economic powers. In particular the cleansing of the Party apparatus, although performed quietly and with a certain amount of discretion, helped to revive political activity and restore discipline and cohesion in the Party ranks. Need for further measures remained, however, and found real expression in periodic calls for increased activity or for additional improvements. Criticisms of various Party organizations, particularly in western Ukraine, helped to remind the local organizations that no Party member must ever rest on his laurels.<sup>41</sup>

Illustrative of this continuing "vigilance" is the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, held in June of 1952, at which it was announced that 33 per cent of the district Party secretaries in the Tarnopol region, 30 per cent in the Dnepropetrovsk region, 25 per cent in the Zhitomir region, and 21 per cent in the Lvov region had been changed in the course of the preceding year.<sup>42</sup> An unspecified number of Party members were also removed from the Party; and a comparison of the official Party memberships, as announced at the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Ukrainian Communist Party Congresses, indicates that the number removed amounted to about 30,000 Party members for the years 1949 to 1952.<sup>43</sup> The thesis that Soviet totalitarianism is a system of the permanent purge, varying in intensity, thus finds further vindi-

cation in the Ukraine and Byelorussia during the postwar years 1946 to 1952.

The technique of the purge was similarly utilized in other parts of the Soviet Union not ravaged by the war but still indirectly affected by it. The effects of the war, however, were somewhat slower in making themselves evident in those areas, and for this reason the response to them was not as immediate. On the economic plane, major difficulties stemmed from the need of readjustment to peacetime without undue loss of productivity. Soviet leadership, therefore, continued to press for a high level of production and attempted to substitute more intensive efforts as compensation for the unavoidable temporary dislocation. In the field of agriculture, renewed stress was placed on collectivization, and wartime deviations from it were severely castigated. The problem, however, was not one of restoration of the system, as was the case in Byelorussia and the Ukraine, but rather of consolidation. In order to eliminate the existing abuses as well as to strengthen the ideological basis of the regime's agricultural policy, special efforts were exerted at directing demobilized Communists into agricultural work.<sup>44</sup>

This process, however, was accompanied by a relatively thorough cleansing of the agricultural apparatus of the various Soviet republics. Critical references to the caliber and honesty of local agricultural leaders appeared frequently in the Soviet press during the postwar years, usually followed by announcements of changes. By 1947 only 28 per cent of the collective farm chairmen had held their posts for more than three years, while 38 per cent had held them for less than one year.<sup>45</sup> Wholesale local changes, in some places approaching the Ukrainian and Byelorussian scale, were announced. In Kazakhstan, for instance, it was announced that "several hundred" collective farm chairmen were replaced during the first nine months of 1950, indicating that the process of cleansing the agricultural workers was still continuing.<sup>46</sup> In a number of republics, the dynamic of critique and accusation reached the top personnel responsible for the agricultural policy, and resulted in their removal.<sup>47</sup>

This situation was closely linked with the general decomposition of Party militancy and stagnation in Party activity during the immediate postwar years. As in the case of the western Soviet

republics, the local Communist parties, in keeping with the directives of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B), had relaxed their membership requirements, and their ranks had grown rapidly during the war. As a consequence "dishonest persons, people unworthy of political trust, penetrated the Party."<sup>48</sup> The republican Party leaders, however, seized upon this point in order to cloak all other sources of the existing problems. To blame everything on the growth of the Party was actually to free themselves from responsibility. For after all, it was the official policy during the "Great Fatherland War" to open the ranks of the Party to as many valiant soldiers and eager industrial and administrative workers as possible. The fact that the Party grew stale, slow, and satisfied, could thus be conveniently blamed on the war.

The roots of the postwar condition, however, went deeper and were closely entwined with the problems of the prosecution of the war. The war meant a further tightening-up in social and political discipline; it meant the unquestioning execution of all orders and directives; it meant expediency and opportunism. The central leadership of the Soviet state was preoccupied with the direction of the war, with the political grand strategy, with harnessing the potential of the nation for the winning of the military and political goals of the war. This resulted in a great centralization of power at the top, with each Politburo member personally responsible for a specific aspect of the war effort. But it resulted, paradoxically, also in decentralization of actual control and in greater reliance on republican secretaries for "getting things done." They were the people closest to the situation, most apt to get the utmost from the local citizens. Their power to command and control grew accordingly.

In consequence of this came the growth of local satraps and satrapies, and the development of Party secretaries with their own supporters and their own sources of power. These, while useful during the war, could not be tolerated over a long period of time, and their replacement was becoming more and more necessary with the gradual consolidation of the regime's power and with the reconstruction of its stability. A gradually mounting campaign was consequently launched against the various republican Party organizations, particularly in the non-Russian national republics.

The attack took various forms and shapes. The Party organizations were accused of having grown apathetic and inactive. Many Party organizations, in the words of the Kirgiz Party secretary, "ignore serious defects in the work of their institutions, do not strive to increase the efficiency of administrative machinery, reconcile themselves to infractions of state discipline and fail to take the necessary measures to improve mass political work among the employees."<sup>49</sup> Another report cited an interview with a collective farmer, who had become a Party candidate member back in 1943. The farmer was asked what he had read since that time, and he replied: "Haven't read a thing. Don't even touch a newspaper." "Why is that?" he was asked. "Because there aren't any. When papers come the Party secretary and the collective farm chairman take them, and we never see them," the farmer was quoted as having replied.<sup>50</sup>

In some areas, according to another report, "engineering technical workers do not engage in studying the history and the theoretical foundations of the Bolshevik Party."<sup>51</sup> In Karaganda, Kazakhstan, only about a third of the local organization's 7000 Communists were studying the history of the Party.<sup>52</sup> In Azerbaidzhan the Plenum of the Party's Central Committee bewailed lack of attention to the political education of the members, and listed many district committees as being particularly negligent in this connection.<sup>53</sup> The serious nature of the situation was illustrated by the fact that the head of the consumers' cooperative trade organization of Georgia was said to have no knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, to have never read newspapers, and to be unable to name a single Soviet author.<sup>54</sup>

The Party organizations were also accused of impeding the rise of younger Party officials to more prominent posts. The secretary of the Kazakh Central Committee was forced to admit that "the fact that new cadres from the districts are never or almost never promoted to leading work in the province and republic must be considered a serious shortcoming and error in the work of the bureau of the Kazakhstan Communist Party Central Committee."<sup>55</sup> *Pravda* complained that "there are instances in which responsible posts are given to persons not by reason of their political fitness or experience but on the strength of their personal connection," and

cited the case of an incompetent Party official in Kazakhstan, who "surrounded himself with relatives and friends and got rid of many honest workers of the district Party Committee." Instead of being removed completely, he was transferred to another district, where he followed his previous routine, and went even further, having "lost all sense of shame": "He ordered all the officials to call him *aksakal*, which means in Kazakh 'white-bearded old man whom everybody respects.' And he gave up Party work." And again he was merely transferred to another position, this time director of a cotton supply office.<sup>56</sup> The inference from all this was clear—there are some in high places interested in perpetuating confusion and inefficiency.

Another line of attack was to emphasize the absence of self-critique in the Party organizations and the unwillingness of Party leaders to subject themselves to "democratic centralism." These defects also resulted in abuses and fraudulent practices. In many cases the Party secretaries hushed up and suppressed all criticisms, threatening and even invoking reprisals.<sup>57</sup> There thus seems to have developed, on a relatively high scale, something like a "mutual-aid society" in which various Party officials participated. The effects of this on the operations of the Party were not favorable.

And so the basis was laid for the changes and removals in the Party leadership of the various Soviet republics which occurred in the postwar years, and to which attention will subsequently be given. But added to all this, there was an additional factor which probably hastened and possibly intensified the changes that did take place. That was the ever present element of nationalism.

While attacks on nationalism and "nationalist deviators," as has been previously suggested, are a standard weapon in the arsenal of any Soviet publicist and occur regularly in the Soviet press, there seems to have been a significant increase in the frequency of attacks on "nationalist" scholars and writers in the national republics. In Ashkhabad, for instance, it was noted in 1952 that "major mistakes of a bourgeois nationalist nature have been made by the Institute of History, Language, and Literature of the Republic's Academy of Science," and the Party's propaganda and agitation committee failed "to take timely measures to expose the

essential defectiveness" of its work.<sup>58</sup> In Azerbaidzhan, local historians were ordered to retract their previous glorification of Shamil, which, in the current interpretation, links "frenzied Moslem fanaticism" with Anglo-American "imperialism."<sup>59</sup> In Georgia, "it is known that some writers have abandoned our Soviet reality and gone into the depths of history, forgetting the present and idealizing Georgia's past. This cannot be considered anything but a manifestation of nationalist tendencies among them."<sup>60</sup>

Under the thunder and smoke of such critique a quiet purge was taking place which affected, in varying degree, both the Party ranks and their leaders. This purge was by no means as eventful and spectacular as the prewar variety. It was less noticeable, and manifested itself in the quiet removal, transfer, demotion, or in some cases disappearance of those involved in it. But its scale was nonetheless impressive. In Kazakhstan, for instance, during 1945 and 1946 some 67 per cent of the Party officials and industrial executives, one third of whom had held their posts for less than a year, were reported changed.<sup>61</sup> In the USSR as a whole, 27.5 per cent of the district Party secretaries and 35.3 per cent of the district committee (*raikom*) bureau members were changed at district Party conferences in late 1947.<sup>62</sup>

Public announcements concerning such changes, however, were relatively few and generally tended to restrict themselves to shifts in the higher Party and state hierarchy. Information for the lower ranks could be gleaned only from scattered items of information and comparative Party statistics. The various Party Congresses, attended in some cases by central Party officials, provided the forum for the expression of imagined or actual grievances and for the justification of leadership changes.<sup>63</sup> The process was characterized by caution, discretion, and secrecy.

The actual meeting of a republican Party congress was usually preceded by several plenary sessions of the given organization's central committee, which on occasion actually effected the changes to be approved later by the Party congress. The Party congress would then become the official arena for spontaneous approval or severe self-critique and sometimes for ex post facto acceptance of already accomplished changes. These measures affected not only

the Party but also the technical and economic apparatus of the various republics. Apart from the previously indicated changes in the agricultural organizations, the hardest hit were the consumers' ministries and organizations, indicating the postwar deficiencies in this field.<sup>64</sup> The most striking changes, however, occurred in the upper levels of the various national Parties. The years 1949 to 1952 were marked by very determined efforts to introduce new cadres into the top levels of the Party organizations. In five of the fifteen republican Party organizations, both the first and the second Party secretaries were changed.

Such changes were not restricted to the top levels alone. The regional committees were similarly affected, and all the Party congresses made frequent references to changes on the intermediary levels of the Party hierarchy. In Azerbaïdzhan removals occurred not only in the top Party and administrative hierarchy but also in the important Baku Party organization, in the Nakhichevan Province Party Committee, and in "many district Party committees."<sup>65</sup> These were followed a year later by renewed changes in Baku, involving the removal of the regional and city Party secretaries for deception and violation of instructions. Eight district secretaries "and others" were also named as having been dismissed.<sup>66</sup> In Kazakhstan 6.6 per cent of the top executive Party cadres "were dismissed or relieved of their duties in 1951 for failing to cope with them, or for compromising themselves." The dismissal also involved 13 per cent of the first secretaries of district and city Party committees.<sup>67</sup> The situation was even more drastic in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) where "within three years, four first secretaries and three regional Party committee chairmen have been replaced in the Tashkent Region Party Committee, and three first secretaries have been replaced in the Fergana Region Party Committee. The turnover of administrative personnel has also been great in other Party, Soviet and economic organizations."<sup>68</sup> Similarly in Kirgizia, in the eighteen months prior to September 1952, the personnel turnover involved 44 per cent of the Central Committee appointed posts (*nomenklatura*), 56 per cent of the Obkom, and 49 per cent of the Raikom and Gorkom posts.<sup>69</sup>

That these changes penetrated and affected Party ranks is certain.

That there were large-scale expulsions is less certain, although probable in some areas on the basis of available evidence. The rate of admissions to the Party also diminished considerably, and increasing attention was paid to the actual qualifications of the aspirants to membership, both from the social and ideological standpoint. It is of interest to note that the Party, which doubled its membership between 1941 and 1946, increased only by about half a million (or roughly 8 per cent) between the years 1947 and 1952. It is of even greater interest to note that the membership figures of some Party organizations remained unusually static during this period, although, of course, some members must have died or been expelled, and new ones admitted. Thus, for example, the Kazakh Party organization numbered some 229,000 in 1949.<sup>70</sup> During the next two years 22,061 individuals were reported as having been admitted into the Party, yet as of November 1, 1951, the Party ranks numbered 229,793,<sup>71</sup> and by September 1, 1952 they had decreased to 201,687.<sup>72</sup> What then happened to the 50,000 missing members?

A similarly interesting question develops from analyzing the membership data for the Azerbaidzhan Party organization. Its membership grew rapidly during the war, as did that of the other organizations, and by 1949 the Party organization, which numbered in 1940 some 79,000 Communists, could boast of 110,000 members.<sup>73</sup> Its roll of primary Party organizations almost doubled during this period. But when the delegates to the Eighteenth Congress of the Azerbaidzhan Party assembled to hear their secretary, D. A. Bagirov, report on the state of the Party, they learned that, having admitted 10,249 persons between January 1949 and May 1951, the Party consisted of 108,737 members.<sup>74</sup> The turnover was hence about 12,000, or 10 per cent—somewhat less than in the case of Kazakhstan. A year later, with 5,215 members admitted, the Azerbaidzhan membership stood at 111,697.<sup>75</sup> A more selective and discriminating attitude towards admitting members had apparently developed.

What then does all this suggest?

It would seem that the immediate postwar years were ones of reintegration and consolidation, of gradual reassertion of the con-

trols which had grown lax during the war. It was the period of increasing emphasis on political and ideological uniformity and of a return to the orthodox Party line. It was marked by the growing stiffness of the Soviet Union in the international arena, and by increasing application of its coercive powers at home.<sup>76</sup> It was the period of a subtle recourse to the technique which characterizes the totalitarian regime — the purge.

The Party was to lead the struggle against the existing problems. But “solution of these problems demands higher standards of Party leadership, correct correlation of political and economic work, and further strengthening of the bonds of Party organizations with the masses of the workers.”<sup>77</sup> The Party, therefore, had to strengthen its ranks by cleansing itself, and the old familiar slogan “the Party strengthens itself by purging itself” was again raised.<sup>78</sup> Initially under Zhdanov’s leadership, this period, frequently referred to as the *Zhdanovshchina*, became characterized by a general tightening-up not only in the areas discussed previously but also in the arts, letters, and sciences. Conformity, uniformity, orthodoxy — these were demanded.<sup>79</sup>

But none of this could compare either in intensity, scope, or nature of consequences with the prewar holocaust of the Yezhov era. The purge was comparatively restrained, and conducted with greater caution.<sup>80</sup> The consequences of dismissal or expulsion were not necessarily arrest and forced labor but more frequently transfer or demotion or both. The charges against those purged, which previously emphasized socio-economic origins (especially during the years 1930–1935) or political subversion (1935–1940), changed to accusations of inefficiency or corruption, which, although sufficiently serious in the Soviet context, still meant less severe punishment. This very fact suggests the changes in the nature of the postwar purge — from a mechanism of transition and consolidation of political power during the thirties to a weapon of revitalization and reintegration during the late forties.

The masses of the population were not involved directly, nor were they called upon to participate in this process. Admittedly vigilance was expected, and special spy laws passed during this period served to remind the Soviet people of the dangers of foreign

espionage and internal subversion.<sup>81</sup> But they were not driven to a mass participation in the process of the purge, as they had been in the Yezhov era, nor did the postwar purge create the dynamic towards it. Denunciations, accusations, mass terrorization — these were not the main features of postwar political consolidation in the Soviet Union. Even the press campaigns against bad Party management or agricultural deficiencies tended to be more restrained. Emphasis was placed on positive measures to remedy the situation rather than on sabotage, wrecking, and the like as the sources of the shortcomings.<sup>82</sup> And it is exactly the absence of mass hysteria which permitted the Soviet regime to conduct the purge in a fashion which appears, on the surface at least, to be rational and calculated.

The purge would seem, therefore, to have been a managed operation, arising out of the existential conditions of the postwar era and adjusting itself to the gradual stages of the postwar reconstruction (both political and economic), consolidation, and gradual accentuation in coercion and controls. It thus reflected the varying conditions, which differed according to time and place, prevailing in the Soviet Union. But this continuing operation demonstrated once again that the purge is an inherent aspect of the Soviet system, which varies in intensity with the demands of the circumstances and the ability of the leadership to control it. In times of stress and uncertainty, like the aftermath of war, the cautious nature of the purge reflects the regime's desire to consolidate its power without unduly straining the already torn fabric of the state. In times of relatively more effective control, the purge becomes more intense as the regime eliminates those whom it did not dare to eliminate previously and whom it prefers to dispose of for the sake of its future. But within these broad arcs of the pendulum there is the constant process of the purge, the permanent, sometimes cautious, sometimes violent, ebb and flow.

The controlled nature of the purge becomes particularly manifest when the purge has objectives which are clearly defined and fairly apparent. Such was the case with the purge between 1945 and about 1951. Its purposes were largely derived from the events and consequences of the war and the postwar years, and were, in a general

sense, a response to them. The purge was truly a remedial mechanism. Subterranean overtones to it, which only became apparent after Stalin's death, did not begin to manifest themselves until the very late stages of this purge. And it is these latter, ulterior, and largely political motives that can transpose the purge from an orderly instrument into a bloody and hysterical one, whose ultimate implications are unfathomable.

# 9

## **The Purge and the Struggle for the Stalinist Succession**

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“Our Party and the workers, collective farmers, intelligentsia and all peoples of the Soviet Union well know and deeply respect comrade Malenkov as a talented disciple of Lenin and a faithful comrade-in-arms of Stalin” (L. P. Beria, 1953).

THE TOTALITARIAN DICTATOR is nonetheless a mortal. And this fact was being taken increasingly into consideration in the post-war period by the would-be successors to power. By the late forties, therefore, the purge was operating in a new context: the certainty of the struggle for succession.

The political nature of the Soviet system, despite the considerable change in its outward façade and the alleged stabilizing influence of an emerging status-oriented bureaucracy and technological personnel, still remained focused on the dictatorial power of one man. The source of his power was neither traditional legitimacy nor institutions. The former was not even claimed and the latter were of the dictator’s own making. The dictator’s lieutenants could not but realize that succession was a task not predetermined by “dia-mat” (dialectical materialism) but highly dependent on their own “private” initiative. Personality and policy clashes, in these circumstances, easily became major, and their object was not so much determined by the substantive nature of the issues involved as by considerations of pure political expediency.

The Stalinist lieutenants and their supporters must have known that to lose in such a contest was not merely to suffer a policy reversal but to be actually pushed down another step in the ladder leading to Stalin’s exalted mantle. Not that any single claimant could have seriously expected to fill it. The goal was rather to prevent any single faction from monopolizing it. The stakes were high, and, what is more important in an analysis of the Soviet

system, the contest could not be avoided. No constitutional sanctions or moral imperatives existed to enforce tentative amicable arrangements reached either before or after the dictator's demise. The only solution was that of the armed camp, with some of the warring factions uniting because of a possible greater danger from the outside, but still continuing to maneuver within for the most favorable positions.

Within this pattern of increasing competition for the accumulation of power and Stalin's personal blessing (the presence of one did not guarantee the other), the following three stages, each climaxed by death, emerge most clearly: the Zhdanov-Malenkov competition, ending abruptly with Zhdanov's death; the period of internal intriguing preceding Stalin's death; and Beria's abortive attempt to seize primacy, following the dictator's sudden demise. Throughout this process the standard weapon of internal combat was the purge, and the launching of a purge usually signified the completion of the struggle, the beginning of mopping-up operations by the victor.

Zhdanov's gradual climb to power began as early as 1934, with the assassination of Kirov and Zhdanov's appointment as the head of the Leningrad Party organization, a very important post from the standpoint of both actual strength and prestige. He had assumed in the immediate postwar era an ideological position which generally led him to be classified as an extremist, on both the international and internal planes. It was Zhdanov who was largely responsible for the attempted integration of the European Communist Parties within the Cominform; and allegedly he led, in the main, the struggle against Tito. His postwar pronouncements placed him in the forefront of those who were considered rigid and inflexible opponents of the West.<sup>1</sup> This attitude was reflected also on the domestic front. It was Zhdanov who led the struggle against "cosmopolitanism"—against the infiltration of Western ideas and concepts into the Soviet Union. It was Zhdanov who spearheaded the attack on postwar deficiencies and general neglect of political activities.<sup>2</sup>

Opposition to him must have existed. It was probably derived from ideological and practical objections to his program as well as from political jealousy. Any such opposition, however, by the nature

of the Soviet system, had to justify itself on ideological grounds and to emphasize its critique in terms of the orthodox interpretations of the system. The struggle over genetics, for instance, was thus probably one of the ideological fields of battle on which the warring cliques clashed.

But before the situation could crystallize, Zhdanov died (August 31, 1948). His death was immediately followed by the decline or disappearance of the people closely associated with him<sup>3</sup> and by the growing prominence of Malenkov. The displacement of Zhdanov's supporters was probably not the work of Malenkov alone. The other top lieutenants, among them Beria, doubtless participated in the process, attempting to place their own men in influential positions. Nonetheless, it seems that the leading role in this internal reshuffling was played by Malenkov. His position in the Party apparatus placed him in a key spot to effect the necessary personnel changes, so crucial in any contest of power.<sup>4</sup> These changes proceeded at an accelerated pace following Zhdanov's death.

The first major shifts seem to have occurred in the very important Party secretariat. In 1946, according to an official statement, the Party had five secretaries: Stalin, Malenkov, Zhdanov, A. A. Kuznetsov, and G. M. Popov (listed in that order).<sup>5</sup> Kuznetsov and Popov were believed to be close associates of Zhdanov. By 1950 the Party still had five secretaries, but these now were Stalin, Malenkov, Ponomarenko, Khrushchev, and Suslov. Kuznetsov (who was also removed from his important Leningrad post) seems to have been the first to go; he was no longer a secretary by the beginning of 1949.<sup>6</sup> Popov, who was also secretary of the Moscow Party organization, was not removed until January of 1950, when he was made USSR Minister of Municipal Construction.<sup>7</sup> This change coincided with Khrushchev's return to Moscow from the Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> More than these two, however, fell from power during this "open season" on Zhdanovites.<sup>9</sup>

The elimination of the Zhdanov wing from the Party gave Malenkov considerably more opportunities for solidifying his hold on the Party cadres throughout the USSR. The years preceding the Nineteenth Party Congress of 1952 were accordingly marked by extensive changes in the republican Party personnel, and not a single republican Party organization evaded the Moscow scythe.<sup>10</sup>

A major obstacle, however, to the ambitions of any individual competitor was the old Politburo practice, presumably devised by Stalin, of entrusting certain areas of the Soviet Union to the particular care of a Politburo member. Beria, for instance, had been in personal charge for many years of the Caucasus and adjoining areas.<sup>11</sup> As a result, replacement of Georgian Party stalwarts by appointees anxious to weaken Beria could only be effected by overcoming Beria's opposition within the Politburo, or by a subtle intrigue which would avoid a headlong collision.

The latter technique was apparently employed in the case of Georgia prior to the 1952 Georgian Party Congress. The Politburo became somehow convinced that the Party leadership in Georgia had become inefficient and potentially disloyal.<sup>12</sup> In keeping with the standard practice, none other than Beria himself was then dispatched to supervise the distasteful task of removing his own men and to install in their places newer Party cadres, whose Party experience was not entirely limited to Georgia. At the same time, in an apparent move to weaken the role of the secret police, "experienced Party workers" were sent into the MGB by the new Georgian MGB Minister.<sup>13</sup>

Characteristic of the increasingly violent nature of the internal struggle for power was the fact that a number of the deposed top Georgian Party leaders not only were excluded from the top Party counsels but were actually incarcerated. Some may even have been shot.<sup>14</sup> The purge also spread to the adjoining republics, where many top Party officials both on the regional and republican levels were purged on various charges, ranging from corruption and political blindness to nepotism and "moral depravity."<sup>15</sup>

The growing scope of these changes found further reflection in the Nineteenth Congress of the CPSU, called for October 1952. The Nineteenth Party Congress was to symbolize the conclusion of the postwar transition and the inauguration of a new era. The assembled congress was also to sanction the changes which had taken place in the top Party counsels. The election of the new central Party bodies was to provide the official basis for the new power alignments which had developed through inner Party machinations.

At the congress the Political Report was delivered by Malenkov.

This act itself symbolized his growing political ascendancy. In his report Malenkov reminded the delegates that the unity of the Party was the essential factor in the military victory of the Second World War, and that this unity was only achieved through the uprooting of the subversive elements within the Party by means of the purge.

In the light of the results of the war the full significance of the merciless struggle which our Party conducted in the course of years with all enemies of Marxism-Leninism, with the Trotskyite-Bukharinite degenerates, with the capitulators and traitors who attempted to divert the Party from its proper course and destroy the unity of its ranks, is revealed . . . It is easy to realize that if this had not been done on time, we would have found ourselves in time of war in the position of people under fire from the front and back, and we could have lost the war.<sup>16</sup>

Having so justified the prewar purges, Malenkov went on to add a word of warning. The Party ranks had expanded considerably, and despite the efforts of the Central Committee, "admissions still continued at a rapid pace" in the postwar period. "The Party could not but take notice of the fact that the rapid growth in its ranks had also its bad points, tended to a certain lowering of the level of political consciousness in the Party ranks, to a certain deterioration in the qualitative composition of the Party."<sup>17</sup> The members were reminded that many obstacles still lay ahead and that their utmost energies would have to be exerted in the struggle for communism.

