

STALIN'S RUSSIA

The Stalin-Trotsky power struggle

Trotsky 'possessed neither the ability nor the willpower for in-fighting' (M.McCauley). He failed to understand that in order to launch an attack a power base is essential and Trotsky failed to build one - even after Lenin's suggestion in December 1922 that they build a 'bloc against bureaucratism in general and the Orgburo in particular'. Trotsky's vituperative (vicious) attack on Kamenev and Zinoviev in 1924 in his *Lessons of October* convinced them of their need to fear him and made an alliance with Stalin more likely. Trotsky, a bitter opponent of Lenin between 1904-17, was very vulnerable to counter-attack.

Trotsky's resignation from the post of Commissar for War in January 1925 was a serious folly since it cut him off from his only power base - the Red Army. He lacked both the ability and interest to administer and organise on a day to day basis - where Stalin excelled. His true talents only emerged when faced by crises of an immediate nature. When Stalin had him exiled to Soviet Asia in January 1928 Trotsky 'found out too late that in a one-party state, which he had helped to build, there is no legal way of voicing dissent'.

The failure of Zinoviev and Kamenev before 1926 to recognise that the real threat came from Stalin and not Trotsky is a puzzle but like Trotsky, they had misunderstood Stalin. They also underestimated and failed to appreciate the skill with which he had built up both a power base and a reputation for moderation within the party. Stalin also realised the basic popularity of the Left's rapid industrialisation programme and its anti-kulak policy and he was quick to adopt these once he had defeated the Left. Bukharin stood no chance against someone of Stalin's ability - especially when committed to a deeply unpopular (within the party) pro-peasant policy. Bukharin perhaps sensed this when in 1927 he too made anti-kulak noises but to no avail.

During this year (1927) the differences between the Right and the Left were at their narrowest - once Bukharin had declared his hostility to the kulaks. It was necessary, therefore, for Stalin to create another crisis - that of the invasion threat and collapse of the international workers' movement (General Strike's defeat in GB in 1926; the crushing of Chinese Communists in 1927) to ensure a mood of tension and near hysteria inside the party to be able to dispose of the Right during 1928-29: rapid industrialisation was a matter of urgency to build up the Soviet Union to withstand the encircling capitalist powers and so the NEP (and the Right) must go. And so they did with Bukharin expelled from the CC in November 1929.

The Right Opposition

In the early months of 1928 a Right Opposition began to organise itself just as the LO had been defeated. Bukharin and Rykov, its leading exponents, opposed the dismantling of the NEP. Bukharin found himself in the difficult role of now opposing the man with whom he had been a close ally - Stalin. His words of criticism of this 'Genghis Khan' did not ring true with some. From his point of view, entering into secret discussions with the remnants of the defeated LO proved a politically disastrous step. Unable to form a faction, the RO could not make their policies public or build mass support. The loss of their two power bases - the Moscow Party and Tomsy's Central Council of Trade Unions - in 1928 to Stalinist apparatchiks signalled their complete isolation and defeat (though Rykov retained his position as head of the Soviet government until 1930). The programme of the Rightists, however sensible and pragmatic, offered little to a Party desperate for success and revolutionary fervour.

The depth of personal animosity among these Marxists is also surprising: 'Zinoviev hated Trotsky, Trotsky hated Zinoviev, Bukharin hated Trotsky, Trotsky hated Stalin, Stalin hated Trotsky and Bukharin came to hate Stalin.' As Lenin had earlier remarked - 'In politics spite generally plays the basest of roles'.

SOVIET CULTURE UNDER STALIN

Education

During the 1920s progressive educational theories swept through the Soviet education system. Formal teaching was abandoned, textbooks, individual testing of academic standards and homework were all discredited [such traditions still live on in the Chesham Soviet Republic of Peoples' Sixth Formers]. Between 1931 - 34 these tendencies were sharply reversed. All of the above were reinstated with added attention to discipline and teacher authority. University entrance requirements were restored on academic rather than political criteria as were degree examinations. History texts were rewritten. Out the window went the dry, Marxist histories of class conflict, without names and heroes. Stalin ordered new history books. These new books were written by conventional 'bourgeois' historians, disgraced in the early 1920s. Heroes were restored to prominence and great figures from the past, such as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, were rediscovered as great patriots and the founding fathers of modern Russia. Their authoritarian ruthlessness was seen to be a necessary feature in that success - enter J. Stalin. Among the most successful of these writers in terms of entertainment value was Neilovich Demarkovski.

