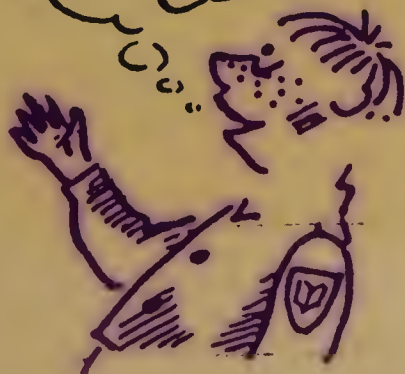


# SOVIET HISTORY IN THE GORBACHEV REVOLUTION

R.W.DAVIES



Shall I give you  
the textbook  
version  
or the real one?





SOVIET HISTORY IN THE GORBACHEV  
REVOLUTION



# **Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution**

R. W. Davies

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Bloomington and Indianapolis

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# Preface

Nothing like this has ever happened before in the history of the world. In the course of 1987 and 1988, tens of millions of Soviet citizens became passionately involved in studying their country's past, and in rethinking the principles and practice of Soviet socialism.

These astonishing developments were a consequence of Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, launched soon after he was appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party in March 1985. As I shall seek to show, Gorbachev did not anticipate this outburst of public interest in the past, and it was largely uncontrolled. The tumultuous spread of new information and heretical views about the past alarmed many party leaders. I suppose that nowhere else in the world has a government discussed its own history as frequently and as intensively as did the Politburo in the first six months of 1988.

In Part I of this book I give an account of the new information which has been published and the new approaches to major aspects of history which have been emerging in the Soviet press and media since the end of 1986. Novelists, journalists and social scientists receive more attention than historians, who at first played a fairly small part in the mental revolution. I then examine the impact of the debate on the attitudes of the Soviet political authorities towards history (Part II), and the consequent upheaval in the historical profession and in history teaching (Part III).

The debate about the past is also a debate about the future of Soviet society. In two final chapters I trace some of the connections between the mental revolution in history and *perestroika*. The story is far from being over. While the debate about history is well under way, *perestroika* has hardly yet begun.

Some confusion may be caused by the names of Soviet contributors to the discussion. There are *three* Afanas'evs: Yurii, who is the iconoclastic Director of the State Historical Archive Institute; Viktor, the rather conservative editor of *Pravda*; and Aleksandr, a leading correspondent of the Young Communist newspaper *Komsomol'skaya pravda*. There are two Yakovlevs – Aleksandr, the Politburo member, and Egor M., editor of *Moscow News*, both very strong advocates of *glasnost* and *perestroika*; two Shmelevs, both reformist economists, Nikolai Shmelev of the Institute of the USA and Canada, and Girei Shmelev, from the Agricultural Academy VASKhNIL; and two anti-

Stalinist Popovs, Gavriil Popov from Moscow State University and Nikolai Popov. There are two very different A. Egorovs – Academician A. Egorov, who when Director of the Institute of Marxism–Leninism urged Andropov and the KGB to ban a play about Lenin by Mikhail Shatrov, and Aleksandr Egorov, a journalist who supports Rosa Luxemburg’s criticisms of the restrictions placed on political liberty by Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

It would have been impossible to survey the recent Soviet publications about history, which appear in every type of journal and newspaper, without considerable help from colleagues. I am particularly grateful to Julian Cooper, Judith Shapiro and Mike Berry, who generously plied me with material. Others who have provided advice and information include J. D. Barber, M. Dewhurst, N. J. Dunstan, P. Hanson, M. Harrison, J. Haslam, G. Hosking, H. Jenkins, M. Kaser, S. Kotkin, E. Mawdsley, B. Pearce, M. P. Perrie, D. Perris, G. Rittersporn, E. Teague and S. G. Wheatcroft. Stephen Wheatcroft has published two valuable articles on this subject, which are cited frequently in my text. Useful comments and suggestions were made by members of the Soviet Industrialisation Seminar (SIPS) of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, which held two seminars on this topic. A preliminary version of some parts of the book appeared in R. Miliband, L. Panitch and J. Saville (eds), *The Socialist Register, 1988* (London, 1988), pp. 37–78.

I am most grateful to Mrs B. Bennett, secretary of our Soviet Industrialisation Project, for her successful efforts to prepare an orderly typescript at great speed.

October 1988

R. W. DAVIES

# 1 The Background: Thaw and Frost – History Before *Perestroika* (1956–85)

In Stalin's last years the censorship and falsification of Soviet history reached a climax. All publications, syllabuses, films and broadcasts had to conform precisely to the judgements and the periodisation of the Stalinist textbook *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, published in 1938. Every aspect of the policy of the party throughout its history had to be presented as entirely correct; past policies which did not fit were distorted or simply ignored. Historians were required to condemn nearly every major political figure from the first decade after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 as a traitor, or not mention them at all.

In February 1956, three years after Stalin's death, Khrushchev launched his campaign of 'de-Stalinisation' at the XX Congress of the Communist Party. The thaw among historians began almost immediately, and continued – with retreats and fresh starts – for ten years.

In the spring of 1956 Burdzhakov, the deputy editor of the principal Soviet historical journal, published a bold article re-examining the role of the Bolshevik party in the spring of 1917. He demonstrated that Stalin was an ally of Kamenev's in compromising with the Provisional Government, and presented Zinoviev as a close associate of Lenin.<sup>1</sup> Both Kamenev and Zinoviev had been executed as traitors in 1936. The article was strongly criticised. Burdzhakov was moved to an unimportant post, though he did manage eventually to publish an important history of the February–March revolution of 1917. The struggle continued. After Khrushchev's further public denunciation of Stalin at the XXII Party Congress in 1961 there was a great flowering of publications about Soviet history.

The most remarkable achievement of these years was a substantial series of articles and books about the collectivisation of agriculture and 'dekulakisation' in 1929–30, largely based on the party archives (the kulaks were those peasants who were classified as exploiters of

others). The authors – Danilov, Vyltsan, Zelenin, Moshkov, Ivnikskii and others – were strongly critical of Politburo policy in that period. Their writings were informed by a rather naive critical conception. They held that the decisions of the XVI Party Conference in April 1929, incorporating the optimum variant of the five-year plan and a relatively moderate pace of collectivisation, were entirely correct. But they rejected the decision of the plenum of the Central Committee of the party convened in November 1929, which speeded up collectivisation, and the campaign to expropriate the kulaks which followed. They argued that these new policies were imposed on the party by Stalin, who already exercised personal power, supported by his henchmen Molotov and Kaganovich. This concept was partly a matter of political tactics: one historian told me that he believed it was right to concentrate on demolishing the favourable view of Stalin, even though things were more complicated than that, because Stalin had such a hold on the Soviet people. But it is supported by much evidence, and broadly corresponds to the interpretation of Soviet history after 1928 so well argued later by Roy Medvedev and Robert Tucker.

The fall of Khrushchev in October 1964 was followed by a fierce debate about whether this policy of de-Stalinisation should continue. According to a recent Soviet account, in the spring of 1965 Shelepin, the Politburo member who had been a prime organiser of Khrushchev's overthrow, proposed that Brezhnev in his speech on Victory Day, May 9, should reverse many of Khrushchev's policies, and also restore Stalin's 'good name'. While most of Shelepin's proposals were rejected, the idea of improving Stalin's image was supported by Suslov, the Politburo member responsible for ideology, and by the overwhelming majority of the party leadership. They were in favour of dropping the concept of 'the cult of the individual' which had been used to criticise Stalin ever since 1956. Two party leaders, Mikoyan and B. N. Ponomarev, insisted, however, that the Central Committee resolution of June 30, 1956, 'On the Cult of the Individual and Its Consequences', should continue to be the basis for the party's policy towards Stalin. Andropov took an intermediate position. He believed that the problem of Stalin was so sensitive that it would divide the leadership and the whole party, and proposed as a compromise that nothing should be said about Stalin. In the end this cautious view prevailed, and Brezhnev mentioned Stalin only once in his report.<sup>2</sup>

The decision to avoid the problem of Stalin was in itself a major

step backwards for historians specialising in the Soviet period, and troubles multiplied for the whole history profession with the appointment in 1965 of one of Brezhnev's former assistants, S. P. Trapeznikov, as head of the Department of Science and Educational Establishments of the party Central Committee. Trapeznikov, who remained in this post for over fifteen years, was an extremely orthodox historian who was at the same time quite unscrupulous with the facts. The role of his Department has been bluntly described by the critical historian Yurii Afanas'ev:

The campaign to stop scientific initiative in historical science was headed in the early 1970s by S. P. Trapeznikov, who used unlimited authority (*neogranichennaya vsedozvolennost'*) in the leadership of science to appoint to almost every post people who were dependent on him and on that basis held together by 'business' connections.<sup>3</sup>

An unkind historian pointed out that Trapeznikov was not competent enough to have managed this elaborate campaign without help from above, 'even from the point of view of normal literacy'.<sup>4</sup> Trapeznikov received strong support from the Politburo as a whole, and particularly from Suslov, who intervened directly in historical questions. The campaign was also supported by the History Division of the Academy of Sciences, and actively assisted by more orthodox or more opportunist historians. Eventually, according to one Soviet assessment, 'the overwhelming majority of professional historians, competent and at first honest (but unfortunately only at first), capitulated to the situation'.<sup>5</sup>

'Purge' might be a better word than 'campaign'. A series of major cases involving the demotion and silencing of creative historians disfigures these years. A couple of notorious examples will illustrate this. By the time of Khrushchev's fall, the proofs of a book on the collectivisation of agriculture in 1927–37, edited by Danilov, were already complete. The argument about publishing the book continued as late as 1969. But fierce criticisms of Danilov's approach to collectivisation had already been published in the party journal and elsewhere by F. M. Vaganov and other historians from the Institute of Marxism–Leninism.<sup>6</sup> The book was never published; and all the historians involved in it were transferred to work on other periods of history (except Ivnitskii, who with some difficulty managed to publish a book on dekulakisation in which he was economical with the truth). Danilov left or was removed from his positions as head of the Soviet peasant sector of the Institute of the History of the USSR and as

secretary of the party group of the entire Institute. And in 1967 S. P. Trapeznikov published his own history of the Soviet peasantry, which dealt with collectivisation – and peasant history generally – in an extremely traditional way.

Another major incident in the purge was the rejection in 1972 of the interpretation of the 1905 and 1917 revolutions advanced by the distinguished historian P. V. Volobuev, who at that time was Director of the Institute of the History of the USSR. He was forced to resign from his post, and transferred to another Institute. Afanas'ev, in his attack on Trapeznikov, referred to historians 'removed from the horizon of science . . . V. V. Adamov, E. Burdzhalov, P. V. Volobuev and – one could continue through the alphabet'.

At worst this persecution of creative history acquired some of the milder characteristics of the campaigns against enemy influences in the 1930s. Academician Narochnitskii, when Director of the Institute of the History of the USSR, castigated the historians who were under attack for their 'hostile system of views' and their 'alien voice'. In the whole period from 1973 to 1986 replies to such attacks from the historians concerned were never published.<sup>7</sup> In the worst period, the early to mid-1970s, historians whose outlook was suspect were sometimes ostracised by most of their colleagues.

Military historians were equally subject to bans and restrictions, and in publications about the history of the second world war all controversy faded away (see Chapter 8). In the second half of the Brezhnev period, his memoirs as a political commissar in the defence of Malaya Zemlya were given tremendous publicity in the press and in a series of films screened at peak time on television.

In the 1970s, in a further blow at serious historical research, the access of historians to archives relating to the Soviet period was considerably restricted, and access to higher party and government archives ceased altogether. Bad practices returned such as the complete ban on referring to the death of any leading Soviet figure in the repressions of 1937–8.

The new orthodoxy was imposed throughout the media by a variety of formal and informal channels. We have recently learned from the Soviet playwright Shatrov that on January 27, 1982, the then Director of the Institute of Marxism–Leninism, Academician A. Egorov, wrote to Andropov in the latter's capacity as head of the KGB (!), complaining that Shatrov's play 'This is How We Conquer', then showing at the Moscow Arts Theatre, idealised the New Economic Policy. Egorov recommended to Andropov that it should be quietly

removed from the repertoire of the theatre, and that the Ministries concerned should establish 'firm obstacles' against future plays of this kind.<sup>8</sup>

It would be wrong to conclude that the period before the appointment of Gorbachev as General Secretary of the party in March 1985 was one of complete stagnation. Gimpel'son's careful and thoughtful study of War Communism appeared in 1973.<sup>9</sup> Danilov's two important volumes on the Soviet peasantry *before* collectivisation were published in 1977 and 1979, and a third volume is in preparation.<sup>10</sup> Valuable documents from the archives had been published, including the minutes of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) for 1921–2, with names and activities included of officials who were later arrested.<sup>11</sup>

In Brezhnev's later years there was a general slight relaxation. Statements published on the occasion of the centenary of Stalin's birth in December 1979 were somewhat less coy about his errors.<sup>12</sup> Literary publications, which had played a major role in the 1956–66 thaw in history, again began to display greater frankness. *Drachuny*, the fictionalised autobiography of Mikhail Alekseev, was published in 1982. Alekseev is the editor of the generally conservative literary journal *Moskva*; but *Drachuny* contained a harrowing description of the 1932–33 famine of a kind which had never before appeared in the Soviet press.<sup>13</sup>

The mild thaw did not last. On July 23, 1982, a resolution of the party Central Committee declared that 'it is impossible to tolerate the publication in certain journals of works in which events of the history of the fatherland, the socialist revolution and collectivisation are presented with serious departures from the living truth'.<sup>14</sup> Such publications as Alekseev's temporarily ceased. And in 1984, the 50th anniversary of both the XVII Party Congress (January) and the murder of Kirov (December) were passed over in almost complete silence.

While the press maintained a grey silence about all the sensitive historical issues, away from the official world the Soviet past continued to be hotly debated in private. Neo-Stalinists and Russian nationalists contended with democrats, liberals and dissident Communists. Democratic Marxists like Roy Medvedev, who earlier held that Stalin's deviation from Leninism was an accident of history, turned towards more fundamental criticism of Soviet history. Solzhenitsyn and his fellow-thinkers appealed to the traditions of Russian Christianity, and rejected both the liberal-democratic revolution of February–

March 1917 and the Bolshevik revolution of October–November as departures from Russian traditions. Popular singers like Okudzhava, Galich and Vysotsky, recorded on private tapes, bitterly satirised the Stalinist past and the Brezhnevite present. One of Galich's songs imagined a monument of Stalin stalking the city at night. Vysotsky's negative hero 'Seryozhka Fomin' avoided fighting in the second world war, thanks to his father, who was a professor, but ended up as a Hero of the Soviet Union.

In all this welter of unofficial and dissident views about the past, Marxists and democratic communists of all shades were a small and decreasing minority. The names of Bukharin and Trotsky were rarely invoked by the dissidents. The use of Marxism as an instrument of Stalinism, and the deadness of official Marxism under Brezhnev, seemed to have destroyed any possibility that it would provide a basis for creative understanding of the Soviet past.

In the course of the twenty years dominated by Brezhnev and his successors Andropov and Chernenko, the clamour of unofficial discussion about the past was also gradually silenced. The KGB, master-minded by Andropov, imprisoned the most outspoken and persistent dissidents or sent them to psychiatric hospitals, and permitted or compelled a number of the most vocal to emigrate from the USSR. Harsher penalties were imposed for reading dissident literature. This was the silence of apathy and fear, not the silence of approval or even acquiescence.

**Part I**  
**The Mental Revolution**

## INTRODUCTION

During 1986 new secretaries were elected by the Writers' Union and the Film Workers' Union, and towards the end of the year several new editors of literary magazines were appointed (see Chapter 10). This had a profound and immediate effect on Soviet intellectual life.

The vast upheaval in Soviet historical consciousness began with the publication of Aleksandr Bek's previously banned novel *Novoe naznachenie* (New Appointment) towards the end of 1986, which described the career of a Stalinist senior industrial administrator (see Chapter 7). This was followed early in 1987 by other previously unpublished novels about the Stalin period, notably those by Mozhaev, Rybakov, Dudintsev and Granin.

Perhaps the most important single event was the release of the Georgian film *Pokayanie* (Repentance) for mass showing, first (in January 1987) to audiences in Moscow, and then elsewhere. The film, which was an allegorical account of Stalin's despotism (see Chapter 7), was given special showings at places of work, including research institutes, hotels and the Moscow circus. Soon afterwards major literary journals published Tvardovsky's moving poem about his father, exiled as a kulak (see Chapter 4), and Anna Akhmatova's tragic poem *Requiem*, in memory of her only son, arrested in 1937. Tvardovsky's poem was published in two major literary monthlies, *Novyi mir* and *Znamya*.<sup>1</sup>

These publications aroused immense interest among the Soviet reading public. The literary monthlies, where the novels and poems were published, are known as 'fat journals', because they contain a couple of hundred closely-printed pages, with few or no illustrations. They circulate in hundreds of thousands of copies. The journals which published Tvardovsky's poem had a joint print-run of 680,000 copies. Other important sources of historical information and ideas in 1987 had an even larger circulation: the print-run of the weekly paper of the Writers' Union, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, was 3.1 million. Yet 'people stood in queues from six in the morning for these publications and then passed them from hand to hand'.<sup>2</sup> And readers in provincial towns complained that supplies were insufficient for them to get access to most of these journals.

Young people had shown little interest in Soviet history before 1987. But the trouble was not that young people were apathetic but that the post-revolutionary history they were offered was so boring. In 1984 a public lecture on 'Paganism and Christianity in Mediaeval Rus', which I attended in a large lecture theatre in Moscow University, was packed with students, and I had to sit in the aisle. But in the same year a colleague of mine went to a public lecture on Workers' and Peasants' Control in the 1920s and 1930s which was attended by a mere handful of people, several of them schoolboys out for a lark.

Behind the external apathy of the Brezhnev years the interest of young people in the history of the post-revolutionary period was not dead. When *Children of the Arbat* was published in 1987, two young amateur historians wrote to the literary newspaper about their long-established interest in Stalinism. A seventeen-year old from the town of Zhdanov explained that 'I got interested in this topic after reading K. Simonov's trilogy *The Living and the Dead*. This mentions orders signed by Stalin authorising the shooting of a certain section of political prisoners. Ever since then I have embarked on collecting data piece-meal about that really tragic time'. A 23-year old post-graduate student wrote from Moscow: 'Wanting to sort it all out independently, I began to question people from the older generation, and in the University library (I am a post-graduate in mathematics) I began to read the newspaper files for 1921–1934. Of course, care is needed here, not everything written in the newspapers should be believed, but after a certain experience one can realise what is true, and what is not entirely true'.<sup>3</sup> A third amateur historian, a 22-year old student, made a dramatic appearance in April 1987 at a Moscow lecture on Stalinism, and revealed that he had been privately studying the repressions for ten years (see Chapter 6).

With the emergence of *glasnost*' these private interests became public, and interest in the Soviet past quickly spread among young people. At one lecture on Stalinism at the end of March 1987, long before it began 'the corridors of the Historical-Archive Institute were overflowing and half of Nikol'skaya street was blocked by students from Moscow higher education establishments'.<sup>4</sup>

But these extraordinary developments in 1987 proved to be only the first stage in the flowering of public interest in history. Journals and newspapers were permitted to increase their print-runs for 1988 in accordance with the number of advance subscriptions, and the circulation figures published at the beginning of the year revealed

the great popularity of the new thinking about Soviet history. The five most outspoken and radical journals substantially increased their circulation, while journals with traditional or nationalist views about history were far less successful. Thus the print-run of *Novyi mir* rose from 495,000 to as many as 1,150,000 and of *Druzhba narodov* from 150,000 to 800,000. The only conservative journal with a large increase in its print-run was *Moskva*; it rose from 430,000 to 800,000, but mainly because it began to publish the long out of print history of Russia by the conservative early XIX-Century historian Karamzin.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, in the course of 1988, *glasnost* about history reached a public far wider than the growing number of readers of 'fat journals'. The main daily newspapers published long articles about Stalin, Bukharin, Trotsky, collectivisation and the repressions. *Pravda*, which has a circulation of nearly eleven million, included a regular weekly feature on history under the title 'Pravda Fridays'. This was usually a full page of several thousand words. And several long films about Stalinism and Soviet history were shown at peak times to huge television audiences.

In the following chapters I present the main trends as I see them of the Soviet discussions about several crucial aspects of Soviet history. I have not had space to deal with foreign policy, the Communist International, or any aspect of Soviet history after the second world war, although a great deal has been published on all these subjects.

I have also been unable to discuss the important subject of the non-Russian nationalities, which requires a special study. The rate of progress of *glasnost* is different in each republic: the Baltic Republics are well in front, the Ukraine in the rear. But in every republic during 1988 the delicate issue of the history of the nationalities, and of national repression under Stalin, has increasingly come under scrutiny. The history of the nationalities impinges on the current disputes and disorders. In the Supreme Soviet debate in July 1988, the President of the Armenian Republic presented evidence indicating that in 1921 Stalin had been responsible for the reversal of the decision of the Caucasian bureau of the Communist Party that Nagorno-Karabakh should remain part of Armenia.<sup>6</sup> This is perhaps the first occasion on which the issue of Stalin's national policies has been a matter of public contention in the highest organ of Soviet government. It will not be the last.

## 2 Russia Before the Bolshevik Revolution

In the Gorbachev era Soviet writing about the pre-revolutionary past has been both more objective and less predictable. Sometimes the earlier hostility to the tsarist period has even been replaced by a somewhat naive enthusiasm.

One common theme is that valuable traditions have been eroded. A few minor examples will illustrate some of the respects in which Soviet writers have detected a deterioration since the revolution.

In the course of its long campaign against the inefficiencies of the Soviet postal service, the literary newspaper claimed that the post was delivered more promptly under the tsars. In June 1987 it took ten days for a letter to be delivered from Staraya Russa to Leningrad, but in June 1872, 115 years earlier, Dostoevsky was upset because the same delivery took as long as two days!<sup>1</sup>

Publishing arrangements are also said to be worse now than before the revolution. Nowadays, by the time a book has been through numerous editors and censors, and awaited its turn in the publisher's queue, it can be many years before it is published. But in 1826 the great Russian poet Pushkin complained because it took at least two months to publish a book, including the preliminary reading by the censor.<sup>2</sup>

According to another account, information was much more readily available in tsarist Russia than in the Soviet Union today. The directory for Moscow, published annually before the revolution, had over 1500 pages by the end of the XIX Century. It was well over twice the size of the present Moscow directory, which appears only irregularly.<sup>3</sup>

Much praise is lavished on pre-revolutionary culture. Kaverin, a writer in his eighties who spent many years in camps and exile, praised the high level of culture among the intelligentsia on the eve of the first world war, in contrast to the lack of 'truly cultured people' in recent years.<sup>4</sup> Another writer claimed that the ability of Leningraders to withstand the terrible blockade of the second world war rested on their cultural inheritance. Russian culture of the XIX

Century, she argued, embodied 'all the spiritual wealth and humanism accumulated by civilisation up to that time'. Leningrad culture was based 'not only on Russian literature, music, philosophy and painting from the great Nineteenth Century, but also on the *old* unshakable concepts of good and evil, of what is *honourable* and what is not, what a decent person can live with, and what conduct should lead to suicide'.<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein a speaker at the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers in May 1987 praised the sense of personal honour found in XIX-Century Russia from Pushkin to the revolutionary populists, and powerful in the tsarist guard regiment. He contrasted this with 'the slave habit of fear', which leads Soviet citizens to bow their heads when the most that threatens them is losing their position or their job. The well-known playwright Viktor Rozov, speaking at the same meeting, pointed out that Gogol did not complain to higher authorities on the famous occasion when Belinsky attacked him publicly as a reactionary; Rozov urged his fellow-writers to follow this example.<sup>5</sup>

The most influential article in this genre was undoubtedly Daniil Granin's 'On Charity', published in March 1987.<sup>7</sup> Granin argued that charity towards others had gradually developed as an important human value in pre-revolutionary Russia: 'the lively feeling of compassion, guilt and repentance expressed in the work of both major and minor writers in Russia increased and spread, thus gaining national recognition and authority'. But in the 1930s and 1940s compassion and charity towards the repressed were seen as suspicious or even criminal, and all charity vanished.

As an example of the absence of compassion in the modern Soviet Union, Granin mentioned Soviet attitudes to animals: he had been reading James Herriot's stories of a country vet, and commented: 'I thought not without a sense of shame of the hordes of stray dogs in the suburbs and in country resorts'. In a joint letter to the popular journal *Ogonek* a leading poet and a leading actor pointed out that a Society for Animal Protection was established in Russia as long ago as 1866. But this society no longer exists, and Russia, unlike other civilised countries, has no homes for stray animals.<sup>8</sup>

Many specific aspects of pre-revolutionary culture and civilisation have been singled out for praise in recent Soviet publications.

According to many contributors to recent discussions, philosophy was taken seriously in pre-revolutionary Russia. Great creative writers like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were strongly influenced in their work

by philosophical arguments. But nowadays no serious philosophy exists.<sup>9</sup>

Before the revolution, scientists as well as writers took philosophy seriously, and made important contributions to our understanding of the human condition. Much attention was devoted to the great Russian scientist V. I. Vernadsky in the course of 1988, the 125th anniversary of his birth. Already before the revolution Vernadsky developed the concept of the 'biosphere', showing the great influence of living matter on the earth's landscape and atmosphere. This led Vernadsky to his concept that the future of civilisation depends on the ability of human beings to transform the biosphere into the sphere of Reason. Vernadsky called this the 'nous-sphere', from the Greek word for reason. Recent Soviet writers have presented Vernadsky's notions of the relation between life, human beings and nature as in effect an alternative to – or at least a complement to – Marx's and Lenin's treatment of the relationship between humankind and nature. In an anniversary article on Vernadsky in *Kommunist*, the Communist Party theoretical journal, Academician N. I. Moiseev summarised Vernadsky's concepts in an entirely positive spirit, and argued that they were derived from the Russian philosophical school of the XIX Century. Moiseev made no mention of Lenin, and referred to Marx on only one occasion; this is almost unprecedented in writing on this topic.<sup>10</sup>

Other articles praised pre-revolutionary traditions among the mass of the Russian population, particularly the peasants. To cite one among many examples, a leading novelist pointed out that peasants before the revolution took a more enlightened attitude to the forest than they do now, and did not cut down cedars unnecessarily.<sup>11</sup> Much attention has also been devoted to the successful development of peasant cooperatives in pre-revolutionary Russia. Many articles on this theme have appeared since the rehabilitation of Chayanov, the famous specialist on the peasant economy, who saw the way forward for Russian agriculture in the voluntary cooperation of individual peasant households.<sup>12</sup>

In recent years many Soviet citizens, of many nationalities, have tried to trace the history of their own family. The archives have been inundated with requests for information about family origins. Daniil Granin argued that pride in one's family history over many generations, and in its sense of decency and honour, was a valuable feature of pre-revolutionary Russia. It was found among peasants as well as the nobility, and formed part of the stream of history:

The historical consciousness which existed to a great extent in the XIX Century, when they knew they were part of the flow of history, is very important. It gives rise to a feeling of responsibility to children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, not to be ashamed before them and not to make them ashamed.<sup>13</sup>

In this spirit, an account of the heroism of four brothers in the second world war pointed out that one of their ancestors was mentioned by the XIX-Century conservative historian Karamzin as having rallied the population against the invader in 1611.<sup>14</sup>

Praise for important aspects of pre-revolutionary civilisation has not been confined to activities which could be presented as independent of the tsarist system. The tsarist education system, for example, has been presented in a favourable light. Kaverin argued that 'the old *gimnazium* [secondary school], although it had many faults, nevertheless provided an incomparably higher education than the present-day school'.<sup>15</sup> The first School of Mines in pre-revolutionary Russia took gifted pupils even from serf families, but kept on only those who could learn foreign languages and humanities as well as engineering, sending the others to be foremen in the mines.<sup>16</sup>

Even more significant has been the attention devoted to pre-revolutionary legal reforms and institutions. According to Aleksandr Vaksberg, prominent Soviet lawyer, the 1861 Emancipation Act, which liberated serf peasants, was a major step towards a law-governed state, because it insisted that peasants could no longer be sold like animals (he argued, somewhat fancifully, that the introduction of genuine wholesale trade would be an equivalent step forward at the present time). He added:

Not remembering our history, we forgot to celebrate the centenary of the serf reform and the subsequent great reforms, particularly the legal reforms [of 1864]. That is shameful. The chance to somewhat correct the situation will arise next year, 1989, when we could observe the 125th Anniversary of this historic event.