The Congress proceedings were concluded by the "election" of an enlarged Central Committee and a similarly enlarged roster of Central Committee candidate members. The increased size of these bodies suggests that an effort was being made to make the Central Committee a forum in which the interests of the Party, the secret police, the army, and the administrators could be coalesced into one "united front." But the enlargement was probably caused also by the natural tendency of the main lieutenants of the dictator to attempt to strengthen their own positions in the top Party councils by introducing their men into the upper Party levels. It is of interest to note that about two thirds of the new Central Committee's membership was composed of young Party leaders whose climb to power was of rather recent vintage.<sup>18</sup> Most of them came to their

republican or regional Party posts during the postwar shuffles. A shift in the internal balance of power must, therefore, have taken place.

Even more interesting was the composition of the new Party Secretariat, which together with the Party Presidium was to direct the Party's operations. The Secretariat contained (apart from Stalin, Malenkov, and Khrushchev) seven other individuals, all of whom were also either members or candidate members of the new Presidium. Of these, five had been promoted relatively recently to the top councils of the Party: the previously mentioned P. K. Ponomarenko from the post of Byelorussian Secretary, A. B. Aristov from the post of Chelyabinsk region Secretary, and N. A. Mikhailov from the post of Komsomol Secretary. The Secretariat was thus dominated by younger Party officials.<sup>19</sup> The new Presidium was likewise staffed with a number of younger Party leaders, although the old guard, consisting of Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Molotov, and Mikoyan, had a firmer hold there than in the Secretariat.<sup>20</sup>

As a consequence of all this, the general impression created by the decisions of the congress (which clearly reflected the will of Stalin) was that Malenkov's star had risen even higher. The old guard no longer monopolized the key Party organs. Younger men, such as Brezhnev or Ponomarenko, were brought in and presumably owed their newly acquired status to Malenkov (and possibly also to Khrushchev). They effectively balanced the older Stalinists.

Then in early January 1953 came the startling announcement of the Jewish doctors' conspiracy. And here the web of intrigue becomes more involved and the totalitarian mystery more inscrutable. According to the limited evidence available, the plot was apparently directed at Beria. The customary vituperations against the imprisoned men, and the "Jewish bourgeois nationalists" backing them, were followed by an announcement that the Party should be cleansed of "degenerates and double-dealers" who made the doctors' conspiracy possible. They were to be "chased out of the Party."<sup>21</sup> A particular effort was made to make it clear that the Party would no longer tolerate "carelessness" in its ranks, which is the "nourishing soil for spies and diversionists."<sup>22</sup>

Let us examine the implications of this charge of "carelessness."

It should be noted that the official announcement concerning the alleged plot went on to state that

. . . the agencies of state security did not discover the doctors' wrecking, terrorist organization in time. Yet these agencies should have been particularly vigilant, since history already records instances of foul murderers and traitors to the motherland in the guise of doctors, such as the "doctors" Levin and Pletnev, who killed the great Russian writer A. M. Gorky and the outstanding Soviet statesmen V. V. Kuibyshev and V. R. Menzhinsky by deliberately wrong treatment, on order from enemies of the Soviet Union . . . besides these enemies we still have one more enemy — the carelessness of our people. One cannot doubt that as long as we have carelessness there will continue to be sabotage. Consequently: to end sabotage it is necessary to put an end to carelessness in our ranks.<sup>23</sup>

This statement obviously suggests negligence on the part of the secret police. And the implication was strengthened by the additional charge of "carelessness," which, according to the preceding, is the real basis for sabotage. And in order to effectively eliminate sabotage, the sources of "carelessness" must be liquidated.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the alleged conspirators, whose work was so facilitated by the "carelessness" of the secret police, were accused of conspiring only against the heads of the Party and the army. The omission of the leaders of the secret police may or may not be significant. Yet when considered in the general context of the charges of "carelessness" and failure to uncover the plot "in time," the omission suggests some grounds for speculation concerning the further development of the purge. The unexplained disappearance of the former MGB head, V. Abakumov, from the public scene provides additional basis for belief that the significance of the charges against the doctors went beyond the official indictment.

The pointed dagger of these charges seems hence to have been directed straight towards Beria. An appeal to latent Russian anti-Semitism<sup>25</sup> seems to have been coupled with charges of a "bourgeois nationalist" plot, promoted clearly by anti-Russian elements within some of the minority republics and tolerated, if not abetted, by the "careless" secret police. The inner mechanics of this intrigue are still to be unraveled: nothing is known yet of Stalin's role in it.

Who were the prime movers? Was the elimination of Beria actually a mere matter of time?

But before history could provide an answer to this unfolding process of inner totalitarian power struggle, a purely human factor intervened to change momentarily the course of the battle. Stalin died.

His death was apparently sudden. The reactions of the Soviet leadership betrayed a considerable degree of apprehension and concern. The official dirge was accompanied by frequent and somewhat frantic appeals for "unity" and for popular support for the regime. In this initial moment of crisis, either the internal intrigues were forgotten, or Beria himself seized the opportunity to re-establish his position by a fiat. In any case from the resulting shuffle Beria emerged again in full control of the police apparatus (now amalgamated under a single MVD), and he was clearly a member "in good standing" of the ruling clique.<sup>26</sup> The final question of Stalin's successor, however, was still far from settled.<sup>27</sup>

The ensuing conflict, which lasted about four months, was probably rooted in the intrigues preceding Stalin's death. And given the nature of Soviet totalitarianism, it could not be avoided. Neither party could entirely trust the other: all concerned had to make certain that their own power positions were secure. The competition for security easily developed into open clashes.

At least in the initial stages, Beria probably considered himself to be in a somewhat precarious position. He realized that the doctors' plot intrigue was apparently aimed at him, and he must have felt that only through decisive and rapid action could he safeguard himself. Whether his measures of self-defense aimed, in the long run, at the elimination of his colleagues will probably never be known. But that is not really important. Within the framework of the totalitarian system such measures were bound to affect those colleagues adversely, and they realized it. The totalitarian logic of power pointed to but one solution: a struggle, followed by a purge.

The course selected by Beria involved a series of actions by the MVD, following basically two parallel and closely connected courses. One was to gain a measure of popular support; the other to restore his power position by undoing the changes effected by

his opponents and by effecting similar changes in their strongholds. It was the latter aspect of his program which apparently precipitated the climax.

The campaign for popularity included the granting of an amnesty to certain categories of criminals, a step probably taken in agreement with the other Presidium members.<sup>28</sup> It was followed very shortly by a repudiation of the doctors' plot, this time announced by the MVD alone,<sup>29</sup> and by a growing campaign against "adventurers" who fan the flames of national prejudices.<sup>30</sup> Abakumov's successor, S. D. Ignatiev, was forced out of the reorganized Secretariat because he was accused of being implicated in the "fabricated" charges against the doctors.<sup>31</sup> Efforts were made to represent this doctors' intrigue as a plot against the national "unity" of the various nationalities. Beria was in this manner attempting to represent himself as the champion of the non-Russian elements within the Soviet Union.

More concrete measures involved first of all the purging of Beria's Georgian opponents and then the restoration to power of the men imprisoned in 1952.<sup>32</sup> In a rapid succession of moves, telescoped into late April and early May 1953, the Georgian leadership was uprooted and presumably imprisoned on charges which again reflected Beria's desire to harness the national consciousness of the non-Russians. Discussing the elimination of one of the former leaders, *Zaria vostoka*, speaking for the new leadership, stated: "The enemy of the Party and the people, Rukhadze, and his myrmidons, tried to inflame the feeling of national enmity, the feeling of dissatisfaction in the Soviet people, and remove active Georgian Party workers and Georgian state workers. They fabricated provocative affairs about a non-existent nationalism."<sup>33</sup> The changes involved the entire top Party leadership<sup>34</sup> and all the major governmental posts, including that of the premier.<sup>35</sup> The purge spread out rapidly to involve the Georgian regional Party organizations, with four secretaries rapidly losing their posts, as well as the Kom-somol and the Georgian Supreme Soviet.<sup>36</sup>

The Beria offensive was not limited to Georgia alone. Utilizing his position as MVD head to the limit, Beria proceeded to appoint his men as republican MVD ministers, exploiting the opportunities provided him by the governmental reorganization initiated by

Moscow after Stalin's death. The measure of his success is indicated by the fact that in at least seven republics, his MVD appointees were removed from office within three months after his arrest. In a number of the republics, particularly those adjoining Georgia, considerable governmental and Party changes were effected, with some posts changing hands several times within the space of a few months.<sup>37</sup>

Beria, however, was not entirely successful in all the republics. In a number of them, for instance Estonia and Latvia, the local Party leadership apparently succeeded in checking his efforts and in actually displacing his appointments.<sup>38</sup> In general, however, by May and June of 1953 Beria's offensive was gathering momentum, and it is noteworthy that satellite Communists, long trained in interpreting Soviet developments, were beginning to talk of a coming Beria dictatorship in the USSR.<sup>39</sup> Many foreign observers likewise could not help but notice that the tide of battle seemed to be favoring Beria.

The final clash, it seems, was precipitated by Beria's excursions into areas not previously subject to his personal jurisdiction. Communist leaders have a strong proprietary sense, especially when their power is involved, and trespassers of their domains are viewed with a wary eye. Beria proceeded to commit this cardinal sin. His next move was to attempt to neutralize his opponents in the Ukraine and to gain control of the important Party organization there. Here again he followed his twofold policy of attempting to gain popular support while removing his enemies.

The first step, so this analysis suggests, may have been the widely discussed decoration of Petrovsky, a former Ukrainian Communist leader who had disappeared during the latter stages of the Great Purge. The announcement of Petrovsky's award, made in early May 1953, could have been an attempt by Beria to cater to Ukrainian nationalism and to dissociate himself from the anti-nationalistic policies pursued by the Ukrainian Party leaders. This supposition was strengthened further by Leonid Melnikov's removal from the post of First Party Secretary in the Ukraine, again on charges suggesting clearly that Beria was promoting the interests of the non-Russian minorities.<sup>40</sup> Melnikov's removal, probably engineered by the MVD Minister P. Ia. Meshik (shot later with Beria),<sup>41</sup> struck

a heavy blow against Beria's opponents, and indicated a further extension of Beria's growing influence.

It may have been this coup which galvanized Malenkov, Khrushchev (who had been closely associated with Melnikov), and other members of the Presidium (some of whom may have previously been neutral) to action. The danger to them suddenly became very real and very pressing. It must have become quite clear that any further delay might spell a Beria victory. The first protagonist to act decisively would be the one to survive.

Beria's arrest was announced on July 10, 1953.

It probably occurred earlier, and June 26 is officially suggested. The mechanics of the arrest were not made clear. The element of surprise was probably decisive. The Party old guard, faced by the prospect of a complete seizure of power by the MVD chief, most likely decided that Malenkov represented the lesser of two evils and rallied round him. There are indications also that the armed forces were involved in the anti-Beria cabal and that it was this coalition of the Malenkov-Khrushchev Party machine, the old guard leadership, and the armed forces which engineered the liquidation of the second most important Soviet leader.

His execution was announced shortly before Christmas in 1953.<sup>42</sup> According to the official statement, Beria met his fate at the hands of the MVD executioners—who, according to an official admission, had previously liquidated on Beria's orders "hundreds of thousands of the best sons of the entire Soviet people."<sup>43</sup>—together with six of his closest associates. V. G. Dekanozov, the Georgian MVD Minister, and P. Ia. Meshik, the Ukrainian MVD Minister, probably paid with their lives for their success in executing Beria's mission in Georgia and the Ukraine respectively. The others, B. Z. Kobulov, S. A. Goglidze, and L. E. Vlodzimirsky, probably represented the Moscow brain trust of the Beria forces and directed from the central police headquarters the unfolding pattern of Beria's march to power. V. N. Merkulov, whose arrest allegedly took place on September 16, either was involved in the affair through the testimony of those arrested with Beria or was accused of some act designed to save the life of his former chief.<sup>44</sup>

The elimination of Beria, performed swiftly and energetically, was followed by a thorough reshuffling of the Party and the state

administration, particularly in the non-Russian republics. The extent of the subsequent purges was usually in direct ratio to the success Beria had enjoyed in placing his men in key positions. Accordingly the most heavily affected areas were Georgia and the other Caucasian republics. The changes were not restricted to the MVD apparatus.<sup>45</sup> Within three months of Beria's arrest major changes were made in Party and government leadership in Georgia. Wholesale ministerial replacements followed. The men released from jail in April of 1953 presumably returned there in September; in any case they no longer held their posts. A new Party secretary, previously associated with the Ukrainian Party organization, was appointed; while a former Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Georgia was promoted to replace the former Chairman, V. M. Bakradze, whose length of tenure of office would not be envied even by a French premier. A new Party bureau was constituted, and new appointments were made to the Supreme Court and the regional Party organizations. Some of the other republics fared almost as badly: Armenia witnessed changes in the post of Premier, three Party secretaries and two Vice-Premiers; Azerbaidzhan had its premier changed twice between July 1953 and January 1954, as well as witnessing changes in the MVD and in the post of Vice-Premier; in Byelorussia a strange juggling act occurred in the MVD, whose minister was changed three times between June 25 and September 5, 1953.<sup>46</sup>

An interesting aspect of these purges is the fact that some of the purged Party officials had formerly been closely associated with the secret police. For instance Bagirov, who was purged as Azerbaidzhan First Secretary on July 19, 1953, had been the head of the CHEKA and subsequently the OGPU in Azerbaidzhan for almost ten years before becoming the Azerbaidzhan Party's First Secretary.<sup>47</sup> Similarly in Georgia, some of the purged Party officials had had close links with the secret police; and it is of interest to note that subsequent appointments brought to power Party officials whose previous experience involved extended military service. This is not to say that military men were being infiltrated into the Party; rather, that former Party watchdogs of the military are considered suitable replacements for former Party-police officials. It is probably assumed that such men, considering their previous experience in

supervising the military, will be well qualified to break down any opposition from disgruntled police elements.

An example of this type of Party official was the new Georgian Party Secretary, V. P. Mzhavanadze. He served in the Red Army for about ten years, prior to receiving political training in 1933 which qualified him for the post of political commissar in the Red Army. During the war he served in the Political Administration of the Army, first on the Leningrad and then on the Ukraine front. After the conclusion of hostilities he was assigned to the Ukrainian Party organization, where presumably he worked until his appointment in the summer of 1953 as the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party Central Committee, following a purge of the Beria elements.

The permanent quality of the purge was again reasserted by the events subsequent to Beria's execution. Their recency makes a detailed treatment unnecessary, and a sketchy outline will suffice for illustrative purposes. The year and a half between the liquidation of the former secret police head and the removal of Malenkov from the premiership in February 1955 was marked by further steps to liquidate the remains of the alleged secret police conspiracy in the name of the new state legality, and by an obvious growth in stature and influence of the First Secretary of the CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev, whose appointment to that post was formalized in the September 1953 session of the Central Committee.

On July 23, 1954 came the announcement of the shooting of one M. D. Ryumin, the MGB officer allegedly responsible for fabricating evidence in connection with the Jewish doctors' plot. In December 1954, on the anniversary of Beria's liquidation, V. S. Abakumov, the former MGB head under Beria, was executed. In this instance the victim was not only linked to the Beria conspiracy, but in the words of the indictment: "Abakumov fabricated the so-called 'Leningrad case,' in which many Party and Soviet officials were arrested without grounds and falsely accused of very grave state crimes."<sup>48</sup> This part of the indictment could have special significance as it might refer to the post-Zhdanov purge of the Leningrad Party organization, which was taken over by V. M. Andrianov, presumably a Malenkov appointee. It is noteworthy that Andrianov was removed after Khrushchev's appointment as first secretary.

The possibility therefore arises that back in 1948 Malenkov and Beria were collaborating together against Zhdanov.<sup>49</sup> Abakumov's liquidation would thus have been also a warning to Malenkov. But even if the accusation against Abakumov was fabricated in order to link Malenkov to Beria, it would still suggest that it was designed to discredit those who in 1948-1949 were most active in purging the Zhdanovites.

These more sensational developments obscured to some extent the quiet but widespread changes made during 1954 in the regional Party organizations, amounting to about one half of the CPSU regional secretaries. An analysis of those nominated to the Supreme Soviet suggests that widespread changes also occurred in the Central Committee of the Party. They were most likely the work of the First Secretary, whose prominence was clearly increasing and was expanding even into areas of foreign affairs. The agricultural policy to which the First Secretary committed himself and the international crises involving Formosa and the rearmament of Germany probably brought to a head the growing conflict within the ruling circles about the relative merits of a consumers' goods policy or of further industrial expansion. Rumbings indicative of this clash increased during late 1954 and early 1955, and the conflict finally became public through Khrushchev's speech at the Central Committee Plenum in late January 1955. There the matter was fully resolved in favor of a policy of increased industrial output, and a few days later, on February 8, Malenkov relinquished his office.

Both the nature of the Abakumov indictment and the dismissal by Bulganin of the Minister of Culture, G. F. Aleksandrov, one of the more prominent victims of the *Zhdanovshchina* restored to prominence in 1953 presumably by Malenkov, indicate the possibility that the present ruling clique, with Khrushchev at the head, represents elements which were not previously involved in the Malenkov-Zhdanov clash and which emerged only as a result of the collapse of Beria. Beria's fall, it seems in retrospect, actually hurt Malenkov most of all, as it left the Party apparatus under the First Secretary in a pre-eminent position. Its ability to control the military, through the Main Political Administration, left Malenkov with few sinews of power. His weakness, however, might have

been precisely the factor which saved his life when the final show-down came — there was no need to be as forceful as in the case of Beria. However, some of Khrushchev's remarks at the Central Committee session in January 1955, characterizing those who advocated a policy of consumers' goods as "anti-Party slander," may indicate that the matter is not yet closed. Should present economic difficulties continue to mount, the regime might yet be tempted to make a sacrificial offering on the altar of the purge.

The past-Stalinist purges generally, however, did not penetrate to the Party masses. Unlike the prewar and even the early postwar purges, these purges tended to restrict themselves to the higher Party and state hierarchy.<sup>50</sup> For instance, if official data can be trusted, the purge in Georgia involved only about 3,000 Party members out of a total of 167,000.<sup>51</sup> Clearly the majority must have been Party officials and not mere members. This fact in itself is interesting testimony concerning the changed character of the Party and the state apparatus. The Party is no longer composed of individuals who are capable of responding to the appeal of new ideas; its membership tends to be instead a shapeless and faceless mass, molded and directed by a hierarchy of officials. Only within this hierarchy are any clashes possible. The highly developed organizational structure of the system makes splits and groupings difficult. Conflicts tend to be confined to the upper strata and to be resolved there.

The masses are appraised of an inner conflict through reading *Pravda's* reports of the liquidation of some aspirant to power or by having their local Party secretary announce it. Under the monolithic fabric of the totalitarian system there live two separate classes: the complex hierarchy of those who wield power; and the great majority of the population, including Party members, who are subject to it. It is only among the top levels of the former and their apparatus that conflicts can break out. If these can be settled quickly and decisively, the masses learn of them only after they are over. The brevity of the campaign of vilification against Beria bears further testimony to this fact: although the regime had to make obeisance to established ritual and explain the "reasons" for its action, no long, intensive campaign was necessary or desirable. The contrast with 1936–1938 is clear.

On the other hand, it is precisely this clearcut separation, as well as the continued totalitarian and dictatorial nature of the power held by the ruling elite, that necessitates brutal and final solutions to any internal conflicts. Otherwise conditions are created for the breakdown of the system, and the gates are opened to disintegration. It is one thing, however, to eliminate Zinoviev and Kamenev; another to kill Beria or to deny the existence of N. Voznesensky. In the former case, supporters of those purged had to be hounded down to the last man — for support of Zinoviev and Kamenev was not only insubordination but also actual ideological deviation. But in the latter case, shooting Beria and his lieutenants was enough to end the conflict. The masses, as well as Beria's own organization, would follow the new master loyally and efficiently. They are no longer much concerned with the *why* of things but with the *how*, especially since transmission of ideological conflicts (or power conflicts rationalized in ideological terms) from the top down is almost impossible except by an open attempt to violate the existing total unity of the means of communications. Such an attempt involves the rearrangement of forces and individuals, the mapping of strategic moves. Beria was in the midst of such a process when his opponents decided to act. It is not likely that on any future occasions they will wait longer.

It follows that had Beria won, a mass Party purge would also have been unnecessary — Malenkov's and Khrushchev's followers, with the possible exception of their associates in the Party machine, would have followed the new leadership with equal loyalty and zeal.<sup>52</sup> And this quality of the Soviet system, a product of many bloody and costly purges, is one of its strengths. It makes the prospect of an internal revolution or disruptive conflict for power unlikely; it makes the purge an effective mechanism of power transition which does not puncture the monolithic unity of the political system.

There is no indication that the latest regime is yielding even in the remotest respects any of its political power. As long as it continues in its present form, the conditions precipitating the purge and ultimately giving it its violent character will also continue. Their consequences may no longer be a mass purge, which is not so neces-

sary given a pliable and silent membership which has been politically neutralized. The purge will continue to liquidate, violently if necessary, those who tend to disrupt the unity of the top strata. The Stalinist era is over, but it has left the Stalinist purge as a lasting heritage.

# 10

## Summary and Conclusion

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TOTALITARIANISM NEEDS THE PURGE. Disloyal and potentially deviant individuals or groups must be unmasked and their followers liquidated. The tensions, the conflicts, and the struggles within the totalitarian system must somehow be released or absorbed lest they erupt into disintegrating violence. The problems of promotion and circulation of the elite must be solved within the monolithic framework of a system which eliminates freedom of choice and free competition. Corrupt and careerist elements must be weeded out periodically in order to maintain revolutionary fervor. The purposes of the purge are accordingly many and varied, and the need for it ever present. The purge thus becomes permanent.

However, within this permanent process there are oscillations. The more violent manifestations of a purge usually become evident when the inner power struggles which proceed ceaselessly under an apparently smooth totalitarian surface and which are accentuated by totalitarian paranoia have reached the stage of consolidation, and when only the final removal of the vanquished elements remains to be effected. The purge, therefore, exists in two parallel processes: in a continuum involving all the considerations outlined above, which make the purge permanent; and in violent eruptions, which are the aftermath of an internal rebalancing of the power structure.

The purge can, however, disrupt the enforced unity of the totalitarian state. Such disruption occurs when, through various circumstances, the purge develops a logic and a course of its own, excessively increasing its scope and impact. In that event it becomes a mass phenomenon, embracing the entire society and threatening the existence of all of its segments. The essence of the system being a constant balance between oppression and relaxation, this phase of the purge seriously endangers the totalitarian equilibrium. For this reason, recourse to the mass purge in the future will signify

either that the Soviet regime has become unable to control the various forces operating within the system, or else that in the hierarchy a hysterical misconception of reality has developed. Such a misconception through its very artificiality could result in most serious consequences for the system's stability, and even threaten its survival.

These propositions, it is hoped, have been substantiated through the foregoing analysis of the Soviet purge. We have seen that the purge as an instrument of internal rule has characterized Party operations since the very moment of Party domination by Lenin. This legacy was bequeathed to the Soviet state, and the purges acquired an increasingly meaningful role in it with the growing centralization and solidification of political power in Stalin's hands. The character of the purge, however, changed as the Soviet system changed. From a Party operation, controlled by Party organs, the purge evolved almost in a dialectical pattern into a violent mass process, conducted in an atmosphere of great hysteria by the secret police. The consequences for its victims were usually fatal. During the subsequent period of retrenchment the purge remained essentially a police function, with growing emphasis on secrecy and quiet efficiency. The events after Stalin's death indicate that reliance on the purge, including its violent form, has not really diminished. Indeed, at least one stage of the succession struggle involved the application of the purging technique both before and after its climax.<sup>1</sup>

At one time in recent Soviet history the purge did cease to be a mere process of government and instrument of power consolidation to become a mass phenomenon, threatening the unity of the Soviet state. The mass purges of the Yezhov period, although admittedly initiated by the regime for the express purpose of eliminating considerable numbers of people, developed a forward motion of their own and tended to involve indiscriminately all the segments of the Soviet population. The *Yezhovshchina* thus indicated once again that a rationally conceived operation of liquidation can easily become irrational when operating within a framework which has very few restraints on political power. In such a system all sorts of aberrations and abuses allow authority-hungry and ruthless individuals to come to the fore and exploit the situation to their ad-

vantage. This generic weakness of the system was fully revealed during the Great Purge.

Until then Soviet leaders had been extremely careful to balance the system's coercive aspects with simultaneous concessions. For example, the violence of the collectivization was balanced by the opening of Party ranks to thousands of new members, hitherto kept out. The screening of the Party during the Kirov era was accompanied by economic concessions to the consumers and farmers. A similar balance was effected during the twenties, although the more relaxed nature of the system then made it less necessary. The mass purge of the late thirties, however, threatened this delicate "golden mean" and tended to deprive the regime of all its sources of support, leaving it dependent almost entirely on its police apparatus. The leadership of the Communist Party, however, through efforts which were analyzed in Chapter 7, succeeded in overcoming this growing danger; and the mass purge reverted to the normal process of periodic accentuations.

The need for the purge will not diminish with the growing stability of the totalitarian regime. Instability is not its primary cause. Measures to eliminate stagnation and corruption will always be needed. Channels for drawing new members into the system will have to be kept open. The problem of succession, for instance, will remain a source of constant friction; and its solution, either before or after a dictator's demise, is bound to change the alignments within the power structure. It may be assumed that such struggles will result in purges of increased intensity.