Patriotism

A new patriotism manifested itself - heavily laced with good old Russian nationalism. The term 'motherland' - despised by the old Bolsheviks - came back into common use. Although xenophobia (hatred of foreigners) was a feature of this new patriotism, anti-semitism was not. That said, there were far fewer prominent Jews in the party than there had been previously.

'Wimmin'

Motherhood and the virtues of family life replaced the feminism of the 1920s which had seen the legalisation of abortion and divorce. Personal sexual behaviour was seen as a matter for the individual - Kollontai had always argued, however, that the personal was political. The rather sexist treatment meted out to her by fellow Bolsheviks on account of her love affair with a man thirteen years her junior reveals that many supposed revolutionaries still retained many bourgeois preconceptions about women. This was the case even in the revolutionary 1920s. This trend was exacerbated (made worse) under Stalin. In the Stalin era divorce became more difficult to attain; homosexuality was made a criminal offence and abortion, legalised by Kollontai's Commissariat for Women's Affairs for the first time anywhere in the world in 1921, followed into illegality in 1936. Gold wedding rings (previously symbols of bourgeois convention) became acceptable again.

However revolting these features of lower middle class (petty-bourgeois) morality may have been to the Bolshevik Old Guard, they were, in Fitzpatrick's words 'almost certainly welcomed by the "Philistine, petty-bourgeois" majority of the Soviet population'. Women were drawn increasingly into the labour market and this was hailed as a triumph for women's equality - and this was certainly true for the peasant women on the kolkhoz. For the first time, they became full members of the kolkhoz (unlike in the old village mir) and took up traditional male jobs, driving tractors etc. On the other hand, the new woman liberated by the Revolution, assertive, independent and committed to abortion and a career in preference to motherhood was no longer in favour. The new message of the 1930s was that motherhood and husbands came first. Women with time on their hands were directed into voluntary service.

A Privileged Bureaucracy

Trotsky in exile characterised Stalin's Russia as a state in which a privileged elite had usurped (seized) power from the proletariat but he maintained that Soviet Russia still retained essentially a socialist character. It would not require another revolution to restore it to the correct path but merely the removal of Stalin and his bureaucracy. In Lenin's time the bureaucracy was kept in check - not in terms of its power which was already considerable but in terms of its privileged status. Most Communist bureaucrats were not allowed to earn more than the average skilled worker's wage. Under Stalin this limit disappeared and the bureaucratic and professional elite enjoyed an immeasurably higher standard of living. The crux of the issue is, though, not whether this elite was privileged (it clearly was) but whether it constituted a new class. If it did, then Stalin had carried out a counter-revolution, overturning the gains of 1917 and restoring a new form of capitalism -. 'state capitalism' in which the proletariat were as much exploited as they had been under the Tsars.

The fact that this bureaucracy was accountable to only Stalin served to strengthen its identity as a class. All systems must have a bureaucracy - the issue is who controls it and how is that control carried out? Lenin would have argued that the bureaucracy under him was accountable to the people via the Soviets but even he admitted that in the early 1920s it was already getting out of control i.e. losing its accountability.

On the other hand, this elite clearly did not own the means of production (factories, businesses etc) and could not, therefore, in Marxist terms, be categorised as a bourgeois class. This was the basis of Stalin's reclassification which stated that Soviet society consisted of two basic classes: the working class and the kolkhoz peasantry. In addition, there existed a stratum, the intelligentsia or white collar group. Class relations of the type under capitalism no longer existed since these classes did not exploit each other as the bourgeoisie had exploited the proletariat.