Vaksberg pointed out that the jury system was already introduced at that time, and could be revived today.<sup>17</sup> Another prominent Moscow lawyer stressed that after the reforms of the 1860s the tsarist courts displayed some independence. 'We must utilise', he added, 'everything valuable, useful and progressive which is provided by our national court system and particularly the experience of trial by jury'.<sup>18</sup>

Even the tsarist censorship has been praised for its relative leniency. It grew less tight from the middle of the XIX Century, so that Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov found it easier to get their works published than Pushkin had in the 1820s. Since the 1930s censorship has been much worse, and proved 'destructive for literature'.<sup>19</sup> And in the XIX Century all the Statutes on Censorship were openly published, even the Statute on military censorship, whereas even in 1988 'in practice we can hardly mention Glavlit [the censorship] in the press'.<sup>20</sup>

Sighs of regret for the good values and characteristics of a lost world have, however, been accompanied by loud shouts of disapproval of those unpleasant aspects of the tsarist past which have been continued or revived in the Soviet period.

The lack of a democratic political culture in pre-revolutionary Russia is seen by many as a key issue. One writer referred to the 'serf consciousness, developed over centuries, which weighs down on our culture'.<sup>21</sup> Another deplored the survival at the present day of the 'type of person clearly depicted in the literature of the XIX Century': 'the lackey remembers his former serf-owner as a severe and strict master, who was quick to take revenge, and kept order with the aid of a whip; but he also remembers him with a feeling of loss in his soul, and renounces the changes since the serf reform'.<sup>22</sup> The rise of the one-party system is attributed by one prominent publicist to inability to compromise, which was common to all political parties during the Russian revolution. He saw this as in turn a result of 'the low political culture of the masses':

The Russian autocracy did not permit any freedom of expression of opinion, so in the vast spaces of the Russian Empire there was nowhere to acquire the culture of discussion, the habit of respect for another person's opinion.<sup>23</sup>

Recent writers also emphasise the familiar point that pre-revolutionary intellectuals – with some notable exceptions – lacked practical ability and were remote from the ordinary people. 'In Russia', according to a writer on the cooperative movement, 'there was not sufficient interest among the intelligentsia in the specific organisational side of affairs, in the details of work and life'. Instead, there was a long-established 'yearn of the Russian soul towards theoreticisation about the general fate of the world'. He blamed this for the great enthusiasm displayed by the post-revolutionary intelligentsia for revolutions in agriculture, and their lack of interest in the best way to develop practical peasant cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

Some writers have taken criticism of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia much further. Yurii Shcherbakh even rejected 'the naive rationalist standards of the XIX Century' in Europe as a whole. From very different viewpoints, Dostoevsky, Jules Verne, Engels and Vernadsky warned that such naive rationalism was dangerous. These warnings had not been heeded, and people had come to believe that 'we could create a new ideal human being at lightning speed, forgetting about conscience and the ten commandments'. The eventual outcome of this belief was the Chernobyl' disaster.<sup>25</sup>

Sharp divisions of opinion exist on the role of the Church in Russian history. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Orthodox Church was denounced as an historically deep-rooted centre of reaction and superstition. During the second world war, Stalin undertook a certain reconciliation with the church – and a reassessment of its historical role. But after the war, and particularly under Khrushchev, the traditional Bolshevik hostility to the Church resumed.

The 100th Anniversary of the conversion of Russia to Christianity was celebrated in 1988. But should a party which is seeking more open-ness, democracy and socialism simply accept the Church's own estimate of its historical role, or should it frankly seek to show the Church's role as it really was? (There is, after all, plenty of evidence that the Church and its servitors did frequently play a reactionary role in pre-revolutionary Russia.)

In April 1987, in a key-note address to the Academy of Sciences, A. N. Yakovlev, a close associate of Gorbachev's, a secretary of the party central committee and now a member of the Politburo, was fairly uncompromising. Placing his criticism of religion in the context of a Marxist view of the Russian past, he criticised the concept of the 'unified flow' of Russian history, claiming that it falsely exalted the church, the tsars and the exploiting classes:

The approaching millenium of christianity in Rus' makes all these questions particularly important. The adoption of christianity did, it is true, assist the links of Kiev Rus' with the then centres of civilisation . . . In this, as in certain other periods of history, particularly before the age of printing, the church played a definite educational role, and there is no reason to play this down. But, as the saying goes, give what is god's to god, and what is the church's to the church – but give to us marxists the full truth. And from this viewpoint any attempt to depict christianity as the 'mother' of Russian culture must be firmly rejected. Prince Vladimir invited

christianity not to the cave of a primitive tribe, but to a state which was already established, which already had its own culture . . . If the later Russian mediaeval period deserves the attention of historians, this is certainly not only in connection with the millenium of the orthodox church.<sup>26</sup>

A few months later, Academician Likhachev offered a very different view of the place of the Church in Russian culture, strongly criticising the hostility to believers resulting from atheist propaganda as 'based on ignorance, on lack of knowledge of the history of the Church and history in general'. He argued that the monasteries were not centres of superstition, but engaged in the copying of books, and introduced new forms of agricultural management and new varieties of fruit. He praised church singing and painting and above all church architecture, 'which was always on the highest level'. The Church supported national unity against the invader and opposed the cruelty of Ivan the Terrible.<sup>27</sup>

In another article Academician Likhachev praised the Old Believers, the Christians who separated out from the Russian Orthodox Church in the XVII Century, for their traditions of generosity and respect for cultural and moral values.<sup>28</sup> Academician Likhachev, the most respected of all Soviet literary critics, spent many years in camps and exile.

Likhachev's views received much greater publicity than A. N. Yakovlev's. And in 1988 Gorbachev – while making it clear that the party supported an atheist world outlook – welcomed the anniversary of the millenium with sympathy and even enthusiasm.

Another contentious issue is the reassessment of the position of the nationalities in the Russian Empire. Among the Russian nationalist writers, whom we shall frequently meet in our pages, there is a strong tendency to chauvinism, often coupled with anti-semitism. *Glasnost'* has enabled this trend to be expressed more openly, most notably in the activities of the voluntary society *Pamyat'*.

In 1987, in furtherance of the Russian nationalist cause, O. Trubachev even attempted to rehabilitate Pushkin's notorious poem written in defence of the repression of the Polish uprising of 1830.<sup>29</sup> But Trubachev was already in trouble for his alleged attempt to seize control of the archives of the great Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov, and his proposal came to nothing.<sup>30</sup>

Enlightened defenders of the history and culture of the Russian nation such as Academician Likhachev take an entirely different

view. Likhachev, stressing the compatibility of different national interests, claimed that the various nationalities on Muscovite soil lived in harmony until the XVI Century, when tsarism was seized by the nationalist notion that Moscow was the Third Rome (Constantinople being the second).<sup>31</sup>

Greater *glasnost*' has brought with it a reconsideration of several of the long-running controversies about the nationalities before the revolution. In the 1940s Stalin insisted that Russian conquests of minority peoples should be regarded as progressive. Consequently the rebellion of Shamil, the XIX-Century leader of the Caucasian mountain peoples, was interpreted in Stalin's last years as reactionary, and Shamil was condemned as an agent of British imperialism. In the previous round of de-Stalinisation under Khrushchev, Shamil and his movement were rehabilitated, only to be re-condemned as reactionary in the Brezhnev years. Now the need for a sympathetic treatment of such anti-tsarist rebels as Shamil has again been raised in the Soviet press.<sup>32</sup>

This is one of a number of examples of the recent trend towards franker discussion of the history of the separate nations of the USSR. Dmitrii Balashov, author of a cycle of novels on mediaeval Russia, argued that the history of the warring tribes in ancient Russia was sometimes quite unknown, sometimes completely distorted. The Golden Horde, the Mongol tribal association which dominated Russia in the XIII–XIV Centuries, has been treated very negatively by Soviet historians since the 1930s. They argue that it was a pernicious invading force which held back Russian development. But Balashov pointed out that 'the steppe cultures brought a whole number of discoveries to the settled world, such as the wheel'. 'The whole history of Ancient Kiev Rus' and very Ancient Rus', and of the later Moscow state was, to a considerable extent, associated with the culture and history of the steppe peoples'.<sup>33</sup>

The well-known economist and reformer Gavriil Popov, generalising on this question, has argued that a true Marxist approach to history would attempt a fresh look at national histories:

A mutual truth about different peoples is required. Then Batyi [the leader of the Mongols who invaded Russia in the XIII Century] would be not only the evil-doer who burnt Russia down, but also the builder of the Mongol–Tatar state. Chengis-khan would not cease to be a tyrant, but he would also be the creator of a fairly effective administrative system, which functioned in good order over an area of thousands of kilometres.

But we do not simply need truth. We also need to evaluate it from the point of view of *historical progress*. And progress itself must be looked at from various standpoints – economic versus social, progress for the whole world versus progress for a particular people, progress for the conqueror people and the conquered people.<sup>34</sup>

The delicate issue of the role of the nationalities in the history of the Russian Empire is as yet largely unresolved. But it is already clear that Gorbachev cannot simply be interpreted as ‘heir to Stalinist schemes of Russian nationalism’, as Professor Norman Davies claimed in an article which was pointedly illustrated by a cartoon of Stalin putting on a mask of Gorbachev.<sup>35</sup>

There is a very wide measure of agreement in recent publications that the evils of tsarism were in large part due to the exceptional role in Russian history of the tsarist autocracy and the state. ‘Stalin’, wrote Fedor Burlatsky, political commentator and adviser to Gorbachev, ‘borrowed two-thirds of his concepts about the grandeur of the state in our country, and the role of the leader, from the previous experience of Russia, and certainly not from Marxist sources’.<sup>36</sup> The sociologist L. G. Ionin stressed the importance of the principle of ‘Russian messianism’, that Russia had a special historical mission:

For the Russian pre-revolutionary bureaucracy this principle was embodied in the autocrat, who was at the same time the head of the Orthodox church. The autocrat ‘originally’ embodied in himself the essence of national being. The form of the political unity of the people . . . was ‘disciplined enthusiasm’. All this together constituted the essence of Russian state-ism, the sacred foundation of Russian statehood.

According to Ionin, these features of the Russian heritage have constituted the foundations of the present-day ‘conservative syndrome’ in Russia. The conservatives seek in vain to carry out revolutionary changes by the old methods of firm centralised state orders from above.<sup>37</sup>

Two crucial figures dominate this reconsideration of the past. Ivan Grozny (the ‘Dread’ or the ‘Terrible’) (Ivan IV, 1533–84) was the tyrannical tsar who sought to get rid of opposition by eliminating the great noble boyar families and establishing a serving class of small landowners. Peter the Great (1700–25) established the Ural iron industry and the modern capital St Petersburg (now Leningrad) with the ruthless use of serf labour.

In Stalin's day, contrary to the received opinion of almost all historians, Ivan the Terrible was classified as a 'progressive' tsar. In an interview in 1947 with the film director Eisenstein and the actor Cherkasov, who played the part of Ivan in Eisenstein's films, Stalin expressed his own view of Ivan quite firmly:

Comrade I. V. Stalin remarked that Ivan IV was a great and wise ruler, who protected the country from the penetration of foreign influence and sought to unite Russia . . . One of his mistakes was that he did not manage to eliminate the five remaining great feudal families . . . Iosif Vissarionovich added humorously that 'Ivan was hindered by God' . . . he should have acted even more decisively!<sup>38</sup>

No one in the USSR now seeks to defend this unambiguously favourable view of Ivan's tyranny, which became unpopular with both historians and the public soon after Stalin's death.<sup>39</sup> In a popular journal a specialist on the period even argued that an alternative road to the creation of a powerful Russian state was attempted in the first decade of Ivan's reign by the monk Silvester and his colleagues. They were eliminated by the tsar when he embarked on a ruthless tyrannical policy which resulted in economic crisis and the establishment of serfdom 'in a particularly barbarous slave-owning form'. The author did not mention the Soviet experience, but he was obviously suggesting that Silvester and the reforms of the 1550s were analogous to Bukharin and the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, while Ivan and his later policies were analogous to Stalin and the repressive policies of the 1930s. 'It is not possible for a tyrant and an executioner', the author concluded, 'to be a motive-force of progress'.<sup>40</sup>

A much better case can be made for regarding Peter the Great as a progressive tsar, and this is still the official Soviet view. But it is now strongly challenged. One critic has reminded us that the great liberal pre-revolutionary historian Kluchevsky argued that Peter was 'more accustomed to deal with things, with working tools than with people, and dealt with people as if they were working tools'. This led Peter to develop a hierarchy of human working tools in the form of bureaucrats, arranged in the Table of Ranks. The Soviet critic commented:

Surely this is somewhat at variance with the concept of a democratic father (*batyushka*), affectionate to hard-working carpenters and resourceful negroes, an idea fostered by our screen and partly in

our press. But there is no doubt we must also swallow this bitter pill without spitting it out if we want the full truth about our own Fatherland, warts and all.<sup>41</sup>

Stalin's belief in the continuities between Ivan, Peter and himself is a prominent feature of Anatolii Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*. Rybakov's Stalin sees Ivan and Peter as providing models for his own conduct, and muses to himself that 'the Russian people loved Ivan Grozny and Peter I, who were the tsars who destroyed the boyars and the landowners'.<sup>42</sup> On another occasion Rybakov's Stalin rejects the findings of the historians about Ivan:

Russian historical science presents Ivan Grozny as an evildoer. In reality Ivan Grozny was a great statesman. He joined Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia to Russia. He was the first person in Russian history, and perhaps not just in *Russian* history, to introduce a monopoly of foreign trade. He was the first of the tsars to make the principle of statehood the main principle: everything is subordinated to the interests of the state.<sup>43</sup>

Several authors have also detected close connections between the most reactionary aspects of the tsarist regime on the eve of the first world war and the Soviet system under Stalin. In his fictionalised biography of the biologist Timofeev-Resovsky, Granin reported that his hero compared the charlatan Soviet biologist Lysenko with Rasputin, the debauched mystic who was very influential in the court of Nicholas II: 'the figure of Rasputin was the only possible analogy in this history of an absurdity'.<sup>44</sup> V. Bondarenko, pondering about the evils of the 1930s, suggested that 'the pogroms of the "Black Hundred" [the anti-semitic extreme pro-tsarist Right], the mass executions of revolutionaries, all installed in the political practice of the twentieth century the principle of terror'.<sup>45</sup>

Bondarenko also argued that the wrong ideas and practices of the revolutionaries themselves contributed to the post-revolutionary disasters. He condemned the harmful influence of Nechaevism, the radical terrorism of the 1870s, and the terror of the peasant revolutionary party, the Socialist Revolutionaries. In favourable contrast to Nechaev, German Lopatin, the revolutionary hero of a recent historical novel, rejected the 'evil principle' that 'the end justifies the means', and displayed an acute sense of justice and a broad humanity. He sought to achieve popular support for revolution by patient work among the peasantry, and opposed terrorism.<sup>46</sup>

Earlier Soviet accounts of the pre-revolutionary past also presented the tsarist period as having both 'progressive' and 'reactionary' aspects. Soviet historians, and their political masters, were anxious to emphasise the cultural and economic achievements of pre-revolutionary Russia. Stalin even insisted, as we have seen, that the Russian colonial conquests of the Caucasian mountain-peoples and the defeat of such leaders as Shamil should be regarded as a positive achievement. When a Soviet historian attended one of my lectures in Birmingham in the early 1970s, he complained because I presented tsarist industry as 'too backward'. A Soviet novelist has complained that only three or four years ago he was required to remove a passage from an historical novel in which he described the extensive thefts of state funds which took place under Nicholas I: 'this is a slander on the whole people', his editor told him.<sup>47</sup>

But there are major differences between the present discussions and all earlier historical writings. In past writings, many positive achievements of pre-revolutionary Russia were excluded from consideration. The leading statesmen of the later tsarist period, and all those opponents of tsarism who were not associated with the Leninist wing of the revolutionary movement, were usually crudely caricatured. But now the views of those who were on the 'wrong' side, including Lenin's opponents, are described much more accurately. Biographical sketches of leading opponents of the October revolution appeared in *Moscow News*. Milyukov, the leading liberal Constitutional Democrat (the 1917 equivalent of David Owen – RWD) was criticised because he 'ruled his party in a dictatorial manner, while paying lip service to democracy', but he was also described as 'a major historian, whose works have not lost scientific significance' ('to top it all, he played the violin').<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, those positive achievements of tsarism which were described in Soviet publications before 1986 were simply treated as a starting point for the Soviet regime. Everything that tsarist Russia did quite well, the Soviet Union did much better. There was no suggestion that any of the achievements of pre-revolutionary Russia were lost as a result of the revolution.

But the repressive and reactionary aspects of the tsarist regime were presented as having been eliminated – or largely eliminated – as a result of the revolution. The landlord-dominated autocracy gave way to proletarian democracy. Industrialisation and the triumph of socialism overcame Russian economic and cultural backwardness. During the Khrushchev years a few publications did suggest continu-

ies between the tsarist autocracy and the institutions and practices of the Stalin years. But the general picture was that the reactionary aspects of tsarism had been more or less completely eliminated.

In recent publications, the role of the past in influencing the present, and the place of the Soviet period in the history of Russia and its Empire, have been discussed much more frankly. Rival interpretations which differ fundamentally from each other have been quite freely offered to the reader in mass-circulation journals. Three examples will illustrate this – from Vadim Kozhinov, a ‘Russian nationalist’, Vasilii Selyunin, a pro-market reformer, and Igor Klyamkin, who might be described as a ‘democrat’.

Vadim Kozhinov strongly criticised Rybakov’s *Children of the Arbat*. Rybakov sought to show that Russia followed a despotic ‘Asiatic’ historical road under Ivan and Peter, and that this same road was followed by Stalin. Kozhinov argued that the tyrannies of Peter and even of Ivan Grozny were no worse than the absolute monarchies elsewhere in Europe at the time. Ivan executed less people than Henry VIII or Elizabeth I, and Peter was oriented on Europe not on Asia. Even Peter’s principal executioner was a Scotsman!

According to Kozhinov, a much more important cause of Stalin’s repressive actions was the nature of revolution as such. The French revolution was responsible for the invention of the guillotine and the beheading of 17,000 people, including all the major heroes of the revolution. The October revolution also naturally and inevitably gave rise to lawlessness. Here Kozhinov cited Lenin’s famous statement, which is very popular among anti-communists in the West, that dictatorship means ‘unlimited power, not limited by any laws or restricted by any rules whatsoever, relying directly on force’. The real tragedy of the revolution lay not in Stalin’s wickedness but in the sincere belief of its heroes that enemies must be ruthlessly repressed. ‘All the greatest and highest epochs in human history have been epochs of enormous sacrifices and losses’. It was not the specifically Russian historical experience which gave rise to Stalinism.<sup>49</sup>

Vasilii Selyunin’s view of Russian history is entirely different. Selyunin presented Russian history as the story of an economic progress over many centuries which was led by the market, but was interrupted by the harmful influence of the state. In the XV Century, Selyunin argued, citing the pre-revolutionary liberal historian Kluchevsky and the Soviet historian Nosov, ‘pre-bourgeois production

relations were already forming'. Ivan IV's attempt to establish a landowning class dependent on the state was 'an idle fight for feudalism against the growing capitalist mode of production'.

Selyunin also tried to show that Peter's efforts in the XVIII Century to establish an iron and steel industry with government support were in vain. The industry eventually declined because the entrepreneurs protected by state subsidies failed to make technical improvements, while Peter's statist programme produced a complex and confused bureaucracy.

Finally, vast industrial progress took place in the last fifty years before the revolution. It was hindered, however, by the peasant commune, which had been compulsorily introduced from above by the state. For Selyunin, Stolypin, Prime Minister from 1906 to 1911, who attempted to abolish the peasant commune and clear the road to capitalism in agriculture, was 'an outstanding statesman'. (And not for Selyunin alone. Recently the Soviet agrarian historian V. P. Danilov reported that 'professional historians have discovered with astonishment that the notion has suddenly become widespread that there was a "Stolypin alternative" in the history of Russia, and that this would have spared it from revolutionary upheavals and sacrifices'.<sup>50</sup>)

Turning to the Soviet period, Selyunin saw War Communism in 1918-20 and the Stalinist system of the 1930s and 1940s as continuing the harmful road of state compulsion. In contrast, the New Economic Policy and the forthcoming reforms of the present day continue the fruitful path of market-led economic progress. 'The advantages of "socialised, collective, commune labour"', he argued, 'have not been proved even now, although, it seems, all conceivable and inconceivable variants have been tried'. Selyunin comes very close to offering an historical justification for the establishment of a capitalist system in the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup>

Igor Klyamkin does not share the complacency either of Kozhinov, who believes that historical development was in principle the same in Russia and in Western Europe, or of Selyunin, who attributes all progress in Russia to the rise of capitalism and the market. Klyamkin argued that the XIX-Century 'Westernisers' who wanted to establish a liberal democracy in Russia were completely unrealistic. This applied to both the soldier rebels of the Decembrist movement of December 1825, like Pestel, who wanted to move to democracy via a military dictatorship, and to liberals who attempted to work with the tsarist autocracy to bring about change, like Katkov, prominent

editor at the end of the century. In Klyamkin's opinion Russia, in order to meet the Western challenge, had to industrialise by means of autocratic power: 'In the West entry into the industrial era was accompanied by the growth of freedom, in Russia by the growth of slavery'.

As a result, Klyamkin continued, the Russian intelligentsia, rapidly developing in the XVIII and XIX Centuries, found itself isolated from the capitalist bourgeoisie, which subordinated itself to the tsarist regime. And it was equally isolated from the mass of the population, which even by 1917 primarily remained a pre-bourgeois peasantry, combining patriarchal and petty-commodity characteristics.

On Klyamkin's analysis, the rise of the urban working class began to change all this. It brought about the situation in 1917 that one part of the intelligentsia, the socialist intelligentsia, joined with the working class, and with the peasantry, to make a proletarian revolution. But at the same time, the continued backwardness of Russia and its international isolation provided the conditions for the triumph of the Stalinist system. Only since 1985 has it become possible to escape from this system by attempting to establish a truly democratic socialism.<sup>52</sup>

Our three authors – three out of many – each argue their case with passion and conviction. They are frank and honest, but they show little understanding of rival views, and they ruthlessly select their historical facts and their historians to their own advantage. This, I fear, is not at all unusual even in countries with a much better established political culture!

The last paragraphs in this section should be reserved for a fourth viewpoint, that of the economist and reformer Gavriil Popov, whom we have already met in connection with the problem of the nationalities. Popov is perhaps the most competent and thoughtful of all the contemporary publicists who have written about the Russian past. Some twenty years ago he prepared a report about the serf reform of 1861 for a senior official of the state planning commission Gosplan. This examined the experience of tsarist reform in order to assist the preparation of economic reform in the 1960s. Symbolically, the unfortunate Gosplan official was never able to study the report; he had a severe heart attack while he was preparing the 1965 economic reform, and a further and fatal attack while speaking at a Gosplan meeting two years later.

Popov's report, eventually published in mass-circulation journals in 1987, remains highly relevant to the Gorbachev reforms. He

concluded that the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, while on the whole a progressive development, was curbed and confined because it was carried out from above, relying on the landowners and the bureaucracy. The reform was not simply a reform from above: it would not have been carried out at all without pressure from all the progressive forces in the country. But it could only have been taken further through a truly 'democratic variant', involving mass action.

This is a subtler consideration of the continuities and discontinuities with the past than we have met elsewhere in these discussions. In a recent interview, summing up his own approach to the past, Popov provided a healthy antidote to the blatant bias of Kozhinov, Selyunin and Klyamkin. He insisted that lessons cannot be learned from history if it is not studied objectively and from many sides:

In the culture of every people there are progressive and conservative elements. Both must be seen, both must be considered in their specific historical context. What was a clear weakness in one case begins to play a positive role in another situation. To suppress memory, to cut it up, to take only one part of it, means in fact to deprive oneself of all memory.<sup>53</sup>

We shall see in Chapter 7 that it is Popov who has suggested the most fruitful analysis so far of the Stalinist economic system.

# 3 The New Economic Policy and the Alternatives to Stalinism

The Bolshevik revolution of October–November 1917 was followed by a bitter Civil War. Between 1918 and 1920, in a desperate struggle, the Soviet government succeeded in defeating the numerous White armies and their foreign supporters.

The Civil War system, which later became known as ‘War Communism’, sought to establish firm control from Moscow over the whole economy. Industry was nationalised. The twenty million peasant households retained their family farms, but were subject to arbitrary state requisitions of their products. The Communist Party and the political police (the Cheka) imposed a remorseless political dictatorship. (The recent discussions about the Civil War are dealt with in Chapter 9.)

By the end of the Civil War in 1920 the country was devastated. Industrial production fell to a fraction of the pre-war level. Discontent in both town and country was widespread.

To deal with the social and economic crisis, in 1921 Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP). This was a new model for the transition to socialism. Most industry remained in state ownership, but a market relationship was established between the state and the individual peasantry. But Lenin argued that political dictatorship was as essential as economic relaxation. Without it the urban-based proletarian party would be unable to retain power in an overwhelmingly peasant country surrounded by hostile powers. While rights of public discussion and dissent were considerable, the one-party system was consolidated. Discipline within the single party was tightened up, with the imposition in March 1921 of a ban on the formation of ‘factions’ or ‘groupings’.

## THE ECONOMIC ISSUES

The experience of NEP has been a major focus of the present historical debate. Many analogies have been drawn by reformist economists and journalists between NEP in the 1920s and the necessities of Soviet socialism in the late 1980s. At the XXVII Party Congress in February 1986, within a year of his appointment as party General Secretary, Gorbachev called for the introduction of 'something like a Leninist *prodnalog*' in the new conditions of today.<sup>1</sup> The significance of this statement was underestimated by almost all Western observers. The introduction of the '*prodnalog*' was the crucial moment in the turn from War Communism to NEP. The *prodnalog*, or food tax, was the fixed tax in kind imposed on peasants in March 1921. Its aim was to encourage them to increase their production by leaving the non-taxed produce freely at their disposal. Gorbachev's phrase indicated that he intended to bring about a major shift towards the market in agriculture, and this must have been obvious to everyone in his audience.

Quite early in the ensuing discussion, in November 1986, the political scientist and publicist Ambartsumov enthusiastically praised the results of NEP. He commended 'its reliance on the individual direct interest of the producer, its unshackling of local initiative, and its driving-out of administrative by economic methods of management'. He contrasted NEP favourably with War Communism and described the renunciation of NEP at the end of the 1920s as 'in essence a return to the principles of a "war communist" policy'.<sup>2</sup>

Ambartsumov's radical views had been strongly criticised in the Brezhnev years, and even in November 1986 his enthusiasm for NEP still seemed excessive. But during 1987 and 1988 the many assessments of NEP which have been published have been almost universally favourable.