Furthermore, any emerging leader in the post-Stalinist era is faced with a hard and pressing fact: he must legitimize his authority in the totalitarian sense by removing or neutralizing all possible alternatives to himself. In a sense, this process of "legitimization" has already been initiated. The post-Beria period has seen the re-emergence of many of the younger Party leaders, shunted aside presumably by the old guard immediately after Stalin's death. Places for them have been made through resort to the purge.<sup>2</sup> The top leadership of the army professionals is clearly another potential group to be purged. Even the apparently peaceful disposal of Malenkov in February 1955 was not devoid of ominous rumblings. Malenkov's policy of emphasis on production of consumers' goods

was characterized by Khrushchev and shortly afterwards by his minions as an "anti-Party slander," a "vulgarization" of Marxism-Leninism reminiscent of "right-wing deviation."<sup>3</sup>

The purge, therefore, is not likely to be deprived of its *raison d'être* in the years to come. The political struggles within the Soviet system will continue to generate the energy and the tensions that resolve themselves in the purge. And as the system further develops its totalitarian unity and as the gradual growth of the Party results in the diminution in distinctions between members and nonmembers, the purges may even *potentially* embrace wider circles of the population, by then drawn into active participation in the totalitarian processes. Simultaneously, however, with this further "totalitarianization" of the system (including both the conditioning of the masses and increasing technological efficiency in the system of controls), the purge may possibly appear less extensive and even less drastic. It may become internalized, operating quietly in the upper levels of the apparatus, even though potentially applicable to the entire society. It may become a normal aspect of the general process of movement and shuffling in the life of the totalitarian citizen who is not initiated into the inner mysteries of totalitarian rule and not familiar with the internal struggles on the higher power levels.

At that stage, manifestations of open violence and suppression may even become very infrequent. On the surface, the system will appear to be operating without recourse to the more extreme forms of coercion. The energy of unbridled violence will possibly have spent itself. Social and political relationships will tend to create the illusion of increasing stability and relaxation, as well as of pluralization of political power. The abjuring of clearly discernible terror techniques will create the impression of a considerably more secure regime.

The gradual tendency in this direction explains, to some extent, the inclination of some foreign observers to claim that Soviet society is already devoid of tensions and that the internal processes of control are becoming relaxed. Ignoring for a moment the recent indications of an accentuation of insecurity in connection with internal power realignments, we may assume that such foreign observers have failed to recognize that the Soviet system is becoming increas-

ingly totalitarianized; and, as a result, the inner tensions and struggles and their consequences tend to be resolved more and more in the upper layers of the totalitarian power structure, and to no longer penetrate the lower strata of the hierarchy as they did during the thirties. This development certainly does not imply a relaxation in totalitarian controls.

Neither does this trend indicate that a form of managerial rationalization of the system is about to set in. It is often suggested that the USSR is now likely to enter upon a rationalist stage of development, made necessary by the vested interests of the bureaucracy and the managerial circles, which require an abandonment of the more arbitrary "totalitarian" features of the system. The proponents of this line of thought, however, neglect to prove that a rationalist system is necessarily incompatible with totalitarianism, or that a rationalist system must be any less totalitarian than an "irrational" totalitarianism (presumably of the Stalinist type). Surely the concepts of 1984 ought not to be disregarded. And even if 1984 is to be rejected as merely a novelist's nightmare, one might well wonder whether Nazism was any less totalitarian, given the stage of its development as well as the discernible trends of its future unfolding, even though it was superimposed on a system marked for its bureaucratic and managerial characteristics.

Similarly the apparent over-all stability of the Communist system is not a concomitant of the erosion (i.e., a gradual and evolutionary process) of totalitarian dictatorship and the abandonment of the dynamic, brutal, and revolutionary attributes of its rule. The present and probably temporary absence of a definite one-man rule in the Soviet Union is certainly not indicative of such a development. Indeed, it is possible that the Soviet system could continue for some years to be ruled by a mysterious "monolithic collectivity"—the secret committee at the very top which speaks and acts as one, even while torn asunder by most violent inner clashes. The great masses of the totalitarian population will then continue to operate from day to day without any real knowledge of the nature of its leadership or of its actual composition (except as occasionally revealed through official media). The chief personalities of the leadership would be significant only as they appear as part of the "collective leadership."

This collective leadership, in a sense, could forebode a more frightening situation than even the tyranny of a totalitarian dictator—known and feared but still recognized to be a mortal. It could suggest a total separation of the population from the leadership, which, if the present arrangement continues, might become impersonal and not subject to the laws of human existence. But precisely because of this great separation from the masses, the leadership would be most careful not to lose its grip on the system, not to let the instruments of power slip from its hands. And these instruments of totalitarian control would become no less sharp or effective should the standard of living of the population rise appreciably. Economic concessions, as recent years have shown, do not mean political concessions. A higher standard of living does not involve a lesser degree of dictatorship. Nazi Germany is again a sufficient example.

To expect, therefore, a fundamental mellowing in the political system of the USSR is to show a great misunderstanding of the nature of totalitarianism and to engage in a dangerous underestimation of the compelling logic of totalitarian rule. For totalitarianism aspires not only to total political power. It also postulates total goals—goals which cannot be achieved within the lifetime of a single generation. These goals, formulated in variable degrees of precision in the programmatic parts of the official ideology, demand the energy and create the strength of the totalitarian movement. They continue to push the system ever forward in a struggle towards the undefined Apocalypse, demanding sacrifices and exacting obedience from the population.

This abuse of the present is the fundamental difference between the totalitarian system and such antiquated dictatorships as Franco's, the very existence of which is based on its desire to leave the *status quo* untouched. Its mission is to preserve the present and to prevent the future. This mission inherently limits such a dictator's capacity to expand his powers, and totalitarianism rejects it categorically. The totalitarian movement recognizes no present limits on its powers because to it Today should already be past, and it is Tomorrow that shapes the current reality. The roots of totalitarian power are to be found in the system's ability to generate the enthusiasm of the masses through a constant process of

inventing new goals and new objectives. It is this drive towards the millennium which is the real source of totalitarian power and the justification for its coercion.

To predict the possible erosion or withering away of the system's despotic features is to suppose that the flight of the shackled into the future can be halted despite the presence of a totalitarian leadership determined to maintain its power. The erosion which this concept posits would involve the abandonment of the official ideology that frames the objectives of the system and justifies the means used for their attainment. It would involve the denial by the ruling groups of their chief rationalization for the sacrifices demanded from the masses and, more than that, for the obedience imposed upon them. It would mean that gradually the leaders would have to resign their powers and limit their reach.

But halting would in fact invite the decay of the system and its collapse under the impact of some revolutionary force. There could be no gradual growth of democratic forms after the death of the old coercive institutions. For political power is never static. It is either increasing or decreasing, expanding or retracting. It fluctuates with the pressures of the times and the needs. The original terror of the totalitarian regime, even if intended to be temporary, has committed the regime beyond the power of recall to the further expansion of its power and to the continued maintenance of its coercive apparatus.

As things stand today, the rulers can no longer dream of parting with these organs of suppression. The quest for absolute power, pursued now for nearly three decades with a ruthlessness unparalleled (in scope at least) in modern times, has again produced internally, as it did externally, its own reaction. The excesses of the police apparatus have fanned the potential opposition to the regime into something far greater and more dangerous than it could have been before these excesses began.<sup>4</sup>

This situation in turn breeds the continued insecurity of the regime which so many of its students have noted. And the insecurity is certainly not conducive to the erosion of its despotic features. Rather it inclines the regime towards continued dependence, despite any tendencies to political pluralization, on the Party and the secret police apparatus.

Totalitarian leadership thus is forced to use its power to the full. To expect it not to is to credit it with greater stupidity than its own security could allow. True, such power may take on different forms and shapes. Its open violence may diminish. But it will only do so when substitute methods are developed for exacting complete obedience and forcing participation in the furtherance of the official goals. If in time the totalitarian citizen is indeed conditioned to react automatically to the demands made on him, open violence will admittedly be needless. But the totalitarian system will then have become all the more despotic, for its power will truly be total and its goals unlimited. And those who wield the power and continue to derive growing advantages from it will remain constantly interested in expanding it in order to maintain it. This expansion will require recurring pressures for new objectives and the necessary tools of coercion.

The purge will remain a quiet and efficient mechanism for the removal of those minority elements which, after even a lengthy totalitarian rule, still prove themselves (in the demanding and suspicious eyes of the regime) unable to adjust to the growing responsiveness of the totalitarian masses. The purge will thus perpetuate what might be called the "stabilized instability" of totalitarianism through a permanent process of removal and readjustment. The arteries of the system will not be allowed to harden, while the apparent stabilization will be based on the continuing drives and goals which give totalitarianism its total character.

The purge and totalitarianism have been linked in an indissoluble union, and the Soviet system may rightly be called one of the permanent purge. The final questions of how long such a union can endure, and whether it may constitute the structure's fatal weakness can be answered conclusively only from the lofty perspective of historical insight. Such insight is yet to come.



## **Appendix I. Some Important Dates in the History of the Soviet Purges**

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*December 18, 1917.* CHEKA (Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counterrevolution) established.

*March 8-16, 1921.* Tenth Congress of RKP(b)\* resolution on Party unity, empowering the Central Committee to expel members from the Party.

*July 21, 1921.* Party purge ordered to weed out class enemies and unreliable elements.

*February 6, 1922.* GPU replaced the CHEKA.

*May 23-31, 1924.* Thirteenth Congress of RKP(b) approved decision of the Central Committee to screen and purge the administrative and educational cadres; defined in this connection the broad powers of the Party Control Commissions.

*December 18-31, 1925.* Fourteenth Congress of VKP(b)† approved the screening of nonindustrial Party cells.

*October 15, 1926.* Trotsky capitulated to the Central Committee and formally abandoned opposition.

*November 15, 1927.* Trotsky and Zinoviev expelled from the Party.

*January 18, 1929.* Politburo decision to expel Trotsky from the Soviet Union.

*April 23-29, 1929.* Screening and purge of the Party ordered by the Sixteenth Party Conference, to be completed by the Sixteenth Congress of the VKP(b).

*January 12, 1933.* Party purge ordered by the Central Committee.

\* Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).

† All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik).

*June 8, 1934.* Law on treason announced.

*July 10, 1934.* NKVD established to consolidate secret police functions.

*December 1, 1934.* Kirov assassinated.

*May 13, 1935.* Screening of the Party ordered by the Central Committee.

*December 25, 1935.* Screening and purge declared over; exchange of Party cards ordered by the Central Committee.

*August 1936.* Trial of the "Sixteen" (Kamenev, Zinoviev, *et al.*).

*January 1937.* Trial of the "Seventeen" (Radek, Piatakov, *et al.*).

*April 3, 1937.* Yagoda's arrest announced.

*June 12, 1937.* Tukhachevsky's execution announced.

*August–October 1937.* Peak in the purge of the nationalities.

*January 19, 1938.* Party resolution on mistakes made in the purge, urging restraint and efforts to draw new members into the Party.

*March 9, 1938.* Similar resolution of the Komsomol.

*March 1938.* Trial of the "Twenty-One" (Rykov, Bukharin, Yagoda, *et al.*).

*April 19, 1938.* Decree restricting expulsions from the collective farms.

*December 8, 1938.* Yezhov's removal from the NKVD announced.

*March 1939.* Eighteenth Party Congress: Stalin's and Zhdanov's speeches on the mass purge; Party resolution renouncing the technique of the mass purge.

(Since the postwar purges were of a more local character, there are no central resolutions available. Most information is to be found on the local level, particularly from the various republican Party congresses.)

*August 23, 1946.* Plenum of the Ukrainian Party Central Committee, reporting on effects of Party cleansing.

*September 19, 1946.* Announcement of measures against violators of collective farm regulations.

*1946–1947.* Cleansing of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Party cadres.

*June 9, 1947.* State Secrets Law announced.

*1947–1948.* Period of Zhdanov's attack on cultural and scientific organizations; charges of cosmopolitanism.

*August 26, 1948.* Biological dispute resolved in favor of Lysenko.

*August 30, 1948.* Zhdanov died.

*Spring 1949* (No specific dates available). Voznesensky and A. A. Kuznetsov removed from central Party organs.

*July 13, 1949.* *Bol'shevik* editorial staff purged, among other things, for propagating Voznesensky's theoretical position.

*January 12, 1950.* Death penalty for treason and espionage announced.

*1951–1952.* Republican Party Congresses involving major changes in leadership (e.g., May 1951, Eighteenth Congress of the Azerbaidzhan Communist Party; December 1951, Fifth Congress of the Kazakh Communist Party; June 1952, Plenary Session of the Georgian Communist Party Central Committee).

*October 1952.* Nineteenth Party Congress; speeches by Malenkov and Khrushchev on Party unity and discipline.

*January 13, 1953.* Doctors' conspiracy against the leadership of the Soviet state announced.

*March 5, 1953.* Stalin died.

*July 10, 1953.* Arrest of Beria announced.

*Fall 1953.* Purges in Georgian, Azerbaidzhan, and other republican Communist Parties.

*December 23, 1953.* Execution of Beria and six accomplices announced.

*1954.* Extensive changes, up to 50 per cent, in regional Party secretaries.

*July 23, 1954.* Ryumin's execution announced.

*December 24, 1954.* Abakumov's execution announced.

*January 25–31, 1955.* Central Committee of the CPSU proclaimed policy of increased emphasis on industrial expansion.

*February 8, 1955.* Malenkov replaced as premier by Bulganin.

## **Appendix II. The 1937 Byelorussian and Caucasian Purges**

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THE CUSTOMARY PRELIMINARIES to the purge were manifested in Byelorussia. A noticeable accentuation in self-critique appeared in the local press, and local Party organizations as well as administrative institutions were subjected to severe denunciations and attacks. Serious overtones to these criticisms soon became apparent. Party organizations were castigated for not maintaining adequate contact with the masses (a rather standard accusation) and for failing to properly assist in the work of political education among the uninitiated.<sup>1</sup> The element of sabotage and wrecking soon crept in. For instance, in a discussion of forest protection and the prevailing deficiencies in it — such as lack of adequate fire precautions — a suggestion of premeditated wrecking was made.<sup>2</sup> Elimination of the saboteurs was, therefore, said to be needed. The press campaign soon resembled a self-induced case of hysteria, with enemies of the people being detected in almost every state and city institution, in Party organizations, in agencies of local government, and so on. The local “wreckers” were said to be assisted by or to be the instruments of foreign espionage services (preferably Polish in the case of Byelorussia) or local nationalists who were striving to make Byelorussia the colony of feudal landowners.<sup>3</sup>

The resulting purge was launched concurrently with the beginning of the Sixteenth Congress of the Byelorussian Communist Party, held in June of 1937, roughly a month after the conclusion of a series of Party conferences in various cities and towns of Byelorussia, all of which emphasized Party strength and close “contact with the masses.” In his report to the congress given four days after the execution of the Red Army Marshals in Moscow, Shrangovich, the Party secretary, already had some preliminary results of the purge to share with his attentive listeners: “In the district and central leading apparatus 421 people have been expelled from the Party. In the agricultural trusts, sovhozes, and MTS 367 people were unmasked. 150 directors of trusts, of industrial enterprises

and their deputies [were unmasked]. Already after the exchange of Party documents 140 secretaries of Party committees and partorgs were removed from work; of these 60 were expelled from the Party."<sup>4</sup> Party personnel were exhorted to increase their vigilance, and the secretary pointed to the previous presence on the Central Committee of the Byelorussian Party of the late General Uborevich (executed in the military purge a few days earlier) as further proof of the infiltration of hostile elements into the highest levels of the Party. (The secretary probably still had no premonition of how personally prophetic his words were.)

The purge then began to pick up momentum, and its victims became both more numerous and more prominent. The purge included the Chairman of the Byelorussian Council of People's Commissars, N. M. Goloded, purged for "bourgeois nationalist leanings"<sup>5</sup> and arrested on his way to Moscow. It included none other than comrade Sharangovich himself, purged at a special session of the Central Committee, with I. A. Iakovlev sent from Moscow to supervise personally the proceedings;<sup>6</sup> the special session was held barely a month after the same Sharandovich had declared to the Party congress that "the unmasking in Byelorussia and in the Communist Party of Byelorussia of enemies shows not our weakness but our strength, our might, it shows that our Party is increasing its vigilance still higher . . ."<sup>7</sup> Also purged were Cherviakov, the Chairman of the Byelorussian Central Executive Committee, who committed suicide;<sup>8</sup> Gikalo, the notorious Byelorussian chief purger during 1933 and 1934; Cherviakov's successor, N. Natalevich; several consecutive chairmen of the Minsk City Council;<sup>9</sup> and a considerable portion of the Council of People's Commissars and of the Central Committee.

Public trials, mainly for local consumption, became quite frequent. The previously named Communist "V.I.P.'s" were now joined by an impressive collection of so-called wreckers, saboteurs, spies, and nationalists, said to be working in almost all institutions and organizations of Byelorussia.<sup>10</sup> Their trials fell basically into two closely connected types. The first were wrecking and sabotage trials, in which the accused were said to have been the cause for the prevailing shortcomings. The "wreckers" then became scapegoats for the failures of the Party and state institutions to achieve

certain norms or to guarantee even a minimum standard of living to the citizen. Thus, for instance, the dismal housing conditions prevailing in Minsk were said to be caused by the fact that the successive chairmen of the City Council were "politically bankrupt" enemies of the people, who had purposely prevented any improvement in the lot of the Soviet laboring masses.<sup>11</sup> The second type were the espionage and nationalist trials, somewhat more directly political in nature, in which the accused confessed to plotting to sell Byelorussia "down the river" to the Poles, or to having been paid agents of foreign intelligence rings and having instigated a nationalist conspiracy against the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup>

The following list of "unmaskings" and subsequent trials illustrates their frequency and nature.<sup>13</sup>

*July 17, 1937.* The Dzerzhinsk district executive committee chairman was unmasked as a "bourgeois-nationalist and a spy." Together with the district Party committee secretary, he was found guilty of Polonizing the area.

*July 22.* Wrecking activities in the Byelorussian transport industries were uncovered.

*July 23.* Wrecking was discovered in Byelorussian commerce.

*August 2.* The Byelorussian Academy of Sciences was attacked in the press; some members were revealed as having maintained contact with foreign spies.

*August 3.* The Polish Theater was unmasked as a cover for Polish spies and an arena for lowering and discrediting the cultural accomplishments of the Soviet Union. "City committees of the Party forget too frequently that the theatre is a weapon of political enlightenment of the masses . . ."

*August 3.* Wrecking was discovered in various agricultural, industrial, and transport agencies.

*August 4.* A physical culture organization was infiltrated by enemies of the people and loafers.

*August 5.* Wrecking was discovered in the agricultural bank.

*August 15.* Sabotage was discovered in the cement industry.

Such attacks continued throughout the month in preparation for the public trials, which were soon forthcoming. The following six

are again listed on the basis of press coverage, and did not in any way constitute all the trials which occurred during this period.

*August 26.* A veterinary, an "enemy of the people," who had caused heavy losses in stock, was sentenced to ten years in an NKVD corrective labor camp.

*October 8.* A "Trotskyite diversionist" group, working for the Polish and Japanese intelligence services on the Byelorussian railroads, was tried; all nine accused were executed.

*October 8.* A conspiracy in the Zagotzerno trust to deprive Byelorussia of its bread supply was uncovered; all five accused, including an elevator director, were sentenced to death.

*October 12.* "An espionage-diversionist-wrecking rightist" organization was unmasked in the Agriculture Commissariat, composed mostly of veterinary personnel and including the head of the Veterinarian Administration and his deputy; all were sentenced to be shot.

*October 15.* The trial was announced of a "counterrevolutionary Trotskyite-diversionist-espionage-terrorist" organization active in the Zhlobin district on behalf of Polish intelligence; among the accused were the former district Party committee secretary, district executive committee chairman, and district procurator; all nine accused were sentenced to be shot.

*October 24.* The trial of a "counterrevolutionary espionage-diversionist-wrecking" organization in the Mozyr district began.

The trials continued, at various intervals, well into 1938. Among the later victims were members of the All-Byelorussian Committee for Physical Education and Sport, various agricultural functionaries, dairy operators, etc. And to be added to these were the countless unnamed victims of the purge, whose arrests had no "educational" or propaganda value to the authorities, but who were dragged out of their homes in the dead of night and sent to unknown parts of the Soviet Union, very frequently without the privilege of correspondence, to work and toil and quietly die.<sup>14</sup> Former Soviet citizens interviewed abroad speak of the long lines forming each day in front of local NKVD prisons and offices, lines of anxious relatives inquiring ceaselessly and without success for the whereabouts of the helpless victims of the purge.

After about four months the terror and the purge began to decline.<sup>15</sup> Occasional trials were still held and sentences of death were meted out. But these became more rare, and the propaganda apparatus ceased to emphasize the trials. Accounts of them were relegated to the last pages of the local newspapers, frequently in a brief column entitled *Sud* which gives the news about proceedings in the local courts. There were no more banner headlines announcing the "unmasking" and elimination of dangerous enemies, with page-wide hyphenated epithets following. A slight and barely audible sigh of relief could be breathed by the surviving Byelorussians, whose attention had now to be focused on the approaching elections to the Supreme Soviet, being held for the first time under the provisions of the Stalin Constitution. The official emphasis was now on unity, Party solidarity, mass support, and enthusiastic approval of the regime's policies. The tidal wave of the purge had receded.

A similar pattern of development manifested itself in the Caucasus. The Caucasian purge was initiated by the customary accentuation in propaganda, criticisms, and denunciations, assuming serious proportions by July 1937. Critiques of the political leadership became exceedingly vicious: the head of the Armenian Communist Party, Khandzhian, was called an enemy of the people who, prior to his exposure, had shielded hostile elements on the highest levels of authority, and, together with Amatuni and Akopov, both secretaries of the Armenian Central Committee, had imposed on the Party various Trotskyites. Some people (like the former head of the agricultural section of the Armenian Central Committee), having been exposed previously by the watchful eyes of the Party as "double-crossers," were said to have been merely transferred to other positions (the head of the agricultural section was made rector of the State University). In an interesting revelation of prevailing practices, it was announced that the "unmasked" Party secretaries edited the reports of the proceedings of the Armenian Party Congress in order to eliminate any criticisms of their leadership. Fortunately, unceasing "vigilance" paid off; and Khandzhian, Amatuni, Akopov, and Guloian, the Chairman of the Council of

People's Commissars, as well as the Commissar of Agriculture, Gumedin, were duly unmasked and purged.<sup>16</sup>

The purges were accompanied, as usual, by strenuous efforts to mobilize the Party membership and public opinion behind them. The Party conferences and congresses held during this period were also used to whip into line any wavering or ignorant Party members, as well as to facilitate, through the scheduled Party elections, a clean-up of the Party personnel. Thus, for instance, the Party organs of Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, were "renewed" by 60 per cent,<sup>17</sup> and in all of Georgia about one third of the membership of the primary Party organizations and a little more than one fourth of the district committee plenums were refreshed by new members. About one third of the Party secretaries were likewise changed.<sup>18</sup> This process, Beria pointed out to the Tenth Congress of the Georgian Communist Party, resulted in a significant elimination of nationalist infiltration into the Party ranks.

The real meaning of that remark was emphasized shortly by the execution of the leading lights of Georgian political life: B. Mdivani, M. Torosheknidze, M. Okundzhav, and four other leading Georgian communists, accused of conspiracy and nationalist deviation.<sup>19</sup> Their elimination paved the way for an open assault against the remaining "nationalist deviators." And while until then the most vitriolic and vociferous outbursts had been directed against the permanent whipping-boys of the Soviet regime, the Trotskyites, counterrevolutionaries, wreckers, etc., the purge now became openly aimed at Caucasian nationalism, be it Georgian, Azerbaidzhan, or Armenian.

A new series of trials held the spotlight. Secret organizations, separatist and nationalist in nature, were "uncovered" by the relentless NKVD. These were not limited only to the major republics, but were soon found to have been active also in the smaller autonomous units. In Andzhariia, for instance, a "counter-revolutionary insurgent" group, headed by the former chairman of the Central Executive Committee and ten other leaders, including the Georgian Commissar for Light Industry, were tried and for the most part executed in late September 1937.<sup>20</sup> A similar trial of Abkhazskian leaders, including once more a former chairman of

the Central Executive Committee and twelve similarly highly placed accomplices, began exactly a month later.<sup>21</sup> The central Tbilisi paper, *Zaria vostoĳa*, maintained throughout the fall months a high pressure campaign against numberless nationalist deviators, attacking Party organizations and various local papers for their "liberalism" towards alleged offenders. A surprisingly large number of "nationalist" wreckers were uncovered among the agricultural personnel of the Caucasian republics (including MTS directors, sovhoz and kolhoz heads, technical staffs, etc.), indicating the particularly serious deficiencies in that area of "socialist construction."<sup>22</sup>

The public trials lasted somewhat later in the year than in Byelorussia, and, despite increasing emphasis on the forthcoming elections, they continued to attract much attention. Mass arrests were climaxed by the announcement in December of the execution of Enukidze, Sheboldaev, and other well-known leaders.<sup>23</sup>

As was the case in Byelorussia, the most effective and telling blows were telescoped into a short period of time. While the Yezhov period of large-scale arrests included both 1937 and 1938, the most intensive schedule of NKVD operations against the Caucasian "nationalist deviators" can be pinned down to the months of August, September, and October of 1937. During this interval the "black ravens" of the NKVD carted away many thousands of Caucasian residents. According to an eyewitness report, the mass arrests commenced by a sinister round-up of suspects, fixed for the night of July 31–August 1. The eyewitness, a former Communist, arrested himself for alleged "bourgeois nationalism," claims that on this one night alone there were some 80,000 arrests throughout the Caucasus.<sup>24</sup>

This technique of a sudden, quick blow is of utmost importance, as it has been a characteristic feature of Soviet secret police operations. In such mass operations the object is not to get rid of a few individuals or potentially dangerous groups. It is to eliminate any basis for the potential activities of either. Thus entire villages and communities can be marked off for elimination or deportation. For the sake of efficiency, and probably also for the sake of forestalling possible resistance, such blows are struck quickly and quietly.