Exercise 1

1. Explain why
 - a) Trotsky's attack on Zinoviev and Kamenev in 1924
 - b) Trotsky's resignation as C-in-C of the Red Armycan be seen as tactical errors in the struggle with Stalin for leadership of the Party.
- 2 Explain the point of the quotation at the end of the second paragraph
- 3 What evidence is there in the text that Stalin had no real political principles of his own?
- 4 How did events abroad assist Stalin's moves against the right of the Party?
- 5 How did Stalin ensure that education – especially history -served his interests?
- 6 In what ways did the feminism of the 1920s give way to more traditional attitudes towards women in the 1930s?
- 7 What are the arguments in support of the view that Stalin had created a new ruling class of bureaucrats in Russia?

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STALIN'S REVOLUTION

1927: watershed

1927 has already been cited as a significant year in the development of Soviet policy. Soviet concerns of Western encirclement and a series of foreign policy reverses convinced many that an invasion was imminent - hence the grain hoarding and panic buying of consumer goods. But climate of tension was also exploited by both sides in the power struggle.

Trotsky and other Oppositionists blamed the foreign policy setbacks on Stalin - especially the Communist defeat in China. Trotsky also proclaimed that he would continue to criticise Stalin's leadership even if the enemy were at the gates of the capital. To loyal Communists and patriots this sounded like treason and Fitzpatrick claims that this was probably decisive in enabling Stalin's group to defeat Trotsky a few months later. The issue of the threatened Western invasion was also skilfully used by Stalin to justify the extraordinary demands and sacrifices called for by the regime.

This crisis atmosphere was kept alive in the early months of 1928 by a confrontation between the government and the peasantry and by an attack on the old 'bourgeois' experts. The trial in the Shakhty region of a group of bourgeois engineers for sabotage and conspiracy with foreign powers neatly brought together the two current obsessions: internal and external counter-revolution and served to justify yet further repression. The Shakhty trial and others that followed also served to deprive the USSR of the very people it so desperately needed for its modernisation programme. Stalin came to realise this himself and in a 1931 speech called for an end to persecution of bourgeois experts.

The 'scissors crisis' Mark II

The need to accumulate capital to finance the import of foreign technology was as much a feature of the NEP as it was of the Five Year Plans. The NEP had tried to pay low prices to the peasants for grain and charged high prices for its manufactured goods - in practice, though, the free market in grain generally ensured that state prices were never much lower than those of the private sector.

Whenever confrontation with the peasants over the state price of grain loomed, as in 1923-24, the state backed off and upped its grain prices or increased the supply of manufactured goods. In 1927, though, the need for foreign currency from export sales of grain to fund industrial expansion was seen by the regime as more urgent - and the short fall in grain procurement in that year served to exacerbate [make worse] the need and threatened the first Five Year Plan. Stalin's solution - 'the Urals-Siberian method' - was coercion against the kulaks.

Collectivisation

Paying for the foreign machinery needed to modernise Russia's industry was the key economic and political problem which faced the Soviet government in the late 1920s. There were two choices:

1. Encourage greater production by increasing the prices paid by the state to the peasants for their crops. This grain could then be sold abroad and the machinery imported with the foreign currency earned. The peasants could be encouraged to improve their efficiency by persuading them to join larger agricultural collective farms (Kolkhoz) which shared expensive machinery. This policy, essentially, left the NEP intact.
2. Take the grain from the peasants and make them join the Kolkhoz. These would be controlled by the state to ensure the maximum grain output.

Bukharin and the Right Opposition favoured the first method; the Left of the Party, such as Preobrazhensky, favoured the latter - though the Left did not advocate the use of violence to

achieve collectivisation. The problem with the RO position was that it made the Party look as though it was under the control of the 'capitalist;' peasantry. Allowing the peasants to carrying on getting rich under the NEP could only be achieved at the expense of the workers who would have to pay market prices for their food. This was not why the Bolsheviks had taken power. They identified the so-called rich peasants, the Kulaks, as the enemy. These Kulaks employed other peasants to work on their land and were seen as small-scale landowners and capitalists. In fact, only 4% of the rural population could be classified as kulaks. But 62% of the peasantry did own their own land and they felt threatened by collectivisation.

When the grain procurement – the amount the state received, rather than the actual harvest – fell in 1927 (despite a good harvest), the immediate conclusion was that the 'kulaks' were hoarding it to drive up the price. The feeling in the Party was that the greedy peasants must be brought under Communist discipline – hence the Urals-Siberian method of 1928: forcible requisitioning of grain in the manner of War Communism.