Thus an interviewer in the party theoretical journal, *Kommunist*, praised the rapid rate of growth of agriculture during NEP. 'In 1922-1928', he wrote, 'the average rate of growth per year was about 10 per cent - this is a really very high result'.<sup>3</sup> And the economist Vasilii Selyunin enthused about the great success of the economy as a whole:

Within four or five years [i.e., by 1925 or 1926] the pre-war level in industry and agriculture was reached. In 1928 it was exceeded

in industry by 32 per cent, and in the countryside by 24 per cent . . . It has been estimated that from 1924 onwards people were fed better than ever before. On the average for the whole country a worker consumed, for example, 72 kilograms of meat a year. This is an impressive result even by present-day standards.<sup>4</sup>

Otto Latsis, first deputy editor *Kommunist*, even claimed that 'in 1925 the post-war restoration of industrial production was in the main completed'.<sup>5</sup>

The sceptical Western reader cannot refrain from noting that the reformist economists, savagely critical of official statistics for later years, have cited them without question for the 1920s! But Western specialists on NEP all agree that neither agriculture nor industry recovered to their pre-war level until 1927, and some Western specialists claim that even then recovery was far from complete.<sup>6</sup>

With reservations, most Western students of the Soviet economy would, however, agree with the Soviet view that in terms of economic recovery NEP was a considerable success. Why did it succeed? In the recent Soviet discussions, the economic freedom of the peasant is at the centre of attention. Academician Tikhonov paints an idyllic scene:

What was the reason? There was only one reason: the peasant received the land not 'for use', but in undivided ownership. And not a single person had the right to interfere in his economy. . . . Naturally, he sold this production. To whom? To anybody who wanted to buy it at prices acceptable to the peasant. . . . In return for monetary payments the state freely bought wheat from the peasant, which had previously been taken from him with the aid of rifles. This continued till 1928.<sup>7</sup>

Selyunin took a similar line, and presented 1925 as the year when economic policy was at its most sensible. In the spring of 1925, as Selyunin reminded us, the renting of land and hiring of agricultural labour by individual farmers were legalised. Simultaneously Bukharin called upon the whole peasantry to 'Enrich yourselves, accumulate, develop your economy'.<sup>8</sup>

The practical effects of these policies have been vividly depicted in the Soviet media. In a major TV programme, the brother of the great Soviet poet and editor, Tvardovsky, described how their father, falsely condemned as a kulak (peasant who exploits others), had carefully tended the family horse and cow.<sup>9</sup> Notes prepared for the

use of school-teachers in the absence of a new textbook (see Chapter 13) praised the ability of party and government officials in the 1920s to trade with the individual peasant and the private merchant:

The name of Sergei Vasil'evich Malyshev (1877–1938) will not mean much to the present-day reader. They called him the 'red merchant'. Son of an office-worker, from youth a supporter of revolution, he delicately and precisely understood the psychology of the peasant, the trader and the artisan. The portrait of Malyshev, calm, thoughtful and bearded, is truly presented in one of Babel's stories. The writer accompanied the 'red merchant' down the Volga when he successfully exchanged urban nails for rural grain.<sup>10</sup>

On the basis of the success of NEP the reformers have drawn very optimistic conclusions for the present-day economy. According to one historian, both the experience of China since the late 1970s and of NEP Russia in 1922–6 demonstrated that, with 'a radical reform of land ownership and the system of land utilisation', a country can very rapidly come to feed itself properly.<sup>11</sup> And Selyunin claimed that the speed of the transition to NEP demonstrated both 'the possibility of carrying out revolutionary changes from above literally within months' and the 'astonishing speed' with which these changes can in turn transform economic performance.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the economists and politicians who flourished in the years of NEP were accused of anti-Soviet conspiracy in 1929–31, and exiled or executed. Their rehabilitation in 1987 and 1988 (see Chapter 10) was followed by extensive publicity for their achievements. The economist Kondratiev, internationally renowned for his discovery of 'long cycles' of economic activity, was praised in a full-page article for his approach to socialist planning, which was described as 'entirely compatible with the Leninist concept of NEP as a mixed commodity-money economy'.<sup>13</sup>

Another prominent economist of the 1920s, Novozhilov, unlike Kondratiev, survived the vicissitudes of the Stalin years and was awarded a Lenin prize in the Khrushchev period. His views have been cited, again in the industrial newspaper, in support of a kind of Soviet monetarism:

Western inflationists, the most outstanding of whom was the famous Lord Keynes, assumed that it would be possible to eliminate crises and obtain constantly accelerating rates of growth by a policy of compulsory savings, increasing state subsidies and easing credit

conditions (by additional currency issues). Almost ten years before J. M. Keynes' *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* was published, Novozhilov made mincemeat of the arguments of theoreticians who favour inflationary encouragement of demand.<sup>14</sup>

Economic development during NEP was in fact by no means a smooth or straightforward process, and occasionally the difficulties and disturbances of the period have been described in recent publications. Mikoyan's memoirs for 1924, published for the first time at the end of 1987, described the crisis caused by the poor harvest, including serious peasant disturbances.<sup>15</sup> The contemporary economic historian, V. P. Dmitrenko, a specialist on the 1920s, criticised 'publicists, writers and economists' who presented a 'rainbow picture' of NEP. They had failed to show that the economic successes of peasant agriculture also revealed the 'economic weakness of the state', which proved incapable of supplying adequate industrial goods and loans to the private traders and the peasants.<sup>16</sup>

Such reservations are, however, quite rare. But within the loud chorus of approval for NEP, the themes are by no means always harmonious. Selyunin and Tikhonov placed their main emphasis on the efficiency of individual peasants working for the market. But others have stressed that for a successful peasant agriculture over a long period individual peasants would need to join together in voluntary cooperatives. V. P. Danilov, whom we have already met in Chapter 1, sharply criticised economists who claimed that 'the development of agriculture in conditions of NEP took place at such marvellous rates that any idea of its transformation [into cooperatives] is simply stupid'.<sup>17</sup> He also rejected the view advanced by Tikhonov and others that kulaks and the kulak problem hardly existed in the 1920s.<sup>18</sup>

If Kondratiev was the most prominent representative of the 'individual peasant' school of agricultural economics, Chayanov, also rehabilitated in 1987 (see Chapter 10), was the outstanding advocate of peasant cooperation based on peasant needs and interests. (Kondratiev and Chayanov are, incidentally, presented in the Soviet press as if they were in complete agreement about the future course of Soviet agriculture; this is quite wrong.) Chayanov's analysis of the peasant economy and his views about its future development, already well-known abroad, have recently received enormous and almost entirely uncritical publicity in the USSR. In September 1987, Teodor Shanin, a British sociologist, lectured about Chayanov to a huge and

receptive academic Soviet audience (this is a curious example of reverse technology – the borrowing of one's own inventions). On January 29–30, 1988, a conference devoted to Chayanov was addressed by A. A. Nikonov, President of the All-Union Agricultural Academy VASKhNIL, and an associate of Gorbachev's from his Stavropol' days. Among those attending the conference was V. S. Murakhovsky, a first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and the principal government administrator responsible for Soviet agriculture.<sup>19</sup> One writer has recently stressed that NEP demonstrated the success which can be achieved in a market economy by combining independent collective farms with small-scale individual farms which cooperate voluntarily.<sup>20</sup> This view evidently evokes a responsible echo in influential official circles today.

If the economic policies of the 1920s were so successful, why did they ultimately fail? Why was there a grain crisis after the 1927 harvest, and why did this lead within two years to the compulsory collectivisation of agriculture, and the mass exiling of kulaks and other peasants?

A considerable number of writers have argued that it was rapid industrialisation which made the breakdown of NEP inevitable. 'In 1927', according to V. P. Dmitrenko, 'there was a grain strike, when the countryside began to show its dissatisfaction with economic policy. . . The grain strike objectively led in the course of class struggle to collectivisation'.<sup>21</sup>

The argument that the breakdown of NEP could not have been avoided has been most fully developed by Igor Klyamkin.<sup>22</sup> He concluded that alternative paths to socialism were not in practice available:

The mechanism of NEP did not create the resources for industrialisation. The profit received from industry was miserly if we compare it with the huge scale of the tasks. To increase profit, prices might have been raised, as the 'leftists' proposed, but it was impossible to raise prices; on the contrary they were continuously reduced in order not to give advantages to the well-to-do groups of the population and not to spoil relations with the majority in town and country, who could not afford high prices. For the same reasons the proposals of the Bukharin group to increase grain prices, which had also been reduced up to that time, were also rejected.

Explain how you would have untied this whole knot of problems,

which thread you would have seized. What is more, don't forget that you are responsible for the defence capacity of the country, that you have got to take care to create the most modern military technology, which requires gigantic outlays and will not give any income in return. And don't try to simplify your task by arguments to the effect that it is still necessary to establish where the military threat was coming from at that time, that it was not really so great, and that someone [i.e., Stalin] hid his dark schemes and deeds by drawing attention to it. Even if there was no direct threat, no state leader endowed with common sense would have waited until the threat emerged before undertaking the creation of a war industry.

I have found no convincing answer from any of the political leaders of that time who supported the NEP platform to all the questions about 'how?' and 'at whose expense?' which emerged at that time. If, following some of those leaders, you consider that industrialisation would have been more successful without the unprecedented violation of proportions between industry and agriculture and between heavy and light industry, try to prove it. Even if you do not find answers which existed in the past and think them up with hindsight, do not keep it from us. This is very important for the understanding of history.

But if you and I have nothing to say, let us find the courage not to refrain from saying aloud: the strongest triumphed then, and no-one else could have triumphed because at that time there was no other 'building project' for our street which was capable of competing with collectivisation. To recognise this certainly does not mean that we condemn those who then thought otherwise. It should be added that the position of many of them seems more attractive today than that of the victors. It is merely that the relationship of historical forces was in favour of the second and not the first. That is all. But it is difficult to reconcile oneself even with that conclusion, knowing the subsequent fate of our peasantry and agriculture. My arm, obedient to Reason, votes for an affirmative answer, but my soul is tortured again and again by the question without an answer: perhaps everything could have been different? Sober Reason is implacable: no, it could not have been. But how I wish that Reason was in error!<sup>23</sup>

Klyamkin can be faulted in detail, and strong arguments can be found to reject his viewpoint as a whole. But his article represented

a breakthrough in facing squarely the issue of the major economic choices of the end of the 1920s. And perhaps only a Russian would have been prepared to expose his raw feelings on these great issues, to the advantage of our historical understanding.

Very few recent publications agree with Klyamkin. Most writers believe that the Bukharinist road to socialism, through voluntary peasant cooperation and the continuation of NEP, offered a viable alternative which would have been much more humane.

This new consensus about the 1920s was reflected in an interview between the Soviet playwright Mikhail Shatrov and the American Sovietologist Stephen Cohen, published in *Moscow News* in June 1987. Shatrov made a TV serial about Lenin in the early 1970s which was banned until the beginning of 1987. Cohen is the author of the major biography of Bukharin and an active supporter of the American Nuclear Freeze movement. Cohen's biography of Bukharin was translated into Russian in the West, and was privately circulated in the USSR even in the Brezhnev period. But it was not mentioned in the interview in *Moscow News*. Since then, however, it has been given much favourable publicity, and substantial extracts from it have appeared in a Latvian daily newspaper.<sup>24</sup> Articles by Cohen, and his biography of Bukharin, are scheduled for publication in the Soviet Union at the end of 1988 and in 1989.

In the interview between Shatrov and Cohen, entitled 'Going Back to Move Forward', Shatrov and Cohen displayed virtual unanimity in their interpretation of Soviet history. Shatrov praised Lenin's Russia and the New Economic Policy, characterised 1928–9 as 'a certain retreat from the many moral and political values proclaimed by the October revolution', and the XX Party Congress in 1956 and the *perestroika* since 1985 as 'attempts to go back to Lenin, his ideas'. Cohen declared that 'from my point of view Party life when Lenin was there between 1917 and 1920 was sufficiently democratic' (!), and argued that the present reforms marked a return to Lenin's tradition of the NEP, as an economic system combining state planning with market relations and private initiatives.

In the following month, July 1987, the same issues were discussed more fully in a short play by Fyodor Burlatsky, a leading Soviet political commentator.<sup>25</sup> The play, entitled 'Political Testament' (a reference to Lenin's famous Letter to the Party Congress of December 1922 in which he called for the removal of Stalin from the post of party General Secretary), presented a conversation at the end of the 1920s between a father and his two sons, Aleksei, a 'Rightist', and

Peter, a supporter of Stalin. Peter stoutly defended the great breakthrough of 1929. He pointed out that NEP had produced over a million unemployed, and criticised it as a system dominated by 25 million peasant households, in which artisans made nearly a third of all industrial goods and the private trader dominated the retail market. Peter argued that the new policy would mean that 'after two or three five-year plans our industry will be no worse than in Germany and France'. 'If we don't follow this path, the path of difficult struggle, the imperialists will crush us. Without heavy industry, there will be no defence, and that will be the end, the end of Lenin's cause.'

Aleksei put his alternative with equal forcefulness. He insisted that Stalin had no ideology of his own. 'He was with Kamenev and Zinoviev against Trotsky, with Bukharin against Kamenev and Zinoviev, and with people like you against the last member of Lenin's Politburo [Rykov]'. Aleksei quoted the famous Opposition joke that 'the whole history of mankind is divided into three periods: the matriarchate, the patriarchate, and the secretariat'. Your policy, he told Peter, is 'superindustrialisation in the town, compulsory collectivisation in the countryside and the cult of one-man leadership in the party . . . "revolution from above" wasn't borrowed from Lenin but from Saltykov-Shchedrin'. He claimed that in contrast NEP had been a great success. The peasant lived better than before the revolution; workers' wages were higher and their hours lower. In contrast, 'you intend to drive everyone into the collective farm by force'; your policy of squeezing the village by low prices is leading to refusal to sell, and will result in uprisings. In what sense is your superindustrialisation 'super'? 'above real possibilities? above common sense? above the truth?'

Our sympathy for Aleksei's views is greatly strengthened by the plight of the father. Even though he fought for Soviet power, he was classified as a kulak in 1929 for having three horses and three cows. (Aleksei quite inaccurately suggests that this is because 'earlier there were said to be four per cent of kulaks, it proved too few, and a year later it became fifteen per cent'. In fact the 'standard' percentage was raised from 1 per cent to 5 per cent.) The 'kulak' father, in spite of the injustice with which he is being treated, supports the Stalinistic Peter on purely opportunistic grounds, telling Aleksei: 'Peter is hot under the collar, but he is cleverer than you. You can see what's happening, he's joining the bosses. And if they drive you out, you'll let me down as well. . . And you'll destroy Peter and the whole family'.

Burlatsky's own afterword was neatly balanced, but slightly tilted towards the path followed in the 1920s:

Industrialisation enabled victory in the Great Patriotic War and opened the road to further progress, but at the same time the inefficiency of command-administrative methods of socialist construction became more and more obvious. Now, when the party and the people are carrying out a fundamental *perestroika* and renewal of our society, when sharp discussions are taking place, it is important to remember the lessons of history, the reasoning and arguments . . . and to appreciate the true political will of Lenin.

A year later Burlatsky was much blunter, writing of Stalin that 'at the end of the 1920s he began to carry out a leftist programme of "revolution from above" and terror, mainly with the objective of strengthening his personal power'.<sup>26</sup>

Following the legal rehabilitation of Bukharin in January 1988 (see Chapter 10), a number of his writings have been republished. The most important of these appeared in the party theoretical journal *Kommunist*, no. 2, 1988. This reprinted in full his 'Political Testament of Lenin', prepared on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Lenin's death (January 21, 1929), which in effect defended the New Economic Policy against the new policies of Stalin and his supporters.

The Bukharinist position was put succinctly by Boris Mozhaev. A meeting about his novel on collectivisation was held in a Rostov-on-Don collective farm with the support of the Rostov party regional committee. In the course of the discussion Mozhaev declared:

They say (not in the present discussion, but in our press) that there was no alternative to the 'great breakthrough', and that therefore there is no reason to regret its victims. But was there no alternative? What about Lenin's cooperation and NEP, adopted 'seriously and for a long time'. Wasn't that an alternative? Even[!] the American S. Cohen noticed this and began his book on Bukharin with a preface on 'Bukharin and the Idea of an Alternative to Stalinism' . . . We are well aware that Bukharin did not have his own line, he defended the policy of Leninist cooperation and NEP jointly with Rykov, Tomsy, Dzerzhinsky[!], Frunze[!] and others. Bukharin justified this policy for the last time in January 1929 as the political testament of Lenin (*Kommunist*, no. 2, 1988). Then Bukharin and the remaining supporters of the Leninist policy were thrown out of the political arena, and many were physically exterminated.<sup>27</sup>

The Bukharinist alternative has been advocated with varying degrees of sophistication. Academician Tikhonov explained the reasons for the grain crisis and the breakdown of NEP inaccurately and rather crudely:

Why were there difficulties with the grain collections? There was a normal average harvest. The peasant barns weren't empty. The cause is clear, it was simply concealed by politicians, and in subsequent years by zealous historians. Seeking to force the growth of accumulations for industrialisation, Stalin (personally!) with his closest collaborators secured the reduction of the purchase prices for grain and simultaneously a considerable increase in the prices of industrial goods supplied to the countryside.<sup>28</sup>

Otto Latsis described the evolution of Soviet policy towards the peasants in 1927–9 in some detail. For Latsis, with some qualifications, Stalin's turn to the use of force to obtain grain at the beginning of 1928 was not primarily due to the seriousness of the grain crisis. It was rather because he wanted a pretext for imposing a radical social transformation. Like almost all of the other contributors to the discussion, Latsis paid little attention to the more fundamental problems of the market relation between the state and the peasantry, or to the influence of the deterioration in the international situation on the policies of Stalin and his supporters.<sup>29</sup>

Latsis also argued that the first five-year plan as prepared by Gosplan in the winter of 1928–9 was a feasible plan, and compatible with NEP. According to Latsis, the lower 'initial' variant of the plan was entirely practicable, and might well have been exceeded if the economy had not been disrupted by higher wildly impracticable plans in the course of 1930 and 1931.<sup>30</sup> Danilov has also argued along similar lines. For Danilov, the policies of Gosplan, as embodied in the five-year plan, represented a third alternative to the Bukharinist and the Stalinist variants:

The first two alternatives [Gosplan's and Bukharin's], with all their differences, were based on the common assumption that the economic mechanism which was established in the years of NEP would be preserved, improved and utilised. Thus in the last resort they were diametrically opposed to the Stalinist alternative, which denied the whole system of NEP and was beginning to be established in practice with the break-up of NEP in 1928 and 1929.<sup>31</sup>

In all these Soviet discussions the participants are evidently almost completely unaware of the disputes about the causes of the grain crisis of 1927–8, and the viability, or otherwise, of the first five-year plan, which have been raging in the Western academic press since the 1960s. This is a striking illustration of the huge communication gap which still exists between the Soviet and Western intellectual communities.

## POLITICS AND CULTURE

Contemporary Soviet intellectuals look back with equal nostalgia on the political and cultural freedoms of the 1920s. According to Viktor Listov, in spite of the ban on factions within the party, 'ideological confrontations, opinions and shades of opinion did not vanish'. And outside the party 'opposed opinions and sometimes even very sharp struggles took place in the soviets, trade unions, cooperatives and other voluntary organisations, and in the press'. Moreover, Soviet citizens had freedom of movement within the USSR. Listov implicitly contrasted the situation in the 1920s with the internal passport system which has operated within the USSR since 1932:

[In the 1920s] the compulsory attachment of a person to a place of domicile was considered one of the signs of the cursed exploitation of the past. The *Small Soviet Encyclopaedia* explained with revolutionary simplicity that 'the *passport system* was a major instrument of police pressure. Soviet law does not recognise a passport system'. Any document therefore used to serve as an identification – the trade union card, a pass, a labour book, a call-up notice and so on. Freedom of movement and of choice of place of domicile were considered one of the great achievements of the new regime.<sup>32</sup>

The power of the law during NEP has frequently been contrasted in the recent discussions with the arbitrariness of the law in the Stalin period. Lenin, like Gorbachev, specialised in law as a student, and his many statements about legal guarantees have often been quoted. During NEP, defence lawyers were much more independent than in later years, and had the right to be present when suspects were questioned. The procuracy also had much greater independence in the 1920s.<sup>33</sup> Such legal rights, albeit precarious, provide a frequently cited precedent for the 'law-governed state (*pravovoe gosudarstvo*)' envisaged by Gorbachev's reforms.

Otto Latsis has claimed, not very convincingly, that during the 1920s workers possessed considerable democratic rights of control over their factories. Under capitalism, he argued, the worker could not decide the division of the income of the enterprise between wages and profit; the trade union was always in an unequal position. But in a socialist democracy, if the working class has adequate access to information, it can be in a decisive position:

In the twenties, the question was decided in the simplest and most reliable fashion at the enterprise (and this is closest to and most important to the worker). The level of wages was determined every year by a collective agreement between the administration and the trade union.<sup>34</sup>

Recent publications have also praised the quality of life, and of social arrangements generally, during NEP. The reminiscences of the well-known playwright Viktor Rozov, published in the most popular youth magazine, are particularly noteworthy.<sup>35</sup> Rozov was a ten-to-fifteen-year-old schoolboy in 1923–8, and lived in the provincial town of Kostroma. He described the life of the town with an extraordinary degree of affection and enthusiasm. Private traders in markets and shops sold a vast array of foods and consumer goods with courtesy and attention ('competition obliged them to be pleasant'). Many of his schoolfriends sold food or flowers by the roadside, working for their family or for a Nepman. 'It did not enter anyone's head that this child labour was being exploited, or that this was a bad thing. There were very many children working at various jobs suitable to their strength'. Rozov himself broke up nuts for an ice-cream lady and in return was given an ice-cream as payment: 'I did not feel a yoke of exploitation and was entirely satisfied with my sweet earnings'. There was a Tatar suburb on the outskirts of the town, and 'we had great respect for the autonomy of this suburb and never set foot on its territory'. A Tatar woman brought milk to their house every day, and you always knew it was the same cow:

I even did not know that this was NEP. I simply noticed with childish delight how our poor, hungry and ragged life was transformed, how everything began to glisten and laugh.

NEP did not seem like that to everyone, and other writers have described the corruption, immorality and backwardness of those days. In his novel *Posle buri* (After the Storm) Zalygin showed how 'enrich yourselves' could mean: make profits by illegal deals. His

heroine helped a man who was near to disaster, but then broke with him without hesitation once he had become a successful Nepman.

Much attention has also been devoted to the restrictions on creative freedom which operated even when economic policy was at its most liberal. Boris Pasternak described NEP as 'the most false and ambiguous of all Soviet periods'. It benefited above all the racketeers who had made fortunes at the beginning of NEP, and artists and scholars who stood close to the government.<sup>36</sup> Even in 1925, at the height of NEP, the major Soviet writer Mikhail Bulgakov was savagely criticised and for a time ceased to be published altogether.<sup>37</sup> Soviet writers who do not share the current enthusiasm for Bukharin have hastened to point out that he played an active part in the widespread intemperate criticism of non-Communist writers. In an article in *Pravda* he denounced the ideas of the poet Boris Esenin for 'combining the most negative features of the Russian countryside and of the so-called "national character"'. 'Eseninism', Bukharin wrote, 'is a repulsive and pertly-decorated Russian nun, abundantly soaked in drunken tears'.<sup>38</sup> It has also been pointed out that during NEP creative activity was not freely permitted in the fine arts. The triumph of the 'Leftists' meant that traditional painting was discarded (it subsequently secured a monopoly for itself under Stalin a decade later).<sup>39</sup>

Another basic defect of the 1920s, according to recent Soviet writers, is that the independence of the law was never firmly established. They have described how the People's Commissar for Justice, Krylenko, stoutly argued that the law should not be overridden for reasons of expediency. But in a debate at the XV Party Congress in December 1927 he was almost shouted down, and from this time he began to yield up his principles.<sup>40</sup> Long before this, the secret police had the right to over-rule the law. In his notes for history teachers, Viktor Listov pointed out that the labour camp system came into existence very early in NEP:

Real life frequently failed to match up to the good intentions. The first large-scale camp was operating from 1923 on the Solovetsky islands of the White Sea. In the middle of the twenties it was occupied as a rule by prisoners who were really guilty before the state – Whiteguards, participants in mutinies and uprisings, embezzlers, thieves, swindlers and other anti-social elements. But the regime established on Solovki was already at that time far from the good-hearted illusions. As often happens, the road to hell was paved with good intentions.<sup>41</sup>

Other Soviet writers have pointed out that the labour-camp system had already been established during the Civil War, when Lenin was at the helm (see Chapter 9).

Although they differed sharply among themselves about the general strategy of forced industrialisation and collectivisation, none of the contributors to the recent debates would attempt to defend Stalin's despotic rule, with its extraordinarily savage repressions and falsifications. How did Stalinist autocracy manage to replace the relatively flexible political system of the mid-1920s? Could one-party rule have continued to be combined with collective leadership and considerable intellectual freedom? These were major themes of the discussions. The importance of understanding how the system degenerated into one-man rule has become an urgent political issue with the realisation that Stalin's successors Khrushchev and Brezhnev also established an autocracy, though in a much milder form. Can this be avoided in the future?

One school of thought, with which a number of nationalistic Russian writers are associated, treats the autocratic system as a consequence of the Bolshevik revolution. Their views were briefly discussed in Chapter 2. Here I will summarise four other explanations of the rise of Stalin by four typical contributors to the discussion: Dmitrii Volkogonov, a senior military historian, formerly holding quite conservative views; Otto Latsis, the economic reformer; Viktor Kiselev, who has offered a quite sophisticated 'multi-factorial' analysis; and Sergei Dzarasov, who has attempted a class analysis of the victory of Stalin and Stalinism.

Professor D. A. Volkogonov has a quite orthodox political background. While deputy head of the Political Administration of the Soviet Army, he vigorously condemned Soviet writers for their lack of patriotism in assessing both the past and the present.<sup>42</sup> But he is also seriously rethinking his country's post-revolutionary history. An historian in his own right, he is now Director of the Institute of Military History. In his personal capacity he is preparing a biography of Stalin, using many reminiscences as well as unpublished documents from the Ministry of Defence archives. In a preliminary version of the preface to the future book, he associated the tragedies of the Stalin period with Stalin's personality, but then struggled with the difficult problem of how these tragedies could have been avoided.<sup>43</sup> 'I am profoundly convinced', he wrote, 'that the socialist development of society could have avoided those dark stains . . . if a deficit of popular power (*narodovlastie*) had not developed after the death of Lenin'. He then considered the alternative leaders to Stalin:

If Trotsky had been in charge of the party, even more burdensome experiences would have awaited it, involving loss of our socialist achievements – all the more because Trotsky did not have a scientific and clear programme for the construction of socialism in the USSR. Bukharin had such a programme, his own vision of the general aims of the party. But in spite of his great attractiveness as a person, his considerable intellect, his gentleness and his humanity Bukharin for a long time did not understand the necessity of a sharp leap by the country in the growth of its economic power.

There were also of course Rudzutak, Frunze, Rykov. But it seems that after the death of Lenin, almost to the beginning of the thirties, Stalin was surely the most consistent and strong-minded defender of the line of the party, which was directed towards the consolidation and strengthening of the Soviet state.

Volkogonov conceded that Stalin was inferior to some other party leaders of the 1920s in intellect, morals and personality. But ‘in a time of struggle for establishing a new system the purposiveness and political will of the leader was of unique significance’; and this was coupled with his ability to utilise the party apparatus. ‘In these circumstances the alternative of the other leaders was rather improbable’.

So, according to Volkogonov, the party could not avoid having Stalin as its leader. But he nevertheless maintained that the tragedies which occurred could have been avoided if the ‘democratic potential’ which was being created under Lenin had been continued after his death:

If the democratic attributes of social defence from accidents had been created, whether the leader was outstanding or less outstanding would not have played a decisive role. Otherwise the fate of the country becomes too dependent on the historical choice of who holds the power.

Volkogonov’s arguments were expressed naively and clumsily. But none of the Western discussions I have read about the personal role of Stalin (or of Napoleon) get much further with this famous ‘Cleopatra’s nose’ crux.<sup>44</sup> Volkogonov’s weakness was his failure to discuss how or whether the ‘democratic attributes of social defence against accidents’ could have been established in Soviet conditions in the 1920s (even in 1988 these attributes merely limit the arbitrary

power of Gorbachev in the USSR and Margaret Thatcher in Britain, but do not eliminate it).

Our second analyst, Otto Latsis, rather contemptuously rejected Volkogonov's arguments, asserting extremely unfairly that Volkogonov's 'statement that "the alternative of the other leaders" was absent automatically provides an historical justification for everything that Stalin got up to'.<sup>45</sup>

Instead, Latsis offered us a rather complex and somewhat incoherent explanation of his own. According to Latsis, the crucial problem was the small number of genuine Bolsheviks in NEP Russia: by 1922 only 2 per cent of party members had joined before February 1917. This pre-revolutionary Old Guard failed to stick together. Zinoviev and Kamenev, who led the Leningrad Opposition against Stalin in 1925, rightly criticised Stalin personally, but also condemned the correct policy of the party Central Committee, and thus 'objectively strengthened Stalin'. But the underlying problem was that, quite unavoidably, huge numbers of ex-peasants and others joined the working class and the party. It was the 'domination of the petty bourgeoisie in the population as a whole' which was responsible at the end of the 1920s for the surge of unwise over-enthusiasm for impossibly ambitious plans. Leaders such as Ordzhonikidze were influenced by 'the passion of the thousands and the millions', with their 'young unrestrained culture'.

According to Latsis, in post-revolutionary countries which lack an 'ancient democratic culture', the widespread 'petty-bourgeois consciousness' frequently has the effect that the young working class favour the cult of the leader.

Latsis nevertheless concludes that these objective factors did not mean that either excessive industrialisation or one-man rule were necessary. What was required was that the leader should counteract these trends. Instead, in relation to industrialisation 'the leader stepped on the gas when it was his obligation to put on the brakes'. And as for the cult of the leader, while it is bound to emerge in a country without democratic traditions, 'in such a country the stage of early socialism requires an active and conscious struggle by the revolutionary leader against the cult of personality'.