The story of the purge of the Chechen-Ingush is particularly

characteristic.<sup>25</sup> The Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, situated to the northeast of the Caucasian Range on the Caspian Sea, numbered in 1937 a little over half a million people.<sup>26</sup> The population had a long history of active resistance to Soviet authority, and during the 1933-1935 purge a member of local leaders had been tried and sentenced for a "nationalist conspiracy." The NKVD thus had ample reason to believe that the area was potentially, if not actively, disloyal to the Soviet Union, and that the operations of local "enemies of the people" were being supported by the community as a whole. The elimination of such enemies, therefore, had to be also accompanied by a thorough purge of the population. This was scheduled for the fateful night of July 31-August 1, during which long lines of NKVD trucks moved out of the Chechen-Ingush capital, Groznyi, and branched out through the little republic. By next morning, it is estimated by an eyewitness, some 14,000 Chechen-Ingush citizens were in custody and concentrated in various makeshift prisons in the capital (apart from the habitual NKVD prisons, the central garage of the City Oil Trust, the Stalin Club and the local militia house were utilized). Immediate disposition of the cases was begun by special tribunals of the NKVD, with a considerable number of the prisoners being sentenced to death and summarily executed in the local NKVD death chambers.

Resistance increased, and cases of sabotage were said to have occurred. The inability of the Chechen-Ingush leadership to cope with such conditions led the central Party and government organs to the belief that it was abetting, if not actually aiding, "nationalist" activities. *Pravda* accordingly published a scathing account of the conditions in Chechen-Ingush, entitled "Bourgeois-nationalist centre of intrigues in Chechen-Ingush," which explicitly admitted the fact of terrorist operations in many districts of the region.<sup>27</sup> The blame was laid at the feet of the local Party and Republican leaders for, in the word of the article, ". . . it is known that most penetrated by hostile elements are those districts which were led directly by the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Gorchkhanov, the second Secretary of the Regional Party Committee, Bakhaev, the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Section,

Okuev." The cry was quickly picked up by the Caucasian Party organizations and newspapers which, like the *Groznyi rabochii*, the official organ of the Regional Party Committee, were said to have "received many signals about the subversive work of the bourgeois nationalists [in Chechen-Ingush] and their high protectors—the secretary of the Regional Party Committee, Bakhaev, the chairman of the Executive Committee, Gorchkhanov, the former manager of the Regional ORPO Committee, Kurkiev, the head of the propagit section, Okuev, and others."<sup>28</sup>

At this stage Moscow decided to strike the final blow, and promptly dispatched the customary "hatchet-man" to take personal charge of the purge. A Politburo candidate member and deputy to Yezhov himself, Shkiriatorov, arrived in Groznyi in early October and immediately called a meeting of the Plenum of the Party Central Committee. It was also attended by responsible Republican, city, and district leaders and officials, and met on October 7 in the Lenin House of Culture. Shkiriatorov revealed the existence of the "conspiracy" and briskly ordered the arrest of all Chechen-Ingush present at the meeting.

Their names read like a Chechen-Ingush "Who's Who" and included, among many others and apart from those previously mentioned in the press attacks, the Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee, several section heads of the Party Central Committee, the majority of the People's Commissars, the Republican Gosplan chairman, a number of writers, etc. The arrests quickly spread to include the heads of the Chechen-Ingush administrative districts, the only NKVD district head of Chechen-Ingush nationality, as well as native Chechen-Ingush who "had made good" in the neighboring republics: Tokaev, member of the Azerbaidzhan Central Committee; Oshaev, director of the North Caucasian Pedagogical Institute; as well as the informant from whose memoirs much of the information given here is drawn.<sup>29</sup>

All in all 137 leading Chechen-Ingush were charged by the NKVD with having formed a "bourgeois nationalist" center, which plotted the creation of a North Caucasian Federal Republic as a Turkish and English protectorate. A number of them died while "under investigation," and the remainder were tried publicly in late 1938. The leaders, including Gorchkhanov and his deputy

Salamov, were sentenced to death, while the remainder received terms of imprisonment ranging from seven to twenty-five years. Chechen-Ingush "nationalist deviation" was thus rooted out.

A succession of such swift and sweeping blows accounted for a majority of the national leaders in the Soviet Union. But what is even more significant, the purge also attempted to knock out any possible foundations for a reappearance of "bourgeois nationalism" and, therefore, concentrated on the nationality intelligentsia, the growing professional and administrative groups.<sup>30</sup> The total number of the arrested, imprisoned, or executed will probably never be known, and is certainly most difficult to estimate. Various sources differ greatly, and Russian *émigré* accounts are merely general estimates without factual evidence. A. Uralov (Ouralov in French transliteration) suggests the figure 422,000 for the number purged or arrested during 1937-1938 in the Caucasus. He submits the following approximations:

	<i>Number purged</i>	<i>Population</i>
Azerbaidzhan	120,000	3,200,000
Armenia	52,000	1,280,000
Georgia	130,000	3,540,000
North Caucasus	120,000	3,000,000 <sup>31</sup>

This would amount to about 4 per cent of the total population. No similar estimates are available for Byelorussia, but judging from the testimony of former Soviet citizens as well as from the frequency of the trials, the total must be equally impressive. As in other parts of the Soviet Union, the purge and the mass terror began to recede by the middle of 1938, and increasing efforts were being made by the regime to obliterate some of the more grievous scars left by this period of uninhibited violence.



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## Notes

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### INTRODUCTION

1. For a discussion of the interaction between physical necessity and a priori construed ideological programs, see Barrington Moore's *Soviet Politics — The Dilemma of Power* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950).

2. Emil Lederer, *State of the Masses* (New York, 1940), p. 18.

3. Mussolini, in his own post-mortem on the collapse of his power, bewails early Fascist toleration of the monarchy and paints a grim picture of the monarchy's duplicity: "Fascism must pay for the generous and romantic error it made in October 1922, when instead of making a clean, *totalitarian* sweep of old institutions, it tried a compromise solution which the experience of history has shown to be a precarious compromise. The Fascist Revolution stopped short of the throne. At the time this course seemed inevitable. As things have turned out, the Crown has expiated with its fall the dagger it stuck in the back of the Fascist regime and the unpardonable crime it perpetrated upon the nation" (*The Fall of Mussolini: His Own Story by Benito Mussolini*, ed. by Max Ascoli, New York, 1948, italics mine). Mussolini, of course, is prone to exaggerate somewhat the role of the monarchy in order to rationalize the relative swiftness of the collapse of the Fascist rule, and of his own fall from power. For a discussion of the relationship between Fascism and the Catholic Church, see Daniel Binchy's *The Church and State in Fascist Italy* (New York, 1941). The organization of the Balilla, for example, was impeded by the Catholic Youth Movement. Ciano's diary contains the following revealing entry: "The Duce promises himself he will talk to Ribbentrop about the fight against Catholicism. 'It is useless and idiotic,' he said to me, 'and it makes the Axis unpopular with the Catholic Italian masses'" (Entry for October 27, 1938, *Ciano's Diary, 1937-1938*, ed. by A. Mayor, London, 1952, p. 185).

4. This raises an interesting issue over which regrettably we cannot linger: to what extent, without weakening the concept, can Fascist Italy be considered a true totalitarianism, and not merely a state controlled by a totalitarian movement? It would seem that a clearer distinction is desirable between states such as Fascist Italy or Argentina, which are controlled by totalitarian movements, and states which have become totalitarian themselves, such as Soviet Russia.

5. Waldemar Gurian, "Totalitarian Religion," *The Review of Politics*, vol. 14, no. 1 (January 1952), p. 4.

6. "The consensus of observers is that character changes have taken place in the Soviet citizenry since the Revolution. In contrast to persons who

emigrated before or immediately after the Revolution, the recent Soviet émigrés are more overtly disciplined and less spontaneous. They are more practical and less contemplative; more concerned with results and less with the means whereby they are gained. They are more manipulative and better extemporizers . . . They exhibit, in short, the 'reflex of purpose' which Pavlov found lacking in the Russians . . . Regardless of their origin, these are traits that enable a man to live and operate more effectively in a modern industrialized society and particularly in a tightly controlled system such as the Soviet one" (Raymond Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology*, Cambridge, Mass., 1952, pp. 181-182). Some of these changes are, of course, induced not only by the premeditated efforts of the regime but also by the rapidly changing environment.

7. An example of these was the scheme of the *agroroda*, later modified into a policy of amalgamation of the collective farms.

8. Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology*, p. 177.

9. Testimony of former Soviet citizens will be acknowledged in the notes merely by the person's chronological number given him by the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, and by the page number. All interviews are from the A Schedule.

## 1. THE PURGE AND THE TOTALITARIAN SYSTEM

1. For a discussion of "the law of anticipated reaction," see C. J. Friedrich's *Constitutional Government and Democracy* (revised ed.; Boston, 1950), pp. 48, 398.

2. A striking illustration of this is afforded by Speer's experience as the wartime economic boss of Nazi Germany. Although convinced in the later stages of the conflict that Germany could not win the war, he did not dare to shake Hitler's firm conviction in Nazi invincibility, as such an attempt would have resulted in his fall from grace and replacement by some other yes-man. The dictator, by creating this necessity for suppression of reality, actually contributed to his own isolation and to the continued maintenance of a state of artificiality (*American Military Tribunal, Case II*, pp. 580, 1172; *International Military Tribunal, Defence for Albert Speer*, vols. 2, 3).

3. Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, March 31 and April 1, 1949 (Washington, D.C.), pp. 69, 74, 81 (exhibits 9, 13, 20). Exhibit 9, for instance (marked, as all others, "Secret"), dated December 30, 1946 (L.P. 0713/II), and signed by General Spychalski (since purged for nationalist deviationism), contains the following: "The method of the thematic treatment of the problems touched upon in your reports shows that you are falling under the influence of your environment, losing to a considerable extent the feeling of objectivity in the realistic evaluation of the situation and intentions of American policy. It would be, from all points of view, a desirable thing that you analyze events, getting at their source, rationally, critically and free from the thinking habits of the big-capitalist world. Then your material will give a true insight into problems of interest to us."

4. The former Soviet code clerk in the Ottawa legation, Igor Guzenko, testified before the Royal Commission appointed to investigate Soviet espionage in Canada that Soviet intelligence worked through five separate organs: the foreign service, the commercial service, the military, the NKVD, the Party. Their reports were sent home independently of one another (*The Report of the Royal Commission*, Ottawa, 1946).

5. H. R. Trevor-Roper claims that Hitler decided to commit suicide when he found out that the S.S. could no longer be trusted (*The Last Days of Hitler*, London, 1947, p. 116). It is also noteworthy that casual visitors to a totalitarian state are inclined to be easily misled by the apparent unanimity and stability of the system.

6. "The International Significance of Historical Experience of the Bolshevik Party," *Bolshevik*, no. 17 (September 15, 1948).

7. Karl Radek, speaking to the Seventeenth Party Congress, *XVII S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b)*, Stenographic Report, *Partizdat* (Moscow, 1934), p. 628. Mr. Radek himself faced a purge trial in January 1937.

8. A. L. Bullock tells how the NSDAP was literally swamped with applications for membership after Hitler's seizure of power (*Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, London, 1952, p. 253).

9. J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Moscow, 1940), p. 347, quoting from Lenin's *Collected Works*, vol. 27, p. 260.

10. For a discussion of the nature of modern dictatorship, see Sigmund Neumann's brilliant *Permanent Revolution* (New York, 1942), ch. 1, "Modern Dictatorship Defined," where Mr. Neumann maintains that in internal affairs: "The claim to power is based upon the necessary destruction of the nation's or the classes' arch enemy; and when power is won, the *permanent revolution*—even if renounced in foreign affairs, at least at times, for tactical reasons—has to go on in internal politics. Opposition groups have to be seized, the party has to be regularly purged, trials and expulsions have to take place. All this means stamina to a dictatorship, and even the most peaceful work of daily life must show the touch of warlike activity. There are a thousand battles going on; the battle of grain, the battle for raw materials, the fight for joy after work, the battle of the birth rate . . . It is the 'permanent revolution' in foreign affairs and in internal politics that makes possible the strange mixture of dictatorship's promise of stability and at the same time the belief in revolutionary action. Victorious dynamics become the only security of a war society."

11. The constant shifting of Party personnel in the Soviet Union (attempted also on a somewhat smaller scale in Fascist Italy) is part of that process of prevention.

12. O. Utis develops the theory of a conscious oscillation between relaxation and oppression as a technique of Stalin's government ("Generalissimo Stalin and the Art of Government," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1952, pp. 197-215).

13. The satellite purges seem to substantiate this theory. Allowing for the

two extraneous factors involved, namely the presence of Soviet control and the problem of Titoism, it is generally recognized that in all the captive nations the period of *relative* restraint ended abruptly when consolidation of power was completed and the programmatic plans of the regimes were launched. The element of undivided leadership is here provided externally; and internally the growing stability of the regimes is accompanied by increasingly intense purges. Ideological purity is stressed ever more vehemently, and the numbers of alleged deviants include followers who once appeared most orthodox (e.g. Slansky, Pauker, Rajk, etc.). This phenomenon has been particularly true of countries with well-established communist parties.

14. F. Beck and W. Godin recount on the basis of personal experience the story of a *seksot* (special agent of the secret police recruited from among the population) who, under gradual pressure, was forced to denounce his friends for completely imaginary offenses. "The tragedy was the NKVD's complete lack of interest in the truth. It wanted reports about actions, without caring in the least whether such reports corresponded with the facts." The seksot was, therefore, ordered to "interpret" his own reports and make due deductions from them. "The outcome was that the borderline between fact and fiction grew hazier and hazier, and the real was increasingly displaced by the potential. From this point it was but a step to outright invention and lies" (*Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession*, New York, 1951, pp. 200-209).

15. A. Mavrin describes the fate of the chief of staff of the Far Eastern Army, General Sangursky, who was arrested during the military purge of 1937. Following his arrest, the general is said to have implicated literally hundreds of officers—supplying all the details of their alleged conspiracy. When the reaction of 1938 (see Chapter 7) came, Sangursky repudiated his confession, claiming that dissident elements within the secret police intended it to weaken the army ("The Case of Corps Commander Sangursky," *Na rubezhe*, Paris, March 1952, p. 27).

16. This feature of mass participation in the purge, be it inspired by fear, ambition, or enthusiasm, makes the totalitarian citizen an accomplice of the regime in the process of mass purging. He is forced to participate personally in an operation which establishes joint responsibility with the regime for everything that transpired. Individual self-respect is difficult to maintain when a man has to denounce his closest friends and associates, and even sometimes his own family. The mass purge forces the totalitarian citizen to become either a participant or a victim. And few would consciously choose to become a victim. (For a discussion of the Soviet emphasis on mass participation in the purge, see Chapter 3.)

17. It is still too early to judge to what extent the elimination of Beria represents a successful transition of power.

18. Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (London, 1949); Boris Souvarine, *Stalin* (London, 1940); Nikolaus Basseches, *Stalin* (New York, 1952).

19. The following testimony of two former Soviet officials should be sufficient to illustrate this point.

"The Secretary of the Oblast Party Committee, Kabakov, who had a lot of authority, once accidentally came to my apartment while he was visiting some workers' quarters. It was in 1932. I was not at home, but my mother was there and she told him that I had gone to a rest cure as I had become sick through overwork, and my mother told Kabakov that I had to go at my own expense. He called the management of the Trust and when I returned they paid all my expenses. In 1937 when they started the purge they removed him as an enemy of the people and someone remembered the fact that a few years back Kabakov came personally to see me at my apartment and personally gave me protection, and I was accused of boot-licking Kabakov. This accusation was made although I never saw him in my life and I never even wrote him" (Harvard Project, no. 470, p. 28).

"There was a purge at that time, a Party purge, and although I was not a member of the Party I was affected . . . Rykov and Bukharin were shot. The first assistant of Rykov called me. He told me that I had been accused of harmful activity. He asked me, why had Bukharin recommended me, and I told him that Bukharin worked in the Commissariat of Heavy Industry and that he was there the head of the department of propaganda and agitation. I had friends in the Institute of Norms and Standards who knew him and through them I got the job. He told me that Bukharin was an enemy of the people and asked me what Bukharin told me. I told him that he told me how you should work with the masses and he answered that he understood and that he thought I was dangerous. I asked him why and he said because I got the job from Bukharin and also he asked me why I was so friendly with Rykov, why did I go to his house, why did I go on trips with him. I told him that Rykov often asked me to accompany him on inspection trips for certain construction work. Then he gave me a statement saying that I should be removed from work" (Harvard Project, no. 381, p. 5).

## 2. THE PURGE AS A TECHNIQUE OF TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENT

1. "The talk of second revolution led by the Brown Shirts did not subside, and ominous rumblings were discernible in the general murmur . . . Hitler decided to get rid of his 'Mountain.' The result was the massacre of June 30, 1934, comparable to the events of St. Bartholomew night in 1572. State authority had bloodily reasserted its rights: the second revolution was dead" (Franz Neumann, *Behemoth*, New York, 1944, p. 63). An account of the Roehm plot is to be found in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, United States Government (Washington, 1946), vol. 5, pp. 456ff.

2. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Modern Totalitarianism* (New York, 1950), p. 400.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

4. Deutscher, *Stalin*, pp. 378–388. Stalin himself supplies an interesting example of his logic in the following passage: “A victory of the Right deviation in our party would mean an enormous accession of strength to the capitalist elements in our country. And what does an accession of strength to the capitalist elements in our country mean? It means weakening the proletarian dictatorship and multiplying the chances of the restoration of capitalism. Hence a victory of the Right deviation in our Party would add to the conditions necessary for the restoration of capitalism in our country” (Speech of October 19, 1928, *Leninism*, p. 231).

5. *Ibid.*

6. George Orwell describes the “hate week,” with special hymns of “a savage, barking rhythm,” being written for the occasion. “Roared out by hundreds of voices to the tramp of marching feet, it was terrifying” (1984, New York, 1952, p. 113).

7. Since writing the above, I have become acquainted with a similar point of view, advanced by Henry V. Dicks. “Another factor favouring acceptance of an authority, sterner than any that Western people could readily conceive, is that authority-holders at intermediate levels are frequently and publicly degraded and punished. This introduces a sort of egalitarian justice, making people feel that there is only one supreme power which is capable of visiting sanctions on great and small alike, hence that all people are really helpless children together before that mighty inscrutable power, and none may presume on his privileges or be proud without getting into trouble . . . The pleasurable sense of identification with the supreme power is heightened when some incompetent or obnoxious immediate authority figure (such as an officious, stupid factory manager) is punished. Then the people will applaud what has been done and experience a sense of vicarious satisfaction of their own secret wishes” (“Observations of Contemporary Russian Behaviour,” *Human Relations*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1952, pp. 127–128).

8. “Talks on the Charter of the CPSU(B),” *Pravda* (September 14, 1946), p. 2.

### 3. THE SOVIET CONCEPT OF THE PURGE

1. See E. Yaroslavsky, *Bolshevik Verification and Purging of the Party Rank*s (Moscow, 1933), pp. 48–55.

2. V. I. Lenin, “Revolutionary Army and Revolutionary Government” (1905), *Selected Works* (New York, 1943), vol. 3, p. 313.

3. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 81, quoting from Lenin’s *Selected Works*, vol. 10, p. 204.

4. Yaroslavsky, *Bolshevik Verification*, pp. 11–12.

5. *Leninism*, p. 81.

6. Lenin’s address to the combined session of the All-Russian Central

Executive Committee and the Moscow Soviet, April 4, 1918, quoted in Yaroslavsky, *Bolshevik Verification*, p. 13.

7. *Pravda*, October 19, 1918, p. 1.

8. *Pravda*, November 4, 1918, p. 4.

9. Stalin, *Leninism*, pp. 82-83, from a lecture Stalin delivered at the Sverdlov University in the beginning of April 1924. Yaroslavsky develops this further by stating that "it was Lenin and his Party who carried out the teachings of Marx and Engels in the program, organization, strategy and tactics of the proletarian Party and on the basis of these teachings they founded a militant, fighting party. Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, the Party is unswervingly carrying this revolutionary line into practice. It makes demands on those it calls its members such as no other party in the world makes." From this Yaroslavsky draws his far-reaching conclusion that "a systematic, periodical purging of its ranks is one of the conditions of its existence" (*Bolshevik Verification*, p. 8).

10. P. Pospelov, "The Party of Bolsheviks in the Struggle Against the Foes of Socialism," *Pravda*, November 8, 1937, p. 3. Stalin, answering opposition complaints (voiced by Preobrazhensky) at the Thirteenth Party Congress that the Secretary General was stifling all opposition, said: "Comrade Preobrazhensky believes that the purging is a weapon of the majority of the Party against the opposition and, apparently, does not approve of the methods of the purging. This is a question of principle. It is a profound error on the part of Comrade Preobrazhensky that he fails to understand that without periodic purgings of wavering elements the Party cannot become stronger." Giving an insight into things to come, Stalin added: "I believe that sometimes, from time to time, the master must without fail go through the ranks of the Party with a broom in his hands" (*XIII S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii [bol'shevikov]*, Stenographic Report, Moscow, 1924, pp. 244-245). Also, in attacking the Trotskyites before the Sixteenth Party Congress, Stalin stated that continued toleration of the Trotsky faction within the Party would constitute a violation of the Party discipline and unity, and would reduce the Party to the status of a political party in a bourgeois democratic state. Such factionalism, he said, cannot hide under the slogan of "intra-Party democracy," and for this reason "it was necessary first of all to finish with the remainders of Trotskyism in the Party . . ." (*XVI S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b)*, Stenographic Report, Moscow, 1931, pp. 51-52).

11. E. Fainberg, "For a Fighting Political Education of Young Bolsheviks," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 20 (October 1936), p. 19.

12. L. Kaganovich, "On the Party Purge" (Speech before the Moscow City Party *aktiv*, May 22, 1933), *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo* (June 1933), pp. iff.

13. Deutscher, *Stalin*, pp. 233-234.

14. To carry this analogy further: the hunters go home after the hunt is over. But the secret police, if not satisfied with the number of slain "foxes," may turn and hunt down the flushers.

15. It seems to the writer that the Russian term *samoķritika* would be rendered more accurately, considering the context in which it is normally used, by self-critique, instead of the usual self-criticism. The Russian word *ķrititsizm* means a certain sense of discrimination in values with respect to others and one's self. *ķritika* connotes the mechanism. Thus there are doubtless many people in the Soviet Union with a highly developed sense of criticism who never engage in self-critique; while many others do participate in it because of outside pressures, without any inner intellectual promptings. From the regime's point of view, it is the technique which is important and useful, and not the stimulation of a critical sense among the Soviet people.

16. Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 197, quoting from *Politichesķii Slovar* (Moscow, 1940).

17. Self-critique is thus doubly important. In the words of Alex Inkeles, it serves "for the release of tension and the direction of aggressive tendencies . . . The institution of self-criticism provides a channel for the expression of popular feelings that is not only relatively harmless to the existing social system but is actually designed and operated to support it" (*Public Opinion in Soviet Russia*, pp. 217-218). It is the provider of a steady flow of information on current performance, efficiency, and the sources of most acute complaint and dissatisfaction. Self-critique thus helps the regime to overcome the isolation (produced by coerced mass enthusiasm and unanimity) in which totalitarian leadership inevitably finds itself, and, more than that, it allows the leadership to launch ambitious projects while simultaneously dissociating itself from their excesses.

18. Yaroslavsky, *Bolshevik Verification*, p. 43.

19. Editorial, "Bolshevik Self-Critique—the Basis of Party Existence," *Pravda*, February 8, 1937, p. 1.

20. Another aspect of self-critique, not central to the mainstream of this study, is its role in the general totalitarian rejection of the present. Totalitarianism must always strive towards new goals, and self-critique is useful in emphasizing that the *status quo*, despite tremendous progress made, is not yet utopia.

21. "Propaganda and violence are never contradictions. Use of violence can be part of the propaganda" (Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Modern Totalitarianism*, New York, 1949, p. 333, quoting from Eugen Hadamovsky, Nazi spokesman, *Propaganda und nationale Macht*, 1933).

22. For example, "In Baku after the meeting a great demonstration took place. Over 150,000 workers of the city came out on the streets to acclaim the verdict of the High Tribunal" (*Pravda*, February 2, 1937, p. 2).

23. *Pravda*, January 31, 1937, p. 1.

24. *Pravda*, June 12, 1937, pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were devoted to the various resolutions passed approving the executions. The following issues were likewise largely devoted to discussions of the conspiracy. An interesting parallel to this is provided by the Beria affair. After the announcement of his "unmasking" on July 10, 1953, all the Moscow newspapers for the next four

days devoted all of page 2 to accounts of various meetings in factories, collective farms, offices, etc., throughout the country. Resolutions denouncing the "snake bourgeois degenerate" Beria were passed and duly cited in the press. The same occurred in the provinces, after the demissions of Bagirov and Bakradze (e.g., *Babinskii rabochii*, July 19, 1953, p. 1).