In the winter of 1928-29, Stalin tried persuasive means to get the peasants to join the Kolkhoz but this had little effect. Now force would be tried. The free market in grain was abolished so that grain could only be sold to the State. Stalin called for the 'liquidisation of the Kulaks as a class' in December 1929. Thousands of dedicated Communists went into the countryside forcing the peasants to join the Kolkhoz. The peasants responded by slaughtering their animals and burning their grain rather than hand them over. Resisters were arrested and deported to Siberia.

In March 1930 Stalin called a halt to this full-blooded collectivisation drive. In what has become known as his 'Dizzy with Success' speech, Stalin criticised the excess of enthusiasm of the collectivisers and urged a more moderate approach. Thousands of peasants seized their chance to leave the Kolkhoz. In March 1930 50% of peasant families lived in Kolkhoz; by August this had fallen to 21%. This relaxation of policy may have been a ploy by Stalin to get the peasants to sow the 1930 harvest or it may have been a panic reaction by Stalin in the face of so much opposition.

Anyway, in the autumn the campaign re-started: 25,000 Communists re-entered the villages to re-impose collectivisation. By 1932, 62% of peasant families had been forced into the Kolkhoz; by 1937 it had risen to 93%.

The results of Collectivisation

1. The seizure of grain did help to pay for industrialisation but it wasn't until 1937 that grain output reached pre-collectivisation levels.
2. Livestock numbers collapsed and did not reach pre-collectivisation levels until the 1950s.
3. In the long term Soviet agriculture was crippled. Productivity on the Kolkhoz was so low that the government had to relent and allow the peasants to own small private plots and allow them to sell these on the open market. By 1937, 50% of vegetables and 70% of milk came from these privately owned plots.
4. The human effects were catastrophic. In 1932-33 famine raged in southern Russia while food was exported to pay for industrialisation – between five and seven million died.
5. Nineteen million peasants left the land by 1939 to work in the towns, providing valuable labour for the Five-Year Plans.
6. Politically, the power of the state and the Party in the countryside was strengthened. The peasants were firmly under the control of the government.

Cultural Revolution

Stalin's political and economic revolution was accompanied by a cultural one. Its purpose was to intensify the class struggle in the cultural and intellectual sphere with the bourgeois intelligentsia as the class enemy. In the words of Fitzpatrick,

"The purpose of the Cultural Revolution was to establish Communist and proletarian 'hegemony', which in practical terms meant both asserting party control over cultural life and opening up the administrative and professional elite to a new cohort of young Communists and workers".

The Shakhty trial marked the beginning of the CR and enabled Stalin to portray the RO as the protectors of the bourgeois intelligentsia with their suspected nostalgia for the 'good old days' under the Tsar.

However, the CR was much more than an instrument in the struggle with Bukharin. It had a genuine appeal to Communist youth who detested bourgeois liberal dominance of Soviet culture. It also appealed to non-Communist intellectuals at odds with the leadership of their professions. Most prominent in the CR were groups like the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers and the League of Militant Atheists. One aspect of the campaign reflected working class prejudices against intellectuals of whatever political colour, xenophobia and anti-semitism. Stalin, one of the few Bolshevik leaders of humble origins, benefited from the prejudiced climate his CR encouraged.

The dismissal and trial of bourgeois experts created opportunities for young workers and enormous numbers were promoted into managerial posts directly from the shop floor. At least 1.5 million workers moved into white-collar jobs during the First Five Year Plan [Fitzpatrick]. A similar transformation occurred in higher education with some 150,000 workers entering higher education during the first 5YP to study vocationally useful subjects like engineering. Among these was Khrushchev, a future leader of the USSR. They were to become the core of Stalin's elite after the purges of 1937-38 and their commitment was to the kind of Russia Stalin was building.