The reader will be pardonably puzzled by this time. Latsis attacked Volkogonov for believing that the victory of Stalin was very difficult to avoid. But Latsis's own argument turns to an even greater extent than Volkogonov's on the behaviour of individuals. Volkogonov believed that the solution to the problem lay in the strengthening of

party democracy after Lenin's death. But Latsis evidently believes that this was objectively impossible. As I understand it, he thinks that there were only two ways out: either the Old Guard could have carried out Lenin's advice to throw out Stalin, or Stalin could have been a better leader. Both of these were matters of the personal will of a group of people or one individual.

Viktor Kiselev, who is a senior research fellow in Bogomolov's Institute of the Economics of the World Socialist System, provides our third example of recent attempts to explain the collapse of NEP. Instead of concentrating on the question of historical alternatives, he restricted himself to weighing up the major factors which led to the establishment of the Stalin-dominated system at the end of the 1920s.<sup>46</sup> Kiselev's analysis is not fully integrated, but in a quite short article he displays an impressive range of considerations, which I will summarise as a series of points, slightly rearranged:

(1) The idea of socialism emerged from the heart of European culture, and envisaged that all the achievements of bourgeois society would be embodied in the new society, including the absolute value of the human personality and its right to freedom. But the socialist revolution triumphed in a country which had not been through the school of bourgeois democracy and, in Lenin's words, lacked the basic features of civilisation. There was a high rate of illiteracy and the mass of the people lacked political culture.

(2) The establishment of the new regime had the special feature that it combined social transformations with the leap of a backward people to the world economic level. 'This leap', writes Kiselev, 'was so necessary and at the same time so agonising that it involved both a huge cost and the extreme concentration of all forces in a single General Staff – the state'.

(3) 'The doctrine of socialism incorporated the Utopian hope that the statification of the means of production would automatically lead to a precipitate jump from the "the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom"'. But in fact it led to the monopolisation of all resources in the state, to a decisive role for political power, and eventually to a combination of arbitrary power at the top and passivity among the people.

(4) The distortion of the new system was reinforced by the change in the class composition of the party: it attracted adventurers and petty-bourgeois, and the Old Guard remained a very narrow group. Pseudo-radicalism, revolutionary impatience and hatred of the past, combined with the despotic traditions of Russia, all helped to

strengthen the state and provide the possibility of the usurpation of power. In this context Stalin's personal characteristics came into play.

(5) 'Manipulation of millions of people in turn led to fear by the apparatus of a possible rising of the masses. This fear provided an impulse to the system of repressions, the end to which could come only with the death of the leader'.

Our final writer, S. Dzarasov, approached the problem of the triumph of Stalinism in terms of a single factor: the rise of a social class or group alien to socialism after Lenin's death.<sup>47</sup> For Dzarasov the basic trouble was the triumph of bureaucratism over democracy, which involved the emergence of a self-seeking bureaucracy:

Bureaucracy is sometimes understood to mean red tape in solving problems and excessive paperwork. In fact far more serious issues are involved. Bureaucracy is 'the rule (*vlast*) of officials (*chinovniki*)'. And it is incompatible with democracy – the rule (*vlast*) of the people'.

Lenin proposed to defeat bureaucratism by democratising the state machine, by introducing universal election and replacement of officials, and by reducing their pay to the level of the average worker. But after his death the anti-bureaucratic measures he had adopted were gradually cancelled.

While Stalin's personality played a role in the triumph of Stalinism, the main cause was the emergence of a pyramid of bureaucratic power in which every group of officials has a boss (*nachal'nik*); the structure was logically completed with the figure of 'the boss of the bosses':

The old system was born out of bureaucratism and itself gave birth to and 'multiplied' bureaucrats: it corresponds fully to their interests and is the main basis of their power.

These writers were primarily concerned with the major factors resulting in the breakdown of the political system of NEP and enabling the triumph of Stalin. Others have tried to approach the same problem more empirically by trying to establish exactly when Stalin had firmly secured his own power, and the sequence of events which brought this about.

We have seen that Latsis criticised the unhelpful behaviour of Zinoviev and Kamenev in 1925. Several writers, including Latsis, have also criticised the Politburo of 1923 as a whole, and especially Zinoviev and Kamenev, for its failure to take Lenin's advice in his additional note to his 'Letter to the Congress':

Stalin is too crude, and this fault, completely tolerable in the environment and relationship between us communists, becomes intolerable in the post of General Secretary. Therefore I propose to the comrades to think of a means of replacing Stalin in this post and appointing another person to this post.<sup>48</sup>

In his recently published memoirs, Mikoyan gave several reasons for the decision to ignore Lenin's advice. First, 'Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and others feared the strengthening of the role of Trotsky'. Secondly, neither the other leaders nor the delegates to the XIII Party Congress in April 1924 believed that Stalin was a 'claimant to the role of a leader of a Bonapartist type'. Stalin conducted himself in a modest and comradely fashion, listened attentively to others, and showed no signs of vanity. Thirdly, Lenin 'did not propose a specific candidate to replace Stalin; if he had, the Politburo, not to mention the Central Committee and the congress delegates, would not have acted contrary to Lenin's proposal'.<sup>49</sup>

Other writers take matters further back. Shatrov saw the turning-point as the occasion in February 1923 when the Politburo was reluctant to print Lenin's article, *Better Less but Better*, and Kuibyshev proposed to print a dummy *Pravda* with the article in it to show to the sick Lenin!<sup>50</sup> A historian at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism has pointed out that a month earlier, on January 25, 1923, *Pravda* published Lenin's article 'How to Reorganise Rabkrin' (the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate), omitting a line in which he said that all members of the party Central Committee, including the General Secretary, should be subject to the supervision of Rabkrin.<sup>51</sup> And a careful reader of Lenin pointed out that in December 1922, when Lenin had stated that 'cde. Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated immeasurable power into his hands', was only eight months after Stalin had been appointed in April 1922. Obviously the developments during these eight months, he argued, required careful investigation. By the summer of 1988, one healthy trend in the discussion of the breakdown of NEP (though it was by no means predominant) was to ask specific questions about crucial matters and seek ways to answer them.

# 4 The Repression of the Peasantry

At the end of 1929, with Bukharin and his colleagues defeated, the pace of industrialisation was greatly accelerated. During the next few years, great capital projects such as the Magnitogorsk iron and steel works and the Dnepr dam and hydroelectric station were constructed at breakneck speed. Education and training provisions at every level expanded simultaneously.

The millions of people who poured into the towns and building sites lived in desperately poor conditions. This was a harsh society and a harsh system. The priorities of the state were relentlessly enforced by an increasingly centralised administration. The 1930s saw the rapid expansion of the network of labour camps in which millions of Soviet citizens were imprisoned. Stalin's personal power steadily augmented throughout the 1930s, and was consolidated by the repressions of 1936–8. This was a time of industrial triumph and a time of pervasive fear.

The worst fate was suffered by the peasantry. The drive to collectivise agriculture was launched at the end of 1929, and was accompanied by the exiling of better-off and recalcitrant peasants ('dekulakisation'). The state exacted a much larger amount of grain to feed the expanding towns and for export, but agricultural production fell dramatically. Millions of peasants died in the famine of 1932–3.

In the past two years a large number of novels, stories and articles have been devoted to the fate of the peasants in the 1930s. Some of this material is entirely new. In 1963 Khrushchev revealed a letter sent by Sholokhov to Stalin criticising agricultural policy in the spring of 1933 in his native Don region during the famine. Now *Moscow News* has published an equally critical letter by Sholokhov written much earlier, on June 18, 1929, describing the situation in the Don and Lower Volga regions.<sup>1</sup> The letter, addressed to the librarian of the city committee of the Moscow party, was sent by her to Stalin (except for one particularly critical paragraph). Sholokhov, evidently referring to the final stages of the campaign to seize grain from the

1928 harvest, complained that 'the average peasant has already been *squashed*; the poor peasants are starving and the property – down to samovars, and blankets – of the truest middle peasants, who are often very weak economically, is being sold in the Khopersk area. The people are running berserk, the mood is depressed, and the areas sown for the next year will sink disastrously'. Political bandit gangs had emerged for the first time since the Civil War. The appropriations were worse than those in 1919 and 1921. (The Khoper okrug, a few months later, was nationally proclaimed as a model for voluntary comprehensive collectivisation.<sup>2</sup>) In his final paragraph (the one not sent to Stalin) Sholokhov bitterly remarked that 'everyone, up to Kalinin himself, should be given a good whipping; everyone who shrieks hypocritically like a Pharisee about the alliance with the average [middle] peasant and at the same time is strangling the very same peasant'.

Sholokhov's famous novel about collectivisation, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, which has long been a standard work in Soviet schools, was in many respects realistic, but it sought to justify the general thrust of Stalinist policies in the countryside. A Soviet writer, Lev Voskresensky, re-reading it 34 years after first reading it at school, drew on evidence in the novel itself to criticise these same policies. The dispossessed kulak, treated as any enemy in the novel, was a former Red Guard who had developed his farm in response to Soviet policies of the 1920s; no serious justification was advanced for excluding him from the collective farm. Voskresensky grumbled that while Sholokhov's novel is in the school curriculum, novels critical of collectivisation are not: contrary to the spirit of present-day economic reform, 'our 17-year-old children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are listening, in keeping with the school curriculum (which cannot be avoided) to Nagulnov and Davydov [the party activists] saying . . . drive those who work day and night, getting richer in spite of our warnings, out of our life and squash them'.<sup>3</sup>

The other major novel about collectivisation written in the 1930s was Andrei Platonov's *Kotlovan* (The Pit). Platonov's novel, written at the height of collectivisation in 1929–30, and neglected ever since, describes in a scathing satire the escapades of a self-confident village 'activist', frantically obedient to higher authority. Published in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1987,<sup>4</sup> its impact on Soviet readers was considerable. 'It is necessary to recognise,' wrote one party historian, 'that A. Platonov's *Kotlovan* has to a considerable extent entered the consciousness of people, especially young people.'<sup>5</sup>

In recent publications there is a strong element of continuity with the critical writings published in the Khrushchev years. But there are important differences. There is much more outright hostility to the whole policy pursued in the villages since 1929. Thus the Belorussian novelist Vasil' Bykov, following the award of the Lenin prize for his novel *Znak bedy*, explained that in Belorussia 'we did not have any kulaks generally, but they required us to dekulakise'. The unjust actions which resulted led to hatred within the village, and the Germans were able to use this to persuade the persecuted to join the police and revenge themselves on their fellow-villagers.<sup>6</sup>

V. A. Tikhonov, Academician in the Agricultural Academy VASKhNIL, argued that kulaks had disappeared during the Civil War, so that during 'dekulakisation' 'qualitative social criteria were replaced by purely quantitative evaluations of the level of development of the economy'. Tikhonov therefore concluded that it was probably those peasants who produced more than the average who were caught up in dekulakisation:

It is well-known that Stalin stated in one of his interviews that millions of people were dekulakised.

. . . Lenin's ideas on taxation were pushed aside, and the country went over entirely to requisitioning (*prodrazverstka*) – first in the countryside and then throughout the planned economy. Grain was taken from the collective farms almost for nothing.<sup>7</sup>

Returning to the issue over a year later, Tikhonov, with even greater emphasis, condemned the whole policy pursued by Stalin after 1927 and described the effect of collectivisation as unambiguously disastrous:

What and who did the peasant become after such a bloody lesson? Alienated from his land, and from the distribution of what he produced, he turned from a master into an executor of jobs and orders.<sup>8</sup>

The sociologist V. Shubkin declared equally bluntly:

Stalin decided to eliminate NEP prematurely, using purely administrative measures and direct compulsion; this led, speaking mildly, to pitiable results. Agricultural production was disrupted, in a number of districts of the country famine began. In towns measures against artisans and small producers in practice destroyed a whole sphere of services. The lives of tens of millions of people (I speak

not of the servitors in the capital, but of the main population of the country) were filled with incredible deprivations and difficulties, often at the limit of purely biological existence.<sup>8</sup>

The economist Selyunin denounced Stalin's 'Year of the Great Break' which launched collectivisation, as the 'year of the breaking of the backbone of the people'.<sup>10</sup>

Criticism of state policy towards the peasants is now extended to the Khrushchev period and beyond. 'All the methods of squeezing the peasant', wrote Mozhaev, 'were also adopted under Khrushchev in the last period of his activity: they cut the collective-farmers' plots, and took their animals away'.<sup>11</sup>

The author Anatolii Anan'ev broadly attacked the general organisation of the collective farm from its foundation to the present day, on the grounds that the farmer was separated from responsibility for the land:

We have barricaded ourselves for more than half a century behind the calming formula 'the land belongs to the people', which apparently solves everything; in trying to solve every kind of secondary problem we did not see how the links of people with the land were broken . . .

The working day of the collective farm lasts from dawn to dawn, but even at the present day his work is in essence depersonalised. He does not need to get up earlier (even if he wanted to, it is not necessary), it does not depend on him whether to sow tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, or the depth at which to plough . . . He is only required to keep the tractor or harvester in order and go out to plough or harvest with everyone else . . .

We must go boldly further and must not adapt man to socialism, as we did previously in many matters, but adapt socialism to natural human requirements, so that the customs, traditions and culture of the people should not be destroyed but strengthened.<sup>12</sup>

Most of the new materials about collectivisation present its effect on the Soviet peasantry – then the vast majority of the population – as profoundly disruptive and demoralising. This includes two major novels: Boris Mozhaev's *Muzhiki i bab'i* (Peasant Men and Women) published at the beginning of 1987, and Sergei Antonov's *Ovragi* (Ravines), published at the beginning of 1988.<sup>13</sup>

But perhaps the most influential publication about the peasantry in these two years was Aleksandr Tvardovsky's poem 'By the Right

of Memory' about his father, Trifon, who was exiled as a kulak in 1931.<sup>14</sup> It was completed in 1969, but in spite of great efforts Tvardovsky was unable to publish it (he took it round to the main journals and read it to their staffs, to the embarrassment of some of the editors).<sup>15</sup>

Tvardovsky's poem was an act of repentance as well as a memorial. In a lengthy account of life in the countryside in the 1930s, which is even more remarkable than the poem, Tvardovsky's brother Ivan describes how Aleksandr, a devoted Young Communist, went to the city and cut himself off from his suffering family for many years. In 1931 Tvardovsky's father, who had escaped from the hunger and disease of exile, called at the offices of the newspaper where Aleksandr worked in Smolensk, accompanied by his 13-year-old son, to seek help. Aleksandr told him brusquely, 'I can only help you by paying for you to go back where you come from!'. Five years later, his conscience overcoming his political convictions, Aleksandr decided to move his family to Smolensk.<sup>16</sup>

If the fundamentally courageous and upright Aleksandr Tvardovsky behaved inhumanely to his family in the years of collectivisation, the typical supporter of collectivisation, as portrayed in the recent literature, was not a heroic class-conscious worker but a stupid dogmatist or greedy self-seeker. 'Stalin', wrote A. Burganov, 'took into account the psychology of the most deprived, and as it were to some extent "lumpenised" [i.e., turned into riff-raff] the malevolent part of the population in general and of the peasantry in particular'.<sup>17</sup> And the popular author Viktor Astaf'ev described how such people took over his Siberian village:

In 1931, when the strict instruction arrived to drive everyone into the collective farm, a *kombed* [committee of poor peasants] was set up in our village, which included Gan'ka Boltukhin, Timka Mitrokha and my aunt Tat'yana. They even gave Boltukhin a revolver to control the masses. None of the people in the *kombed* had land, animals or livelihood . . . They held endless meetings, beating themselves on the chest with their fists, and pronounced speeches.

According to Astaf'ev, as a result of the exactions by the state, and the activity of these 'chatterers and layabouts', many peasants fled from the village, and in 1939, as was the case with many Siberian villages, the collective farm finally broke up and was officially closed.<sup>18</sup>

The most terrible event in the rural upheaval was the famine of

1932–3. At first – even in literary publications – very little was said about this catastrophe.<sup>19</sup> But after Gorbachev's report of November 2, 1987, these events were described with increasing frankness. Mikhail Alekseev, the orthodox editor of the journal *Moskva*, returned to the events of his boyhood which he already had written about five years earlier (see Chapter 1):

In 1933 there was famine in Western Siberia, the Southern Urals, the present Orenburg region, North Kazakhstan, the present virgin lands, North Caucasus, the present Stavropol' region, the whole Volga region – from Gor'ky to Astrakhan, the whole of the Kuban, the whole of the Ukraine, from West to East, the Rostov and Tambov regions, and part of the Kursk region. These were the regions which had always provided grain for our people and still provide it. At first they took away all the fodder, and the collective-farm horses perished. To save the land the collective farmers harnessed their own cows (of which very few remained!) and ploughed with them. It surprises me that there is not even a simple mention of the terrible tragedy of 1933 in any textbook. In our village Monastyrskoe [in the Lower Volga] only 150 out of 600 households remained, even though no war reached this part of the Saratov region. Many of my relatives and schoolfriends died in front of my eyes, many of them were buried in the ground where death from hunger had carried them off.<sup>20</sup>

Thus the literary publications about the peasantry have followed a striking pattern in the course of 1987–8. At first they confined themselves to fairly frank descriptions of the less harrowing aspects of collectivisation. But by 1988 they were not only describing collectivisation and its aftermath in entirely negative terms, but also seeking to show that it destroyed the independence and spirit of the peasantry, and relied on failures and puppets from the countryside and windbags from the town. What was always characterised in the past as the healthy proletarian and poor peasant nucleus of support for Soviet power was now presented as the worst elements in the countryside. And the famine was now depicted with brutal honesty, so that the old image of mechanised prosperity was replaced by the new image of destruction and death.

Collectivisation is the one issue on which professional historians have written extensively in 1987 and 1988. Much work was undertaken on this subject in the Khrushchev years, largely under the direction

of V. P. Danilov, and much of this, as we have seen in Chapter 1, remained unpublished.

Between August and November 1987 Danilov published three articles on collectivisation, each of them franker than its predecessor. The first article, 'Causes and Lessons of Collectivisation', appeared in *Pravda* on August 7. It was less frank and critical than many of the stories and commentaries by writers and journalists published earlier in the year. It failed to mention the famine of 1932–3, merely referring laconically to 'the situation in the countryside which had developed towards the end of the first five-year plan'. It made no criticism of the second wave of collectivisation and dekulakisation in 1931. It referred in entirely positive terms to the work of the political departments which were established in the Machine-Tractor Stations in 1933–4 to enforce order in the countryside. These defects were not Danilov's fault. He later described his troubles at the hands of the *Pravda* editors:

It was published unfortunately in such a form that it caused me many unpleasant experiences. After all the discussions and quarrels with the editors, and after I had signed the article in its final agreed variant, sections of the article which were of major importance were removed from the text without my knowledge and agreement, and were replaced by a photograph in the choice of which I played no part.<sup>21</sup>

The photograph, dated 1931 (the year of the second collectivisation drive, not mentioned in the article), showed a bearded peasant waving enthusiastically and shouting 'Long live the collective farm!'

In spite of these defects, the article contained facts and opinions about collectivisation which had not appeared in *Pravda* for twenty years. It strongly criticised the closing down of the agricultural marketing and credit cooperatives at the end of 1929, and the abrupt transition to collectivisation: 'for the main mass of the peasantry comprehensive collectivisation, developed at the end of 1929 and beginning of 1930, amounted to a direct transition from small-scale to large-scale production, without passing through the preparatory "school" of the primary stages of collectivisation'. This contradicted the orthodox argument that the basis for collectivisation had been satisfactorily established in the 1920s. Moreover, Danilov also drew the more general conclusion that 'the main source of the difficulties in establishing and developing collective farms was the violation of Lenin's well-known directive that collective farms can be vital and

stable only if they are established voluntarily'. The publication in the main party newspaper of this article by Danilov, who had been silent about collectivisation for nearly twenty years, was a notable event.

The second article by Danilov, 'On the Beginning of Collective Farming', appeared in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, on October 11. Unlike the *Pravda* article, it described the second wave of collectivisation in 1931 and 1932, strongly criticised the excessive use of force, and also briefly mentioned the famine, 'which carried off many lives'. In his conclusion, while noting that collectivisation mobilised physical and human resources for industry and defence, Danilov also stressed 'the profound contradiction between the objective and the means by which it was obtained'.

Danilov's third article, 'October and the Agrarian Policy of the Party', appeared in the party journal *Kommunist*.<sup>22</sup> It stressed even more emphatically that the previous two articles the contrast between 'Lenin's cooperative plan', which aimed at gradual and voluntary introduction of cooperative farming, and the realities of forced collectivisation:

The use of methods alien to socialism not only contradicted its objectives but also led to their distortion . . . The treatment of the cooperative of peasant households not as an independent objective of the socialist reconstruction of society, the achievement of which had its own internal logic and its own criteria of success and failure, but as a means for solving other problems, was a violation in principle of Lenin's cooperative plan and involved other distortions.

Danilov has continued to expound these views in later articles. In his review of Western literature on the Soviet demographic catastrophe of the 1930s and 1940s (see Chapter 12), he bluntly declared that 'this famine was in fact Stalin's most terrible crime, a catastrophe of which the consequences were felt in the whole subsequent history of the Soviet countryside'.<sup>23</sup> In two long articles in *Pravda* in August and September 1988 he presented what was in effect a summary of the material in the volumes on collectivisation which are to be published at long last under his editorship.<sup>24</sup> In these articles the scissors of the editors of *Pravda* were evidently far less active than in the previous year, and Danilov quite frankly summarised his general view of collectivisation:

Collective farms and collective farmers survived the severest test of war and made an immeasurable contribution to the great victory,

collective-farm production was and still is one of the foundations of the economy and the whole social structure of our country . . . [However,] the contribution of the countryside to social development could have been much greater without costing the countryside so much. The young collective farms which had just been established were put in a position which excluded independence and initiative, and thus prevented successful economic growth.

There is a certain internal contradiction in Danilov's writings, reflecting the agonising problem for the historian of assessing the results of collectivisation, with all its hardships and suffering, in the context of a whole economy which was developing heavy industry in unfavourable circumstances. While criticising collectivisation for violating Lenin's cooperative plan in the interests of 'solving other problems', he continued to praise it for eliminating class stratification and exploitation and for 'facilitating the mobilisation of physical and human resources for industry, for the strengthening of defence capacity, and for the social and cultural progress of the whole of society'.

A similar line was taken in several articles by the Ukrainian historian S. Kul'chitskii. He argued more emphatically than Danilov that the collectivisation of agriculture, and the anti-kulak policy, were correct, but like Danilov also condemned the abolition of the agricultural cooperative system built up in the 1920s, the unleashing of an artificial class war in the countryside, and the crippling grain collections. Kul'chitskii rejected the view that the Ukrainian famine was 'ethnocide' and argued that the huge Western figures of 8–10 million Ukrainian victims of famine are greatly exaggerated. But he frankly attributed the famine to 'disorganisation of economic life in the countryside'.<sup>25</sup>

Ivnitskii, who collaborated with Danilov in the 1960s, also argued that the collectivisation policy was justified in principle but distorted in practice. He frankly declared that 'the main cause of the famine was the incorrect grain collection policy': 'in 1932 18 million tsentners of grain were exported to obtain foreign currency for the development of industry: if that grain had been used for the needs of the hungry, many thousands of people would have been saved from death from famine; but this was not done'.<sup>26</sup>

Danilov and his colleagues, condemned by the party in the 1970s, are now regarded as insufficiently critical about the past by some historians, and by many writers about the peasantry. Yurii Afanas'ev,

who condemns outright the whole course of Soviet history since the end of the 1920s, argues: 'In publications written in the spirit of half-truths, the earlier false picture is presented of the internal political struggle in the party in the 1920s and 1930s. The whole Stalinist version of the struggle with deviations remains essentially unchanged, and they are silent about the existence in practice of a Stalinist anti-party fraction':

The same can be said about certain publications on collectivisation. (Unfortunately, this is true of V. P. Danilov's article – a historian who has done very much to establish the truth about collectivisation and whom I deeply respect.) In certain of them . . . a general picture is presented which is not as optimistic as before. But it nevertheless follows from them, as before, that collectivisation as a whole was a continuation and realisation of Lenin's cooperative plan, although in fact – and this we again know to a considerable extent thanks to V. P. Danilov – it was something completely different: the Stalin version of collectivisation crossed out Lenin's cooperative plan. It became almost the most large-scale crime of the Stalinist regime. In the course of collectivisation mass repressions were carried out for the first time. The famine organised in 1932–3 carried off millions of human lives.<sup>27</sup>

Danilov, in an indignant reply, 'Is the "Pointing Finger" Necessary?', accused Afanas'ev of behaving like the infamous S. P. Trapeznikov by posing as the sole possessor of truth, pointing an accusing finger at his opponents and misrepresenting them.<sup>28</sup> Danilov repudiated the change that he had presented collectivisation as continuing Lenin's cooperative plan (though, as the reader will observe from the above quotation, it is not clear that this was in fact what Afanas'ev was criticising in Danilov's work).

For their part Danilov and his colleagues have objected on several occasions to the inaccuracy of some of the recent Soviet publications about the peasantry. Danilov, while praising Mozhaev's novel on collectivisation, declared that he disagreed with many statements made both by Mozhaev and by Academician Tikhonov, who wrote a preface to the novel. In particular Danilov criticised Mozhaev's 'completely stupid conception' of the mistakes made in the first collectivisation drive in 1930.<sup>29</sup> Mozhaev, and his hero in the novel, claimed that it was 'Zinoviev, Kamenev, Preobrazhensky and Trotsky' who were responsible for pushing the party away from NEP and towards the use of force against the peasant, and that the left

intelligentsia in general had 'complete contempt for our national historical experience'.<sup>30</sup> Danilov replied that this was a dangerous fantasy:

Responsibility for the force to which the peasants were subjected in the course of collectivisation in the winter of 1929–30 is transferred from those really guilty (Stalin and his immediate entourage, especially Molotov and Kaganovich) to Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Yakovlev and Kaminsky. The first three had no role in political decisions from 1927, and Trotsky was even deported from the USSR in February 1929. These fantasies were not produced by *perestroika*. *Perestroika* and *glasnost*' simply revealed them.

'Trotsky and his supporters', Danilov added, 'must be finally freed from the attribution to them of the variant carried out by Stalin'.<sup>31</sup>

While the novelists, and historians such as Danilov, in spite of their disagreements, were all providing fresh information and understanding about the fate of the Soviet peasantry, other historians continued to hold firmly to the orthodoxies of the past. V. M. Selunskaya, professor of Soviet history at Moscow University, published a very favourable account of collectivisation on orthodox lines in the party history journal. Selunskaya criticised the present author for denying that there were 'objective prerequisites' for collectivisation, and for 'claiming that agencies of state power imposed on the peasantry the policy of the ruling party'.<sup>32</sup>

At a meeting of the Academic Council of the Institute of Marxism–Leninism on October 26, 1987, which reviewed the work of the party journal in which Selunskaya's article appeared, V. Ya. Bondar' argued that, while Selunskaya had written with a "traditional" approach' to collectivisation, her article had increased our knowledge. But G. L. Smirnov, the Director of the Institute, commented darkly, implicitly referring to Selunskaya, 'as for those who intend to maintain the outdated views which we held 5–7 years ago, it will be very hard for them'.<sup>33</sup> And a Ukrainian historian criticised her failure to embody in her analysis all the negative aspects of collectivisation.<sup>34</sup>

But the issue remained unresolved. In his authoritative report of November 2, 1987, Gorbachev presented a critical but generally favourable view of collectivisation (see Chapter 10), and this view was echoed in a report by Shcherbitsky, the Ukrainian party secretary.<sup>35</sup> A few weeks before the XIX Party Conference, a contributor to the party history journal referred approvingly to Selunskaya's 'critical

analysis' of the 'a priori assumptions' of journalists and social scientists that the evolution of agricultural cooperation was arbitrarily interrupted by forced collectivisation.<sup>36</sup> More or less simultaneously, the journal for party propagandists, in a biography of Bukharin following his rehabilitation, insisted that his policy towards the peasantry in 1928–9 had been 'mistaken' and had 'objectively held up the socialist offensive' until he surrendered his position at the end of 1929.<sup>37</sup>

An enormous gap thus remains, or has even opened up still wider, between the different approaches to collectivisation. The most popular novelists and social scientists condemn collectivisation outright. One group of historians accepts it in principle but strongly condemns the major distortions in practice; this is more or less the view accepted by Gorbachev. But other historians have hardly moved away from the viewpoint current under Brezhnev.