25. For example, A. Vishinsky, *Some Methods of the Wrecking Diversionist Work of the Trotskyite-Fascist Espionage*; A. Zakovsky, *On Some Methods and Activities of Foreign Intelligence Organs and their Trotskyite-Bukharinite Agents*; S. Uranov, *On Some Subversive Activities of the Recruiting Work of Foreign Intelligence*; A. Khamadan, *Japanese Espionage*. This little library for a well-informed Soviet citizen, published by *Partizdat* of the CPSU(b), was recommended to its readers in an article entitled "What to Read," by *Zaria vostoka*, a Tiflis daily, on August 9, 1937. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 15 (August 1, 1937), apart from recommending the above, also reviews favorably a book by M. Raginsky, *The Anti-Soviet Right-Trotskyite Bloc*. No background information on any of the authors was supplied. It is known, however, that Mr. Zakovsky served as a high NKVD official on the interrogations in preparation for the major trials. He later shared the fate of his victims.

26. "Fascist-Trotskyite-Bukharinite Espionage," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 15 (August 1, 1937), p. 56.

27. See *Sudebnyi Otchet po Delu Trotskistskogo-Zinovievskogo Terroristskogo Tsentra* (Moscow, 1936); *Sudebnyi Otchet po Delu Anti-Sovietskogo Trotskistskogo Tsentra* (Moscow, 1937); *Sudebnyi Otchet po Delu Anti-Sovietskogo i Provo-Trotskistskogo Bloka* (Moscow, 1938). For a partial refutation see *Not Guilty*, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made against Leo Trotsky in the Moscow Trials (New York, 1938).

28. For example, *Zaria vostoka* (Tbilisi), October 29, 1937, reported the trial of a diversionist insurgent group in the Abkhazakian ASSR; *Rabochii* (Minsk), August 8, 1937, reported that the former chairman of the city Executive Committee was an enemy of the people who prevented improvements in the housing conditions; *Sovetskaia Byelorussia*, October 12, 1937, reported the trial of a number of veterinarians on charges of sabotaging the livestock.

29. Anton Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma* (London, 1940), p. 153.

30. For example, Gustaw Herling speaks of a new arrival in the labor camp, by the name of Gorcev. "Whenever he opened his mouth as the prisoners sat around the fire in the forest, it was to pronounce short, violent harangues against 'the enemies of the people' imprisoned in the camps, defending the action of the Party and the Government in placing them out of harm's way." For men like Gorcev, the author feels "the fact that their period of seclusion and meditation has to be spent in hell does not prove anything . . . or rather it proves only that hell really does exist, and woe to those who suffer expulsion from paradise for sins against the doctrines

of the Almighty," which is the Party. It later turned out that Gorcev was a former examining judge from Kharkov, notorious for his brutality. He was killed by his fellow-inmates: the NKVD guards did not interfere (*A World Apart*, New York, 1952, pp. 45-50).

31. Zbigniew Stypulkowski, in *Invitation to Moscow* (New York, 1950), supplies a firsthand account of Soviet interrogation methods, ranging from threats to deals with the prisoners. N. Leites and E. Bernaut, in their *Ritual of Liquidation* (Free Press, 1954), provide a thoroughly documented analysis of the relationships between the Communist modes of thinking (e.g., translation of prediction into preference) and some of the confessions extracted at the major purge trials.

#### 4. THE EXPANSION AND EVOLUTION OF THE STALINIST PURGE, 1930-1936

1. Yaroslavsky, *Bolshevik Verification*, p. 65. Somewhat varying figures are to be found in "Questions of Membership in the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)," *Partiinaiia zhizn*, no. 20 (October 1947), p. 75: the 1921 Party membership is put at 732,521, and the total expelled at 170,000.

2. An account of the revolt is to be found in Robert V. Daniels, "The Kronstadt Revolt of 1921: A study in the Dynamics of Revolution," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 10 (December 1951).

3. Lenin, "Left-wing" Communism: an Infantile Disorder (London, 1920), p. 30.

4. See R. V. Daniels, "The Soviet Succession: Lenin and Stalin," *The Russian Review* (July 1953), pp. 153-172. For a highly colored account, see Leon Trotsky, *Stalin* (2nd ed.; New York, 1946).

5. The first registration of Party membership was carried out in the spring of 1919. The Eighth Party Congress ordered Party membership to be registered throughout the country.

6. Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 237.

7. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 237.

8. Souvarine, *Stalin*, p. 492. This seems to be corroborated by Ordzhonikidze, who stated that between the Fourteenth Party Congress and February 1, 1928, some 5,755 Trotskyites were "brought to responsibility" by Party Control Commissions (*XVI S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 323).

9. Yaroslavsky, *Kak provodit chistku partii* (Moscow, 1929), p. 136.

10. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, no. 52/53 (Paris, 1936), p. 6.

11. The resolution announcing the purge emphasized that one of its chief objectives will be a rectification of the social composition of the Party, which still was weighted against the industrial proletariat. Little open mention was made of the opposition elements. (*VKP(b) v Rezoliutsiakh i Resheniakh S'ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK (1898-1932)*, II (Moscow, 1933), pp. 562-570.

12. *Izvestia*, August 10, 1930. The total 30 per cent is interesting, as it represents about the total of former Tsarist civil servants still in the Soviet

bureaucracy by the late twenties (Yaroslavsky, *Kak provodit chistku partii*, p. 49). The unreliable elements, however, were not only present among the pre-Tsarist officials. Ordzhonikidze, reporting plaintively to the Sixteenth Party Congress, had to admit that even some Party members employed in missions abroad could not resist the enticements of capitalism and had absconded, frequently with official funds. He cited the cases of several ex-Communists who established themselves abroad in independent businesses, financed by these "confiscated" funds. The total number of officials who deserted in 1926 was 38; in 1927, 26; in 1928, 32; in 1929, 65; first half of 1930, 43 (*XVI S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 315). By the time of the Sixteenth Congress (June 1930), the impact of the purge on various Commissariats was as follows: USSR Commissariat of Finance, 12.6 per cent of the staff purged; RSFSR Commissariat of Finance, 15.7 per cent; USSR Commissariat of Communication, 33 per cent; Supreme Soviet of National Economy of RSFSR, 26.9 per cent; RSFSR Commissariat of Agriculture, 60.3 per cent; RSFSR Commissariat of Trade, 43 per cent; RSFSR Commissariat of Enlightenment, 30.5 per cent (*ibid.*, pp. 316-317). Characteristically, the purge was most extensive in the more exposed and critical areas, e.g., agriculture.

13. "Questions of Membership in the All-Union Communist Party (B)," *Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 20 (October 1947), pp. 78-79.

14. Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, pp. 278-279.

15. This continuing purge resulted in the expulsion of 81,000 Party members in 1930, and 64,000 in 1931 (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 9, May 1932, p. 49).

16. *XVII S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b)*, Stenograficheskie otchet, Partizdat (Moscow, 1934), pp. 27-28.

17. Resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B), January 12, 1933, "On the Purge of the Party"; *VKP(b) v Rezoliutsiakh i Resheniakh S'ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK (1898-1939)* (6th ed.; Moscow, 1941), vol. 2, p. 523. See also *Pravda*, December 11, 1932; and *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 23-24 (December 1932), p. 77, "Decree of the CC CPSU(B) of December 10, 1932," ordering the purge.

18. In 1933 the Party had 2,203,951 members and 1,351,387 candidates, or a total of 3,555,338. In 1934 the Party had 1,826,756 members and 874,252 candidates, or a total of 2,701,008 ("Questions of Membership in the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)," *Partiinaia zhizn'*, no. 20, October 1947, p. 80).

19. Yaroslavsky, *Bolshevik Verification*, p. 37.

20. *Izvestia*, April 29, 1933, p. 1. Other members of the Commission were Yaroslavsky, Shkiriakov, Stasova, and Piatnitsky. A hierarchy of purging commissions, extending down to the direct level, was to be established by the Central Commission.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Yaroslavsky, *Bolshevik Verification*, pp. 58-59.

23. S. Trapenznikov states that serious mistakes were made by overeager

Party officials and that the "mistakes of the various Party organizations were exploited by the class enemies and their agents who, through their provocations and disorganizing activities, attempted to lead the agricultural movement away from the proper course . . ." (*Borba Partii Bol'shevikov za Kollektivizatsiiu Sel'skogo Khoziaistva*, Moscow, 1951, p. 110). The writer goes on to cite numerous abuses and cases of mass coercion. As a consequence the leadership of a number of Party organizations was "renewed."

24. F. Rizel' states that between the Fifteenth Party Congress and 1930, some 600,000 workers, or 77 per cent of all new admissions, entered the Party. The expulsions from the Party during the same period accounted for 7.1 per cent of the workers and 15.1 per cent of the peasants ("Growth of the Party in the Last Two Years," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 10, May 1930, pp. 8ff.). By June of 1930 workers in production accounted for 48.6 per cent of the Party, as contrasted with 40.6 per cent at the Fifteenth Party Congress (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 11-12, June 1930, p. 14). During 1930, workers accounted for some 450,000 of the 650,000 new members admitted into the Party (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 7, April 1931, pp. 68-69, Decree of the CC of the CPSU(B) of March 6, 1931, "On the Growth of the Party").

25. Ruduzutak reported that 23 per cent of those purged were of peasant origin (*XVII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 287).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

27. *Izvestia*, June 9, 1934. The provision calls not only for punitive measures against those members of the family who assisted in the flight, but also against those "who lived with him or were dependent on him at the time when the crime was committed."

28. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1934.

29. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1934.

30. A series of trials decimated the ranks of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian intellectuals. The most frequent charge was national chauvinism and plotting a struggle for independence. See, for example, the SVU (*Spilka Vyzvolennia Ukraïny*) trial of 45 Ukrainian intellectuals in March of 1930. V. I. Sedura published a list of important Byelorussian literary figures who perished during this period of suppression ("Belorusskaia kultura i totalitarizm," *Materialy Konferentsii Instituta po izucheniiu istorii i kultury SSR, sostoiavsheitsia v N'iu Iorke SShA 20-22 marta, 1953*, Munich, 1953, p. 109). Another list is to be found in S. Krushinsky, *Byelorussian Communism and Nationalism: Personal Recollections*, Research Program on the USSR (New York, 1953), no. 34, pp. 26-27.

31. *Pravda*, January 19, 1936, p. 3.

32. During 1933, 237 district Party secretaries and 279 district executive committee chairmen were purged (*Pravda*, November 24, 1933, speech by the new Party secretary, Postyshev). The total number of districts was 525 (*Sotsialistichna Ukraïna, statistichnii zbirnik*, p. 103). Ukrainian sources claim that the Party membership in the Ukraine during that period declined

from about 600,000 to only 300,000 (BEO, "From Life in Soviet Ukraine," *Kultura*, Paris, no. 11/61, 1952, p. 106).

33. A. Baltin, "Some Results of the Purge of the C.P. (B) of Byelorussia," *Revolutsiia i Natsional'nosti* (March 1934), p. 18.

34. In Azerbaidzhan, for instance, all Party district secretaries were relieved of their duties during 1931 (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 16, August 1932, p. 51).

35. See *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 7 (April 1935), p. 47 on the setting up of cadres departments on the city level: resolution of the Central Committee of March 27, 1935.

36. "Resolution of the C.C. CPSU(B) on the Screening of Party Documents," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 13 (July 1935), p. 46.

37. "The Goals of the Screening of Party Documents" (editorial), *ibid.*, no. 17 (October 1935), p. 3.

38. "The Screening of Party Documents" (editorial), *ibid.*, no. 15 (August 1935), p. 1.

39. "Results of the Screening of Party Documents," *Sovetskaiia Sibir*, December 17, 1935, p. 3.

40. The Donets region Party organization did not account for 14,584 Party cards, Uzbekistan for 3,542, Armenia for 3,517, Central Aisa for 13,000; the Gorky organization found that it had 1,000 more members than it thought it had, etc. (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 1-2, January 1935, p. 37; *ibid.*, no. 10, May 1936, pp. 28-32; *Bolshevik*, no. 3, February 15, 1935, p. 23).

41. "Goals of the Screening of Party Documents," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 17 (October 1935), p. 4.

42. I. Rumiantsev, "The Second Screening of Party Documents," *ibid.*, p. 17.

43. Harvard Project, no. 126, p. 7.

44. Harvard Project, no. 188, p. 20; no. 474, p. 6; no. 147, p. 3; no. 318, etc. In an interesting, but admittedly not representative, statistical analysis, based on interviews with 2,725 Soviet respondents, we find that reported arrests of various members of their families totaled 447 people during the years 1931-1935. One hundred and sixty-one respondents were themselves arrested. Many of these people, however, were involved in the general upheaval of the collectivization, not directly in the purge. On the other hand, the total of 161 personal arrests may be lower than average, in view of the fact that many prisoners are not allowed to return to their former domiciles, but are resettled in the northern and eastern areas of the country. Their opportunity for reaching the West is thus relatively more limited. It is also of interest to note that of the 447 relations listed as having been arrested, 199 were Great Russian, 174 were Ukrainian, 16 Byelorussian, and 28 of various non-Slavic nationalities. Of the 161 respondents arrested during this period, 69 were Great Russian and 68 were Ukrainian. These figures are clearly out of proportion to actual population ratios, but the collectivization probably accounts for the relatively high percentage of Ukrainians involved.

45. P. Sakharov, "About the Results of the Purge in the Crimean Republic," *Bolshevik*, no. 9 (May 15, 1935), p. 53.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Sovetskaia Sibir*, December 28, 1935, p. 3.

48. *Ibid.*, December 17, 1935, p. 3.

49. "Our West Siberian organization has in its ranks 111,000 members and candidates. And ten months ago the West Siberian organization had 132,000 members and candidates. As a consequence of a ten months work in preparation for the purge, as well as the beginning of the accounting, up to 21,000 members and candidates left [the Party ranks]" (Speech by comrade Nikolaeva, *XVII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 570).

50. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 14 (July 1934), p. 2.

51. V. Balyan, "The Exchange of Party Documents of Communists of the Transport," *ibid.*, no. 5 (March 1936), p. 27.

52. R. Sherendovich, "Party Work in the Light of the Results of the Purge of Secondary Party Organizations," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 7 (April 1935), p. 32.

53. "The Goals of the Screening of Party Documents" (editorial), *ibid.*, no. 17 (October 15, 1935), p. 3.

54. *Ibid.*, no. 2 (January 1936), p. 12. His figures were slightly higher than the ones cited in October.

55. Report of the Mandate Commission, *XVII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 303.

56. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 18 (October 1935), p. 63.

57. These calculations, however, made on the basis of statistics published during this period, seem to be lower than the estimates drawn from the article "Questions of Membership in the CPSU(B)" (*Partiinaia zhizn'*, no. 20, October 1947, p. 81), which put the Party membership in 1935 at 1,659,104 members and 699,610 candidates (total: 2,358,714). These figures indicate a loss of about 200,000 Party members and 235,000 candidates during the years 1934-1935, or a total of 435,000 instead of the above estimate, 315,000. These figures, however, do not make allowance for normal causes of decrease, such as death. The total figures for the years 1933 to 1935 inclusive would thus stand at 1,200,000.

58. Sherendovich in *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo* states that 66.6 per cent of those expelled by the end of 1934 had entered the Party during the years 1929-1932.

59. See *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 1 (January 1935), p. 59 on relaxation in rationing.

60. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 338.

## 5. THE MASS PURGE AND TERROR COALESCE: THE VIOLENT STAGE, 1936-1938

1. See Utis in *Foreign Affairs* for a discussion of the "artificial dialectic."

2. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 2 (January 15, 1937), p. 12. Yezhov's sinister role in the purge was enhanced by his appointment on February 25, 1935 as

head of the Party Control Commission, which had supervised in the past the operations of the various purging commissions. Its supervisory function included overseeing the general purging process, pointing out weaknesses, sending out investigators, and indicating the nature of improvements demanded. See Yaroslavsky, "Year's Work of the Party Control Commission," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 3 (February 1935), p. 8.

3. *VKP(b) v Rezoliutsyakh*. p. 646. To make sure that previous abuses would be eliminated, the Party decreed that "only the first secretaries of the district and town committees, especially appointed for this task, have the right to sign and issue new Party cards, candidates' cards, and the account cards . . ." (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 3, February 1936, p. 10).

4. During 1936, for instance, some 79,428 Komsomolites were expelled from the Young Communist League (Fainberg, "The Tasks of the Komsomol," *Bolshevik*, no. 12, June 1937, p. 27). Various local organizations reported expulsions to amounts ranging between 5 and 10 per cent of their total membership: in the Omsk oblast 1,490 Party members were expelled out of the 10,898 members of the regional organization, and 598 candidates were also excluded out of a total of 5,835. The regional Party apparatus also experienced a shake-up of its officials, and about 300 Party workers were removed from their posts (D. Bulatov, "Higher Calibre of Party Work," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 18, September 1936, p. 9; *Pravda*, January 27, 1936, p. 6). The West Siberian Party organization reported that it expelled about 7 per cent of its instructors, about 6 per cent of its cultural managers, and 9 per cent of the primary organizations' secretaries and partorgs ("Results of the Screening of Party Documents," *Sovetskaia Sibir*, January 27, 1936, p. 2). The Voronezh Party organization reported expelling about 8 per cent of its membership (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 9, May 15, 1936, p. 55).

5. "In the Central Committee of the CPSU(B)," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 22, November 20, 1936. Kalinin oblast, Uzbekistan, Krasnoiarsk *krai*, Kazakhstan, and a number of other organizations had been singled out for criticism on the same grounds some time previously (*Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 8, 1936, pp. 50, 51).

6. See *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 17 (September 15, 1936); *Pravda*, August 8, 1936.

7. "In the Central Committee of the CPSU(B)," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 2 (January 15, 1937), p. 61.

8. I. Iarygin, "Some Lessons of the Exchange of Party Documents," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 9 (May 15, 1936), p. 19.

9. "The New Order of Accounting," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 20 (October 1936), pp. 51-56.

10. "On Party Cards of the 1926 Stage," *Pravda*, December 30, 1936; *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 2 (January 15, 1937), p. 64.

11. For some details concerning the special training for Party personnel conducting the screening, the seminars and questionnaires, see B. Troianker, "The Exchange of Party Documents of Armenian Bolsheviks," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 17 (September 1936), p. 24.

12. *Pravda*, April 4, 1937, p. 1.

13. One official was thus castigated for classifying antistate activities as mere "political hooliganism," thereby reducing the seriousness of the offenses, and for actually accusing a vigilant Party worker of "misinformation" when he pressed for appropriate action ("Facts of Weakened Vigilance," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 18, September 20, 1936, p. 29). Another article, discussing the subversive operations of the enemy, states that some Communists try to use their friends to avoid due punishment. It cites the case of Z., an active female Party worker, who after arrest denied her guilt. Her husband, a responsible worker, offered "his head" as a guarantee of his wife's loyalty. Only after interrogation by the NKVD did Z. confess her guilt and implicate in it her husband also (R. Rubenov, "Forms of Camouflage of Trotskyite and Other Double-Crossers," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 15, August 1, 1937, p. 30).

14. "Recognize and Unmask in a Bolshevik Fashion the Enemies of Socialism," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 2 (January 15, 1937), p. 11.

15. A story appearing in *Pravda*, November 20, 1937, p. 6, illustrates this point: the editor of the *Borisovskaia kommuna* accused the district Party committee secretary of being a Trotskyite. At first he was removed, but then restored by higher officials. The editor was fired. Soon, however, he was vindicated, as a further investigation "unmasked" the secretary, who was then sentenced to ten years. The editor was restored to his position, but *Pravda* called for a further investigation to determine who originally obtained the editor's removal.

16. Beck and Godin, *Russian Purge*, pp. 24-25.

17. The official versions are to be found in *Sudebnyi Otchet po Delu Trotskistskogo-Zinovievskogo Tsentra* (Moscow, 1936); *Sudebnyi Otchet po Delu Anti-Sovietskogo Trotskistskogo Tsentra* (Moscow, 1937); *Sudebnyi Otchet po Delu Anti-Sovietskogo i Pravo-Trotskistskogo Bloka* (Moscow, 1938). Critiques: *Not Guilty*; Francis Heisler, *First Two Moscow Trials* (Chicago, 1938).

18. Souvarine, *Stalin*, p. 628.

19. One of the chief prosecution witnesses was a Dr. Pletnev, who, seven months earlier, had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment ("Professor Pletnev's Affair," *Biulleten' oppositsii*, no. 65, 1938, pp. 10-11).

20. See *Not Guilty*.

21. This is how one former Soviet citizen explains his motives for rejecting the Soviet system: "In 1937 in connection with the execution of Tukhachevsky and the military conspiracy, I stopped believing in the Soviet power . . . These people had great merit. They were great specialists in military affairs. My father often told me about Yakir. He had served in his division during the Civil War. And what he told me about him was always good. He became indignant when all this happened, and I was indignant with him" (Harvard Project, no. 531, p. 45).

22. Some preliminary maneuverings took place, however. Thus on May 11,

1937, Tukhachevsky was ordered to command the Samara Military District, and he was only arrested after he left his old post to take the new. This practice of divorcing commanders from their command (and friends) before arresting them was employed with others, e.g., Uborevich. On May 16 Military Soviets were established, thus limiting the authority of the military commanders (*Biulleten' oppositsii*, nos. 56-57, 1937, pp. 2, 3).

23. "The exact circumstances of Tukhachevsky's plot and of its collapse are not known. But all non-Stalinist versions concur in the following: the generals did indeed plan a coup d'état. This they did from their own motives, and on their own initiative, not in compact with any foreign power. The main part of the coup was to be a palace revolt in the Kremlin, culminating in the assassination of Stalin. A decisive military operation outside the Kremlin, an assault on the headquarters of the GPU, was also prepared. Tukhachevsky was the moving spirit of the conspiracy" (Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 379). Mr. Deutscher does not give the source which supplied the details of this planned operation.

24. Another version is advanced by Eduard Beneš: "I was also very confidentially informed that Hitler was now carrying other negotiations which, if successful, might have some effect on our affairs. We discovered from an unconscious slip of the tongue by Trauttmannsdorff (German emissary) that these 'other negotiations' were with the Soviet anti-Stalin conspirators — Marshal Tukhachevsky, Rykov, and others. Hitler fully believed these moves would be successful and therefore for the time being had no further interest in pressing conclusions in our case. The whole European situation would truly have been altered had he succeeded in overturning the Soviet regime. But Stalin acted in time. I immediately informed Alexandrovsky, Soviet minister in Prague, about what I had learned from the Mastny-Trauttmannsdorff conversation in Berlin" ("Omens of a New Conflict," *The Nation*, vol. 166, no. 23, June 19, 1948, p. 682).

A suggestion had been advanced by Soviet *émigrés* that if the above were true, it could possibly have been a German plant to provoke the destruction of the Soviet General Staff, and that Beneš unwittingly became the tool of the Gestapo. German support for this view may be found in W. Hagan, *Die Geheime Front* (Vienna, 1950), pp. 54-68. Mr. Hagan, a former high officer in the German Intelligence, claims that documents incriminating Tukhachevsky were planted with Soviet agents. The operation was said to have been initiated by Heydrich of the S.S.

25. One need not point out the striking difference between such a totalitarian system and, for instance, Franco's Spain, which is highly dependent on the army for the regime's stability. On the other hand, Peron's development of a competing basis of power which limits the army indicates the further "totalitarianization" of Peron's state.

26. That Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik, and others may have been suspected of and charged with opposing further politicizing of the army is implied in the remarks made before the Eighteenth Party Congress by Mekhlis, the head

of the Political Administration of the Army: "Where the Gamarnik-Bulin gang of spies did the greatest damage to the political apparatus was in the sphere of its leading personnel. They promoted to the most important posts enemies of the people, incompetents, utter degenerates, who had sold their souls to foreign secret service agents. They held down the best commissars and political workers, capable and efficient people who were loyal to the Party of Lenin and Stalin, kept them in minor ranks and in relatively unimportant posts. Now, under the guidance of the Party Central Committee and of comrade Stalin and Voroshilov, many thousands of splendid Bolsheviks of the Leninist-Stalinist breed have been promoted . . . it is a labor of love for them to carry the words of Lenin and Stalin among the masses" (*XVIII S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii(b)*, *Stenog. otchet*, Moscow, 1939, p. 274). For an outline of the existing system of Party and secret police supervision, see *Political Controls in the Soviet Army*, ed. by Z. K. Brzezinski, Research Program on the USSR (New York, 1954).

27. It is interesting to note that the Ukrainian Republic, the largest non-Russian unit of the Soviet Union, did not have till 1953 a single Ukrainian first secretary: the first was Otto Aussem (Latvian), followed by Lazar Kaganovich (Jewish), Stanislaw Kossior (Russified Pole), P. Postyshev (Russian), Nikita Khrushchev (Russian), Lazar Kaganovich, Leonid Melnikov (Russian).

28. The following incident is characteristic: in the Kabardin-Balkar region the local chairman of a village wished to get rid of the local Russian settlers. In cooperation with the head of the district Party committee, apparently a native, he decided to expel them all from the community. Fortunately for these "displaced persons-to-be," a savior appeared on the scene: the head of the local NKVD intervened and rescued them. The head of the district Party committee and the village chairman were expelled from the Party, and the procurator was called upon to take appropriate measures against them. The native population was to be fully acquainted with these developments through special meetings ("Burzhuaznye natsionalisty raspoiasalis," Resolution of the Oblast Committee, *Pravda*, March 11, 1937, p. 6). Later, however, the Obkom secretary, as well as the chief prosecutor and the NKVD head, were themselves purged.