The impact of the first Five Year Plan

In many respects Russia had been transformed by the 5YP in a way that 1917-20 had not. Much of the old Russia still lingered on until the 1930s but had disappeared by the end of 1933. Over half the peasant population were members of the collectivised kolkhoz; as many as five million had been deported as kulaks and many more had migrated to the towns and industries. Unemployment in the urban areas had disappeared but over-crowding had reached crisis proportions. Women had come increasingly into the market to make up the shortfall in labour and also to offset the decline in wages.

Huge new industrial projects at Magnitogorsk and HEP along the Dneiper were under way - though there were surprising shortages of bricks and nails in the construction industry. These were items formerly produced by artisan and peasant industry and all industries were hit by transportation problems since the peasantry had traditionally supplied the haulage and the draught animals - unexpected consequences of collectivisation. Collectivisation has rightfully been seen as the Achilles Heel of the First 5YP and succeeded only in leaving a legacy of "bitterness, low productivity and a high level of mutual mistrust in the relationship of the peasantry and the regime." [Fitz.]

But even the spectacular growth rates of industry could, according to one Western scholar, have been achieved without departing from the NEP. While this may be true it overlooks the fact that this rapid industrialisation had a political role: to ensure that the economic base or substructure would prevent any possible restoration of capitalism as had been threatened by the NEP. Since the kulaks had been expropriated and the urban private sector eliminated, there was no longer any fear of this. (Some modern Marxist critics of Stalinism argue, though, that Stalin

in effect created a state capitalist regime in which the state now exploited the workers in the absence of a private bourgeoisie with Stalin's bureaucracy as a new privileged class of exploiters).

Unlike other facets of Soviet policy - the NEP and War Communism - the features imposed by the Five Year Plans became permanent aspects of the Soviet system. The land and industries remained nationalised, state directed planning a constant feature and private trade abolished. Furthermore, it must be said that these achievements met with the grudging approval of Trotsky and those of his supporters who made their peace with Stalin. Though their methods may well have been different, their goals were the same. However, Stalin's dismissal of wage equality in the same 1931 speech in which he ended harassment of bourgeois specialists would not have won Trotskyist backing. The use of bourgeois managerial practices - piecework, wide differentials in wages and high bonuses - signalled the abandonment of many old Bolshevik 'sacred cows'.

Exercise 2

1. How did fear of foreign invasion help Stalin to carry out repressive policies?
2. What was the significance of the Shakty trial?
3. Why was the Soviet Union so desperate for foreign currency?
4. Why was the Right Opposition easily defeated by Stalin?
5. Why was Stalin keen to encourage a Cultural Revolution?
6. Distinguish between grain output and grain procurement.
7. Why is collectivisation seen as the Achilles Heel of the 5YP?
8. Why might supporters of Trotsky have been critical about Stalin's methods while supporting his aims?
9. 'From the government's point of view, the political benefits of collectivisation outweighed the economic benefits.' Discuss.

THE FIVE YEAR PLANS

Successes:

- i) The increase in output after 1929 was a staggering achievement – even after taking into account the exaggerated nature of some of the statistics. The First Five-Year Plan saw 1500 power stations, factories, and metal-working complexes built, including steel production at Magnitogorsk, the tractor factories at Cheliabinsk and Stalingrad, automobile factories in Moscow and a hydro-electric plant on the Dneiper.
- ii) A feature of the FYPs was the creation of industries in areas not previously industrialised, such as Byelorussia in the west and Siberia in the east. When the Germans captured western Russia it was the existence of these industries east of the Urals mountains which enabled Russia to carry on with the war. This must count as one of the most important achievements of the FYPs.
- iii) The FYPs harnessed a mood of patriotic enthusiasm for the Soviet state, especially among the young. The Stakhanovite movement is an example of this enthusiasm.
- iv) Unemployment disappeared.

Failures:

- i) The FYPs frequently failed to meet their targets but these targets were often unachievable anyway and so this failure should not be as too serious a shortcoming.
- ii) Production outputs were often exaggerated so that plant managers could 'reach' their targets to avoid punishment, so there must be some doubt about the extent of these achievements.
- iii) Worker productivity during the first FYP was low – mostly because they were using existing resources. The second FYP set more realistic targets than the First and, in

- average, over-fulfilled them by 3%. This was because industries were now using new plants built during the first FYP.
- iv) Some areas were neglected by the first FYP, creating imbalances in the economy which have dogged Russia ever since; notable industries neglected were the chemical, railway, consumer goods and textile industries.
 - v) An obsession with quantity rather than quality meant that many goods produced were of poor quality.
 - vi) The Third FYP also concentrated on heavy industry but there was some effort to boost armaments output too. Its success is hard to gauge because it was cut short by the German invasion in 1941.
 - vii) Living conditions remained poor and there were few consumer goods produced.