# 5 Stalin and his Entourage

In 1961 Stalin's embalmed body was moved out of the mausoleum in Red Square. 'We must break down the false image of Stalin in the minds of the people if we are to build a better society', a Soviet historian assured me in 1963. In the 1970s, however, almost no criticism of Stalin was permitted in the Soviet press; the problem of Stalin was dealt with by rarely mentioning him.

Now this has completely changed. Information, gossip and speculation about Stalin, mainly of an unfavourable kind, fill the Soviet press. Perhaps the most popular novel of the *perestroika* has been Anatolii Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*, of which a couple of million copies have already been printed. This novel, which deals solely with the single year 1934, devotes a couple of hundred pages to Stalin. He is shown conversing with colleagues and subordinates, and musing to himself about Soviet politics and history. Rybakov's Stalin is a shrewd, sickly-suspicious megalomaniac. He believes that the Soviet Union must be ruled by force and cunning, he fears hidden enemies at every level of society, and he plans to murder his most serious rival, the popular and amiable Kirov. At the pinnacle of power, he takes all decisions in more or less complete isolation. There is no dialectics of debate in Rybakov's Kremlin. Such powerful supporters of Stalin's policies as Molotov and Kaganovich hardly appear.<sup>1</sup>

The military historian D. A. Volkogonov (see Chapter 3) has called his biography of Stalin *Triumf i tragediya* because 'I want to show that the triumph of one person can turn into a tragedy for the whole people'. Volkogonov's image of Stalin is broadly similar to Rybakov's. Volkogonov's Stalin had a 'rational, cunning, designing mind, not lacking in practical ability'. But he was a populariser of Marxist theory rather than a theorist in his own right, and a dogmatist in both mind and character. He was adept at concealing his views and intentions, a 'great hypocrite, I would even say a capable actor'. When he advanced to some major objective, he did so carefully and in small steps. He was 'profoundly alone in his soul':

Imagine a despot who has no one to argue with, no one to justify

himself to, no one to explain himself to and apologise to. Whatever he said, at once became 'great, unique, a product of genius'.<sup>2</sup>

Stalin has been depicted as a despot who lacked any moral feeling by historians who have been through the marginal notes on the books in Stalin's personal library. On the inside cover of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirocriticism* Stalin wrote:

(1) Weakness, (2) laziness, (3) stupidity *alone* can be called *vices*. Everything else in the absence of the above undoubtedly constitutes *virtue*.

The authors commented that 'any energetic scoundrel could fit into this scale of virtues'. Stalin also marked the following passage in *Kurs russkoi istorii* (St Petersburg, 1916): 'Chengis-khan destroyed many people, saying "*The death of the vanquished is necessary for the calm of the victors*"'.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of a full record of Stalin's marginalia, this is hardly serious historical evidence about his character. But we have already encountered Stalin's remarks in the same spirit about the foolish restraint of Ivan the Terrible in dealing with the boyars (see Chapter 2).

Many recent publications have offered detailed evidence to show Stalin as a vicious man, quite unable to tolerate criticism, and at the same time suspicious to the point of paranoia. Admiral Isakov, who met Stalin 42 times, observed that 'the most trusted person could attract suspicion to himself in a moment'. When a pilot, hero of the Spanish Civil War, shouted out an intemperate criticism of Soviet aircraft at a Kremlin meeting, Stalin remarked without looking at him, 'You shouldn't have said that, young man'. The young man was arrested a few days later and never seen again.<sup>4</sup>

On another occasion Stalin, walking with Admiral Isakov down a long corridor in the Kremlin, remarked about the soldiers from the security services who were guarding the corridor:

The trouble is that I don't know which of these rogues will put a bullet in the back of my neck, and when.<sup>5</sup>

Admiral Kuznetsov had no love for Admiral Isakov (he described him as 'ambitious' and 'always afraid of losing his post'). But, like Isakov (and most other people who had personal contact with Stalin), he stressed Stalin's suspiciousness, his strong will which sometimes led to obstinacy, and his responsibility for the repressions.

Were the defects in Stalin's character partly a result of mental

illness? This question is now widely discussed. Admiral Kuznetsov believed that this was an important factor in explaining the repressions. A military historian reported what he had been told by the Old Bolshevik G. I. Petrovsky:

At one of the plenums of the Central Committee at the beginning of the 1930s Kaminsky, a doctor, said 'We must cure comrade Stalin, he is seriously ill'. He meant psychic illness. Stalin heard out Kaminsky very respectfully. But after this meeting the doctor did not return to his home.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately this is rather vague hearsay. An even more astonishing story, to which a full page of the literary newspaper is devoted, must be placed in a similar category. On December 22, 1927, the renowned neuropathologist Bekhterev, after examining Stalin, said to his colleagues something like 'a typical case of severe paranoia' or 'it's normal paranoia' (there are several versions). Bekhterev died suddenly a day or two later, and the literary newspaper argues that Stalin had him poisoned. The newspaper has requested, with the support of his grand-daughter, that Bekhterev's ashes (his body was hastily cremated) and his brain, which was preserved in the Institute of the Brain, should be examined for traces of the poison.<sup>7</sup>

Present-day Soviet psychiatrists have also been asked about the state of Stalin's mental health. The literary newspaper reported that many of them gave vague answers: 'after a period in which they were ready to declare almost everyone a schizophrenic who raised his head above the ocean of conformity, they are now being cautious'. But Professor A. E. Lichko firmly declared that Bekhterev's diagnosis was right, adding that the illness, following a normal pattern, flared up and faded away at different times:

In this illness psychotic attacks, as a rule, are provoked by external circumstances and difficult situations. Take, for example, the waveform which was followed by the repressions. I think attacks of the illness occurred in 1929–30, and then in 1936–7. Perhaps there was an attack right at the beginning of the war, in the first few days, when he in effect abandoned the leadership of the state. Finally, the period at the end of his life, the period of the 'doctors' case'.<sup>8</sup>

This eccentric analysis of Soviet history will please Western psycho-historians.

The image of a suspicious and vengeful Stalin is very unwelcome to other Soviet writers. On the eve of the XIX Party Conference,

Yurii Bondarev, who is strongly conservative, attacked the fashion of presenting Stalin as 'a stupid scoundrel, a vampire with the sickly psychotic character of the manager of a greengrocery, thirsting for blood'. But Bondarev himself described Stalin as a 'despotic figure with the uncontrolled mercilessness of an avenging will', and as 'cruel, cunning, wilful and contradictory in character'<sup>9</sup>

Positive features of Stalin's behaviour as a political leader are stressed in certain recent publications, particularly military memoirs. Admiral Kuznetsov praised Stalin as a 'highly educated and well-read person'. Kuznetsov discussed Stalin with many party and military leaders, but no one ever suggested that he made 'stupid decisions or illiterate proposals'.<sup>10</sup>

Marshal Zhukov, Chief of General Staff throughout much of the war, summed up Stalin's wartime role in a private conversation in remarkably favourable terms:

Complicated and contradictory, but very clever. At the beginning of the war he mastered strategic questions poorly, but his mind, the logic of his thought, his general knowledge and his grasp all served him well. In the second period of the war, after Stalingrad, he was entirely the right person as Supreme Commander. I liked the lack of bureaucratic confusion in the work of the General Staff. Questions were decided on the spot. But he comprehensively studied in advance an issue to be discussed or the plan of a future operation. Having carefully examined the information, he summoned people, military specialists and came to the meeting fully equipped. He did not tolerate superficiality and vagueness. Incidentally, he was able to listen to objections. It is not true that it was impossible to criticise Stalin. I objected and showed he was wrong – more than once!<sup>11</sup>

The military historian A. Mertsalov criticised Zhukov's favourable comments on Stalin, pointing out that different and inconsistent views of Stalin appear in Zhukov's various publications. In one letter Zhukov remarked that 'a particularly negative side of Stalin throughout the war was that, because he had poor practical knowledge of the preparation of operations . . . , he proposed completely unrealistic dates for operations to start'.<sup>12</sup> On other occasions Zhukov described Stalin as an ignorant civilian and castigated his military decisions as childish.

According to Volkogonov, Stalin's worst characteristics were less marked during the war:

He became more 'earthy', the divine dropped away from him. He felt that he also could make mistakes, even catastrophic ones. Stalin became more simple, if this word can be used in relation to him.<sup>13</sup>

There is thus no general agreement on whether Stalin was highly intelligent, and how far he was an effective and consistent policy-maker.

But there is no doubt that with advancing years Stalin's ability to manage Soviet affairs declined. Admiral Kuznetsov noted that in the last few years of his life 'he complained about old age more and more frequently', and appeared in his office more and more rarely. Eventually he was merely sent lists of the topics of proposed decisions to confirm, rather than the draft decisions themselves. Many important matters did not get resolved; Stalin himself referred to 'the hold-up at the centre (*tsentrostop*)'.<sup>14</sup>

But Stalin was hardly turning into a kind of constitutional monarch. In the last few years of his life he asserted his role as a theoretician in two major publications on linguistics and economics. Simultaneously with these exertions, he became increasingly suspicious and forgetful. The resulting arbitrariness and confusion led Admiral Kuznetsov to conclude – with considerable restraint – that 'it would have been correct for him to have left the wheel of such a huge state'.<sup>15</sup>

The confusion extended into the heart of the security services themselves. In 1950 the Minister of State Security Abakumov was instructed to arrest several of Beriya's closest advisers, and then in 1951 Abakumov was himself arrested.<sup>16</sup> In the last months of his life, Stalin was evidently trying to distance himself from Beriya, who had managed state security for Stalin since 1938.<sup>17</sup>

Although Beriya was now less influential, a new wave of repressions was launched. When Professor Vinogradov, one of Stalin's doctors, recommended that he should cease work for a time, Vinogradov was arrested on the grounds that this was an attempt to remove Stalin from power. Then in November 1952 and January 1953 the 'doctor-murderers' were arrested. Mainly Jewish, they were accused of murdering prominent Soviet leaders, including Zhdanov, following a denunciation by Lidiya Timashuk, who worked in the Kremlin medical service.<sup>18</sup>

Many recent Soviet publications have been devoted to these grim events, and to the anti-Jewish campaign which accompanied them.

Simonov, then editor of *Literaturnaya gazeta*, was one of many people accused of forming a group linked with the American Zionist organisation 'Joint'.<sup>19</sup>

One of the most startling accounts of Stalin's last months has been Simonov's description of the plenum of the party Central Committee on October 16, 1952, following the XIX Party Congress. According to Simonov, who was elected a candidate member of the Central Committee at the Congress, Stalin spoke for about one-and-a-half hours at the plenum, which lasted a little over two hours altogether. The main purpose of this extraordinary address was to accuse Molotov and Mikoyan of cowardice and capitulation. Insisting on the vital necessity in a dangerous capitalist world of the fearlessness and firmness characteristic of Lenin, he listed a series of errors made by Molotov while Stalin was on holiday. Stalin's attack on Molotov and Mikoyan was so merciless that their replies seemed like the last words of the accused in a trial:

It seemed to me that they were not people . . . but white masks put on these people, closely resembling their own faces and at the same time somehow completely different, no longer alive.

Simonov believed that Stalin wanted to deprive Molotov of the possibility of being considered his successor by undermining belief in his firmness, which was his strongest characteristic in the eyes of the party.

During the same plenum, Stalin proposed to give up the General Secretaryship of the party while remaining Chairman of the Council of Ministers, on the grounds that his age made it impossible for him to do so much work. But the members of the plenum vociferously objected to this proposal, encouraged by Malenkov from the chair, who evidently believed that this was a ploy of Stalin's to find out who his hidden enemies were. At the end of the plenum a larger Presidium was elected to replace the former Politburo, and included both Molotov and Mikoyan. But Stalin then proposed that the new Presidium should have a smaller Bureau, which in effect was the old Politburo under another name. Neither Molotov nor Mikoyan were members of this Bureau.<sup>20</sup>

Khrushchev briefly mentioned these incidents in his secret speech to the XX Party Congress in 1956, treating them as part of Stalin's plan to get rid of the old Politburo. Khrushchev commented that 'it is not excluded that had Stalin remained at the helm for another several months Comrades Molotov and Mikoyan would probably have not delivered any speeches at this Congress'.<sup>21</sup>

In an understandable reaction against the emphasis in the Western literature on Stalin's personal power, some Western historians have tended to treat Stalin's personal role in the repressions as of rather limited influence, and to concentrate on the part played by Soviet bureaucratic and local politics in the upheavals in Soviet society. In his study of the Great Purges of 1936–8 (known as the Ezhovshchina, after Nikolai Ezhov, head of the NKVD at that time), Arch Getty wrote that 'the question of Stalin's role as planner was – or should have been – a secondary one in this analysis'.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Soviet writers have insisted that he bore substantial personal responsibility for the repressions. Thus S. Mikoyan's article on Beriya is entitled 'The Servant', and some passages read as if they were written in reply to Dr Getty.<sup>23</sup>

Snegov, who occupied leading posts in the party right up to his arrest, wrote: 'One must be ignorant of the situation at that time in the Central Committee if without being dishonest one seriously places the responsibility on Ezhov for the extermination of many members of the Central Committee, delegates to the XVII Party Congress, secretaries of the Central Committee, and members of the Politburo: one must be ignorant of the degree of concentration of power in the hands of Stalin, when members of the Politburo did not have the right to defend their deputies, their comrades in arms of whose honesty they were convinced, their wives and even their children'.

But some badly informed people are not averse to discussing this question even today – people who lack either the wish or the courage to accept historical truth as it was.

But the truth is extremely simple. Before Beriya his role was played in turn by Yagoda and Ezhov, but one person unchangeably directed these puppets. After Beriya and parallel to him there were Merkulov, Abakumov and many other subordinates of lesser calibre.

Similarly the authoritative *Pravda* editorial article of April 5, 1988 (see Chapter 10) asserted of Stalin's acts of illegality: 'He did not simply know, he organised them, directed them. Today this is a fact, already proved'.

Stalin left behind him clear documentary evidence of his responsibility for mass executions during 1936–8. Such documents were cited by Khrushchev a quarter of a century ago, but for many years have

not been mentioned in the Soviet press. The most striking example, a letter to Stalin from Ezhov, was recently published in the young communist newspaper:

Cde. Stalin

I send for approval four lists of persons who are to be tried by the Military Collegium:

1. List No. 1 (general)
2. List No. 2 (former military staff)
3. List No. 3 (former NKVD staff)
4. List No. 4 (wives of enemies of the people).

I ask agreement to sentence all of them in the first category.

EZHOV

The 'first category' meant death by shooting. Each of the lists was signed: 'Agreed J. Stalin. Agreed. V. Molotov'.<sup>24</sup>

In order to demonstrate that Stalin was firmly in personal control, Soviet writers and historians have shown in some detail that from the time of the Ezhovshchina onwards almost all the members of Stalin's Politburo were personally humiliated by Stalin or had to endure the imprisonment of those close to them. According to a Soviet historian, Stalin used 'to insult Beriya, strike him in the face and throw tea at him'.<sup>25</sup> Molotov's wife, who was a senior official in her own right, was arrested in 1940 and spent many years in camps. One of Kaganovich's brothers was executed and another killed himself. The parents of Voroshilov's son's wife were arrested, and Voroshilov's wife was at one time in danger of arrest. The wife of Kalinin, the Soviet president, spent seven years from 1938 to 1945 in prison camps. She had to do heavy manual labour for many years, and the light work to which she was transferred involved scraping the nits from prisoners' underclothes in the camp baths with a piece of glass.<sup>26</sup>

In the strange world of Stalin's immediate entourage, different people found different ways of coping with the situation. Some were brave enough to struggle for the release of their relatives. Kalinin pleaded with Stalin for his wife so many times that Stalin eventually agreed to release her once the war was over.<sup>27</sup> Poskrebyshev, Stalin's personal secretary, pleaded for his wife on his knees, but Stalin said it was a matter for the NKVD and there was nothing he could do.<sup>28</sup> But, according to a Soviet account, Molotov, after abstaining from

voting on his wife's case at the XVIII Party Conference in January 1941, failed to intervene further. Kalinin's daughter visited her mother in her remote prison camp, but Molotov's daughter declared she had no mother when she applied to join the party.<sup>29</sup> Voroshilov, who until the mid-1930s was a man of strong will and independent mind, after the Ezhovshchina 'somehow went limp, lost his personality and was more afraid to lose his position than he should have been'.<sup>30</sup>

Whether because they were afraid, or because they genuinely believed in the necessity for the repressions, the Politburo as a whole bore – or was made to bear – responsibility for them. At the June 1957 plenum of the Central Committee, when Molotov, Kaganovich and others had unsuccessfully endeavoured to dismiss Khrushchev, Zhukov read out a frightful document. On a letter from a general pleading his innocence on the eve of his execution, the following comments appear:

A pack of lies! Shoot him! Stalin.

Agreed. Molotov.

Agreed. Blackguard! A dog's death to a dog. Beriya.

Maniac. Voroshilov.

Swine! Kaganovich.

This document, published in Khrushchev's day, but later ignored, was republished in the popular illustrated weekly *Ogonek* in April 1988.<sup>31</sup>

Whether every member of the Politburo was involved to the same extent is not yet absolutely clear. One of Gorbachev's advisers, talking to me about the whole of Stalin's Politburo, simply said 'terrible people (*strashnie lyudi*)'. Gorbachev, in his 70th Anniversary Report, declared that 'the guilt of Stalin and his closest entourage to the party and the people for the mass repressions and lawlessness which occurred is huge and unforgivable'.<sup>32</sup> But, as we shall see in Chapters 10 and 11, until the summer of 1988 it was a delicate question whether the more popular figures, such as Mikoyan and Kalinin, should be condemned as betrayers of the Leninist cause.

While the Politburo had to bear responsibility for Stalin's policies, how far its members and their advisers were able in their turn to influence Stalin remains a controversial issue.

Even in relation to the repressions, Beriya was not a puppet of Stalin. On a number of occasions he unsuccessfully attempted to persecute senior officials, but could not obtain Stalin's sanction. According to Zhukov, Stalin told Beriya, 'I won't give you Zhukov. I know him, he is not a traitor'.<sup>33</sup> Beriya hated the eminent physicist

Academician Kapitsa, who refused to work on the atom bomb under Beriya's command and who persuaded Stalin to free Lev Landau, who was later awarded a Nobel Prize.<sup>34</sup> Kapitsa was dismissed from the directorship of his Institute, but 'Beriya did not receive permission to arrest him from Stalin, and in consequence could not lift a finger against him.'<sup>35</sup> And Admiral Isakov recalled one occasion when Voronov, in charge of the artillery, failed to turn up for a meeting with Stalin, and Stalin demanded to know where he was. No one replied. Then Stalin turned to Beriya:

'Lavrentii, is he with you?'

Beriya, walking about the room, said over his shoulder, 'Yes, he is'.

Stalin looked at him meaningfully, and we saw that Beriya cowered, and even grew shorter.

'Can he be here tomorrow?', Stalin asked.

'Not tomorrow', Beriya answered, not knowing where to put his hands, or himself.

'The day after tomorrow?', Stalin continued, fixing Beriya with a firm look.

'He will be here the day after tomorrow. Definitely'.

The meeting was postponed, and on the agreed day Voronov was in his place, with the dark bags under his eyes lightly powdered.<sup>36</sup>

From these accounts, while Stalin had the ultimate say, and would initiate repressions, Beriya was eagerly pressing further victims upon him. The 'Servant' of S. Mikoyan's article acquired some of the characteristics of Dirk Bogarde in the film *The Servant*, where the servant sought to take over the household. Simonov has even suggested that when Stalin sought in the last six months of his life to set Beriya aside, 'he was perhaps exaggerating his possibilities at that time, part of which were already blocked by Beriya'.<sup>37</sup>

With other members of the Politburo, and on other matters but the repressions, the accounts we are offered are complex and contradictory. According to Admiral Kuznetsov, while Molotov was the second person in the state, 'I formed the impression that in his relations with Stalin Molotov did not have his own definite opinion, but only listened to his orders'. He adds, however, that 'perhaps this is mistaken and only applies to matters concerning the Navy'.<sup>38</sup> Marshal Zhukov regarded Molotov as a much more independent personality:

I was present many times at the discussion of many questions

with Stalin in the presence of his closest entourage, and I had the opportunity to see disputes and altercations, and to see the stubbornness displayed on some matters, especially by Molotov. At times things went so far that Stalin raised his voice and even lost his temper, but Molotov, smiling, stood up behind the table and did not give up his point of view . . .

The authority of Molotov was strengthened by the qualities of his character. He was a strong person, a man of principle, far from any personal considerations, extremely stubborn, extremely cruel, consciously following Stalin and supporting him in the cruellest actions, including those of 1937–1938, on the basis of his own views. He followed Stalin out of conviction, while Malenkov and Kaganovich made their career out of it.<sup>39</sup>

These different views of the part played by Beriya and Molotov in Politburo decisions are accompanied by equally sharp differences of opinion about the Politburo as a whole. According to one Soviet historian, such figures as Kirov, Ordzhonikidze, Kuibyshev, Kalinin and Khrushchev were ‘very different from one another, and they were all very big leaders, thinking originally, working with their own approach’.<sup>40</sup> But Volkogonov’s view of Stalin’s Politburo is quite different, almost contemptuous, and with more than a touch of the snobbery of a professionally-educated man:

Our state and our party were led for thirty years by a person who in essence did not have any solid professional basis. In practice he did not even have a specialisation. This was a person who did not know properly the life of either the workers or the peasants. In fact, with rare exceptions, he did not visit collective farms, factories, or the front. And many of his entourage were the same. It is not surprising that we had at that time an abundance of ‘People’s Academicians’ with a secondary school education, who had made a thorough study of revolutionary phrases. . . Molotov finished a technical school, but in effect did not have production practice. Malenkov, a student who had not finished his course, was competent as a technical secretary. And Kaganovich was a shoemaker.<sup>41</sup>

Times have changed. It was, after all, Lenin who thought that ‘every cook should learn to govern the state’. The eminent historian of Chinese society, Joseph Needham, recently recalled that as a young Christian socialist he welcomed the 1917 Revolution because he

thought that 'it is high time that the lowest of the low learned how to govern'.

Volkogonov is, however, certainly correct in his judgement that Stalin and some of his entourage were frequently liable to fall under the sway of persuasive charlatans. This was perhaps not merely a result of their lack of education. Lenin, a highly educated person, displayed a strong tendency to be attracted by phoney inventions. But he let himself be talked out of them by Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, an electrical engineer by training. Stalin was not always so wise.

The most prominent of Stalin's charlatans was the agronomist Lysenko, who secured the support of Stalin to persecute the great Soviet biologist N. I. Vavilov, who died in a camp in 1943. After the war Lysenko established almost complete control over biology following the notorious conference on biological science in August 1948. Three thousand biologists were dismissed from their posts; some of them were arrested. The careers of both Vavilov and Lysenko have been discussed in great detail in the Soviet press and on television in connection with the 100th anniversary of Vavilov's birth in November 1987.

Two articles by Valerii Soifer present an usually detailed and quite subtle account of Lysenko's relationship with Stalin and the Politburo, and are therefore worth discussing in some detail. Soifer described the bitter struggle between Lysenko and the geneticists in the first three years after the war. This was partly the story of 'Two Brothers and a Son'. Lysenko's younger brother had gone over to the Germans in occupied Kharkov and then fled to the West, and this gravely damaged Lysenko's prestige in party circles. And in 1945 the late Nikolai Vavilov's brother S. I. Vavilov was elected President of the Academy of Sciences, and did much to encourage the development of Soviet genetics. Moreover, in 1947 Yurii Zhdanov, son of Andrei Zhdanov, Politburo member and chief ideologist, was appointed head of the Science Department of the party Central Committee. Yurii was a chemist by training, and after his appointment he soon decided that Lysenko was in the wrong. At a seminar attended by party lecturers, he took the extraordinary step of giving a lecture attacking Lysenko's domination over biology.

Lysenko did not attend the seminar, but listened to it on an internal radio in a neighbouring office. According to Lysenko, he was refused a ticket; according to Soifer, he was afraid to attend because he knew he would be unable to debate convincingly with young Zhdanov.

The seminar was held on April 10, 1948, and a week later, on

April 17, Lysenko wrote to Stalin and the elder Zhdanov insisting that his position as President of the Agricultural Academy had become impossible. The letter, not published until 1987, was written in terms which appealed to Stalin's mode of thought, either by cunning or because Lysenko and Stalin thought alike. Lysenko explained:

The main trouble and difficulty of my work as President has been that I have been presented with requirements which, I am profoundly convinced, are erroneous – to secure the development of two tendencies in science . . .

For me this requirement is not capable of fulfilment. But I have not been able to squeeze out the opposing tendency, first, because these questions are not solved by administrative methods in science, and secondly because the support for Neo-Darwinism [i.e., genetics] has been so great that I have not been able to do this . . .

I am able to assist the development of the most varied branches of agricultural science, but only following the Michurinist [i.e., the Lysenkoist – RWD] tendency, the tendency which recognises that living nature changes in accordance with the conditions of life, which recognises the inheritance of acquired characteristics.

On the grounds, then, that it would be wrong to assist the 'anti-Michurinist' tendency, and that this tendency was stronger than 'Michurinism' in the Academy for which he was responsible, Lysenko directly appealed to Stalin and the elder Zhdanov for help.

No immediate answer followed. But some time earlier Stalin had given a packet containing 210 grams of 'branching wheat' seeds to Lysenko, asking him to test them. According to Soifer, Lysenko knew that this type of wheat was a failure (it was condemned by Russian biologists in the 1850s), but in the spring of 1948 he claimed that it had proved a great success, reported this news to Stalin and published it in the newspapers. He even claimed that the new wheat would eventually yield 100 tsentners per hectare average harvest (a ten-fold increase). According to Soifer:

It is reliably known that when A. A. Zhdanov [the elder Zhdanov] criticised Lysenko in Stalin's presence, Stalin disagreed with him, referring to the fact that Comrade Lysenko was engaged in an important task for the country; even if he was exaggerating in promising to raise the yield of wheat for the country five-fold, and only got an increase of 50 per cent, Stalin said, that would be quite sufficient for the country.

Following this alleged success, Stalin summoned Lysenko, and after their meeting ordered the convening of the famous August 1948 session of the Agricultural Academy at which the Lysenkoists were victorious.<sup>42</sup>

Thus Lysenko had faced many obstacles. He was under a cloud because of his brother. His opponents were defended by the Academy of Sciences as a whole and by the relevant section of the party apparatus. But Lysenko was able to overcome these obstacles by appealing to Stalin partly on ideological grounds, largely by promising a great practical improvement in agriculture. Stalin thought of himself as supporting a progressive tendency in science, and genuinely believed he was weighing it up soberly. In a marginal note on Lysenko's draft report of August 1948, Stalin wrote disapprovingly. 'Is two times two is four also a bourgeois invention?— J.St.'<sup>43</sup> When he wrote this note he was evidently thinking of himself as a moderating influence on Lysenko. But Stalin's intervention was in general far from sober and moderate, and it set Soviet biology back many years.

Stalin did not always give his support to charlatans. In the linguistic debate in the summer of 1950 he intervened against the dogmatists, and a recent Soviet account has described how this occurred.<sup>44</sup>

Ever since the 1930s a powerful group of militant Marxist philologists had advocated the eccentric theories of N. Ya. Marr, who died in 1934. Marr treated language as part of the 'superstructure' of society, erected on the base of production relations, and dependent on class. He also claimed that all languages were ultimately derived from the four elements 'Sal, Ber, Ion and Rosh', an aspect of his theory which caused his followers some embarrassment.

Already in the 1930s philologists were harassed. During the Ezhovshchina their most distinguished scholar, E. D. Polivanov, was executed. After the war, in the autumn of 1946, the Marrists renewed their campaign against their rivals. In June 1949, following the biology discussions, the presidium of the Academy of Sciences resolved that Marr's teaching was to be regarded as 'the *only* materialist marxist theory of language'.

However, events now took an unexpected turn. In April 1950 the non-Marxist philologist A. S. Chikobava was summoned to Stalin's dacha, and Stalin closely cross-questioned him about Marr's views. He was assigned the task of preparing a discussion article on the subject for *Pravda*. Stalin wrote comments on two successive drafts and discussed them with Chikobava. According to Chikobava,

‘contrary to the widespread opinion it was possible to argue with him, and sometimes he agreed’.