29. Ukrainian nationalism manifested itself during the Civil War in efforts to set up an independent Ukrainian republic; and the flame of nationalism continued to be fed by the *émigré* Ukrainian government operating from Poland, by the Ukrainian nationalist organization supported by Berlin, and by Communist Ukrainians who felt that their position was being undermined by increasing Russian penetration. One form of penetration was the actual migration of Russians into the Ukrainian urban centers, particularly in the Kharkov-Donets Basin area. *Pravda* mentions the characteristic fact that in certain districts of Kharkov, 50 per cent of the Party secretaries were not Ukrainian (April 18, 1937, p. 2).

30. *Pravda*, June 16, 1938, p. 3.

31. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1937.

32. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1937.

33. The attack on the radio began shortly after the decapitation of the army, when the Kiev radio was blamed for completely ignoring this event. Shortly afterwards came an attack on the incumbent head of the radio committee, who had himself replaced an "unmasked spy." He was soon removed, but charges continued to be made that the radio and also the press were infested by Trotskyites. The newspaper *Kommunist* was charged with publishing a picture showing the assembled leaders of the Soviet state at a Moscow parade with a black line drawn across their faces. The campaign produced satisfactory results, with drastic changes made in the Partizdat, radio committee, and cultural-enlightenment sections (*Pravda*, July 9, 1937, p. 6; July 13, p. 4; July 20; July 21; July 22, editorial).

34. *Pravda*, August 4, 1937, p. 2; August 8, 1937.

35. *Pravda*, August 31, 1937, p. 2.

36. *Ibid.*, September 13, 1937, p. 2.

37. *Ibid.*, September 20, 1937, p. 2.

38. *Pravda vostoka*, July 15, 1937, p. 3; July 17, 1937, p. 1.

39. *Pravda*, September 3, 1937, p. 2.

40. *Ibid.*, September 6, 1937, p. 4.

41. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1937, p. 2.

42. For example, *Pravda*, September 12, 1937, p. 6.

43. "Meeting of the Tashkent Party Actif," *ibid.*, September 27, 1937, p. 2.

44. *Ibid.*, September 10, 1937, p. 2.

45. *Ibid.*, September 12, 1937, p. 2. The newspapers published in this connection a revealing biography of the former chief commissar, Rakhimbaev. His father was said to have been a major landowner who instilled in his son obedience to the Tsar and his governors. The son, with amazing logic, accordingly became first a Turkish officer and then a bourgeois nationalist. After the Revolution he joined the Party, hiding his past, and by 1934 he had become chairman of the Council of Commissars. This position, however, did not stop his shameful operations. "His entire activity was directed at only one goal — treason of the interests of the Tadzhik people." Whenever he could, he rewarded and abetted the enemies of the people: "spies, trotskyites, bukharinites, former basmatches, bourgeois nationalists." In a final blow, it was revealed that Rakhimbaev also maintained a personal harem of three wives, concerning whom little was told except that one was an Uzbek, one Tatar, and one an Oset. At least in his tastes Rakhimbaev was not pictured as a chauvinist.

46. *Pravda*, September 9, p. 4; September 14, p. 4; September 16, p. 2.

47. *Ibid.*, September 7, 1937, p. 3; September 22, p. 2. Similar events occurred in the smaller national regions: Dagestan, where bourgeois nationalists high both in the Party and in the administration were said to condone nationalism and religious activities (*ibid.*, September 25, 1937, p. 2); in the Bashkir region, where "all basic positions of leadership" were listed as being in the hands of bourgeois nationalists (*ibid.* September 17, 1937, p. 4); in

Krasnoiarsk, where local leaders were accused of "openly sheltering enemies" (*ibid.*, July 11, 1937, p. 2).

48. The choice of areas, Byelorussia and the Caucasian region, depended not only on the relative severity of the purges in these areas but also on the availability of local newspapers and other media of information. The character of these national regions was a further reason. Byelorussian nationalists made some unsuccessful efforts during 1919 and 1920 to assert their national independence (partially with Polish assistance), and they continued to work abroad, where they maintained during the intra-war period a Committee for National Liberation. The bulk of the population, however, remained generally lethargic, and only with the collectivization and increased privations of Soviet existence did indications of potential separatism and what might loosely be called nationalism appear. Early Soviet efforts to encourage the use of the Byelorussian language and the growth of a local intelligentsia also contributed to this development. Thus the purge of the Byelorussian leadership operated in an environment which had been largely produced by Soviet rule itself. In the case of the Caucasus we are dealing with a variety of national groups, rather hostile towards one another, whom the Soviets attempted to organize, after the abolition of the Caucasian Republic, into a number of smaller, supposedly autonomous, state entities. The region has a long history of struggle against the Soviet power, and partisan activity persisted for many years even after the formal conquest of the area. Lack of *expertise* and information prohibits thorough analysis of the purge in any one nationality of the region. We hope, rather, to show the uniform pattern of the purge in the Caucasian area, and the arbitrary methods employed to eliminate nationalist opposition. Some of these measures have become an integral part of the Soviet purges and deserve due consideration.

49. For estimates see Souvarine's *Stalin*; and David J. Dallin and Boris I. Nicolaevsky, *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia* (New Haven, 1947).

50. The following incident, although possibly more extreme than most cases, suggests the prevailing atmosphere: a young man's father "was shaving and wiped his blade off on a newspaper with a picture of Stalin. And there was a fellow who was running for the local committee. He was a candidate who was trying to make a reputation and he saw him and turned him in . . . The militia man came and called my father to the Selsoviet. They asked him why he could not find another piece of paper to wipe his blade on and they gave him a year" (Harvard Project, no. 191, pp. 3, 6, 7).

Another informant describes his school experiences: "The only other difficulty was that in school there were frequent checks by the NKVD. The NKVD would come, call in a Komsomolets, and ask him about other students and how they all felt about the Soviet Union. For example, once there was a picture of Lenin and Stalin in the classroom. All classrooms have pictures of Lenin, Stalin and Marx. Someone once stole Lenin's picture and threw it away. This was reported by the Komsomol and seven people were exiled because of it. [This occurred] in 1937 . . . I don't know who did it, but we were all questioned. I spent two days in the NKVD jail because of

it" (Harvard Project, no. 188, p. 3). The respondent was twelve at the time.

51. See Chapter 1, note 19.

52. This situation is officially substantiated by the indictment returned against Beria and his colleagues (*Pravda*, December 17, 1953, p. 2), which contains the following revealing passage in connection with Beria's alleged intrigues against Ordzhonikidze: "After the demise of Sergo Ordzhonikidze, the plotters continued to wreak severe vengeance on members of his family."

53. Harvard Project, no. 516, p. 20. Subsequent sections will show, however, that Party members were, relatively speaking, even more exposed than the population at large. In the case, however, of an important official, failure to join the Party was most likely viewed with suspicion.

54. One respondent said of Soviet leaders: "One day their pictures are on the walls in the school and in the textbooks. The next day, all of a sudden, we're told they are enemies of the people. Now, with Tukhachevsky, for instance, I remember coming to school and somebody was taking off the portrait. Then all the boys would scratch out his picture in the textbooks, scribble derogatory phrases about him" (Harvard Project, no. 7, p. 24).

55. Harvard Project, no. 11, p. 29.

56. *Pravda*, April 6, 1937, p. 3. (Comparable statistics are available for other regions.)

57. *Ibid.*

58. See, for example, *Pravda*, July 29, 1937.

59. A. Zalikin, "The New Agricultural Leadership Cadres," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 3 (February 1, 1938), p. 60. A large number of the new MTS and collective farm leaders were brand-new members of the Party.

60. In the words of Stalin: "Collective farms without Communists — that's the slogan of counterrevolution" (*Pravda*, January 17, 1933).

61. D. Korotchenkov, "We Liquidate the Results of Trotskyite-Bukarinite Wrecking," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 19 (October 1, 1937), p. 31.

62. James Burnham advances a similar thesis with respect to the managerial society: "In the managerial society . . . politics and economics are directly interfused; the state does not recognize its capitalist limits; the economic arena is also the arena of the state. Consequently, there is no sharp separation between political officials and 'Captains of industry'. The captain of industry is, by virtue of his function, at the same time a state official. The 'supreme planning commission' is indistinguishably a political and an economic institution" (*The Managerial Revolution*, New York, 1941, p. 156).

63. Harvard Project, no. 25, p. 4. Another testifies that in 1937, "eighteen people, the highest people in the institution, including the bookkeeper and the engineer, were all shot for wrecking . . . What happened was that when the combine was first built, the electric plant was built close to the first production plant. Then, as more and more plants were built, the electric plant was soon too far away from the center of production. This was called a fault in planning and the main people in the combine were accused of being deliberate enemies of the people" (no. 17, p. 7).

A characteristic account appears also in *Pravda*, February 8, 1937, p. 2:

"In December of last year in Zaporozhe in a gas-mixing station [*gazomesitel'naia stantsiia*] an accident occurred. The head of the section, engineer Mikhailets, was brought to responsibility. His guilt was established by *expertise*, by witnesses, and he also admitted his guilt. But ignoring this, the director of the gas-mixing station, Communist Riumshin, organized a collective petition of the workers of the section with a plea to the procurator's office for leniency for Mikhailets. A Communist in the role of a solicitor for a criminal!" For similar accounts of professional responsibility, see *Pravda*, February 8, 1937, p. 3; April 8, 1937, p. 2; July 11, 1937, p. 6; January 3, 1938, p. 3; *Pravda severa*, March 26, 1937, p. 3; and the late 1937 issues of *Gudok*.

64. Bauer, *The New Man*, p. 106, quoting from A. S. Zaluzhnyi in *Pedologiia*, no. 3 (1932), p. 17.

65. *Pravda*, May 15, 1937, p. 2.

66. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(B)*, speech by Kosygin, p. 402.

67. Many of these are listed in the trial proceedings. Victor Kravchenko also lists the leaders of the Soviet industry who perished during the purge, often without a public trial. These include many founders of the key Soviet industries — oil, synthetic rubber, metallurgical works, combine and trust directors, etc. (*I Chose Freedom*, New York, 1946, pp. 253–254).

68. Harvard Project, no. 470, p. 25.

69. Beck and Godin state that: "Of the thirteen secretaries of the Kiev Academy of Sciences who succeeded each other between 1931 and 1938, all without exception were arrested. Of the seven principals of the University during that time, six were arrested and one died a natural death" (*Russian Purge*, p. 33).

70. *Pravda*, May 11, 1937, p. 3.

71. For an excellent and stimulating discussion of the role of the intellectual under Communist dictatorship, see Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York, 1953).

72. Harvard Project, no. 25, p. 27. While normally this might be an exaggeration, it may have been typical of extreme periods of the purge, when denunciations were particularly frequent and particularly effective. See also no. 470, p. 4; no. 111, p. 33. In some cases denunciations were made for such purposes as obtaining an apartment, e.g., no. 15, p. 5.

73. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, p. 620.

74. Unfortunately no comparable figures are available for preceding years, so it is difficult to estimate adequately the number of graduates absorbed in new industries or used as replacements for people who were purged. According to figures supplied by V. M. Molotov to the Eighteenth Party Congress, there were 1,751,000 "leading" positions in the Soviet Union on January 1, 1937. He listed, in addition, 250,000 engineers and architects without personal responsibility for enterprises or projects (*XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, Molotov's report, pp. 309–310). The rough total of professionals and administrators broadly classified (including, for instance, collective farm chairmen) was thus about 2,000,000.

75. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 30.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267. (Italics mine.)

77. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo* describes with enthusiasm the new economic leaders. It states about a promotion of 220 young Communists to leading economic posts in Leningrad: "The majority [are] youth recently having completed higher educational institutions . . . These comrades grew up, were educated and hardened in the struggle for our Party line in the ranks of the famous Leningrad Party organization" (no. 13, July 1, 1938, p. 48).

80. Dicks in *Human Relations*, p. 131.

81. During the years 1933-1936 the number of Communists among the chief engineers of mines increased from 9 to 24 per cent, among head engineers in the chemical industry from 20 to 28 per cent (Molotov, "The Lessons of the Sabotage, Diversionism and Espionage of the Trotskyite agents," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 8, April 1937, p. 12). The Komsomol was particularly instrumental in supplying industry with ideologically trained technical personnel. By the completion of the Second Five Year Plan the Komsomol had provided 118,000 engineers and technicians, 69,000 agricultural experts, 19,000 teachers with higher education, and 9,000 doctors (I. Gavrilin, *Leninskoi Komsomol-rezerv i pomoshchnik kommunisticheskoi partii*, Moscow, 1939, p. 27).

82. To avoid repetition, data used with respect to the nationalities but bearing on the Party will not be cited. The purge of the nationalities was, of course, closely connected with the purge of the various national Parties.

83. The atmosphere prevailing then is revealed by the following account, published in the January 19, 1938, Central Committee Resolution, which attempted to halt the purge (for discussion, see Chapter 7): "The former secretary of the Kiev Regional Party Committee, enemy of the people, Kudriavtsev, would turn unflinchingly at Party meetings to participating Communists with this provocative question: 'Have you written a denunciation against anyone at all?' As a result of the provocation, politically compromising denunciations were written in Kiev against almost half of the City Party Organization, and most turned out to be obviously false and also provocative" (*Pravda*, January 19, 1938).

84. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 7 (April 1937), pp. 5ff.

85. A. Stoliar cites some typical cases: "C. E. Shafranov, appointed first secretary of the Redvinsk party district committee. Comrade Shafranov is a Party member since 1928, born 1905. 1927-1930 served in the Red Army . . . A. G. Zalevsky, Party member since 1930, born 1910 . . . From 1933 to 1935 served in the Red Army . . . Recently comrade Zalevsky was promoted to be first secretary of the Krasnopoliansk Party district committee . . . Comrade Minulin, Party member since 1932, born in 1907 . . . Comrade Minulin was promoted to be chairman of the Bardimsk district executive committee" ("Bold Promotions of New Party Workers," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 20, October 15, 1937, p. 15). In reporting that in the Sverdlovsk region 379

Communists were raised to "responsible positions," the same article gave their Party seniority as follows: 6 per cent joined the Party by 1920; 4 per cent between 1921 and 1925; 38 per cent between 1925 and 1929; 52 per cent after 1932.

86. *Pravda*, June 5, 1937, p. 3. The June 11 issue reported the purging of 39 per cent of Party secretaries and organizers in the Kuibyshev region.

87. *Pravda*, May 24, 1937, p. 4, report on Party conference. Later we read that the Moscow organization "uncovered and expelled from its ranks the anti-Soviet right-wing trotskyite double-crossers—the Japanese-German diversionists and spies" (*ibid.*, May 30, 1937, p. 2).

88. Stalin, in his speech before the Eighteenth Party Congress, put the total of primary Party organizations at 113,060 (*XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 29).

89. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 10 (May 1937), p. 22. According to the Party rules adopted in 1939, the size of a primary Party organization bureau (previously known as a committee) was set at no more than eleven, but not less than three (VIII-62). If the average were to be arbitrarily set at about six, then the total involved would amount to about 150,000. This does not include the general membership, estimates for which are made in Chapter 6.

90. Account from the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the VLKSM, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 18 (September 15, 1937), pp. 8, 10.

91. A. Kosarev, "The Fighting Tasks of the Komsomol Organizations," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 3 (February 1938), p. 33; P. Vershkov, "Leninist Stalinist Education to the Soviet Youth," *ibid.*, no. 7 (April 1938), p. 28.

92. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, Zakharev's report, p. 126.

93. *Pravda*, May 31, 1938, p. 2.

94. *Ibid.*

95. This view is further supported by the fact that whereas in the preceding year the work of 1,495 Party committees was judged unsatisfactory, by the middle of 1938 only 361 Party committees in Moscow fell in that category (*Bolshevik*, no. 13, July 1938, p. 10).

96. M. Sokolov, "The Party Masses Test Their Leaders," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 10 (May 1938), p. 35.

97. Sokolov, "The Promotion of Cadres in the Leningrad Organization," *ibid.*, no. 13 (July 1, 1938), p. 48.

98. *Ibid.*

99. In the Turkmen Republic, for instance, with the national issue giving the purge additional impetus, only 143 secretaries of Party committees were re-elected out of 485 holding such posts in the summer of 1937. The discards were classified as "politically bankrupt" (*Pravda*, July 11, 1937). In addition 35.6 per cent of Party committees' membership underwent a change, while on the district level only 9 out of 49 district Party secretaries survived in an occupational sense the year, which was marked by the nationality purges in the fall of 1937 (*ibid.*, December 29, 1938, p. 3). In Kursk, about 9 per cent of the membership was expelled in the course of the audit year, and some of

the Party officials were reported as having been changed about three times in that period (*ibid.*, July 13, 1938, p. 2). In Voroshilovsk 22 of the 39 district chairmen had been removed from office by early 1938 (*ibid.*, February 26, 1938, p. 2). As a final example from the many available, in the little Buryat Mongolian republic more than half of the Party membership received reprimands and rebukes; and expulsion of members from the Party was reported as ranging in the various districts between one fourth and one third of the total membership (S. Ignatiev, "The Bolshevik Self-Critique Is the Basis for Party Activity," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 16, August 1938, p. 32; *Pravda*, December 14, 1938, p. 2).

100. *Pravda*, January 19, 1938; *VKP(b) v Rezoliutsiakh* (6th ed.); Moscow, 1941), vol. 2, pp. 672-677.

101. For example, in one sitting the Central Committee of the Azerbaidzhan Party expelled 279 members; the Stalingrad committee expelled in one sitting 69 members; Novosibirsk, 72 members, etc. "In many districts of the Kharkov region there were cases of illegal removal from work and refusal to give employment in the name of 'vigilance' to those who had been expelled from the Party. . . . In the Emiev district 36 teachers were removed from work in October and November, 1937, without any reason, and the firing of 42 more was contemplated. . . ." (*ibid.*).

102. *Izvestia*, April 20, 1938.

## 6. THE IMPACT

1. The available statistics are by no means complete; they provide a relatively full picture for the Party but shed almost no light on the purge of the broad and unaffiliated masses of the population. Estimates of the scale of the mass arrests have been made by various students of Soviet affairs, but the wide differences of the estimates testify to the degree of uncertainty. There is very little to be learned from Soviet statistics, while the information obtained from Soviet respondents is rather limited and one-sided in nature. For this reason, no effort will be made to discover the total scale of the purge; and statistics based on the experience of the sample of 2,725 Soviet informants will be quoted merely for supporting evidence. Weissberg suggests that the following categories of people were destroyed by the purge: all former members of the Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Bukharin oppositions; all old Bolsheviks in general; all former Red partisans; Bundists, and former members of all other revolutionary left-wing parties; people who had lived abroad or had foreign contacts; former political emigrants who had returned; foreign Communists; Soviet foreign agents; small minority groups; religious sects; former Party members who had been expelled; people who had previously suffered under the Soviets; relatives of the opposition leaders; leaders of too great popularity — e.g. Tukhachevskii; leaders who tried to restrain Stalin; GPU personnel who conducted the Great Purge (*The Accused*, p. 513).

2. November 1935: 1,659,104 members, 699,610 candidates; November 1938: 1,405,879 members, 514,123 candidates ("Questions of Membership in

the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)," *Partiinaiia zhizn*, no. 20, October 1947, p. 81).

3. However, a number of members either were, due to the pressures of the membership drive, probably accepted into membership without this intermediary period of candidacy, or were promoted shortly after acceptance into candidacy. This procedure was particularly probable with the Komsomols. The number of Komsomols is unknown; it will serve, however, to provide "safety-margin" for the estimate of expulsions, guaranteeing that the total is somewhat below the actual total of expulsions. A number of "new" members may in fact have been old members, expelled and now readmitted. This would not affect the number of those originally involved in the purge, but merely diminish the total of those who were genuinely "new" to the Party.

4. "Admission of New Members to the A-UCP(B)," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 15 (August 1938), p. 3.

5. "About the Order of Admissions to the Party of Lenin-Stalin," *ibid.*, no. 23 (December 1938), p. 59.

6. L. Tandit, "The Bolshevik Education of Young Communists," *Bolshevik*, nos. 10-11 (June 1938), p. 62.

7. *Pravda*, March 29, 1937, p. 4.

8. For example, of the 65 members of the Moscow city Party Committee chosen on May 30, 1937, only 10 were reelected on June 4, 1938 (5, however, were identified as having been sent out on missions to the provinces); in Leningrad of the 65 chosen on June 17, 1937, only 9 reappear a year later 4, however, were sent out) (*Biulleten oppozitsii*, no. 70, 1938, p. 11).

9. See section on nationalities in Chapter 5.

10. This, however, includes three natural deaths.

11. *XVII S'ezd VKP(b)*, *Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1934), pp. 680-681; *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, pp. 642-643.

12. *Sovetskoe Gosudarstvennoe Pravo* (Moscow, 1948), pp. 391-392.

13. Some data on the elimination of republican leaders was cited in Chapter 5. A. Ouralov cites the following toll for the Ukraine: the entire nine-man Politburo, all twelve members of the *Sovnarkom*, thirteen of the seventeen members of the Presidium, and forty-three of the fifty-seven members of the Central Committee (*Staline au pouvoir*, Paris, 1952, p. 72).

14. "Trustworthiness of Soviet Cadres," *Biulleten oppozitsii*, no. 70 (1938), p. 11. A study of *Pravda* for 1937 and 1938 revealed the following changes in Regional Secretaries.

Region	1937		1938	
	Date of Pravda	Secretary	Date of Pravda	Secretary
Voronezh	June 15	Riabibin	July 8	Nikitin
		Yarygin		Borkov
Gorky	July 12	Mikhailov	July 14	Polikarpov
	June 15	Kaganovich		Kaganovich
		Ogurtsov		Lomakin
			Rodionov	

	1937		1938	
	<i>Date of Pravda</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Date of Pravda</i>	<i>Secretary</i>
Kalinin	July 12	Rabov	July 8	Boitsov Abramov Kalinin
Kiev	February 25	Kudriavtsev Miroschnichenko Gerashchenko	June 7	Khrushchev Cherepnin Spivak
Kirov	June 20	Rodin Naumov	June 22	Kanunikov Luk'ianov Ivolgin
Krasnoiarsk	July 23	Sobolov	August 12	Kulakov Sokolov Kulikov
Kuibyshev	June 16	Postyshev Levin	June 21	Ignatov Mel'nikov Charykov
Leningrad	June 15	Zhdanov Smorodin Petrovskii	June 17	Zhdanov Shtykov Solov'ev
Marii	June 5	Vrublevskii Emelianov	July 9	Arkhipov
Moscow	June 12	Khrushchev Korotchenkov Shchuchkin	June 18	Ugarov Denikov (Khrushchev to Ukraine) Tarasov (Shchuchkin to Crimea)
Volga German	June 16	Fresher Gisey	July 9	Anashin Malov Kormbakher
Saratov	June 26	Kriniteskii Murashov	July 11	Vershkov Gribov Panin
Stalingrad	June 16	Semenov Gol'din	August 6	Chuianov Andrianov
Yaroslav	February 5	Vainov	August 2	Shakhurin Repin Larionov

15. "Amendments to the Party Statute," *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 675.

16. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)* puts the number of Komsomolites admitted into the Party since November 1936 at 320,000 (p. 126).

17. Seventy per cent of the Party membership have a Party stage of 1929 or later (*ibid.*, p. 149, Malenkov's report).

18. Forty-nine and one-half per cent were under the age of 35 (*ibid.*).
19. *XVII S'ezd VKP(b)*, pp. 302-304; *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, pp. 146-150.
20. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, pp. 146-150.
21. Information may be found in "The Sense of the *Yezhovschchina*," *Na rubezhe* (Paris, 1952), p. 26; Beck and Godin, *Russian Purge*, p. 106; Ouralov, *Staline au pouvoir*, p. 66; Erich Wollenberg, *The Red Army* (London, 1940), p. 253; D. F. White, *The Growth of the Red Army* (Princeton, 1944). The information cited is generally in agreement on the extent and scope of the military purge.
22. *Na rubezhe* lists the names and posts of 113 leading Soviet officers, mostly of general rank, who perished during the purges (March 1952, pp. 34-37). One respondent reports that 70 members of his regiment, including three high-ranking officers and a chief of staff, were arrested. The regiment was stationed in the Ukraine (Harvard Project, no. 342, p. 22).
23. Wollenberg, *The Red Army*.
24. Gustaw Herling, a former Soviet prisoner and forced laborer, describes how in November of 1940 he encountered in the Leningrad prison about 70 high-ranking Soviet officers who had been imprisoned since the purge on charges of plotting against the Soviet Union. Most of them had not been sentenced until October of that year, when the judgment of administrative tribunals, condemning them to ten years, was communicated to them. Most of them, he adds, were nevertheless hopeful of eventual reinstatement and counted heavily on a coming war (*A World Apart*, pp. 13-16).
25. From 216 to 152 out of 447 and 546 respectively; percentage-wise from 48.3 per cent of the arrested to 24.1 per cent. The percentage of the intelligentsia-employees arrested rose accordingly from 41.4 per cent to 63.4 per cent.
26. V. Pozdniakov, "Organs of Extra-Judicial Sanctions," *Volia*, no. 1 (Munich, February 1952), p. 26.
27. Sylwester Mora and Piotr Zwierniak, *Sprawiedliwosc Sowiecka* (Rome, 1945), chs. VI, VII, pp. 179-204. See also N. Semenov, *Sovetskii sud i Karatelnaia Politika* (Munich, 1952), pp. 24-40.
28. Beck and Godin, *Russian Purge*, p. 76.
29. Harvard Project, no. 60, p. 16.
30. Most of the identified bodies came from the town itself (which numbered before the war about 70,000 people) or from the area around it. For further accounts, see Jozef Mackiewicz, "Klucz do 'Parku Kultury i Odpoczynku'" in *Wiadomosci* (London), vol. 4, no. 48, December 2, 1951; "Mass Murders in Vinnitsa," *ABN Correspondence*, III, 5, May, 1952.
31. This hypothesis finds further support in the discovery of a number of civilian corpses among the Polish officers murdered in Katyn, and their highly decomposed state suggests an earlier date of execution.
32. Zh. Meerson admits that as soon as a Party member is even expelled from the Party his friends stop recognizing him. He cited the case of comrade Viktorov who, until his expulsion from the Party on grounds of

passivity, was a member of the editorial board of a wall-newspaper. Following his expulsion, his fellow board members stopped even greeting him ("For an Individual Approach Towards Party Members," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 7, April 1937, pp. 29-31).