Conclusion

Despite the waste and loss of human life, the inefficiency and shortages, the FYPs must be seen as a considerable achievement. The more realistic targets of the Second FYP, as opposed to the largely propaganda value of the First, show that the government could learn from its mistakes and adapt its policies to reflect reality.



THE TERROR

To some extent the Bolshevik regime had always used terror to keep itself in power and, therefore, what Stalin did in the 1930s was not new. The Cheka shot its enemies during the Civil War, political parties were banned, peasant opponents of Collectivisation were also killed or deported, the Shakty show trial of 1928 pre-dated those of the 1930s.

However, the Terror of the 1930s had significant differences:

- The Terror in the Civil War (1918-20) was carried out in exceptional circumstances when Bolshevik rule was under threat. This was not the case in the second half of the 1930s.
- The Terror of the 1920s was carried out against obvious enemies of the Party while the Stalin Terror was carried out against members of the Party itself and were not guilty of any crimes against it.
- The scale of executions and imprisonment before 1928 was much less than in the 1930s.

A purge is not a terror

The arrest and execution or imprisonment of Party members which is the principal feature of the Stalinist Terror of the 1930s should not be confused with the purges which took place on a fairly regular basis in the 1920s and 1930s. The Russian for purge means 'cleaning out' which is what the purges did – they cleaned out undesirable elements inside the Party. These were mostly people who had joined the Party in order to advance their careers ('careerists') rather than through commitment to the Communist cause or came from unsuitable backgrounds i.e. bourgeois, kulaks, ex-White army officers. These people were simply expelled – not executed.

The assassination of Kirov, 1934

In December of 1934, the chief of the Leningrad Communist Party, was shot dead by an assassin. His death convinced many in the Party that anti-Communist terrorist groups existed inside the Soviet Union. Some historians have claimed that Stalin ordered the assassination to remove a popular rival for power who was planning changes which would have reduced Stalin's grip on Russia and also to provide the pretext for unleashing the Terror. There is some evidence of NKVD (secret police) collusion since the assassin, Nikolaev, had already

been arrested – and released – by the NKVD as a suspected terrorist. His release is unlikely to have occurred without Stalin's approval.

However, in Stalin's defence it should be said that there is no evidence of a dispute between Stalin and Kirov. The assassin insisted he acted alone and there is no evidence of any links to existing opposition groups. If Stalin had arranged the assassination he would have forged such links to justify his arrests of 'opponents'. When these mass arrests did take place, they didn't happen until mid-1936, suggesting that nothing had been planned in advance. While it is true that Stalin did use the murder as a pretext for mass arrests, that does not mean that he planned it.

Chronology of Terror

A series of three 'show trials' took place from 1936. The victims confessed to crimes which they had not committed, either in the hope of leniency or, more likely, on the understanding that their families would be spared. The effect of NKVD psychological torture must not be overlooked either. The leading elite of the Party was especially badly affected. Out of 139 members of the Central Committee elected in the 17th Party Congress of 1934, 110 had been arrested by the time the 18th Congress met in 1939.

1936 – Zinoviev, Kamenev and allies arrested and shot for conspiring with the exiled Trotsky and for the assassination of Kirov. Their confessions implicated Tomsky (who committed suicide) and Bukharin.

1937 – In the second show trial Radek and Piatatov confessed to links with Trotsky and foreign intelligence agencies. Piatatov was executed and Radek sentenced to ten years in a labour camp (where he died).

High ranking military commanders were also shot in the same year (including the Civil War hero, Marshall Tukhachevsky); about 1/3 of all officers were shot, including 60 out of 67 army corps commanders.