On May 9, 1950, Chikobava’s article appeared in *Pravda*, and was fiercely attacked in the ensuing discussion by the Marrists, who were obviously unaware of what had been going on.<sup>45</sup> Between June and August, Stalin himself published no fewer than three discussion articles on linguistics in *Pravda*. He classified language as belonging neither to the ‘base’ nor to the ‘superstructure’ in Marxist terms, and strongly attacked Marr’s doctrines.

As the author of the present Soviet account points out, this discussion was ‘pseudo-*glasnost*’, because Stalin knew the outcome of the debate before it began. But the outcome was a remarkable and unexpected contrast to the Lysenko debate: Stalin took the side of the established professionals against the militant charatans.

These accounts of Stalin and his entourage show a Politburo – and a wider heterogeneous group of advisers such as Marshal Zhukov, Admiral Kuznetsov, Lysenko and Chikobava – who are not merely obedient, but actively seek to change policies, with varying results. Yet the overwhelming impression from this unprecedented flow of information is of the grimness and inhumanity of life at the top in the Stalin years. Stalin is shrewd, but he is a suspicious, vengeful and self-regarding despot. His entourage regard him with admiration, but live in fear. The Soviet readers are shown a system of rule and a style of leadership which are intolerable and uncivilised. They must understand it, the critical writers insist, so that it should never occur again.

## 6 Stalinism and Soviet Society

In the recent Soviet accounts of the impact of Stalinism on Soviet society, the repressive character of the regime is at the centre of attention. We have already considered Soviet publications on the campaign to eliminate the kulaks and other opponents of collectivisation, and on the subsequent famine (see Chapter 4). Even greater attention has been devoted to the repression of the intelligentsia, the military and the other professional groups during the 'Great Purge' of 1936–8 and in the whole period up to Stalin's death.

The repressions were the central theme of the novels and short stories which appeared in the first months of 1987. In Granin's fictionalised biography of the biologist Timofeev-Resovsky, who spent the war years in Nazi Germany, the persecution of scientists in the Soviet Union in the 1930s was quite fully described. Timofeev-Resovsky himself was shown after his return to the Soviet Union, nearly dying from pellagra after a year in a camp.<sup>1</sup>

Anatolii Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* described the milder processes of OGPU arrest and questioning in the mid-1930s, and the mental agony of the victim's mother. Rybakov also acquainted his readers with the notorious arrangements by which ordinary apartments were allocated to the OGPU so that informers could report to their controls; and showed the mental torment suffered by some of those forced into acting as informers.<sup>2</sup>

In *Robed in White*, a novel about Lysenkoism, Dudintsev set out in elaborate and fascinating detail the questionnaire supplied by the secret police to an unfortunate informer-provocateur in 1948, which he was required to put to the hero in order to lure him into anti-Soviet statements. Here is an extract:

M.q. [main question]: what do you think of Minister Kaftanov's orders to dismiss scientists – Doctors of Science, Ph.Ds and Professors? Is it true that about three thousand were sacked? Have you tried to work it out from the orders? Is it really three thousand? Isn't that too severe? . . .

M.q.: do you know that cde. Stalin is interested in the biological sciences?

S.q. [supplementary question]: what is your opinion on the fact that the report [by Lysenko] was read at the session [of the Agricultural Academy in August 1948] after it had been approved by cde. Stalin? . . . S.q.: is it true that cde. St. on the proposal of Lysenko and Ryadno, by his personal decision, without election procedure, introduced nearly 30 new members into the Agr. Academy? S.q.: what's your attitude to the absence of elections? isn't it a violation of the Statute of the Academy?<sup>3</sup>

Many short stories provide us with new glimpses of the world of spy mania, deportations and camps. A story by Fazil' Iskander, 'Chik and Pushkin', described the desperate efforts of Chik, a schoolboy, to find evidence of wrecking in a picture illustrating a Pushkin poem about Oleg's farewell to his horse on the cover of a school exercise book of 1937 commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Pushkin's death. While he was doing this, Chik recalled an occasion when a boy found a piece of paper on a beach on which some anti-Soviet remarks accompanied 'a torpedo-shaped object often drawn in public lavatories'. The boy and his friends promptly surrounded an innocent passer-by and accused him of wrecking; he was rescued by the intervention of Chik's mad grandfather, who recognised insanity in others.<sup>4</sup>

In a story by the late Fyodor Abramov, an old countryman got five years for stealing radishes from a field. Another story by Abramov in the same journal described the tribulations of a family who fled from their village to avoid dekulakisation, and had to hide in the towns without internal passports:

We travelled the whole of Siberia, the whole of Kazakhstan, the whole of Kirgizia, we went to all the building sites. It was simpler at the sites. They had a great need for manual workers and diggers, and did not ask for passports. We lived in slums, in quarries, in holes in the ground. Peter did not go to school until he was twelve.<sup>5</sup>

A new novel by Sergei Antonov, *Vas'ka*, took the tale of repression into the working class.<sup>6</sup> This is a rare event: intellectuals and peasants are the heroes and victims of nearly all recent Soviet novels and articles, and little has been written about the factories and the construction sites. *Vas'ka* is a young woman who is an outstanding worker on the construction of the Moscow metro (Metrostroi); but

she is also the daughter of a kulak, and has fled from her village. The young party organiser on the site is torn between his duty to denounce her and his wish not to lose her work, coupled with his human feelings for her. Fear spreads in a spiral through all those concerned. The outcome was left open in the novel, but in an interview in the literary newspaper *Antonov* explained that in real life 'in the middle of 1934 a campaign was carried out to purge Metrostroi of class-alien elements, and Vas'ka had to return where she fled from, and perhaps go further away'.<sup>7</sup>

As is often the case in the Soviet Union, it was the creative writers who led the way. But in 1988 non-fiction accounts of the repressions appeared in profusion in newspapers and mass-circulation journals.

These accounts are tragic and upsetting. I cite a few examples in order to illustrate how this harrowing aspect of Stalinism has been presented to very large numbers of Soviet citizens.

Lev Razgon, the children's writer whom we have already met in Chapter 5, set out to force an understanding of the world of prisoners and exiles into the minds and hearts of younger Soviet citizens, and those of the older generation who had been lucky enough not to experience it.

Razgon showed by a graphic example how the methods used in investigating political cases had grown more inhumane in the course of the 1930s. One of his cell-mates in 1937 was Oskol'kov, a famous civil engineer, who had been responsible for building the Kiev railway station in Moscow. Many of Oskol'kov's acquaintances had been arrested in 1930, and so he thought he knew what to expect from the OGPU investigators. In 1930 the standard treatment was 'kindness replaced by concealed threats; patient conversations, devious on the part of both sides; good cigarettes, and strong fresh tea'. But this did not happen:

When they put handcuffs on him in the lift, Oskol'kov suddenly understood that something was taking place not foreseen by the scenario he knew so well. And then they led him into a room, full of laughing young healthy lads. One of them turned to those who had come in and asked who they had brought. Not even waiting for them to say Oskol'kov's name, he smashed Oskol'kov's face with a skilful and ordinary blow, and knocked out his front teeth. And Oskol'kov, getting up with difficulty, clearly understood that his old mental patterns were inappropriate.

Instead of arguments and persuasion, Soviet engineers and military

men during the Ezhovshchina had to cope with 'these healthy young murderers', who 'bashed everything human out of them'. This was often followed by a five-minute tribunal and execution by a drunken firing squad.<sup>8</sup>

There were various kinds of punishment cells in the Butyrka prison. Some were 'damp, dark sacks', some were black basements, where rats ran about. When he was caught with a small piece of grey toilet paper, which you were not allowed to keep, Razgon was put in a 'light cell', a small 'cupboard-room', two paces long, one-and-a-half paces wide, without windows, with no furniture but a metal frame to sleep on and a big metal shit-bucket, never emptied. Everything was painted a blinding white enamel and illuminated day and night by a blazing 500-watt bulb:

After an hour this starts to drive you mad. For the greater part of the time I stood in the corner in my white vest, because they just leave you in your underclothes, and covered my eyes firmly, pressing my hands against them. But nothing helped, the light penetrated one's brain and right inside one's body, you couldn't get away from it.

He remained there for five days, not allowed to speak, knock, or sit or lie down.<sup>9</sup>

Razgon grew to hate all the OGPU staff. For some weeks he thought of the warders and investigators as human beings, 'mistaken or scoundrels, but human beings'. Then one day an old man, who by a strange coincidence had been in the same cell in 1911, was brought back from questioning. He was weak and ill, and had been badly beaten, and fell to the floor motionless. One of the warders went off and brought in a beautiful woman in a white coat, a most unexpected sight in their isolated world:

We could not take our eyes off her. Not bending down, the beautiful woman in the white coat, using the toe of her small elegant slipper, pushed the hand of the man lying on the floor, and then his arms, which were stretched out on the asphalt floor in the shape of a cross, and then his legs. Then she turned to the warders and said 'Nothing broken, just bruises'.

She turned round and, glancing at us but not seeing us, she went out of the room.

Razgon at this moment understood, immediately and for ever, that 'they are not like we are . . . or like we will be in the future'. They

were just pretending to be human beings, and 'you should not enter into human relations with them'.<sup>10</sup>

In another article Razgon described an even more monstrous figure, Colonel Tarasyuk. After the German invasion, rations were reduced at the timber camp in the Far North where Razgon was exiled, and working hours were lengthened. Pellagra broke out. Then Colonel Tarasyuk arrived, 'with the face of a Roman patrician, cold but calm, equable'.

Exotic flowers and fruit were grown for him in special greenhouses, the best tailor-prisoners made clothes for his capricious wife, and medical treatment was provided for the illustrious couple by professors who were prisoners at the camp. During a long meeting with prisoners, who were all very hungry, he was brought a delicious meal of wild fowl, served by well-dressed waitresses, and prepared by a former chef from a well-known St. Petersburg restaurant. The prisoners got nothing. Tarasyuk, who was a great believer in efficiency, decided to improve the rations of the forestry workers in order to boost productivity. To obtain the required food he took away the anti-pellagra ration from 240 invalids. The doctor told him that this meant they would die. "Are you saying this is not allowed by your medical ethics?" "Yes". "I have just spat on your ethics", said Tarasyuk calmly and without any sign of anger. . . All 240 people died within a month'.

After Razgon had been temporarily released, he was intending to buy sausage and bread when he noticed in his copy of *Izvestiya* a sorrowful announcement that the great organiser of production, Colonel Tarasyuk, had died. Razgon was very short of money, but spent his last rubles on vodka instead of sausage. He and his wife drank the vodka and ate the bread, sighing with happiness that they were no longer in a camp.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most hard-hitting accounts of the Gulag system appeared in the young communist daily newspaper. In an article entitled 'There Was No Way Back', one of their correspondents described his visit to the Far East where he talked to local inhabitants about life in the world of prisoners and exiles after the second world war. In 1949 the construction began of a transcontinental railway which would duplicate the Northern Sea route. The first stretch, Project No. 503, was a 1263 kilometre line which would enable the output of the Noril'sk combine and the Kolyma goldfields to be transported throughout the year. These deadly enterprises were manned by prisoners, and the railway was also built exclusively by prisoners.

Conditions were frightful. On parts of the route there was an ice-desert, with temperatures 60° Centigrade below zero, but all construction was by hand.

At each building site, the watch-towers, the barbed wire and so on were put up by the prisoners first. Until they had built their own barracks they had to sleep near a bonfire; you considered yourself lucky to live till morning.. The correspondent described the humiliating treatment and brutal punishments suffered by the prisoners. Political prisoners were treated particularly badly, and 'most of them perished in the very first frosts'.

In the remote village of Kureika on the banks of the Enisei, where Stalin was in exile during the first world war, a huge museum-pantheon was built round his hut by the prisoners in 1949–50. It was in the eternal frost zone and the whole building was specially heated and illuminated. Next to it stood a white marble statue of Stalin with a newspaper in his hand. All ships had to stop there.

In 1953 the construction of the railway was stopped. It remained a 'railway leading nowhere', and only a small section of it has ever been used. Visits to Stalin and his pantheon-hut continued until 1961, and then, on orders from the top, the statue was lowered into the river. For some years it could be seen from passing ships, face up, until it was covered by sand. Even though forced labour was used to build the railway, costs were immense:

And how many lives were lost in that waste of snow storms, how many people were destroyed? Who could know?

There is no accountant in the world who could add it all up.<sup>12</sup>

Other reports describe the Karaganda camp complex, which was scattered over an area of the size of France, and the mass deportation of tens of thousands of Koreans from the Far East after the Soviet–Japanese border clashes of 1937.<sup>13</sup>

A series of articles in the newspaper *Izvestiya* presented the camp system as an organism with a life of its own, feeding on new arrests: 'when the White Sea Canal was completed in 1932 and there was nothing to occupy the army of prisoners, the decision was taken to construct the Baikal–Amur railway'. These articles also revealed something of the extent of prison labour, which before the war built four major railway lines, and the towns of Magadan, Angarsk, Noril'sk and Taishet, and during the war mined half of all gold and one-third of all platinum production, and cut down the Northern forests.<sup>14</sup>

Such conditions are familiar to Western readers, but they are now being described to Soviet readers in great detail, and in popular publications, on an entirely unprecedented scale. In Khrushchev's day, such accounts were largely confined to the literary journals, and for twenty years the Soviet press has been almost completely silent about the world of the labour camps. But now the picture of the Stalin years in the mind of every Soviet citizen who has read these accounts includes the cruelty, suffering and death inflicted on large numbers of people by the deliberate policy of Stalin and the central authorities.

These reports of the repressions dramatically emphasise the general theme in the recent literature that people were not treated as human beings with rights and individual personalities, but as cogs in a machine. This theme is brought out by the discussion of one unfortunate word used by Stalin: *vintiki*. Stalin always tried to present himself as a man of the people, who understood and responded to their needs: 'leaders come and go, but people are immoral'; 'cadres decide everything'. But on one occasion he made a slip, and several times used the word *vintiki* to describe ordinary people (*vintiki* literally means 'little screws', and in this context is usually best translated 'nuts and bolts', possibly even 'cogs'). On June 25, 1945, at the height of his power, glory and popularity, Stalin addressed a reception in the Kremlin for participants in the Victory Parade:

Do not think I will say anything unusual. I have the simplest and most ordinary of toasts. I would like to drink to the health of people who have few offices and whose status is unenviable. To people who are considered '*vintiki*' in the great state machine, but without whom we – marshals and commanders of fronts and armies – , speaking crudely, are not worth a tinker's cuss. If any '*vintik*' ceases to work – it's the end. I propose a toast to simple, ordinary, modest people, to '*vintiki*', who keep our great state machine in motion in all branches of science, economy and military affairs. There are very many of them, their name is legion, because there are tens of millions of them. They are modest people. No one writes about them, they have no high status and few offices, but they are the people who maintain us as the base maintains the summit. I drink the health of these people, our respected comrades.<sup>15</sup>

This could be interpreted as a thoughtful and even kindly speech; and Stalin was careful to put '*vintiki*' in inverted commas. I remember

being impressed at the time that Stalin was using this major occasion to keep top people in their place, and to speak up for the ordinary people. But the Soviet people are rightly a proud people, and Stalin's patronising use of this single word has never been forgotten or forgiven by some of the *'vintiki'*. I have come across many critical references to the use of the word *'vintiki'* in the Soviet press in the past year or so, with and without attribution to the use of the word to Stalin. Here are a few:

'Wasn't it in the forties, after the victory, when the people, who had suffered an unbelievably severe war, were called "*vintiki*", when lack of care for the ordinary person developed, lack of belief in their strength and consciousness' (Vyacheslav Kondrat'ev).<sup>16</sup>

'The less people feel themselves to be "nuts" or "*vintiki*", the better for society.' (Svetlana Alekseevich).<sup>17</sup>

In a short story by Yu. Shishenkov, an official said to someone, 'You are simply a *vintik* in the state machine and you should act accordingly'.<sup>18</sup>

'The result of democratisation must be that every person in every post ceases to be a *vintik*, becomes a significant figure taking a range of decisions' (V. Mezhuev, Doctor of Philosophy).<sup>19</sup>

The critic A. Egorov concluded that Onisimov, the Minister in Bek's novel *Novoe naznachenie* (see Chapter 7) was a *vintik* in spite of his high rank. Here we must translate *vintik* literally as 'screw', because Egorov added that Onisimov was 'perhaps an expensive little screw, a unique one, but with a cut in its head in which it is easy to insert a screwdriver'.<sup>20</sup>

Many of these accounts seek to demonstrate how the tremendous repressive power of the Stalinist state, and the contemptuous attitude of its masters to the population, succeeded in breaking the will of many people. They toed the line. They lacked all initiative.

It was equally important, perhaps, that millions of people were persuaded to believe in Stalin and the Stalinist system. 'The propaganda had a great destructive force, like a narcotic', wrote a party historian, 'it suppressed the personality, accustomed people to passivity and to understand reality in a false light'.<sup>21</sup> A collective-farm chairman described his past views in an article entitled 'Under a Clear Moon: the testimony of a man who found it difficult to cure himself of his love for Stalin':

We believed everything, I refer to people like myself from the village. . . I can honestly say that when they told us about the

conspiracy of Bukharin and the others, I did not doubt for a second that everything was like that. My soul sought for revenge.

We believed everything, everything in the newspapers. After all we read their own confessions. Moreover, the iron will of the exposures, the mercilessness, had the effect that I believed Stalin still more, blindly. . . Everything was so obvious!<sup>22</sup>

Daniil Granin described the enthusiasm of the 1920s and 1930s much more positively. But he did not present it as inspired by Stalinist propaganda. It was rather that Stalinism very gradually squeezed out all enthusiasm:

Inspired by the ardour of the revolution, and by the dream of achieving a paradise of equality and fraternity in the near future, a dream of communism, they lived in barracks, went to work singing, and built up a powerful industry with fervour and self-reliance. No re-examination and re-assessment should devalue the romanticism of these years. It was genuinely popular in character, it was deeply believed in, and people achieved miracles in their work. They worked well and conscientiously by present-day standards. This inspiration lasted a surprisingly long while. Famine, bad living conditions, dekulakisation and 'the enemies of the people' who emerged everywhere were unable to extinguish it.<sup>23</sup>

Another recurrent theme in recent publications is that Stalin and the Stalin system did not go unopposed. A brave minority actively resisted it, or tried to change its course. Pockets of resistance existed at every level in Soviet society. In his article on Khrushchev, Fyodor Burlatsky presented him as reflecting a healthy trend which almost never ceased to exist in the top leadership of the party:

He was a representative (*vyrazitel'*) of the trend in the party which was represented in other circumstances and probably in other ways by politicians who were different from each other in many ways such as Dzerzhinsky, Bukharin, Rykov, Rudzutak and Kirov. They were supporters of the development of NEP and democratisation, and opponents of coercive measures in industry or in agriculture, and still more in culture. In spite of the cruel Stalinist repressions, this trend never died.<sup>24</sup>

This is tantalisingly unspecific. But a number of specific cases of opposition or resistance have been reported and I will summarise some of the more interesting, in roughly chronological order.

Sometime in 1931, Stalin proposed at a high-level Politburo or Orgburo meeting, chaired by Kaganovich, that Beriia should be appointed second secretary of the Transcaucasian committee. Several of those present, including Kartvelishvili, first secretary of the Trans-Caucasus regional party committee, strenuously objected, and the proposal found no support (Ordzhonikidze was said by Mikoyan to have deliberately absented himself from the meeting). Reporting this case, Mikoyan's son commented:

It is interesting (*lyubopytno*) that at that time, apparently, disagreement could still take place. As yet opponents able to express and defend other points of view had not been removed.

This opposition proved quite ineffective. Stalin immediately broke off the discussion, and a few months later reshuffled the posts without consulting the Politburo. Beriia got the job, and Kartvelishvili was posted elsewhere.<sup>25</sup>

In the following year, 1932, there occurred the famous case of the 'Ryutin platform'. Much contradictory information has been published about the Ryutin affair over several decades in the West, but almost nothing appeared in the Soviet press between 1932 and 1988. The Soviet Supreme Court has now examined the Ryutin files in the archives. Following the investigation, on June 13, 1988, the Court cancelled the decisions of the OGPU in 1932–3, and the later decisions of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court, about Ryutin and his associates, stating that they had not committed any criminal act.<sup>26</sup> A couple of weeks later Arkadii Vaksberg published a quite full article on the case, on which the following account is based.<sup>27</sup>

Ryutin, who supported the Right in 1928, in the autumn of 1930 criticised Stalin's policies in a stormy interview with him. He was expelled from the party, arrested and then accused of organising a counter-revolutionary group. But this was not yet the Ezhovshchina, and he was released for lack of evidence on January 17, 1931, and even restored to party membership.

Conditions in the country continued to deteriorate, and in the summer of 1932, on the eve of the famine, he prepared what has been known in the West as the 'Ryutin platform'. No Western or Soviet scholar had ever seen this document, but there is a copy in the Ryutin files, and Vaksberg has examined it, and quoted extensively from it. Couched as an appeal addressed 'To All Members of the

CPSU(b) [Soviet Communist Party]', it ferociously criticised Stalin's policies:

The adventurist tempos of industrialisation have involved a colossal reduction of the real wages of manual and clerical workers, unbearable open and concealed taxes, inflation, price increases and the decline in the value of the ruble. Adventurist collectivisation has been assisted by dekulakisation, directed in practice against the mass of middle peasants and poor peasants in the countryside. The countryside has been exploited by all kinds of imposts and compulsory collections of agricultural products. This has led the country to a very profound economic crisis, the monstrous impoverishment of the mass of the people, and famine.

The document was equally damning of the political regime, claiming that 'the rights of the party have been usurped by a tiny gang of unprincipled political intriguers'. It insisted that the Stalinist yoke could no longer be tolerated, and concluded:

Stalin and his clique are destroying the Communist cause, and the leadership of Stalin must be finished with as quickly as possible.

On August 21, 1932, ten or twelve party members met in one of their flats to discuss and revise the Ryutin document. They included a professor in the Mining Academy, someone who worked in the Central Archives, and the director of a printing press. The document was later passed on to others; it was apparently marked 'Read, pass on, copy and circulate'. Zinoviev and Kamenev read it and helped to revise it.

Fifty-six years later in June 1988, the Supreme Court tolerantly ruled that, in spite of the call to finish with the leadership of Stalin as quickly as possible, 'the political attitudes and theoretical views set out in the programme document had a discussion character and did not contain appeals for the overthrow, disruption or weakening of Soviet power'. It did not seem like that to Stalin and the security services. On September 20, 1932, the flat where the meeting was held was searched, and three days later Ryutin was arrested, followed by other conspirators and anyone who was known to have read the document.

Stalin demanded that Ryutin should be executed, but Kirov, Ordzhonidze, Kuibyshev and 'some other members of the Politburo' opposed this, and he was sentenced to ten years in prison. But on January 1, 1937, after a 40-minute trial (the court record and sentence

take up only a couple of pages), he was immediately executed. Many of his associates suffered the same fate; his two sons were executed, and one of their wives went insane.

In February 1934, at the XVII Party Congress, opposition to Stalin again appeared. Accounts of what happened at the Congress have appeared in the West in several different versions. Mikoyan's account in his previously unpublished memoirs seems to be authoritative, and coincides with that given by Roy Medvedev in *Let History Judge*.

According to Mikoyan, in the elections at the Congress for the party Central Committee, only three votes were recorded against Kirov, but 'nearly 100 times as many' against Stalin (i.e., nearly 300 out of 1,227 delegates). The chairman of the electoral commission, Zatonsky, together with Kaganovich, told Stalin about this. Stalin insisted that only three votes should be recorded against him as well, and the votes were adjusted accordingly. . . The other dramatic event behind the scenes at the Congress was that a group of delegates approached Kirov and asked him to become General Secretary in place of Stalin. Kirov loyally refused, and told Stalin about what had happened.<sup>28</sup>

Other examples of resistance to Stalin at this time are more ambiguous. At the Writers' Congress in 1934, the well-known explorer Otto Schmidt commented that 'our work does not need to be whipped on, put under pressure or shouted about, it does not need the counterposing of the leader to the remaining mass – these are not our methods'. According to Vaksberg, this speech was taken by the delegates present – and by Stalin – to be a criticism of him.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, contemporary Soviet writers have suggested that the great Jewish actor Mikhoels, in his portrayal of King Lear in 1935–7, 'was thinking of another autocrat who was being inflated minute by minute with the yeast of unrestrained praise'. It is alleged that Mikhoels envisaged that in Stalin's case, as in the case of Lear, 'exaltation would be followed by tragedy'.<sup>30</sup>

At the time of Ezhovshchina in 1937–8, there was almost no opposition, open or concealed, to Stalin's policies. However, a commemorative article on Pyatnitsky, once a leading figure in the Comintern, and in 1937 head of the Department of Political Administration of the party Central Committee, described his rare bravery at the June 1937 Central Committee plenum. He spoke against the physical destruction of Bukharin and his associates, and suggested it would be sufficient to expel them from the party. He also objected to the proposal to entrust Ezhov with extraordinary

powers. On the following morning Ezhov announced that there was evidence that Pyatnitsky had been an agent of the tsarist secret police. The plenum proceeded to pass a resolution declaring 'lack of political confidence' in Pyatnitsky. Only three persons voted against (Voropaev, Kaminsky and Lenin's widow Krupskaya), and one person abstained (Stasova).<sup>31</sup>

Some lower officials also protested about the injustice of the repressions of 1937–8. As many as 74 military procurators refused to approve the executions of persons they believed innocent, and were then shot for disobedience.<sup>32</sup>

In the Leningrad affair of 1949–50, Voznesensky, head of the state planning commission Gosplan, Kuznetsov, former second party secretary in Leningrad, and by 1949 a Central Committee secretary in Moscow, and many other prominent Leningrad personalities, were all executed. Recent reports of their rehabilitation have claimed that some of the accused, even if they could not go as far as active opposition to Stalin, displayed a certain independence. During the war, when Leningrad was under siege, the cult of Stalin faded away (see Chapter 8).

According to the recent accounts, Kuznetsov appreciated this tradition and followed it after the war. He deliberately underemphasised the name of Stalin and stressed the name of Kirov in his speeches. When he was transferred to Moscow, he used his position as Central Committee secretary responsible for cadres to attempt to find out the truth about Kirov's assassination. Such people as Kuznetsov were innocent before the party and the people, one of the Soviet authors comments. But were they also innocent 'before the criminals, adventurers and careerists who were creating an arbitrary system?':

Perhaps there were those who did not believe in the cult? Who did not reconcile themselves with it? And who in the end resisted it?

I dare to believe and assert: Aleksei Aleksandrovich Kuznetsov was *not an innocent sacrifice*.<sup>33</sup>

The post-war years also saw the emergence of oppositionist political groups. A recent article has described in some detail the formation in 1948 of Communist Party of Youth in the provincial town of Voronezh. This conspiratorial organisation, strongly anti-Stalinist, continued to exist for about a year. It explicitly criticised 'the deification of Stalin'. One of its members was a son of the second secretary of the provincial party committee, and was partly motivated

to this dangerous activity by the contrast between the protected block of flats in which he lived, with its well-fed officials, and the conditions of the starving people who begged for food in the streets outside.<sup>34</sup>

What about the resistance of the mass of the population to Stalinism? Hitherto this has always been treated in Soviet publications as anti-Soviet in inspiration, and as having harmed the cause of socialist construction. But the peasant writer Boris Mozhaev, rejecting the view that peasants were 'completely obedient', has recently praised those peasants who rioted in defence of their way of life, or fled to the towns to escape compulsory collectivisation, or counteracted the pressures from above by working badly. Who is the true socialist and true patriot? The person who does his best to help the economy to work well in spite of Stalinism, or the person who openly resists the system? This is the question raised by Mozhaev. In an earlier work, published in 1966, and recently reissued, his hero Kuzkin represented a compromise. He was a workaholic, but also sought to resist evil and idiocy. The eminent Soviet physicist, Academician Kapitsa, once remarked 'I am also a Kuzkin'.<sup>35</sup>

## 7 The Stalinist System

The frank and sometimes astounding reports of Stalinist repression and of the opposition to Stalinism described in the previous chapter are of great interest, but for me they are not the most important development. What is outstanding, exciting and moving in recent writings about the Stalinist past is their desperate struggle to understand and learn from these experiences. It is common ground among the critical writers that the explanation of Stalinism offered by the party in 1956 was inadequate. A. Latynina has insisted that 'at the present level of our understanding, the slogans of 1956 – "cult of the individual", "violations of socialist legality", "contradictions of the period" – explain very little'. According to Latynina, 'the whole course of events of the 1920s and 1930s induced the belief that a communist must be subordinate to the will of the collective, the mind of the collective'. And the 'belief in an organised purposive society directed to a single goal justified the removal of those who were not drawn into this movement or who even opposed it':

Could this have been just a matter of Stalin? If it was, how can the Marxist understanding of the role of the individual in history be reconciled with the extraordinary significance which we attached to a specific individual over so many years?<sup>1</sup>

Some examples will illustrate the probing analysis of the Stalin period appearing in the Soviet press. The first is a lengthy review of Aleksandr Bek's novel *Novoe naznachenie* by Gavriil Popov.<sup>2</sup> The novel, written in the early 1960s by a leading industrial journalist, dealt with the career of 'Onisimov', one of Stalin's Ministers for the Iron and Steel Industry. Partly based on the famous Soviet industrialist Tevosyan, the novel was due to be published in *Novyi mir* in 1966. But it did not appear, on the excuse that it was objected to by Tevosyan's widow. The book was published abroad in 1977 by the anti-Soviet publishing house Posev.<sup>3</sup> But it was not published in the USSR until the end of 1986,<sup>4</sup> twenty years after it was written.