33. Eloquent testimony to this fact may be found in *Notes of a Political Prisoner*, Research Program on the USSR (New York, 1952), pp. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 21, 25, 35. The author of the *Notes* met the following female relatives of important Soviet leaders:

Fifteen-year-old daughter of the Commissar of the Chemical Industry.

Sonia Prokof'ieva, wife of Yagoda's assistant.

Regina Gurevich, wife of the first deputy *Narkom* (People's Commissar) of Health.

Natasha Satz, wife of Narkom of Light Industry.

Valia Bubnova, daughter of the Narkom of Enlightenment.

Wife of the Narkom of Merchant Marine Kulberg.

Katia Belaia, Ivanov's wife (Ivanov was sentenced with Bukharin).

Sister of Marshal Tukhachevsky.

Katia Tukhachevsky, wife of the Marshal.

Yogada's wife.

Svanidze's wife.

Frunze's sister.

Chapaev's son's wife.

Enukidze's secretary.

Wife of the Commissar of the Stalin Military Academy.

Rudzutak's wife.

A. N. Tupolev's wife (released).

For further evidence of the persecution of families of purged leaders, see the indictment of Beria in *Pravda*, December 17, 1953, p. 2.

34. Harvard Project, no. 387, p. 43.

35. *Ibid.*, no. 532, p. 30.

36. *Ibid.*, no. 516, p. 22; no. 521, p. 23; no. 446, p. 47.

37. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 28.

38. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(B)*, p. 147.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

40. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 19-20 (October 1938), p. 78.

41. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 28.

42. Barrington Moore, "The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Soviet System," mimeographed report, Project on the Soviet Social System, Harvard, 1952, p. 6.

43. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)*, p. 27.

## 7. THE SAFETY VALVES

1. For an outline of the function of the control commissions in the purge, see Yaroslavsky's *Kak provodit chistku partii*; *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 10 (May 1930), p. 19.

2. The purge of the top levels of the Party and the state was doubtless

carried out on the direct orders of the leadership itself, and the police was merely the executing organ. It was on the lower levels that the executors of the purge seized initiative and tended to operate independent of central control.

3. *Pravda*, August 10, 1937.
4. "New Members Accepted," February 14, 1938, p. 1.
5. *Pravda*, May 26, 1938, p. 6.
6. V. Kudriavtsev, "Acceptance into the Party of Better Leaders," *Partiinoe Stroitel'stvo*, no. 20 (October 15, 1937), p. 24.
7. *Sovetskaiia Belorussia*, February 3, 1928, p. 2; February 4, 1938, p. 2.
8. "No Recommendations Given," February 9, 1938, p. 2.
9. Kudriavtsev in *Partiinoe Stroitel'stvo*.
10. For example, see Korotchenkov in *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*.
11. M. Kvasov, "The Growth of Party Organizations of the Ukraine," *Pravda*, August 26, 1938, p. 2.
12. *Pravda*, September 2, 1938, p. 2.
13. Z. Serdiuk, "Admissions into the Party in the Kiev Organization," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 22 (November 15, 1938), p. 54; S. Emelianov, "Fully and Accurately Execute the Resolutions of the CC," *ibid.*, no. 23 (December 1, 1938), p. 43.
14. *Pravda*, December 11, 1938, p. 2.
15. By January 1940, the total Party membership stood at 3,399,975 members and candidates ("Questions of Membership in the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)," *Partiinaia Zhizn'*, no. 20, October 1947, pp. 73-83).
16. *Partiinoe Stroitel'stvo*, no. 6 (March 1938), p. 62.
17. "On Mistakes of Party Organizations with Regard to Expulsions from the Party, on a Formalistic-Bureaucratic Approach to the Appeals of the Expellees from the CPSU(B), and on the Measures to Overcome These Shortcomings," *Pravda*, January 19, 1938. The report cited numerous cases of allegedly unjustified expulsions, e.g., one district organization in the Kuibyshev region expelled 50 out of its 210 members. An investigation cleared 43 of the 50 expelled. The report adds that "the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) has facts to the effect that similar situations took place in other Party organizations." For full text see *VKP(b) v Rezoluitsiakh*, pp. 673-677.
18. *Pravda*, March 9, 1938, p. 2.
19. *Izvestia*, April 20, 1938, p. 1.
20. Illustrative examples of previous excesses were again duly cited. In the Smolensk region some 6239 farmers were expelled from the kolhozes during 1937, frequently on the flimsiest grounds, e.g., in the "Krasnaia gorka," collective farm shock-worker Vinoradova was expelled because her grandfather, whom she had never known, was once a monarchist (M. Savinov, "The Liquidation of the Consequences of Trotskyite-Bukharinite Wrecking," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 14, July 15, 1938, p. 22).

In the Buryat-Mongol ASSR, where a thorough purge of the collective

farms had been carried out (with two thirds of the expelled later vindicated), a collective farmer was excluded on the grounds that an ancestor of his had been a lama some hundred years before (*Pravda*, February 19, 1938, p. 2).

21. "Rehabilitate the Wrongly Excluded; Severely Punish the Slanderers" (editorial), *Pravda*, January 26, 1938.

22. "Attention to the Readmitted into the Ranks of the CPSU(B)," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 6 (March 15, 1938), p. 50.

23. *Pravda*, February 3, 1938, p. 2.

24. See, for example, A. Volkov, "Consideration of Appeals in the Byelorussian Party Organization," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 6 (March 15, 1938), p. 24; "The Handling of Appeals of those Excluded from the CPSU(B) by the Party Organizations," *ibid.*, no. 7 (April 1, 1938), pp. 54-57. The Byelorussian Central Committee was accused, among others, of considering only one appeal in the course of an entire month.

25. N. Ignatov, "The Unchanging Basis of Party Life," *ibid.*, no. 6 (March 15, 1938), p. 29.

26. Kudriatsev, "Consideration of Appeals in the Lenin District," *ibid.*, no. 8 (April 15, 1938), p. 34.

27. Ignatov in *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*.

28. *Sovetskaiia Belorussia*, February 15, 1938.

29. Yaroslavsky, "About Bolshevik Vigilance, About Extermination of Camouflaged Enemies and About Attention to Party Members," *Bolshevik*, no. 3 (February 1938), p. 17.

30. Editorial in *Sovetskaiia Belorussia*, January 27, 1938. See also P. Tarasov, "The Liquidation of the Consequences of Sabotage in Party Work," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 13 (July 1938), p. 13.

31. *Sovetskaiia Iustitsiia* (organ of the People's Commissariat of Justice of the Supreme Court of the USSR; July 5, 1938), p. 2.

32. *Pravda*, February 1, 1938, p. 2.

33. *Sovetskaiia Iustitsiia*, August 30, 1938, p. 31.

34. Weissberg, *The Accused*, pp. 400, 419-420. See also Harvard Project, no. 529, p. 29.

35. *Ibid.*, no. 532, p. 23.

36. *Ibid.*, no. 470, p. 24; similar incidents recounted by no. 144, p. 36; no. 516, p. 22.

37. *Pravda*, March 21, 1938, p. 2.

38. *Ibid.*, September 6, 1938, p. 6.

39. December 8, 1938, p. 6. Yezhov's ultimate fate is unknown. His last public appearance was on November 10; consequently his removal must have occurred between that time and the date of the official announcement.

40. Particularly effective stratagems were the symbolic joint appearance of Stalin and Voroshilov (who had been reported as wavering) and the "spontaneous" delegations of the Red Army men demanding the curbing of the opposition.

41. Weissberg recounts the interesting incident of an ex-NKVD inter-

rogator who was recognized by his former victims and severely thrashed (*The Accused*, pp. 407, 420).

42. Beck and Godin, *Russian Purge*, p. 168.
43. Weissberg, *The Accused*, p. 421; Beck and Godin, *Russian Purge*, p. 169.
44. October 22, 1938, p. 6.
45. *XVIII S'ezd VKP(b)* (stenographic report), held in Moscow March 10-21, 1939 (Moscow, 1939), p. 276.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 519.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, p. 668.
50. Part I—Party Members; Their Duties and Rights.

## 8. THE DELICATE STAGE

1. For indications that this, however, was not unanimous see George Fischer's *Soviet Opposition to Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952).

2. Harvard Project, no. 342, p. 48.

3. *Ibid.*, no. 301, p. 52.

4. *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 20 (1947), p. 83. The Party membership as of January 1, 1945 was 3,965,530 members and 1,794,839 candidates, a grand total of 5,760,369.

5. I. Shikin, "Party-Political Work in the Red Army in the Years of the Fatherland War," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 12 (June 1945), p. 14. On this general problem, see Merle Fainsod's "Postwar Role of the Communist Party," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (May 1949).

6. Their numbers, relative to the size of the various Party organizations, were considerable. In the Smolensk region, demobilized Party members numbered 9,305; in the Bryansk region, 10,200; Poltava, 11,303; Kursk, 20,942; Voronezh, 28,166, etc. ("Draw Communists, Demobilized from the Army, into Active Party Life," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 9-10, May 1946, p. 25). The various city Party organizations likewise grew rapidly during the war, absorbing many officials and bureaucrats, as well as women, into their ranks. The Moscow Party organization, for instance, accepted during the war years some 162,000 new members, while besieged Leningrad took in over 100,000 ("Direction of Admission into the CPSU(B) and Training of New Party Members," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 2, November 1946, p. 29). As a result many members were left without any organizational connections ("About Isolated Communists," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 9-10, May 1946, p. 34).

7. The situation was particularly acute in formerly occupied areas from which local Communists had either fled or been eliminated by the Germans. Thus out of some 2000 Communists in Grodno, over one half were accepted during 1943 and 1944 alone (*Sovetskaia Belorussia*, August 23,

1946, p. 2); the situation in Pinsk was similar (*ibid.*, August 24, p. 3); while in the Vitebsk region, 77 per cent of the Party members were new (*ibid.*, November 27, p. 2), and in the Polotsk region, 78 per cent (*ibid.*, December 11, 1946, p. 2).

8. Sixty-three and six-tenths per cent of all Party members were under 35 years of age ("Some Questions of Party Work," *Pravda Ukraïny*, March 27, 1946, p. 2).

9. For example, in Minsk out of 520 new members only 24 were workers (*Sovetskaïa Belorussia*, August 30, 1946, p. 2). *Partiinaia zhizn* cites the case of a factory with some 1,000 workers, of whom only 56 belonged to the Party (no. 2, November 1946, p. 29). *XVI Z'ezd Kommunistichnoi Partii (bilshovikiu) Ukraïny* cites several regional Party organizations where only about a third of the new members are industrial workers (Kiev, 1949, p. 47). *Bakïnskii rabochii* reports that in one Party organization, composed of some 7,000 members, only 28 leading workers were accepted during 1946 (September 12, 1946). Merle Fainsod cites data indicating that between 1945 and 1949 only 11.6 per cent of the new Byelorussian Party members were workers. In Kirgizia the percentage was 15.9 (*How Russia is Ruled*, Cambridge, Mass., 1953, p. 233).

10. The persistent nature of the problem is demonstrated by S. Kurdin's article "Supervision of Admission to the Party Membership and the Training of New Communists" in *Bolshevik*, no. 23 (December 1951), pp. 48-53.

11. See, for example, "The New Five-Year Plan and Questions of Political Work of the Party Organizations," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 7-8 (April 1946), p. 5.

12. "On the Growth of the Party and on the Measures to Improve the Party-Organizational and the Party-Political Work with the Newly Admitted Members into the CPSU(B)." Discussions of the resolution, passed on July 26, appeared in *Pravda* on August 8 and 11 and September 7, 1946.

13. V. Gogosov, "On Certain Questions of Party Committee Work," *Bolshevik*, no. 21 (November 1950), pp. 44-45.

14. "Party Life: The Party Committee and Soviet Agencies," *Pravda*, August 4, 1951, p. 2.

15. L. Slepov, "The Bolshevik Method of Managing Economic Agencies," *Bolshevik*, no. 2 (January 1951), pp. 47-55.

16. The decree outlined the major kinds of offenses, listing the following: improper crediting of labor days, dissipation of collectively held fields of collective farms, spoliation of property of collective farms, violation of democratic basis of the management of collective farms (J. H. Meisel and E. S. Kozera, *Materials for the Study of the Soviet System*, Ann Arbor, 1950, pp. 388-394).

17. *Pravda*, October 9, 1946.

18. According to the testimony of former Soviet citizens: "In 1947 my family was sentenced to exile. The regime did not believe that I was

forced to go to work for the Germans . . . So they sentenced our whole family to exile" (Harvard Project, no. 601, p. 4). "In the place where I worked as an ironworker there were two who had been prisoners in France and Germany. They escaped in some way from going to Siberia and worked with me there. One was a major who was captured. He had changed his opinions a little, in general, about the situation in Russia. He worked with me and became strongly opposed to Soviet power. Secretly, of course. He didn't dare express it. Nevertheless, he disappeared, and no one knows what happened to him. He had a wife and two daughters. She went around and couldn't find out. Another was a prisoner in Germany. He was called up almost once every week and interrogated" (no. 153, p. 24).

19. For an expression of local sentiments, see the testimony of no. 345 (Harvard Project), who claims that the anti-Communist partisans enjoyed a considerable degree of popularity among the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians. Another former Soviet citizen spoke of Chechen insurgents operating in their region until about 1948 (no. 344, pp. 29-30). The operations against these more apparent and active opponents of Soviet rule were entrusted to the NKVD and lasted in the western areas for about two years after the conclusion of the hostilities against Germany. At one stage they involved combined military operations not only of the Soviet security forces but likewise those of the Communist regimes of Poland and Czechoslovakia. By spring of 1946 the official organ of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party began to publish lists of key MVD officials, who had been in charge of the operation and who now were being awarded high decorations for exemplary service (*Pravda Ukraïny*, February 27, 1946, p. 1; February 12, 1946, p. 1; March 8, 1946, p. 1; March 26, 1946, p. 1). As far as can be deduced, the operation had been directed during the crucial first postwar year by V. S. Ryasny, a high official of the NKVD, who, previous to his return to Moscow in early 1946, served as the head of the Ukrainian Commissariat of Internal Affairs. His transfer to otherwise unspecified "duties" was announced in *Pravda Ukraïny*, January 30, 1946. His name cropped up again in 1952, when he was listed ninth in order of key MVD signatories of an obituary to a deceased colleague in *Pravda*, September 13, 1952.

20. On the eve of the war less than one eighth of the primary Party organizations were in the collective farms of the Ukraine (*XVI Z'izd KP(b)U*, p. 46).

21. *Pravda Ukraïny* criticized sugar beet production (January 10, 1946, p. 2). The Plenum of the Central Committee pointed out shortcomings in agricultural work, in the MTS especially, and obkoms and raikoms were ordered to intensify work (*ibid.*, March 5, 1946, pp. 1-2). Soviet and Party leaders were reminded of "their personal responsibility" for the execution of agricultural plans (*ibid.*, March 27, 1946, p. 1). The Plenum of the Central Committee attacked nonfulfilment of economic plans (*ibid.*, May 19, 1946, p. 1). *Sovetskaïa Belorussia* announced the trial of certain agri-

cultural workers for alleged destruction of products, leading to further economic deficiencies (December 22, 1946, p. 4).

22. *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, April 19, 1946, p. 2.

23. *XVI Z'izd KP(b)U*, p. 46. These totaled in 1949 460,835 of a total membership of 684,275.

24. *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, May 21, 1946, p. 2.

25. The Central Committee of the CP(B)U, criticizing cultural work, reported that in the Nikolaev region only 5 out of 685 district and village cultural workers had higher education (*Pravda Ukrainy*, May 22, 1946, p. 1). See also *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, March 15, 1946, p. 3.

26. The resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee, "On Inter-Party Work in Dnepropetrovsk, Poltava, Drohobych Regional Party organizations," admits that many organizations had not held meetings for months, and those that did, did so on a "low level." In addition, little action was evident. "Dnepropetrovsk obkom and gorkom of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine passed fourteen resolutions in the second half of 1945 . . . and undertook the execution not even of a single one." Twenty-seven corrective directives were issued to the above organizations (*Pravda Ukrainy*, March 6, 1946, pp. 1-2). *Pravda* complained that the Kharkov Party organization did not utilize the 76 clubs and reading rooms at its disposal for political work (May 20, 1946, p. 2). *Sovetskaia Belorussia* bewailed the total disintegration of 500 political-education circles which once existed in Grodno (July 14, 1946, p. 2).

27. *Pravda Ukrainy*, September 1, 1946, p. 1; *Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 2 (November 1946), p. 66. The Sixteenth Congress of the Ukrainian Communist Party at several points went on record as condemning in the severest terms "bourgeois nationalism" (*XVIZ'izd KP(B)U* on p. 176 particularly attacked nationalist influence in arts and letters). And the Seventeenth Congress of the Ukrainian Communist Party was informed that "bourgeois nationalism is the most lively and politically dangerous survival of capitalism in the people's minds. We must unmask any manifestations of bourgeois nationalism, wherever it might be expressed" (*Pravda Ukrainy*, September 25, 1952).

28. *Pravda*, August 23, 1946, p. 2. See also N. Khrushchev's "On Some Questions of Intra-Party Work," *Pravda Ukrainy*, June 8 1946, p. 2.

29. *Pravda*, August 23, 1946, p. 2.

30. *Pravda Ukrainy*, September 21, 1946, p. 2. Lvov as well as other western regions of the Ukraine were considered particularly deficient in their work, and were frequently subjected to severe criticism. See, for example, *Pravda Ukrainy*, August 4, 1946, p. 2. An article entitled "Improper Attitude of the Lvov Regional Party Committee towards Critique and Self-critique" attacked the Party secretary and sketched a gory picture of confusion, favoritism, and fraud (*Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 2, November 1946, p. 61). By summer 247 workers of the Lvov Party organizations were said to have been replaced; in one district the turnover was so high that

16 positions had been held by 42 people (*Pravda Ukraïny*, July 6, 1946, p. 2).

31. *Sovetskaïa Belorussia*, December 21, 1946, p. 2.
32. *Ibid.*, December 20, 1946, p. 2.
33. *Ibid.*, November 29, 1946, p. 3.
34. *Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 2 (January 1947), p. 39.
35. *Pravda Ukraïny*, August 25, 1945, p. 1.
36. *Ibid.*, September 11, 1946, p. 2.
37. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1946, p. 2.
38. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1946, p. 3.
39. *Ibid.*, September 10, 1946, p. 3.
40. *Sovetskaïa Belorussia*, November 29, 1946, p. 3. In addition to the above, 67 Party district committees were reported to have been changed in the Minsk region during the last two years.
41. For additional criticisms of the Lvov organization, see *Izvestia*, May 13, 1949, p. 2; *New York Times*, February 19, 1950.
42. *Pravda*, June 2, 1952, p. 2. The removal of the Lvov and Zhitomir obkom secretaries was also announced.
43. XVI Z'ezd KP(B)U puts the total membership at 572,950 members and 111,325 candidates (p. 46). The figures released at the Seventeenth Congress, as published in *Pravda Ukraïny*, September 25, 1952 (L. G. Melnikov reporting for the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party), put the number of members at 676,190 and candidates at 101,642. During the reporting period 119,049 new members and 115,729 candidates were admitted. It is conceivable that the actual number unaccounted for may be much higher; for lack of evidence to the contrary, it was assumed that all new members were formerly candidates. If, however, some of the new members, for instance, soldiers or Komsomolites, were promoted rapidly to membership, then the total of those unaccounted would be considerably higher.
44. "In connection with the growth of Party ranks, because of the return from the Red Army of large numbers of Communists, the district VKP(b) committees have a major opportunity to strengthen the agricultural organizations and to raise their role in the fulfilment of the agricultural-political objectives, which face the countryside" (I. Afanas'ev, "On Strengthening the Primary Party Organizations in the Collective Farms," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 7-8, April 1946, p. 22). In all the Soviet republics special efforts were made to build up the Communist Party's strength in the agricultural areas. In Azerbaïdzhan, for instance, it was reported at the end of 1946 that there were 24,598 "Communists" in agriculture (*Bakïnskii rabochii*, December 27, 1946, p. 1). By April of 1947, the figure grew to 35,000 (*ibid.*, April 4, 1947, p. 2). In Kazakhstan, the Party secretary reported that the Party had about 70,000 members and candidates working in over 5,800 collective farms (*Kazakhstanskaïa pravda*, November 7, 1947, p. 3).

The extent of the abuses is illustrated by the following data from Georgia: after the adoption of more energetic measures, the following "stolen" items

were returned to the collective farms — 7,779 hectares of land, 6,926 head of cattle, 27,977 sheep and goats, 61,826 head of poultry, 92,915,817 rubles in cash. High absenteeism was also reported: in one district 40.9 per cent of the farmers failed to perform a single workday unit (*Zaria vostoka*, September 16, 1952).

Factors like the above prompted the policy of amalgamation of the collective farms, limiting their number, and thereby increasing the effectiveness of political controls over them. The scattered Party members could be organized more easily into primary Party organizations to direct the activities of the collectives. In an article entitled "Work of Party organizations on Amalgamated Collective Farms," it was explained that "the entire work of the district Party Committee is now organized in such a way as to penetrate as deeply as possible into the life of the collective farm Party organizations, heighten their responsibility for rapid development of the communal economy and generalize, study and spread the best methods of their work" (*Pravda*, September 11, 1950, p. 2). With the decrease in the number of collective farms, the number of agricultural primary Party organizations grew percentagewise.

45. "Constantly Raise and Educate the Leading Cadres of the Collective Farms" (editorial), *Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 5 (March 1947).

46. *Pravda*, September 17, 1950. For earlier trends in Kazakhstan, see *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, particularly 1946 and 1947. For reports from other areas, see "On the Work with Cadres in the Smolensk region," *Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 12 (June 1947), p. 63 — 2,118, or 39 per cent, of collective farm chairmen changed during 1946; *ibid.*, no. 17 (September 1947), p. 60 — in Saratov region 58 per cent of collective farm chairmen changed during the preceding year and a half.

47. *Zaria vostoka* reports that the Minister of Agriculture of Georgia was removed (September 16, 1952). *Bakinskii rabochii* reports the removal of responsible officials of the State Farms Ministry, Fishing Ministry, and Ministry of Lumber Industry of Azerbaidzhan (May 26, 1951).

48. *Zaria vostoka*, September 16, 1952. For additional data see the statement of the Azerbaidzhan State Control Ministry on Various acts of malfeasance and fraud (*Bakinskii rabochii*, October 25, 1946, p. 2).

49. *Pravda*, January 3, 1950, p. 2.

50. *Bakinskii rabochii*, September 7, 1946, p. 2.

51. *Bakinskii rabochii*, November 16, 1946, p. 2.

52. *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, November 19, 1947.

53. *Bakinskii rabochii*, September 25, 1946.

54. *New York Times* correspondence from Moscow, June 8, 1952.

55. *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, September 21, 1952.

56. *Pravda*, July 6, 1951, p. 2.

57. In the Krasnodar region, for example, the *Adygeiskaia pravda* exposed one comrade Barsukov as a fraudulent embezzler, who sold factory supplies for personal gain. "Instead of supporting the newspaper and bring-

ing to task those who were obviously guilty of antistate acts, the Maikop city Party Committee bureau and its secretary, D. Cherninko, tried to suppress the criticism. For two months they tried to get the editor of the newspaper to 'rehabilitate' Barsukov and punish the article's author." Only after the dismissal of the Party secretary did a more positive attitude towards such critique develop (*Pravda*, December 30, 1949, p. 2).

58. *Pravda*, January 11, 1952, p. 2.

59. A. Fadeyev, "Murdism as a Tool of the Aggressive Policy of Turkey and Britain in Northwest Caucasus in the Nineteenth Century," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 9 (September 1951), pp. 76-96; "Eighteenth Congress of the Azerbaidzhan Communist Party," *Pravda*, May 29, 1951. A Stalin prize, awarded for a work on Shamil, was recalled in keeping with such sentiments (*Izvestia*, May 14, 1950, p. 2).

60. *Zaria vostočka*, September 16, 1952. Other attacks, indicative of such a trend: "Encounter with a Woman in a Veil," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 24, 1950, p. 2; "Plenary Session of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers of Uzbekistan," *ibid.*, August 28, 1951, p. 2; "Concerning Certain Questions of the History of Central Asian Peoples" (editorial), *Voprosy istorii*, no. 4 (April 1951). This last article stressed the "progressive" impact of the annexation of these areas by the Russians. In that vein, see also Yu. Tarasov's "On the Nature of the 1916 Movement in Turkmenia," *ibid.*, no. 9 (September 1951), pp. 111-117; *Pravda*, October 7, 1952, quoting Bagirov's speech. Even the incumbent secretary of the Kazakh Central Committee, who seems to enjoy the confidence of his superiors, was criticized for occasional lapses into nationalism: "Zh. Shaiakhmetov admitted he had personally erred when, in 1944, he published an article in the newspaper *Sotsialistik Kazakhstan* in which, along with the true heroes of the Kazakh people, he listed the reactionaries Kenesary, Ablai and Naurazbai" (*Pravda*, October 20, 1951, p. 2). His colleague secretary Omarov, who was responsible for ideological questions, was also criticized in this *Pravda* article.