1938 - The third show trial saw Bukharin and other Right Opposition leaders arrested and shot for conspiring with Trotsky and foreign governments against the Soviet Union. Also executed was Yagoda, a former head of the NKVD. His successor as NKVD chief, Yezhov, disappeared the next year.

No scrap of evidence was produced in any of these 'trials'. The only 'evidence' was the confessions of the accused.

What was its purpose?

The traditional view of the Terror is that Stalin used it to destroy existing and potential opponents of his rule and to so terrify the population that it would be impossible for future opposition to be organised. He targeted long-standing members of the Party because they had independent minds and did not owe their position to Stalin. Once he had got rid of these, he could put in place a new tier of Party officials who would be unquestioningly obedient to him alone.

The origins of the Terror

The expansion and rearmament of Nazi Germany from 1935 onwards aroused considerable concern in Russia about the Nazi threat. There was a genuine fear about German agents and sympathisers operating inside Russia and this probably provided some justification – from Stalin's point of view – for the Terror.

Differences inside the Party about policy may also have contributed. These differences mostly related to how to respond to the problems created by the implementation of the FYPs. Ordzhonikidze, a Georgian (like Stalin), wanted more realistic targets set. Against him were

those like Yezhov (later chief of the NKVD) who wanted even more radical change. In 1934 Stalin backed the moderates and the second FYP set more realistic targets but in 1936 he switched position and backed the radicals. Ordzhonikidze died in unexplained circumstances in 1937.

There is also some evidence that the Party in Moscow was having problems keeping the regional Party leaders under control. Orders from Moscow, for example, to root out local cases of corruption were sometimes ignored. Recent research suggests that many middle-ranking regional Party officials (apparatchiks) were targeted.

What was its impact?

The number of those who perished is uncertain. Traditional estimates put it as high as 20 million arrested, of whom seven million were shot. Recent research has cut back these figures to perhaps two million in the labour camps and three million executed.

The administrative life of the USSR was badly disrupted through the loss of many Party and government officials, and factory managers. The loss of this expertise caused chaos and stifled creative discussion as to how to move Russia forwards.

The execution or imprisonment of nearly 23,000 Red Army officers severely weakened the army and was a key factor in explaining its near collapse against the Germans in 1941. However, devastating though the Terror may have been, civilian and military morale was still strong enough to allow the Russians to face up to, eventually defeat, the Nazi invasion of 1941, so its impact should not be exaggerated.

Intentionalists v. Revisionists

The debate on the importance of Hitler's role in shaping events in Germany and whether he was a dictator in control of events ('the Intentionalists') or whether there were many different power centres competing in a confused and contradictory way ('the Structuralists') is mirrored in Russia with regard to Stalin – though the term 'Revisionist' is more usually used to describe the Structuralist point of view.

Characteristics of Intentionalist interpretations of the USSR

- ~ Leaders have long-term aims.
- ~ Centralised decision-making.
- ~ Government dominates society.
- ~ Importance of individual leaders.
- ~ Pressure for change from the 'top down'.
- ~ New interpretations accused of minimising responsibility of Stalin and extent of suffering of the population.

Characteristics of the Revisionist/Structuralist interpretations of the USSR

- ~ Weak state unable to fully control society.
- ~ Many different, sometimes contradictory centres of power.
- ~ Social pressures more important than individual leaders' ideas.
- ~ Pressure for change from the

- 'bottom up'.
- ~ Opportunistic decision-making, rather than careful planning.
 - ~ Far fewer victims of the terror than originally supposed.
 - ~ Widespread support for the Communist government.
 - ~ Old interpretations accused of being based on invalid, or inadequate evidence and anti-Communist bias

STALINISM

Main features of Stalinism

- 1 totalitarian despotism
- 2 systematic use of terror to intimidate the population and destroy inner party opposition
- 3 highly centralised planning with priority for heavy industry at expense of living standards of the people
- 4 revival of traditional values: patriotism, family, formal education, 'bourgeois' art, traditional role for women
- 5 return to hierarchical system with privileges for those at the top, inequality of wealth
- 6 exploitation of workers, few rights, trade unions serving only to boost production with peasantry reduced to neo-serfdom
- 7 total control over the media, censorship.