Bek frankly but sympathetically portrayed one of Stalin's best economic commanders: fanatically devoted to his work, incorruptible, modest in his personal needs, but above all obedient to the will of

Stalin. Onisimov's energy saved the steel industry from the near-stagnation which followed the purges of 1937–9. But his obedience led him, contrary to his own convictions, to waste enormous sums on a useless innovation which had Stalin's support, and his reliance on the conservative specialists in his Ministry caused him to ban experiments on a major technical innovation proposed by a factory director.

In his review, using the evidence of the novel, Popov depicted what he called the 'Administrative System' of the Stalinist economy:

The basis of this system is the centralisation of decisions and punctual, undeviating, over-riding fulfilment of directives from Above and particularly from Stalin – the Boss. Not pitying himself, intensifying above all his own personal work, Onisimov 'holds the ministerial *apparat* in a state of tension'. Day and night are indistinguishable for a substantial number of higher officials . . .

This is a system of specific and detailed management in kind (*in natura*). It is a system of continuous operational management of the course of production from the centre. This is the Administrative System.

Three further important points stressed by Popov, referring primarily to the post-war period, help to place the system of the 1930s in its historical context. First, Tevosyan's own quality as an economic manager deteriorated as he steadily became unaccustomed to independent thinking. But at least such administrators as Tevosyan and his boss Ordzhonikidze came to the Administrative System with a life-experience from outside it, in revolutionary underground and Civil War. With their successors, lack of independence was built in to their managerial behaviour from the beginning of their careers. The system contained within itself its own degeneration.

Secondly, according to Bek, 'the internal logic of the Administrative System required a sub-system of fear'; Beriya's right to replace any subordinate official without explanation grew into the right to deprive any subordinate of life. 'Beriya gradually began to take over a number of national-economic tasks, more and more important from year to year; eventually no large construction could manage without his participation, no large scientific technical project'.

Thirdly, Popov argues that the Administrative System is not coterminous with the Stalin dictatorship. Tevosyan, believing that independent thought was permissible after Stalin's death, in 1957 criticised Khrushchev's scheme to replace the industrial Ministries by

regional economic councils. He was promptly dismissed and posted abroad. In his final section, 'What was Onisimov's Mistake?', Popov uses this incident to illustrate his view that the Administrative System has continued till the present day: terror and fear have gone, but the System in principle remains. This is a distinction similar to that made by Professor T. H. Rigby between the 'mono-organizational society combined with personal dictatorship' of the Stalin period, and the 'mono-organizational society without personal dictatorship' which followed the death of Stalin.<sup>5</sup> Popov goes on to draw sweeping lessons from this for the Soviet future:

Onisimov's mistake is undoubtedly the most valuable lesson for all of us from Aleksandr Bek's posthumous novel. Not only Onisimov, but also N. S. Khrushchev, and all of us, thought that with the elimination of the cult of personality from the system we would solve all the problems of our future. Now, in the light of historical experience, we see that this is not the case. The System has revenged itself on us.

The problem is to renounce it, to replace it by a new system, corresponding to the contemporary stage of the development of socialism, relying not on administrative but on economic and democratic methods and forms.

The Administrative System is not at all the synonym of the Socialist System, it never included the whole of our structure (*stroï*), it is an ephemeral stage.

The view of the Soviet system presented in Antonov's novel *Vas'ka* is a useful supplement to Popov's. It deals with the construction of the Moscow Metro, one of the half-dozen or so most prestigious projects of the 1930s, and shows how the defects of the Stalinist economic system were to be found even in this high-priority project.

Antonov, an engineer who worked on constructing bridges and tunnels before he became a writer, emphasised that the enthusiasm of the young people who built the Metro was genuine, and played a major part in its success. But he also argued that the desperate pace of construction was extremely wasteful:

By the normative estimates the construction would be completed by 1937 at the earliest. Stalin lost patience, did not study the estimates of the engineers, and ordered that the first line should start up on November 7, 1934. Naturally there could be no objections. Feverish work got under way. Moscow young

communists were mobilised to dig the tunnels. They dug day and night by hand. The timetables for organising the work lost all sense. The draughtsmen could not keep up with the diggers. The 'Arbat' station had to be redone three times. And the trains on the first circle of the Metro started, not on November 7, 1934, but on May 15, 1935. This was a striking record, achieved contrary to engineering science. How many extra million roubles were spent to achieve this record is another matter.<sup>6</sup>

Another view of the Stalinist system is presented in Abuladze's famous film *Repentance*, and in a lengthy review of it by the sociologist L. G. Ionin.<sup>7</sup>

*Repentance* depicted the aftermath of the dictatorial terroristic regime of 'Varlam Aravidze', a Stalin figure, in the form of a day-dream by Ketevan, the daughter of two of Varlam's victims. After Varlam's death, Ketevan refused to permit silence about his crimes. His son Abel got the obstreperous Ketevan incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital. Abel's own son, Varlam's grandson, distraught with guilt, shot himself. This brought Abel to his senses, and he dug up Varlam's body and flung it out over a cliff to the crows. Ketevan then woke up from the dream, in which the whole action of the film took place, and carried on with her normal life.

Ionin emphasised several major issues confronted by the film. First, Varlam, though always on the side of the masses, believed that the single individual was not worthy of attention, while groups of individuals dangerously disrupted the unified goal of the happiness of millions:

Real Varlams destroyed whole nationalities, whole professional and social groups. If reality does not yield to their maniacal desire to achieve Utopia, they seek to destroy a whole people, like Pol Pot in Kampuchea.

Varlam was supported by a bureaucratic apparatus, which acted as an inflexible backbone to the unsteady social formation of the masses. He lived and flourished in this context. As in the novels of Elias Canetti, Varlam's mania of greatness gave way to the mania of persecution:

Varlam is the incarnation of absolute non-individuality, of total death. Total death is the necessary consequence of the Utopia of social equality. For equality to become complete, all must die.

Ionin went on to show the social significance of Varlam's complex fate after his death. The social existence of an individual does not cease after death. He continues to perform social roles, and the kingdom of the dead, like the kingdom of the living, and reflecting what is happening there, experiences earthquakes, coups and revolutions. Abel fought for his father's memory, but he was really fighting for his own present place in society as well as for Varlam's place on it. This was a false repentance.

Ionin goes on to argue that the lies and silence about Varlam's crimes after his death were themselves a sin. Repentance for this sin was required if society was not to remain hypocritical, lack moral standards, and lack belief in itself and its future:

An active society sees in the past the necessary foundations of its present development. It therefore wants to know what in the past deserves trust, and what should be rejected, what is reliable and what should be exposed as a myth . . . The transformation of the past is a sensitive indicator of the changes in the present.

In the film *Repentance*, repentance did not take place in reality, only in the mind of Ketevan. 'But the film itself, when shown on our screens, is an act of repentance. That is why it is not only a remarkable and profound artistic production, but also a bold and honest political action'.

A third approach to the analysis of Stalinism is offered in Dudintsev's novel about Lysenkoism *Robed in White*. The title refers both to the white coats of scientists and to those who saved humanity from evil, as depicted in the Apocalypse: 'those who are robed in white' were those who 'have passed through the great ordeal'. The hero of the novel, Fyodor Ivanovich, as in Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* in the 1950s, is a committed party member. A second hero, a colonel in the political police, is also depicted as a secret resister to injustice. The anti-heroes include the colonel's boss, a general who, like the colonel, rose from the ranks in the Civil War. The general's attitude is described as 'superstition and stupidity'. The chief anti-hero is Academician Ryadno, a demagogue and entertaining rascal, and close associate of Lysenko. Ryadno's popular language was 'more easily understood by the bosses, who easily agreed with him and approved his crazy schemes' (he frequently took tea with Stalin).

Dudintsev presented these figures in the framework of a fundamentally critical analysis of the social culture which enabled the triumph

of charlatans who claimed to turn winter wheat into spring wheat, and hornbeams into hazel trees:

Those whose point of view did not coincide with that of the majority remained silent . . . This stupidity emerged from the mass of the inadequately educated majority whom it was easy to persuade that they possessed final knowledge of things.<sup>8</sup>

Even more bluntly, the progressive police colonel cited with approval Dostoevsky's statement in *Crime and Punishment* that socialists failed to take human nature into account. The colonel commented that Soviet communists also 'did not set any limits, as if there were no human nature; social origin was all that counted'. Yet the demagogic Academician Ryadno and the reactionary police general were not sent 'by the tsar or by America', they were products of the Soviet system. 'They flew to us from their own internal space, saturated with envy and the dream of power'.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Popov presented Stalinism as having created an Administrative System, one 'ephemeral stage' in socialism, which continued after Stalin's personal despotism had vanished, and should be replaced by a fundamentally new form of the socialist economy appropriate for the present age. Ionin, on the basis of the film *Repentance*, argued that the political structure which combines an amorphous mass and a rigid bureaucracy has continued until today, and should be replaced by a democratic system which will enable individuals and groups to flourish. Dudintsev (and this is a frequent theme of recent writings) argued that a one-sided concept of socialism had prevailed ever since the revolution. Soviet socialism must be rethought fundamentally.

Films and imaginative literature dominated the reconsideration of the Stalinist past throughout 1987. Social scientists, historians and others have also sought to analyse the world of Stalinism systematically, and in 1988 have moved to the forefront.

The whole gamut of rival Western theories about Stalinism was presented – or has been rediscovered. The totalitarian hypothesis was put forward by N. A. Popov, of the USA Institute:

*Stalin destroyed millions of the best, most enterprising and talented (we have yet to learn the true number of our losses). But the main thing is that he created an ideal totalitarian state, in which his personal power extended to everything – economics and science, literature and art.*<sup>10</sup>

Elsewhere N. Popov defined totalitarianism as 'the practice of

extreme statisation of social life, based on administrative methods and compulsion', and argued that this has been retained to the present day.<sup>11</sup>

Fyodor Burlatsky described almost the same phenomenon, but called it 'statisation' rather than totalitarianism, and argued that Stalin had wrongly identified statisation with the construction of socialism:

It did not seize the economic sphere alone. It gradually extended to the whole of spiritual life, to the administration of cultural establishments, publishing houses, theatres, schools, universities, hospitals and sport.

Because state officials were not elected but selected, state administration had been bureaucratised. State socialism, which emerged from statisation, established an administrative pyramid, with initiative concentrated higher and higher up, in the last resort in a single leader.<sup>12</sup>

Academician Bogomolov, Director of the Institute of the Economics of the World Socialist System, suggested that Stalinism was a world system, embracing Eastern Europe and China as well as the Soviet Union. These countries had a 'unified social nature', and their organisation 'moved towards a general model, established under the influence of simplified theoretical constructions'. The economic mechanisms had a 'common internal logic', and the resemblance extended to political structures and culture. The Stalinist model influenced 'the style of thought and the morality of a whole generation of party-state, economic and military personnel, and also the psychology of the masses'. Bogomolov noted without comment that the Chinese now describe their past system as a 'feudal-bourgeois fascist dictatorship'.<sup>13</sup>

But what was the 'unified social nature' of the Stalinist system? This has been a central question in the debates of 1988.

Dzarasov, whose approach to the rise of Stalinism was discussed in Chapter 3, holds that ever since the end of the 1920s power has been usurped by a social group: the bureaucracy. According to Dzarasov, the bureaucracy, firmly entrenched in power for decades, has no interest in changing the system. In the reforms of the 1960s, the bureaucratic heart of the system was not eliminated, and so the bureaucracy was able to prevent changes which were not desirable for it. This accounted for the fall of Khrushchev. After 1964, 'the new leadership decided that it was more sensible and less dangerous

to work not against the bureaucracy but in alliance with it. Do not damage but satisfy its interests, offering it greater freedom of action and greater privileges’.

Dzarasov drew the conclusion that *perestroika* in the economy can be achieved only by *perestroika* in politics. ‘This requires the democratisation of the whole social and political structure of society’. Above all, ‘the labour collective can and must become under socialism the full master at the enterprise’.<sup>14</sup>

Dzarasov’s is not a lone vote. A ‘Round Table’ in the Institute of Marxism–Leninism, attended by scholars from various research institutes and higher educational establishments, was supposed to discuss the ‘braking mechanism’ which led to the stagnation of the 1970s. But in fact it quite properly devoted much of its attention to the origins of the troubles of the 1970s in the system established in the 1930s. The Round Table was held on October 23, 1987, and was reported in the issue of the party history journal published in February 1988.<sup>15</sup> The main dispute at the meeting concerned the social nature of state power during the Stalin period.

A. P. Butenko, from Bogomolov’s Institute of the Economics of the World Socialist System, argued that after Lenin’s last writings ‘no-one endeavoured to analyse our society from the point of view of the growth and strengthening of the bureaucracy’ (Butenko did not mention Trotsky and the Left Opposition).<sup>16</sup> But the bureaucracy was ‘a huge danger for socialism’:

At a definite stage in the life of the Soviet state it was not the proletariat and the labouring peasantry which were in power but those who usurped power – Stalin and his entourage. Moreover not only the form of rule (*forma vlastvovaniya*) was established, but also the form of administration (*forma upravleniya*) in the shape of a huge stratum of state and party bureaucracy, torn away from the people and not under its control.

Butenko also asserted that ‘the same model of socialism, relying on the state and party bureaucracy’, existed in the 1930s and 1940s and continued in the 1970s and early 1980s. Asked from the floor to define the term ‘the bureaucracy’, he replied that it is ‘that section of the administrators which, managing society and having the task of accelerating its development, use their functions for their selfish interests, and instead slow down and put a brake on its development’.

Butenko’s view was strongly challenged by other speakers. V. S. Lipitskii, from the Institute of Marxism–Leninism, claimed that a

regime of personal power was compatible with different class interests, including the interests of the working class and its allies: working-class power had been combined with Stalin's personal dictatorship. Yu. S. Aksenov, from the same institute, also insisted that under Stalin 'the class essence of the soviets, i.e. workers' and peasants' power', continued; he claimed rather ludicrously that even during the repressions 'elections on a democratic basis took place at all levels'.

Replying to the discussion, V. V. Zhuravlev also rejected Butenko's view that Stalin and his entourage had usurped power from the working class and the socialised peasantry. According to Zhuravlev this view was 'abstract, and torn away from the profound specific historical processes of the time'. For example, the 'ideology' of the 'cult of the individual' had never predominated over Marxism-Leninism. He then presented an extremely interesting argument of his own:

The specific social-class mechanism of the usurpation of power was scrupulously established in a number of classics of Marxism-Leninism, including Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

This clearly shows that the act of usurpation of power does not remove from the agenda the question of the class foundations of power, because 'state power does not hang in the air' and the bureaucracy, 'in spite of all its efforts to achieve power for itself' does not cease to be the instrument of a definite class. How should we apply these important conclusions to the specific social structure of Soviet society from the 1930s to the beginning of the 1950s?<sup>17</sup>

Zhuravlev refused to answer this question, insisting that 'any general statements would be unconvincing without a detailed analysis, which we do not possess so far'. But the implication was clear. There was a bureaucracy surrounding Stalin and his entourage; like Napoleon III, Stalin did usurp power, but the working-class basis of society remained. This is surely not all that remote from Trotsky's analysis in *Revolution Betrayed*, which claimed that political power had been usurped by the bureaucratic caste, but held nevertheless that Soviet society continued to be based on socialist property relations?

Since the November 1987 debate, Butenko has returned to this issue on several occasions (making it clear, incidentally, that he is no Trotskyist: he asserted that Stalin's policies of industrialisation at the

expense of the peasantry, and of putting on the screws generally, 'followed the ideas of L. Trotsky'<sup>18</sup>). In the party history journal, his long letter 'On the Question of the Usurpation of Power' reiterated the view that what had occurred was the 'administrative-bureaucratic usurpation of class domination by Stalin and his entourage'. If the working class had been in power in the 1930s, they would have been responsible for the repressions. This was absurd. It was clearly wrong to maintain that socialism was being constructed in the USSR under Stalin, at a time when a regime of personal power had grown into the usurpation of power and then into 'Stalinist despotism'. Those who held this strange view of socialism were 'fatalists'. The correct view was Lenin's, that socialism is impossible without democracy.<sup>19</sup>

The reply of the editors to Butenko was quite mild. They cited Gorbachev's statement that the impulse of the revolution had been so great that the country had not been 'turned from the path of October'. But they conceded that Butenko had raised 'several sharp questions', which require 'profound scientific research'.<sup>20</sup>

Several contributors to discussions elsewhere have broadly identified themselves with Butenko's views. S. Nikol'skii, of the Institute of Philosophy, examining the phenomenon of 'socialist' bureaucracy, offered a fairly precise definition:

*Bureaucracy is a system of relations in the organisation of the economic, political and spiritual life of society, which emerges in conditions of a deficit of democracy and of a certain degradation of morality, and serves the interests of definite groups of administrators (bureaucrats), providing them with a parasitic existence at the expense of all the rest of society.*<sup>21</sup>

S. Andreev, in an even more remarkable article, sent in from the remote town of Tyumen, argued that 'the production-administrative apparatus', a social group 50 per cent larger than the collective-farm peasantry, used its position to acquire the labour of others, a kind of feudal payment (*obrok*). This is a kind of 'new "class" with its own special interests'. It included even very minor economic administrators, who might only earn 120 roubles a month but failed to give even 10 roubles' worth of work in return. Andreev rejected the term 'bureaucracy' and the 'vulgar formula "class of bureaucrats"'. A party or trade-union official could be bureaucratic, but they were not members of the production-administrative apparatus, and could not acquire *obrok*. And the production-administrative apparatus could use many methods to carry out its policy, only one of which was the

bureaucratisation of production and social relations. This analysis is slightly odd, but it certainly amounts to a fundamental critique of the Soviet social and economic structure.<sup>22</sup>

Two further contributions to the debate, which both appeared in leading party publications, sought to soften or by-pass the dangerous notion that under Stalin the bureaucracy, or alternatively the 'production-administrative apparatus', constituted a kind of ruling class.

An article in the party theoretical journal *Kommunist*, from members of the All-Union Centre for the study of Public Opinion, which is headed by Zaslavskaya, a strong supporter of Gorbachev, was entitled 'Bureaucratism and the Bureaucracy: the Need for More Precision'.<sup>23</sup> The authors argued that Stalinism was a bureaucratic system which sought to turn everyone into an obedient servant of the state. Everyone tended to be involved in bureaucratic behaviour, in 'bureaucratism', but there was no 'bureaucracy' as a dominant class. They firmly rejected the idea that 'administrative cadres are "non-productive" and almost a parasitic stratum in society': the administrative function is just as useful as education and health, and all these sectors are just as important as physical production.

In the course of a full-page article in *Pravda*, G. Bordyugov and V. Kozlov, from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, posed the question 'Whose Class Interests did Stalin Express?'.<sup>24</sup> According to Bordyugov and Kozlov, the 'concentration of all levers of administration in the Central Committee and the Politburo' was inevitable in a country of small peasants which was building socialism alone. Lenin acknowledged that power was in the hands of the party Old Guard, 'a very narrow stratum'. While Lenin sought to include representatives of the 'cadre nucleus' of the working class in the work of the leading party organs, he did not believe that major political decisions should be transferred from the 'very narrow stratum' to the masses; instead he was concerned 'to improve the unity of the "very narrow stratum" so as to ensure that the party followed a proletarian policy'. But this unity was not preserved after Lenin's death, and Stalin used the splits in the leadership to assist him in seizing power:

Stalin usurped power from the very narrow stratum, to which the working class had as it were delegated the right to take decisions of principle. Moreover, this stratum was subsequently physically exterminated. It can probably be said that Stalin usurped the right of the leading party organs to represent the interests of the party and the working class.

Having usurped power, Stalin's goals (the rapid development of heavy industry and the socialisation of the countryside) were progressive, and corresponded to the interests of the working class. But his methods of achieving those goals led to a departure from the initial project. They did not correspond to the interests of the working class, but often reflected the outlook of the new sections of the working class, with 'their peasant past and their petty-bourgeois prejudices', including their 'striving for authoritarianism'. According to Bordyugov and Kozlov, 'Stalin was often a prisoner, a slave of these attitudes'.

This line of argument avoids the question of whether a dominant social group or groups existed in the Soviet Union, and constituted the base, or one of the bases, for Stalin's rise to power and the political and economic system fully established in the 1930s. The debate will continue.

## 8 The Second World War

It is difficult for a citizen of Britain or the United States to comprehend the deep influence of the devastating tragedy of the German invasion of 1941–5 on Soviet life and on the Soviet understanding of the world.

Vast numbers of soldiers and civilians died. The official figure is 20 million out of a population on the eve of the war of 190 million, and this is generally believed to be too low. A respected Soviet demographer has estimated deaths directly resulting from war at 26–27 million.<sup>1</sup> Nearly six million prisoners of war are reported to have died of starvation, wounds and ill-treatment in Nazi prison camps on Soviet and Polish territory. There were losses in almost every Soviet family. Large numbers of the population lived in territories seized by the invading armies.

The tragedy of the war also influences the outlook of young Soviet citizens, who learn about it from their parents and grandparents as well as their teachers. The commemoration of Victory Day on May 9 is a notable moment in the Soviet calendar, when the genuine feelings of the people dominate over official propaganda.

But common suffering, and universal pride in victory, have not resulted in a unified assessment of the experience of the war. What is the right attitude to the war in an age of *perestroika*? Soviet war veterans are themselves deeply divided. Soviet soldiers went into battle shouting ‘For the Motherland! For Stalin!’ Many veterans hold to this image, and believe that the years of their greatest sacrifice demonstrated that the system which Stalin built up was essential for the survival of the country. In August 1956, on my first visit to the Soviet Union, I went to a collective-farm market in Leningrad just as it was closing and got talking to one of the men who was tidying it up. This was the year of the XX Party Congress and Khrushchev’s denunciation of the ‘cult of the individual’. ‘What do you think of all this criticism of Stalin?’, I asked him. ‘Politics is politics’, he replied with a wry smile, ‘but all the same he led us to victory in the war’.

Others have long been convinced that a harsher truth about the war must be faced. Why was the Soviet Union so unprepared, after the great industrialisation and armaments drive? why were so many people and so much territory lost? The myth of Stalin the great war

leader was bitterly attacked in a Soviet popular weekly by Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, a well-known Soviet publicist. He even claimed that when soldiers went into the attack shouting the name of Stalin this was often because orders to do this had come down from the top.<sup>2</sup> In the correspondence which followed, some veterans vigorously denounced Bestuzhev-Lada for presenting their generation in an unfavourable light. But another veteran wrote:

If we, the eye-witnesses of that epoch, do not now tell the people the whole truth, our descendants will not forgive us for it.<sup>3</sup>

Many aspects of the second world war were frankly discussed in Soviet publications in the Khrushchev years, and even after his fall. The leading Soviet military men published rival accounts of their experiences, and these accounts included quite detailed descriptions of Stalin's role at various stages of the war. Multi-volume Soviet histories of the war included a vast amount of new information. The extent of the knowledge available to us is displayed in John Erickson's major studies of the war, primarily based on Soviet sources.<sup>4</sup>

But during the Brezhnev years the bounds of discussion were continuously restricted. Troublesome problems were simply avoided. The cause of death of military men killed during the Great Purge could not be mentioned.<sup>5</sup> The second volume of the standard history of the second world war merely referred to 'accusations' being made against them.<sup>6</sup> According to the leading Soviet military historian Academician Samsonov, authors were even told that they could not publish information about the war unless it had already been published or stated elsewhere. 'But what kind of research is it', complained Samsonov, 'if it has already been published or stated somewhere else previously?'<sup>7</sup> When military men presented their memoirs for publication, 'if the new text treated events or persons differently from memoirs of military leaders previously published, the new evidence had to be regarded as dubious, and removed or corrected in accordance with the earlier publications'.<sup>8</sup>

Behind the scenes the senior officials responsible for this crude censorship were sometimes quite blunt. In 1966 A. A. Epishev, the head of the Political Administration of the Red Army, frankly remarked:

In *Novyi mir* they say we must give them the black bread of truth, but why the devil do we need it if it isn't advantageous.<sup>9</sup>

The bans were strongly enforced on several notorious occasions.

Even in Khrushchev's day, Vasilii Grossman's great novel *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (Life and Fate), to which we shall return later, was deemed to be far too frank and critical. In 1961, Suslov, Politburo member responsible for ideology for many years, told the author that the novel could not be published 'for two or three hundred years'. The manuscript was confiscated; the author himself mistakenly believed until his death that no copy of the book remained at liberty.<sup>10</sup>

On April 28, 1965, Konstantin Simonov, author of several famous novels and documentary accounts of the war, and previously a great admirer of Stalin, gave a self-critical lecture about the war, which he then reworked as an article, 'Lessons of History and the Duty of a Writer', at the request of the military history journal. But Epishev banned publication, and sent his representative to the offices of the journal to confiscate all copies of the manuscript and the proofs. The article was classified as secret, and was not published until 1987.<sup>11</sup>

In October 1965, Aleksandr Nekrich's careful and well-researched study of the outbreak of the war, *1941, 22 iyunya*, was published after much argument behind the scenes. In the next two years, a time when the ideological screws were being firmly tightened, the book was bitterly condemned by orthodox historians, military men and politicians. In 1967, Nekrich, a party member since 1943, was expelled from the party for alleged 'deliberate distortion of the policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet government'.<sup>12</sup>

Bans were also imposed on books which had been previously published and well-received. In 1975 the new edition of Sergei Smirnov's fictionalised account of the defence of the Brest fortress at the beginning of the war was banned after publication, and all 130,000 copies were pulped! In 1979, even a truncated version was banned at the proof stage.<sup>13</sup>

Rank-and-file veterans of opposing liberal and nationalist viewpoints shared a profound dissatisfaction about the public presentation of the war. In his moving account of the battle of Stalingrad, 'One Day of War', the critical sociologist Vladimir Shubkin commented ironically that for an ordinary soldier 'the facts of military life had little in common with the strategy of the General Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief'.<sup>14</sup> The Russian nationalist author Viktor Astaf'ev strongly attacked the twelve-volume official history of the war for lacking all reality from the viewpoint of an ordinary soldier. 'I was in a completely different war', he insisted; the history was 'falsified and cooked up' by 'very highly-paid people, who knew perfectly well what they were doing'.<sup>15</sup>

In the course of 1987 and 1988, all this has changed radically, and many fictionalised and documentary accounts of different levels of war experience have appeared in the press. By June 1988, a Soviet commentator noted the 'vast distance' that had been covered, the huge extent 'to which we have all moved forward in mastering the subject of the Great Patriotic War'.<sup>16</sup>

The turning point at an official level came early in 1987 with the decision of the General Staff and the Chief Political Administration of the Red Army to recommend the long-awaited publication of Konstantin Simonov's interviews with Marshal Zhukov.<sup>17</sup> Since then the conduct of the Second World War at the top has been discussed with much greater frankness: the strange and often grim world around Stalin, the making of military policy, and the policies themselves.