61. *Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 8 (1947), p. 37. For this research item, as well as for those cited in notes 62 and 69, I am indebted to Mr. H. Rigby's outstanding manuscript study of the social composition of the CPSU (University of Canberra).

62. *Partiinaia zhizn*, no. 5 (1948), p. 27.

63. There is some evidence to suggest that individual Politburo members were sometimes placed in charge of specific republics, for the political and economic condition of which they were responsible (see the chapters on the prewar purges). Postwar events point also to Kaganovich's continued interest in the Ukraine as well as to Beria's attention to Georgian problems. For an explicit statement of the latter, see the text of the letter sent by the Fifteenth Congress of the Georgian Communist Party to Beria, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. 4, no. 41, p. 20.

64. Complete data on changes in the economic organizations in the various republics is not available; we are limited to those items which refer in passing to changes or removals in ministries or agencies. Among those

changed were the Ministers of Construction Materials and of Trade in Armenia, as well as the head of the Erevan section of the Transcaucasian railroad (*New York Times*, September 28, 1952); the Minister of Auto Transport, the Minister of Procurements, and "business and industrial trusts and large enterprises" officials in Azerbaidzhan (*Bakinskii rabochii*, May 26, 1951); otherwise unspecified "bureaucrats" in Kazakhstan, including the Minister of Justice, relieved for "moral corruption" (*Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, September 21, 1952); and administrative personnel in the economic organizations of Uzbekistan, where the turnover was described as "also great" (*Pravda*, September 28, 1952).

65. *Bakinskii rabochii*, May 26, 1951. The Party Secretary, D. Bagirov, commenting on the changes, remarked "it must be said that these organizations do not work badly now." That they have been working "badly" for some time is indicated by the changes reported back in 1946 (*ibid.*, February 16, 1947).

66. *Pravda*, September 17, 1952, p. 2.

67. *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, December 16, 1951. The director of the State Publishing House was also fired for nepotism (*ibid.*, September 21, 1952). The scale of these changes, however, is somewhat below the immediate postwar rate. For instance, in the important Karaganda region 26 per cent of administrative workers were changed in 1945; in the Party apparatus of the region 382 workers were removed from their posts, and the Cadres Secretary was fired for deficiencies in Party work (*ibid.*, July 13, 1946, p. 2).

68. *Pravda*, September 28, 1952, p. 2.

69. *Sovetskaia Kirgizia*, September 21, 1952.

70. *Pravda*, February 27, 1949, p. 2.

71. *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, December 16, 1951, p. 6. In 1952 at the time of the Sixth Kazakh Congress, the total membership was put at 231,610, indicating a minute growth during the preceding year.

72. Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, p. 235.

73. *Pravda*, January 27, 1949, p. 2.

74. *Bakinskii rabochii*, May 26, 1951, p. 1.

75. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1952. Comparative data for some of the other areas indicates a small growth in the Moscow organization, which, however, with a much smaller population than the Ukraine, had about the same number of Party members (*Izvestia*, February 2, 1949; *Pravda*, October 9, 1952), and a considerable growth in the Leningrad organization Party ranks, from about 200,000 to about 300,000 members (*ibid.*, May 31, 1950, p. 2).

76. A specific problem, which could not be discussed here, was presented by the presence of considerable numbers of Soviet military forces abroad. Reports from defectors seem to point to the year 1947 as the beginning of a "crack-down." In 1947 a wave of arrests started among the members of the Kommandantura," said one defector, who then fled to the west (Harvard Project, no. 381, p. 48). In the words of another: "At the end of 1947 there began a purge of personnel of political unreliability. I received

an order to return to Moscow because as a highly qualified specialist there was great need for my specialty in the Soviet Union. Although the order was very formal and there were no indications of any special suspicion I believed that I was ordered back for the purge" (no. 25, p. 4). Another defector, a former high official in the administration of eastern Germany, having discussed the trial of some of the officials of his administration, stated in reply to the question of how many of his administration were arrested: "I would say that at least 20 per cent were arrested in a period of three years and are now sitting . . . In addition, there were about 30 (of about 120) who were sent back to the Soviet Union but were not arrested . . ." He added that he did not think his office was unique in this respect (no. 532, p. 27). This defector was considered highly reliable, and even flown to London for special consultation. The existing atmosphere is well portrayed by the following statement of a former Soviet lieutenant: "When we were living in the barracks, we had a big portrait of Zhukov on the wall. And one day we got an order to take this down. This meant that Zhukov had fallen from favour, and everybody asked why. Zhukov was a very popular man with the soldiers. Nobody could answer" (no. 117, p. 6).

77. Editorial in *Pravda*, August 22, 1949, p. 1.

78. L. Slepov, "The Force of the Leninist-Stalinist Teachings on the Communist Party," *ibid.*, April 25, 1949, p. 2.

79. Substance to these demands was supplied by a series of scathing attacks on leading theorists, scholars, and artists. The historians, both Russian and non-Russian, were attacked for ignoring the essential Russian historical and cultural contribution, and for unduly stressing western influence and legacy (see A. A. Zhdanov, "Discussion of G. F. Aleksandrov's book 'History of Western European Philosophy,'" *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 16, August 1947; G. Kuzmin, "Questions of History of Soviet Society in a School Text-Book," *Kultura i zhizn'*, July 21, 1950, p. 3, wherein A. M. Pankratova is criticized for overemphasizing the Western role in the Second World War. Professor Pankratova, nevertheless, was elected to the Central Committee of the CPSU(B) in 1952). The economists, after the well-known Varga debate, were accused of cosmopolitanism and "bourgeois-objectivism" ("Session of the Learned Council of the Economics Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 3, 1949, pp. 166ff.). In arts and letters, attacks were made on nationalist emphasis on folklore and neglect for the Russian contribution (*Pravda*, June 2, 1952, p. 2). See also the "Transcript of the Conference of Musicians at the Central Committee of the CPSU(B)" (Moscow, January 1948), abstracts from which appeared in *News from Behind the Iron Curtain*, vol. 2, no. 1 (New York, January 1953), pp. 38-41.

80. Symptomatic of this, for instance, is the fact that in Azerbaidzhan, during an intensive campaign against shortcomings in Party activities, out of 17 district Party committees which held conferences between December 1946 and mid-March 1947 only one first secretary was removed. In 5

others the second secretary was changed (*Baĭninskii rabochii*, from December 17, 1946 to March 15, 1947). Similarly, in Kazakhstan, where major difficulties existed in the Party and in agriculture (especially as revealed in the 1946 decree on agriculture), few changes were made in the governmental composition between 1946 and 1947: out of the 16 Kazakhstan ministers named in the proceedings of the Kazakh Supreme Soviet during July–August 1946, 14 still held their posts by March 25, 1947 (*Kazakhstanskaiia pravda*).

81. *Izvestia*, June 10, 1947; *Vedomosti*, no. 20 (June 16, 1947); *ibid.*, no. 3 (January 20, 1950), p. 1.

82. This was somewhat less true in the case of the western areas of the USSR where “nationalist deviators” and “foreign agents” were said to have been active.

#### 9. THE PURGE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE STALINIST SUCCESSION

1. *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy* (organ of the Cominform), November 10, 1947, quotes Zhdanov's rather dynamic remarks at the first meeting of the Cominform. For a general analysis, see Adam Ulam's *Titoism and the Cominform* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 47–55.

2. It is of interest to note that the high-water mark in Zhdanov's position marked also the period of a relative eclipse of Malenkov. For example, Malenkov's name was not even mentioned once in connection with the November 1946 celebrations, and he did not appear on the customary picture (*Pravda*, November 8, 1946, p. 1).

3. The best known case is that of N. Voznesensky, whose total eclipse had been effected as early as the spring of 1949, when he was no longer mentioned in the Soviet press and did not appear in the May Day celebrations. Voznesensky was charged with overemphasizing the “law of value” in economics, and with creating the impression that economic laws can be determined by the will of man. Voznesensky's position was attacked viciously in late 1952 by M. A. Suslov, who impugned Voznesensky's “Marxism” and castigated his position as heretically contrary to the teachings of Stalin (*Pravda*, December 24, 1952, p. 2). Suslov's article revealed for the first time that the Central Committee had passed a resolution on July 13, 1949, removing the editor of the journal *Bolshevik*, P. N. Fedoseyev, for “servile glorification of Voznesensky's book *The War Economy of the USSR in the Period of the Patriotic War*.” Giving an interesting insight into Soviet practices, the accusation was made that editors of the journal inserted new text “into articles reaching the magazine without the knowledge of the authors of these articles, the new text being such as to alter radically the content of these articles.” The full measure of Voznesensky's fall was indicated by the wording of the resolution, which referred to him without the customary “comrade,” suggesting thereby his exclusion from the Party.

4. Significant organizational changes were also made in the Party

machinery. For further detail see Louis Nemzer's "The Kremlin's Professional Staff," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 44, no. 1 (1950), p. 68.

5. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, nos. 5-6 (March 1946), p. 1.

6. *XVI Z'izd KP(b)U* cited as honorary delegates all the members of the Politburo and the Central Committee secretaries. Popov was listed among them, but Kuznetsov was not. Ponomarenko and Suslov already appeared among them. Popov and Kuznetsov joined the Party in 1926 and 1925 respectively.

7. *Pravda*, January 19, 1950.

8. Khrushchev was replaced in the Ukraine by L. G. Melnikov (*Izvestia*, December 18, 1949).

9. These included, among others, P. S. Popkov, member of the Lenin-grad Presidium; I. T. Goliakov, head of the Supreme Soviet; I. V. Shikin, GPUVS head; M. I. Rodionov, RSFSR Premier, etc.

10. For details, see Brzezinski, "The Permanent Purge and Soviet Totalitarianism" (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1953), pp. 283-285.

11. For an explicit admission to this effect, see the text of the letter sent by the Fifteenth Congress of the Georgian Communist Party to Beria, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. 4, no. 41, p. 20.

12. The local leadership was accused of deviating from "the Stalinist type of leadership" and tolerating local satrapies which would have "left to the Communist Party of Georgia and the Government of the Georgian Republic only empty space." Charges of "bourgeois nationalism" were also prominent. These charges were made by A. I. Mgeladze, commenting at the Fifteenth Georgian Communist Party Congress on the removal of his predecessor during the June 1952 Plenary Session of the Georgian Communist Party Central Committee, attended by Beria (*Zaria vostoka*, September 16, 1952).

13. Statement by A. I. Kochlavashvili, the Georgian MGB Minister, in *Zaria vostoka*, September 24, 1952.

14. This hypothesis is suggested by the fact that when these arrests were repudiated in the spring of 1953 (presumably by Beria), not all of those involved made their reappearance.

15. One example is the removal of the Armenian Second Party Secretary, A. Pogosov, for moral depravity (*Pravda*, September 27, 1952). Other changes involved Azerbaidzhan, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, etc.

16. *Pravda*, October 6, 1952.

17. *Ibid.*

18. For a complete breakdown, see Leo Gruliov, *Recent Soviet Policies* (New York, 1953), pp. 237-243.

19. Ponomarenko worked in Moscow following his 1948 transfer to the central apparatus; Brezhnev distinguished himself in the reconstruction of the Dnepropetrovsk organization and was later promoted to supplant criticized Moldavian leadership (*XVI Z'izd KP(b)U*, pp. 5, 77, 194; *Pravda*, April 4, 1951; *Ost-Probleme*, no. 49, 1952, pp. 1676-1678). The new

Secretariat members also belonged to the postrevolutionary Party generation: Brezhnev joined the Party in 1931, Ignatov in 1924, Mikhailov in 1930, Ponomarenko in 1925. Of the remaining two members, Pegov, responsible for light industry, joined in 1930; and Suslov, on the Secretariat since 1947, in 1921. (The mean was thus about 1927.)

20. The "younger men" represented, at best, only about a third of the Presidium. See Gruliov, *Recent Soviet Policies*, p. 243, for a complete listing.

21. A clear and energetic statement of such aims was given at the celebration of the twenty-ninth anniversary of Lenin's death, by Mikhailov, the new Secretariat member (*Pravda*, January 22, 1953, p. 2).

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Pravda*, January 13, 1953, p. 1.

24. This theme was repeated in "Careless People—Accomplices of the Enemy," *Pravda*, January 31, 1953, p. 3.

25. That this, however, was not connected with simultaneous anti-Zionist campaigns conducted by the satellite regimes is suggested by the fact that when this campaign stopped in the USSR, it was still continued outside, e.g., Matern's speech in Germany on May 19, Radio Bratislava's anti-Zionist broadcast on May 15, and the second Slansky trial at the end of May 1953.

26. Beria was listed in most Soviet announcements after Stalin's death as second in order, immediately after Malenkov.

27. A significant aspect of the governmental and Party reorganization after Stalin's death was the temporary elimination from the top Party counsels of the younger men, imported during the Nineteenth Party Congress. Malenkov was surrounded by the old guard, which thus checked any too far-reaching ambitions on his part.

28. *Pravda*, March 28, 1953.

29. *Ibid.*, April 3, 1953.

30. Editorial in *ibid.*, April 6, 1953.

31. His removal was announced on April 7, 1953 (*Pravda, Izvestia*). For new Secretariat membership see Gruliov, *Recent Soviet Policies*.

32. It is of interest to note that *Zaria vostoka*, the Georgian Party organ, in its coverage of the Stalin funeral, quoted extensively only from Malenkov, ignoring the other two speakers (March 11, 1953). At least one of Beria's alleged supporters was arrested as early as April 1952 (*New York Times*, April 22, 1953, p. 14).

33. *Zaria vostoka*, April 28, 1953.

34. *Ibid.*, April 15, 1953.

35. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1953.

36. *Ibid.*, April 21, 22, 29, May 5, 1953.

37. One example is Byelorussia, where five Justice Ministers were named between March and June 1953. More extensive changes, however, were generally made in the Caucasian republics.

38. In Estonia, V. I. Moskalenko, appointed MVD head on April 28

(*Sovetskāia Estonia*, April 28, 1953), was replaced by M. K. Krassman on May 30 (*ibid.*, May 30). Krassman was in turn replaced by J. Y. Lombak on September 6 (*ibid.*, September 6). If Krassman, however, was a Beria man, the above indicates that Beria appointments were considerably delayed in Estonia as contrasted with the rest of the country. In Latvia, N. K. Kovalchuk, appointed MVD head in early April (*Sovetskāia Latvia*, April 1, 1953), was replaced by I. V. Zujans at the beginning of June (*ibid.*, June 4, 1953). Zujans still seemed to be at his post by October of the same year.

39. One eminent Eastern European told the author that he was so advised by a Communist colleague after the latter's somewhat agitated return from a Party meeting in early June 1953.

40. The report from the Plenary Session of the Ukrainian Central Committee stated in part: "The session noted that the Central Committee bureau and the Central Committee Secretary had committed distortions of the Lenin-Stalin national policy of our Party, distortions expressed in the harmful practice of advancing to leading Party and Soviet work in western provinces of the Ukraine officials predominantly from other provinces of the Ukraine Republic and in converting to the Russian language the teaching in Western Ukraine higher educational institutions" (*Pravda*, June 13, 1953, p. 2).

41. Meshik's appointment as Ukrainian MVD Minister was announced on April 11, 1953 in *Pravda Ukraïny*. He was reported executed on December 23, 1953.

42. December 23, 1953.

43. The quotation, taken from a statement by the new Georgian Party secretary and broadcast by the Tiflis radio, is as follows: "The Georgian people thrice curse this monster whose hands are stained with the blood of hundreds of thousands of the best sons of the entire Soviet people, including the Georgian people" (*New York Times*, February 22, 1954).

44. Merkulov's complicity is suggested by the fact that A. N. Rapava, one of the leading Georgian Communists arrested in 1952 and freed by Beria in the spring of 1953, was appointed Minister of State Control during the April 1953 shuffle. Merkulov presumably, in his capacity as USSR Minister of State Control, was connected with this appointment, or, at least, made to bear responsibility for it.

45. After the liquidation of Beria, a few stories appeared in the Soviet press which were critical of the MVD. This unprecedented attitude, however, was rather limited in scope and restricted itself to the lower MVD functionaries. See *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. 5, no. 30, p. 16.

46. Other changes: Byelorussia — premier, first vice-premier, justice; Estonia — MVD, justice, shale industry, MVD again; Kazakhstan — three vice-premiers (more extensive changes in early 1954); Latvia — MVD, state control, second Party secretary; Lithuania — MVD, two Party secretaries; Moldavia — Party secretary, justice, premier, three vice-premiers; Ukraine — state control, first Party secretary, MVD, three vice-premiers; Uzbekistan — premier, vice-premier, education. The above is not an exhaustive list but

considering the short period of time involved (April–September 1953) it does indicate a certain pattern.

47. Bagirov's biography is given in *Bakinskii rabochii*, January 25, 1946. It is interesting to note that Zh. Shaiakhmetov, purged early in 1954 as Kazakhstan's first secretary (to some extent because of agricultural difficulties), had lengthy police experience: having been a rural teacher, he served in the local militia between 1922 and 1925; then between 1928 and 1938 he served in various NKVD posts prior to becoming first secretary in Kazakhstan in 1939 (*Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, June 23, 1946).

48. *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, December 24, 1954.

49. Boris I. Nicolaevsky maintains that the Jewish doctors' plot was aimed also against Malenkov, and that only Stalin's timely death saved him then. Subsequently, during Beria's "counteroffensive" in the spring of 1953, Malenkov switched sides, either because he feared that Beria was going too far or that his attempt was doomed to fail. See *New Leader*, February 21, 1955.

50. It is interesting to note that within a year after Stalin's death, at least 10 to 12 per cent of Central Committee members (elected by the Nineteenth Party Congress) were dropped.

51. *New York Times*, February 22, 1954, quoting radio Tiflis, Georgia.

52. This is to some extent borne out by figures cited previously for the Georgian Communist Party. Despite a constant series of purges lasting in an intensive form at least two years, only some 3,000 Party members were purged out of about 170,000 (according to Soviet statistics). These were clearly the Party leaders and their *apparatchiki*; the rank and file of the Party was not directly involved, and silently obeyed and followed each successive leadership.

## 10. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. The postwar period seems to offer further substantiation for the general propositions advanced in this study, not only in terms of the Soviet Union but also on the basis of the experience of the various Communist regimes established in states under Soviet control. In all these states the gradual but ever increasing process of strengthening the controls of the regime in power was accompanied by a recourse to the technique of the purge. But it was only after the elimination of the primary sources of potential challenges for political power that the Communist regimes were able to undertake on a more serious scale internal purges of their own organizations. The first and most energetic purges occurred in those states in which the Communist parties were the most secure and hence most able to "purge themselves in order to strengthen themselves." The need for such purges arose not only out of the growing charges of Titoism and bourgeois nationalism, but actually out of the changing conditions of Communist rule. With political power in their hands, the Communist parties ceased being mere instruments of a revolutionary struggle for power, but actual wielders of it. The purges of the Communist parties which have recently taken on such a

violent form are therefore a direct part of the process which has been underway for some years, involving a shift in the balance of power within these parties. Apart from the purely nationalist-deviationist issue of Titoism, an effort is being made within these parties to replace the trained Moscow revolutionaries with equally pliable but more palatable administrators and rulers. The Party, which now must govern monopolistically, needs not only devoted servants of the Kremlin but also efficient and able executives, who can succeed in achieving the goals set up. They must be able to direct the local populations and derive from them a maximum of effort. The Slanskys and the Paukers were unable to do these things and hence became expendable. Their violent elimination was the last symbolic gesture in this process. The future, however, may create new conditions and new needs for a purge even of the purgers. (The issue of anti-Semitism provides additional stimulus to this process. Anti-Semitism is, however, a transient feature of this process and hence is not treated in more detail. It seems to have become a useful weapon for the exploitation of certain inherent prejudices for the achievement of specific goals. But, nonetheless, it seems to be no more than a weapon which, when its usefulness is exhausted, will probably be discarded.)

2. For example, Radio Moscow announced on February 12, 1954 that "drastic measures" are being taken to improve the political and agricultural situation in Kazakhstan. The old Shaiakhmetov leadership was accordingly replaced by Ponomarenko and Brezhnev, two of the more rapidly rising young Party leaders.

3. See, for example, *Pravda*, February 3, 1955, Khrushchev's speech; *Partiinaiia zhizn*, no. 3 (February 1955), lead article on current goals of the Party.

4. George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 4 (July 1947), pp. 556-582.

## APPENDIX II

1. *Rabochii* (Minsk), May 22, 1937.

2. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1937, p. 2.

3. See, for example, "Beat the Polish Spies without Mercy," *ibid.*, August 2, 1937, p. 2.

4. *Rabochii*, June 16, 1937, Sharangovich's report to the Sixteenth Congress of the Byelorussian Communist Party.

5. A vigorous attack on Goloded appeared in *Rabochii*, June 8, 1937.

6. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1937, p. 1.

7. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1937, p. 2. Sharandovich was condemned to death in March 1938, together with the other national leaders like Ikramov and Khodzhaev.

8. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, nos. 56-57 (1937), p. 2.

9. See *Rabochii*, August 8; *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, October 9, 1937.

10. As usual, the heads of such organizations were most exposed. One former Soviet citizen, a Byelorussian, states in an offhand manner that "in 1937 and 1938 in our district there was a purge which removed the secre-

taries of the district and other organization" (Harvard Project, no. 379, p. 11).

11. "Wrecking Activities in the Minsk City Soviet," *Rabochii*, August 8, 1937; "The Minsk City Soviet Ignores the Electorate's Instructions," *Sovetskaiia Belorussia*, October 6, 1937; *ibid.*, October 9, 1937.

12. Sharandovich, for instance, confessed to both: he "admitted" having been a Polish intelligence agent for some eighteen years, and to having directed a nationalist conspiracy.

13. The list is not exhaustive and is based on the only evidence available, namely the local press.

14. In the words of a Byelorussian peasant: "In 1937 and 1938 the government people came and without saying anything, without setting up courts, they just took away several of these families who were on our farm; and when you think that these were all old people who were taken, that they couldn't even sign their names, they were all illiterate. The government people came and they just declared these to be the enemies of the people and arrested them. So you can see that we were always living in constant fear of them, that one of these days they would come and arrest us as they had arrested these families" (Harvard Project, no. 379, p. 5).

15. The most crucial period of purging in Byelorussia was probably September. It has been Soviet practice to conduct a vigorous denunciatory campaign during the actual purge, while the trials come later as educational functions.

16. "In Armenia Deductions from the Resolution of the Plenum of the CC of CPSU(B) Have Not Been Made," *Pravda*, May 17, 1937, p. 4; *ibid.*, September 28, 1937, p. 2. *Zaria vostoka* reports that Guloian's successor, Rakhmanov, was also removed (October 8, 1937). The purge of the agricultural institutions of Armenia, indicating difficulties in this field, culminated in a major trial of the personnel of the Agriculture Commissariat, headed by the commissar and his departmental heads. All confessed to wrecking and to plotting to tear Armenia away from its Soviet bosom. All were sentenced to death (*ibid.*, December 30, 1937). Armenian Party leadership underwent a more restricted purge in 1937, a reference to which is made in the May 17 issue of *Pravda*.

17. *Pravda*, May 18, 1937, p. 2.

18. *Pravda*, June 5, 1937. In the crucially important railroad Party organization the proportion was even higher: Party committee membership was changed by 45.1 per cent (*Zaria vostoka*, July 30, 1937, p. 2).

19. *Ibid.*, July 10, 12, 1937. An account of Mdivani's conflict with Stalin over the national issues appears in *Biulleten' oppositsii*, nos. 56-57 (1937), p. 7.

20. *Zaria vostoka*, September 24, 29, 1937.

21. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1937.

22. *Zaria vostoka* reports the trial and sentencing to death of a number of kolhoz and MTS personnel (August 26, 29, 1937); and the mass trial of veterinarians, accused of sabotage and wrecking (December 1, 2, 15).

23. *Ibid.*, December 20, 1937.

24. Ouralov, *Staline au pouvoir*, pp. 163-165.
25. The tragic history of the Chechen-Ingush was climaxed by their deportation and presumable destruction in February 1944, following the re-establishment of Soviet rule, as punishment for the support which they gave to the German invaders. The official announcement was not made till June 1946.
26. The 1939 population was estimated at 697,000 (Frank Lorimer, *The Population of the Soviet Union* (Geneva, 1946), p. 242.
27. *Pravda*, September 8, 1937, p. 4.
28. "The Victors over Bourgeois Nationalism," *Zaria vostočka*, September 23, 1937, p. 2.
29. A. Uralov, *Narodoubiistvo v SSSR — Ubiistvo Chechenskogo naroda* (Munich, 1952). The author's real name is A. Avtorkhanov, and under that name he published in the USSR between 1930 and 1936 a number of historical works, primarily about the Chechen-Ingush. He is also the author of *Staline au pouvoir*.
30. This technique has been employed repeatedly by Soviet authorities towards the captive nations. After the occupation of eastern Poland and the Baltic states, and the subsequent arrest of the local leaders, a policy of mass deportations was commenced which aimed primarily at the local intellectuals, professionals, former government and army personnel, students, etc. This effectively knocked the bottom out of any potential resistance.
31. Ouralov, *Staline au pouvoir*, pp. 163, 170.

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