These features were not imposed immediately. They were all in force by the end of the 1930s but how did it come to pass that a revolution which set out to free workers and peasants from the tyranny of capitalism and exploitation ended up imposing something far worse under Stalin?

Russian History

Russian history was itself an important factor in explaining the origins of Stalinism because the history of Russia is an autocratic one. Powerful, despotic rulers like Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great served as models for Stalin and were therefore nothing new to Russians. The tradition of an all-powerful state was accepted: internal passports and residence permits - imposed by Stalin in the 1930s - were not as shocking as they might seem to us since the Tsars had used them also.

This did not mean that a Stalin type dictatorship was inevitable. "It did mean, however, that the seeds fell on somewhat fertile soil" (Nove).

The Circumstances of the Revolution

The Bolsheviks seized power when the old system had broken down and they had helped to make it break down but they did not cause it to do so. "Lenin and his comrades inherited anarchy, ruin, hunger and a disintegrating army" (Nove). To survive, the Bolsheviks were forced to become ruthless. They were a tiny party surrounded by the hatred of the western powers and anti-Bolshevik armed resistance. Terror became the norm and Stalin was one Bolshevik - unlike many - who excelled in its use.

Backwardness

Russia, in 1917, was essentially an agricultural state with some developing industry. With that industry came an educated, professional bourgeoisie: doctors, lawyers, scientists, businessmen. The civil war destroyed or drove into exile most of them. The educational level of those who remained behind was low and those who were recruited into the party in large numbers after Lenin's death (the Lenin enrolment) had little time for intellectual debate. They approved of Stalin's non-intellectual approach, his simple and inevitably solutions to Russia's difficulties. This new bureaucratic class shared Stalin's traditional attitudes to the family, the role of women, education and culture. They also appreciated the wealth and power which came with their status and recognised from whom it all stemmed: Stalin. To him they owed their loyalty.

The Logic of Centralised Planning

In an economic system based on total state control of the means of production (factories) in which the state decides what is to be produced and in what quantities, the power to make decisions is eventually put in the hands of fewer and fewer people. In the capitalist system, supply and demand, the price mechanism decides all this. Under Stalinism, the central state

planning authority decides everything. In this way the concentration of economic power and political power go hand in hand and lead, logically, into one another.

Only the Revolution Matters

It was an accepted feature of some Marxist (and Leninist) thinking that the survival of the revolution was the supreme consideration. If this meant lying, cheating and the distortion of justice and truth then so be it! These were considered only to be foolish bourgeois obsessions. The 'truth' would be anything which served the needs of the revolution. All this, of course, served to prepare the way for Stalinism. 'My party - right or wrong' was a reflection of this attitude and once Stalin controlled the party he could decide what was the truth and what was justice.

Leninism

'Stalin is the Lenin of today' was one of Stalin's own slogans. Many modern historians agree. In this view, Stalin is seen as the man who completed the work begun by Lenin and that the worst features of Stalinism were already present under Lenin. Others argue that Stalin was the grave-digger of Lenin's revolution. Who is right?

It is true that Lenin created the concept of a highly centralised and disciplined Party and the notion of seizing power in a backward country and then in creating the necessary preconditions for socialism. This turned Marxism on its head and meant that the party had to ensure total control of potential opposition classes (the peasantry) and groups (Mensheviks and SRs). Lenin's CHEKA shot people, sent them to concentration camps and Lenin's system banned all organised opposition inside (1921 ban on factions) and outside the party.

Lenin's defenders, on the other hand, point out that Lenin's repressive measures were nowhere near as severe as Stalin's and were in response to the real crisis of the civil war. Under Lenin there were few privileges for Party officials and they lived modestly (so, it must be said, did both Lenin and Stalin). Relations between leading party members were still comradely and discussions vigorous and genuine. Lenin did not try to impose his views of culture on the country and allowed artistic freedom. He became aware of the bureaucratization within the party and tried to stop it by breaking with Stalin (Lenin's Testament called for Stalin's dismissal). There is no doubt that Lenin would have been horrified by the measures that Stalin took - not least against Lenin's old Bolshevik comrades. That does not mean, however, that Lenin, unintentionally, does not share some of the responsibility.