The disasters at the outbreak of war and Stalin's reaction to them have received close attention. A Soviet military historian favourably compared the reaction of the United States' authorities to surprise attack with the situation in the Soviet Union. In the United States honest investigations of the background to Pearl Harbor began within ten days of the calamity. But in the Soviet Union after the German invasion Stalin simply hunted down scapegoats to deflect attention from his own responsibility.<sup>18</sup>

Stalin's decision to execute the generals responsible for the frontier defences, notably General D. G. Pavlov, had already been publicised and condemned in Khrushchev's time. But in the 1970s the conservative writer Ivan Stadnyuk published his novel *Voina* (War), written after close consultation with Molotov, in which he claimed that Pavlov, while not guilty of treason, had been guilty of grave dereliction of duty. Academician Samsonov has now persuasively argued that Stadnyuk's version of the events was inaccurate, and its effect was to whitewash Stalin's conduct.<sup>19</sup> There is a further twist to the story. The military archives have revealed that Pavlov was one of three officers who sent a petition to Stalin in the summer of 1938 protesting about the arrest of Marshals Blyukher, Rokossovsky and others. Rokossovsky, together with some other officers, was released, and then subsequently played a major part in the second world war. But all three petitioners were themselves in due course arrested and executed.<sup>20</sup>

There has been no dispute about some other cases of unjust execution of senior officers in the early phase of the war. Two days after the German invasion, Marshal K. A. Meretskov was arrested and confronted with evidence from as many as forty witnesses that

he was a member of a military conspiracy against Stalin. The armaments' commissar Vannikov was also accused of taking part in this conspiracy. The re-examination of the case revealed how the evidence was obtained:

The victims, savagely beaten, eventually 'confessed' what was required of them (except Loktionov, who withstood all tortures heroically). It is terrible to read the later statements of those who tortured them. Vannikov cried out, holding his heart. Meretskov was covered in blood from his beatings. Smushkevich [senior Air Force officer] rolled on the floor and groaned. Shtern [head of anti-aircraft defence], in torment, lost consciousness. 'Kirill Afanas'evich, that didn't happen, it didn't, it didn't!', Loktionov cried out, writhing in pain and stretching out his arms pleadingly to Meretskov at a confrontation. Then he kept quiet when he saw Meretskov's anguished look, from which all light had gone out.

Some of the accused were released, including Meretskov and Vannikov. But on October 28, 1941, having been evacuated from Moscow in great confusion, with the fascists at the gates, twenty-five of the accused were executed without trial, including Meretskov's wife, an aviator.<sup>21</sup>

Another case in the early months of the war involved General P. G. Ponedelin. A decree of August 16, 1941, signed by Stalin, Molotov, Budennyi, Voroshilov, Timoshenko, Shaposhnikov and Zhukov, accused Ponedelin of 'giving way to panic, displaying cowardice and surrendering to the enemy, deserting to the enemy'. After returning from captivity in 1945 Ponedelin was kept in prison for five years and then executed in 1950. The case was subsequently investigated by Simonov, who concluded that Ponedelin was entirely innocent. When Simonov's diaries were published in the 1970s, his extensive commentary about Ponedelin was entirely removed from the published text. Simonov's commentary admits that he was himself deceived about Ponedelin:

It remains for me to complete this sad story with a necessary and in this case bitter admission. I was a man of my time, and in the summer of 1941, when I read Stalin's decree, which was followed by Stalin's signature, I believed, just as others believed, that the people to whom it referred were really guilty of everything ascribed to them.

The editor of Simonov's article, commending this honesty, points out

that 'judgment on one's experiences and one's time must imperatively include a judgment on oneself; otherwise judgment on others will be neither true nor just'.<sup>22</sup>

Recent publications have also shown us a much less well-known side of the war: the impact of the ruthless micro-world at the top on the millions of ordinary soldiers. Viktor Astaf'ev, writing from the point of view of the ordinary soldier, has presented officers in a quite unfavourable light,<sup>23</sup> and his publications have aroused much resentment among senior military men. One officer complained:

I was leaving a train in Moscow recently; I was returning from a journey on duty. I heard a rather loud whisper behind me: 'Did you read Astaf'ev in *Literaturka*? He gave it to them hot and strong.'

I trembled and even halted in my tracks. As if I had been shot in the back.<sup>24</sup>

Shubkin's account of his experiences as a soldier at the front is perhaps the most thoughtful.<sup>25</sup> Shubkin presents the methods used in the defence of Stalingrad in 1942 as part of the whole system established in the 1930s:

It was the pre-war country which entered the war. Everything in that country was taken by the people to the front. The capacity for self-sacrifice, and suspicion of others. Cruelty, and spiritual weakness. Baseness, and naive romanticism. Officially demonstrated devotion to the leader, and deeply-concealed doubts. The thick-headed rigidity of bureaucrats and people playing safe, and a lively hope that something will turn up. The heavy burden of indignity, and the feeling that the war was just. Nothing was left behind, nothing was forgotten. And both soldiers and Marshals had to cope with all this.

Shubkin showed the impact on the army and the soldiers of Stalin's savage Order No. 227 of July 28, 1942, written when the enemy were on the outskirts of Stalingrad. The Order was read out to the troops, and copies of it were dropped on them by the Germans from the air because they believed it would be demoralising. But it was not published in the Soviet Union until February 1988.<sup>26</sup> The Order abused troops who had surrendered Rostov, Novocherkassk and other places 'without putting up serious resistance and without an order from Moscow, thereby covering our flag in shame'. It demanded: 'not a step backwards without an order from the superior

Command', whatever the circumstances. Delinquent officers were warned that they would be sent in disciplinary battalions to the most dangerous positions at the front, where they would be given an opportunity to 'atone with their own blood for their crimes against the Motherland'.

The chaos of the Stalingrad retreat was so great that at one point Shubkin and his comrades did not know to which Army group or even Front they belonged. A new divisional commander was appointed who told his men that Comrade Stalin's Order No. 227 was right, and that they had not justified the hopes put upon them. He then proceeded to order them to go into the attack at 3 a.m., when it was already getting light. When the attack had started, the new commander, seeing German planes in the distance, realised his own foolishness far too late, and told his soldiers to conceal themselves in nearby haystacks. They were machine-gunned by amused German pilots in low-flying Messerschmidts, and many of them were burned alive in the haystacks. Shubkin commented about such incidents:

It is a tragedy when generals and officers were sometimes concerned not so much about how to fight with the enemy as about how to secure themselves if they did not carry out orders which were often given without taking into account the real possibilities for the fighting units.

The judgement of ordinary soldiers about these matters often does not accord with that of senior officers. Shubkin made clear his negative opinion about Order No. 227. I imagine that Astaf'ev, whose general political views differ sharply from Shubkin's, agrees with him on this point. Yet Academician Samsonov, a senior officer during the war and now a progressive historian, recently declared:

The Order was extreme, but it was necessary in those terrible times. It was necessity and not ruthlessness that people saw in it. For the first time in many years people heard the truth.<sup>27</sup>

Other accounts also reveal the story, familiar in the military history of every country, of the increasing suffering inflicted on the men at the front by the incompetence and ignorance of the politicians and brass-hats. Lev Razgon described how delighted Germans easily slaughtered the helplessly outmoded Soviet cavalry with their tanks in the battle for the Crimea.<sup>28</sup> A recent fictionalised account of the partisan movement showed the tremendous losses it suffered because it lacked professional leadership (Stalin disbanded partisan training

before the war on the assumption that the adversary would not capture any Soviet territory). The unfortunate partisans were then regarded with great suspicion when they eventually rejoined their motherland.<sup>29</sup>

‘In such a terrible war’, Tvardovsky wrote in his diary, ‘it is exceptionally easy to forget an individual person. He is killed, and that’s it’. The novelist Valerii Dement’ev noted the feeling present in every front-line soldier of the ‘mechanical, I would even say fatal, burden of war, unbearable for a simple mortal’.<sup>30</sup> ‘I would like to appeal to publishers and editors of the young generation’, said Aleksandr Mikhailov, who also fought in the front line, ‘Do not believe those who present the war in the trenches as casual rifle fire interspersed with cinema shows’.<sup>31</sup>

The recent literature has displayed the varying reactions of individuals to the strain of war more frankly and more movingly than before. Sometimes great privation resulted in moral failure. One writer admitted that he still felt a sense of shame about his behaviour as a ten-year-old boy during the blockade of Leningrad. He accused his mother of not taking him with her to work so that she would not have to share her rations with him. Even more shameful, he did nothing to help an old woman when she was hit by a bully who was staying at the house, simply because ‘she was old, weak and honest, and he was young, strong and base’.<sup>32</sup>

In Moscow, when the Germans were on the outskirts in October 1941, many people panicked and saved themselves at the expense of others.<sup>33</sup> The strain of war brought out brutality and greed as well as pity and courage. Yurii Bondarev encapsulated this in a single incident. An angry and bitter soldier who had just been under fire killed without necessity a young German officer-prisoner of war. An old man who was present muttered ‘War, war. But he must have had a mother back at home’. ‘Sighing compassionately, he removed the boots from the dead man and then, after a pause for thought, also took off his woollen socks’.<sup>34</sup>

In a passage in his memoirs which did not appear in the previous version, the armaments chief B. L. Vannikov described how a famous leading artillery designer, Shpital’nyi, who was in Stalin’s confidence, behaved shamefully to his colleagues in the midst of war. Following the arrest of a leading designer of aircraft guns, his principal assistant Nudel’man managed to keep the work going successfully. But Shpital’nyi intervened:

For egoistic purposes, trying to keep his own 'monopoly', he deliberately gave unobjective negative assessments of the guns of other designers, and even attacked D. F. Ustinov, the People's Commissar for Armaments, and other senior figures in his commissariat, because they supported Nudel'man. Shpital'nyi put into effect his usual device – accusations of virtual wrecking.<sup>35</sup>

Against this sombre background of human failings, the many accounts of courage and compassion stand out more vividly. Such accounts have of course always been published. But now we hear not only about brave citizens whose political loyalty was not in question but also about the courage of political deviants. A son described how his father, who had been sent to a camp in 1938, escaped in 1941 and lived for years under another name with false documents in order to fight at the front (in 1949 someone recognised him and he was again sent to a camp; he was released after Stalin's death in 1953).<sup>36</sup>

One story of a brave man is an ordinary story by Soviet war-time standards. It has not previously been told in the Soviet press, though frequently discussed outside the USSR, because it is the story of Yakov Dzhugashvili, Stalin's son by his first wife. Yakov, an officer at the front, was captured by the Germans on July 16, 1941, the twenty-fifth day of the war. He refused to collaborate, and the familiar sequence of blandishments and ill-treatment followed. Not surprisingly, Stalin refused to exchange him for Field Marshal Von Paulus, remarking 'I will not exchange a soldier for a Marshal'. German propaganda falsely represented him to the outside world as a collaborator. Eventually he made a stupid attempt to escape and was shot near the wire.<sup>37</sup>

Another major theme of the recent literature is that the war brought a sense of freedom, and to some extent even brought greater freedom in practice. Shubkin's claim that the Stalin system was carried intact to the front is modified by these other accounts in several respects.

First, the common cause and common adversity brought comradeship and cooperation. According to a sensitive and usually reliable witness, even after the Ezhovshchina the recruits of 1939, some like himself called up while still first-year students, found army life democratic and decent.<sup>38</sup> And wartime examples of self-sacrifice and comradeship are numerous.

Secondly, the chaos and confusion of the war enabled segments of

the Soviet Union to escape temporarily from the repressive control of Moscow. Wartime Leningrad under seige apparently provided a striking example:

The portraits of the leader vanished from the walls. Leningraders began to use his name more rarely – both in speech and on paper . . .

The unique conditions of the city, which was on the verge of death, accelerated the process of moral purification and the rethinking of values. The cult of Stalin, which had seemed unshakable and inevitable, faded away of its own accord. The town brought out another ideal from its depths and opposed it to the official ideal. The poet of those times blatantly stressed this with the name of his poem: ‘Kirov is with us’!!! In these iron nights not Stalin but Kirov was by the side of the Leningraders, according to the poet Tikhonov.<sup>39</sup>

Thirdly, the necessity for some relaxation was recognised by Stalin himself. According to several Soviet witnesses, from 1942 he listened much more carefully to his senior advisers, particularly Zhukov, and was prepared to change his mind (see Chapter 5). This greater flexibility affected a wide range of state activity. At the time of greatest danger for the state and for Stalin personally, Stalin sharply changed his tactics – within certain strict limits – only to return to greater repression after the war.<sup>40</sup>

So far I have been trying to convey an impression of the new image of the war as it has appeared in the Soviet press and on Soviet television. Soviet commentators also attempt to place the war in the general context of Soviet history. Victory in the war provided the greatest justification for the Stalin system. Its opponents now seek to show that victory was achieved in spite of Stalinism, rather than because of it.

There are several lines of attack. First, in the words of Simonov, ‘without 1937 there would have been no summer of 1941’. To support this view the evidence provided by Nekrich and others in the 1960s has been elaborated. The repressions deprived the Soviet Union of most of its senior military staff, and of 40,000 officers. They were frequently replaced at the top by incompetent people subservient to Stalin, and always replaced by officers with much less experience. In 1941, only 7 per cent of officers had higher education. In the atmosphere of obedience to Stalin, his failure to recognise that the

German invasion was imminent could not be corrected, with disastrous results.<sup>41</sup>

An important corollary of this argument was never publicly discussed in the 1960s. If wiser leadership could have prevented the huge losses of 1941–2, was the breakneck pace of the Stalinist industrialisation strategy justified? The sociologist L. A. Gordon is clear that it was not:

The war was carried on not with the 18 million tons of steel which were produced in 1940, but with half that quantity. Half of it was lost in the first few months. Thus in fact the country fought with a production potential only 40 per cent of that of 1941. And this potential could have been established within a framework of unforced development, within the framework of NEP.<sup>42</sup>

Vasilii Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* has provided us with a profound and multi-layered description of the war, but it also sought, much more ambitiously, to place the war-time Soviet Union in the context of the world history of the XX Century. The novel depicted the war as a struggle between Stalinist and Nazi coercion on the one hand, and the spirit of human freedom on the other. 'This is a novel about freedom', wrote Igor' Zolotusskii in his recent review:

The idea of freedom became the idea of ideas in the XX Century. . . The paradox of the epoch is that both the great feats of self-sacrifice and the great 'achievements' of evil were carried out in the name of freedom. The idea of freedom and the idea of compulsion, however alien they are to each other, grew together like Siamese twins. . .

Stalingrad is the crisis point of the war. . . On the one hand Stalingrad is the spirit of freedom and the spirit of liberation. On the other hand it is the symbol of the Stalin system, which is hostile to freedom in its very essence. . .

Stalingrad in *Life and Fate* is both an heroic act and the tragedy of a people which, liberating itself, liberating the country and liberating the world from fascism, simultaneously also liberated Stalin. It liberated Stalin from his past. 'The grass is ever thicker on the village graves of 1930. The ice and hills of snow in the Polar region retain a calm silence'.

'He knew better than anyone else in the world'. V. Grossman writes about Stalin, 'that victors are not judged'. . .

'The victory at Stalingrad', we read in the novel, 'determined

the outcome of the war, but the silent quarrel between the victorious people and the victorious state continued'.<sup>43</sup>

The rival interpretations of the war have been fiercely debated throughout 1987 and 1988. In the spring of 1987, at a meeting of the secretariat of the Writers' Union for the Russian Republic, Yuri Bondarev compared the battle of true patriots like himself to halt the advance of liberalism with the battle of Stalingrad:

I would define the present situation of Russian literature as that of July 1941. . . . If this retreat should continue and the time of Stalingrad not come, it will end with our national values and everything which represents the spiritual pride of the people toppling into the abyss.<sup>44</sup>

In the summer of 1987 the conflict in the press between the different attitudes to the war reached a climax, and deserves to be described in some detail. On August 21, the newspaper *Izvestiya* published a moving article 'For the Living and the Dead', by its special correspondent E. Maksimova, demanding that full respect should be accorded to Soviet soldiers who became prisoners of war (the 'Living' of her title) and also to those who were reported 'missing without trace' (the 'Dead').<sup>45</sup> This had been one of the first historical issues to be raised in the epoch of *glasnost*'. In June 1986, an article by E. Dolmatovsky, author of a novel about prisoners of war, pointed out that even captured nurses who had been prisoners in Nazi camps for years were not recognised as having participated in the war.<sup>46</sup> The first Soviet study of prisoners of war was not published until 1987, a quarter of a century after it was written.<sup>47</sup>

Maksimova insisted that the vast majority of missing persons had died in battle or in captivity as brave citizens. Even the turncoat General Vlasov was not able to take his troops with him to the German side. But the Ministry of Defence ruled that 'to change the records of the fate of an officer, confirmatory archive data or testimony from at least two eyewitnesses of the death are required'. Countless mothers have already died still lamenting that their sons were classified not as 'perished' but with the stigma 'missing without trace'.

Former prisoners of war still bear a stigma. For many years, when not imprisoned, they were at best treated with suspicion, and found it difficult to get work. Nowadays they get a proper pension, but they are still treated as second-class citizens. In the villages, unlike other

war veterans, they are not invited to speak to schoolchildren or allowed to light commemorative torches in their windows. Maksimova demanded that a new law should require all Soviet organisations to classify all those missing without trace, and all former prisoners, as having fought for their country.

Following the publication of Maksimova's article, veterans telephoned *Izvestiya* from all parts of the USSR, and the newspaper received hundreds of letters. Readers described how all prisoners had been specially checked on their return; many were sentenced to imprisonment or sent to Soviet labour camps. Chingis Aitmatov has written of the 'hundreds of thousands of former front-line soldiers held in the camps of their own country after being prisoners of war in the concentration camps of the enemy'.<sup>48</sup> Many of the heroic defenders of the Brest fortress in 1941 were imprisoned, and were eventually rehabilitated and recognised as heroes only after Sergei Smirnov managed to publish his novel about them (a striking example of the role of the creative writer in Soviet public life). Even a prisoner who managed to escape from German captivity was expelled from the party on his return to Soviet territory. Even in 1988, standard application forms in the Soviet Union enquire whether the applicant has any close relatives who were POWs or interned.<sup>49</sup>

As for those reported as 'missing without trace', their names did not appear on war memorials. In Stalingrad, the local authorities decided to honour the names of the 'missing' without waiting for permission from higher authorities, but this was not until the summer of 1986.

The majority of those who replied to Maksimova supported her views. But there were notable exceptions. In an indignant letter in the army newspaper, the Chief Marshal of the Artillery pointed out that the Military Statute stated that even the threat of death should not compel a soldier to surrender.<sup>50</sup> A veteran holding the title 'Hero of the Soviet Union' argued that ex-prisoners should not be allowed to address schoolchildren, because young people should not be given the impression that it was ever all right to surrender. An ex-soldier complained that half his regiment fled back to their villages when they got the chance, but still receive the same pensions as those who fought throughout the war. Other ex-soldiers claimed that the majority of prisoners surrendered voluntarily, and that prisoners took part in the making of German weapons which were then used against soldiers who had not surrendered.

What constitutes real Soviet patriotism is a delicate issue. By a

remarkable coincidence, on the same day as the publication of Maksimova's article, August 21, 1987, *Pravda* published an article by Vera Tkachenko which it is not unfair to describe as representing the school of unhesitating and unconditional patriotism.<sup>51</sup> The article, dramatically entitled 'Our Country is Given to Us But Once and Until our Death', declared that one could not choose one's native country, like one's own mother. To compare one's country unfavourably with others was blasphemy. It must simply be accepted 'without fuss and dissatisfaction, without plebeian [sic] envy':

Thank it for the honour of being called its son, for the difficult happiness of serving it in the favourable days of peace and in difficult years.

To contemporary British eyes (except possibly Mrs Thatcher's) this article will seem greatly overdrawn. But anyone with Russian friends will not be surprised that it met with an enthusiastic response from some of its readers. When I first visited the Soviet Union over thirty years ago, I was returning to Britain on a Russian boat (the 'SS Molotov', by the way) and pointed out to my Soviet companion that we were passing the lights of Southend-on-Sea, where my parents lived. Somewhat to my surprise, he replied fervently and with obvious sincerity: 'How wonderful it is to see again the lights of one's native town and one's homeland after being separated from them'.

Tkachenko's article had clear political motives for its appeal to the emotions. It stressed how soldiers fought and died for their country in the dark days of 1941, and drew the moral that 'an honest person will die for their country without stopping to think, without hesitation'. From this it drew unambiguous conclusions about Soviet history. While there had been 'serious and thus tragic mistakes', victory had depended on building up the Soviet Union into a great power in a very short space of time. Those who now undermined this belief were doing harm:

Unfortunately some publicists have apparently forgotten about the pride, the achievements and the triumphs of our great Soviet people. And you are bound to think: are they not discrediting by this the history of our country? – difficult, and at times unbelievably hard and tragic, but a history of unparalleled heroism. . .

There is no subjunctive mood in history. 'Ifs' in history do not exist. What happened, happened, and no 'super-penetrating' thought of the greatest or most fashionable writer, looking back, can correct what happened, and make history different.

Shortly after the publication of this article, the 175th anniversary of the Battle of Borodino against Napoleon in 1812 was celebrated with the issue of two commemorative coins, and *Pravda* published a extremely patriotic commemorative article by Volkogonov, who was then deputy head of the Political Administration of the Soviet Army.<sup>52</sup> Thus the patriotic card was played vigorously at this time. But the more sober reconsideration of the bitter lessons of the war soon resumed. On the eve of the XIX Party Conference the dispute about the war, like all the other arguments about the Soviet past, remained unresolved.

## 9 Lenin, the Civil War and its Aftermath (1917–22)

I have left until last the years after the Bolshevik revolution in which Lenin was in power. This is a most sensitive topic, and there was almost no serious public discussion about it until towards the end of 1987. Under both Khrushchev and Gorbachev, the Lenin period has been held up for admiration as a time of creative revolutionary and socialist development, a past of which to be proud – a time when, in spite of bitter resistance by the old ruling classes and by the whole capitalist world, the Bolsheviks emerged victorious, and in the early 1920s began to construct a humane socialist society. In the context of the condemnation by Khrushchev and Gorbachev both of Stalin personally and of substantial parts of the Stalin system, Lenin's thought, Lenin's political practice, and Lenin as a human being provided an ideal to be emulated, a rock of faith.

These are dangerous foundations on which to erect a new socialist model. As we have seen, the Civil War saw the establishment of the almost complete supremacy of a single political party. The party came to dominate the state. In both party and state, power was increasingly centralised. The professional party apparatus was established and took control of key appointments through the *nomenklatura* system. Privileged food supplies, health facilities and other services were introduced for the party and state elite. The secret political police, founded as an emergency Extraordinary Commission (the Cheka), greatly expanded in numbers and in power. It is certainly true that in Lenin's last active years, 1921–2, the introduction of the New Economic Policy was accompanied by some expansion of civil rights. But the main political and social arrangements of the Civil War years remained and were even strengthened. In 1922 the state censorship system was consolidated, formally and in fact; and in the same year the public trial of Socialist–Revolutionaries already displayed some of the grim features which are normally associated with the trials of the 1930s.<sup>1</sup>

Some contributors to the recent literature see no necessity for any substantial questioning of Bolshevik policy and practice in the early

years of Soviet power. An article in the party history journal provides a characteristic example. The author, V. E. Mel'nichenko, strongly criticised a writer in *Novyi mir* who condemned 'a certain cult of the Civil War . . . which threatens and undermines (*gromyat i kroshat*) the idea of the unity of the country and the solidarity of the people'. Mel'nichenko replied:

As for 'the unity of the country and the solidarity of the people', these supreme socialist values were in fact established in the course of a deadly struggle imposed on the people . . . The barrier of fire of the Civil War went through the whole country, and through every family. Those are the objective laws of the class struggle. They cannot be abolished. . . .

Lenin, analysing the experience of the Civil War in 1920, emphasised that '. . . The interest, the attention and all the spiritual strength of workers and labouring peasants were entirely engaged in the great struggle with the bourgeoisie, this struggle unified the working people of all nations . . .'. As we see, it was the struggle which unified. It unified the working people on the one hand and their class enemies on the other.<sup>2</sup>

Many of those who are engaged in a fundamental reappraisal of the Soviet past share with more orthodox historians such as Mel'nichenko the view that the Bolshevik revolution provided the only way forward for Russia, and argue that the alternatives were anarchy or military dictatorship. Thus Klyamkin, in the article we have already discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, cited with approval the views of the liberal emigre authors of the pro-Soviet pamphlet *Smena vekh* (1921):

Soviet power was opposed by a world-wide coalition, by White armies which occupied three-quarters of Russian territory, by internal destruction, famine, cold and the power of a centrifugal tendency hurling Russia into anarchy. Only Soviet power was able to achieve victory over all these difficulties, which were historically without precedent.<sup>3</sup>

But more critical writers do not accept the view that the dark aspects of the Bolshevik victory can be explained away merely as grim necessities caused by the emergency situation. Instead they try to present more frankly than in the past the cruelties and intolerance of the years when Lenin was in power, and to reconsider what gave rise to them.

Thus we are presented with the fascinating reminiscences of Princess Meshcherskaya, a schoolgirl in 1917. She came from a somewhat eccentric noble family, which apparently treated its peasants well, and even harboured revolutionaries. But during the Civil War she and her mother were thrown out of their lodgings and had to live on a railway station until her mother, disguising her origins, got a job as a canteen cook. Meshcherskaya had some protection from Dzerzhinsky (head of the secret police), to whom her mother had voluntarily handed over a Botticelli painting, and from one of the revolutionaries who had been assisted by the family. Nevertheless, between 1918 and the death of Stalin she was in prison 13 times and her home was searched 23 times.<sup>4</sup>

The summary execution of the Tsar and the Empress, and of all their children, at Ekaterinburg in the spring of 1918, when the enemy was advancing upon the town, is perhaps the best-known of the cruelties against the old ruling class committed by the Bolsheviks in those years. In a recent exceptionally detailed account of these events, a Soviet historian concludes that the royal couple should have been tried in open court and the children should have been spared – the families of the monarch were treated more humanely in the English and French revolutions.<sup>5</sup>

Persecution was not confined to the old ruling classes. Several articles described the unnecessary use of force during the Civil War against kulaks – and other peasants. One writer cited Tsyurupa, who was People's Commissar for Food Supplies during the Civil War, as saying that the food detachments often took food which the peasants needed for themselves. The writer added that the food detachments, who were supposed to act against kulaks, were often only in a village for a few hours, and did not know how to find out who the kulaks were. He concluded that '*it was not just one side which was absolutely and unconditionally guilty*'.<sup>6</sup>

The revolt of the naval island Kronstadt, in March 1921, has always been described in Soviet literature as counter-revolutionary and inspired by foreign powers. A recent fictionalised account, however, made it clear that the Kronstadt mutiny was a genuine mass revolt against unjustified dictatorship, and that its supporters were executed indiscriminately after its suppression.<sup>7</sup>

A striking example of the use of mass terror against opponents was the policy which became known as 'de-Cossackisation (*raskazachivanie*)', practised intermittently during the Civil War. A directive of the Orgburo (Organisation Bureau) of the party Central Committee,

signed by its secretary, Sverdlov, dated January 29, 1919, called for 'mass terror against rich Cossacks, destroying them to a man, and also mass terror in relation to all Cossacks who take any direct or indirect part in the struggle against Soviet power'.<sup>8</sup> A year later, in 1920, whole Cossack villages were burnt down as punishment for assisting the counter-revolutionaries.<sup>9</sup>

The revolutionary commander F. K. Mironov, driven by despair to resist this policy, was twice sentenced to death by a Soviet Military Tribunal. On the second occasion, on April 2, 1921, after the Civil War was over, he was executed on the basis of false evidence from an informer (his appeal failed to reach the Soviet President Kalinin). Mironov was rehabilitated without publicity in 1960, but recently his story has been reported in detail in the press.<sup>10</sup>

The reconsideration of the case of Nikolai Gumilev is even more remarkable. Gumilev, a major poet, was once the husband of Anna Akhmatova, and was the father of her only son, who was the subject of her great poem 'Requiem'. Gumilev was executed with sixty other men and women in 1921 for taking part in a counter-revolutionary conspiracy in Petrograd. But he has now been declared innocent by a former state procurator who has seen the Gumilev file. According to this account, Gumilev was invited to join a conspiratorial organisation but refused to do so; his only crime was his failure to inform the authorities about it.<sup>11</sup>

The most important publishing event relating to the Civil War has undoubtedly been the appearance in full of *Doctor Zhivago*.<sup>12</sup> Boris Pasternak's great novel is very familiar to the Western public, but it was available only clandestinely within the USSR, and was read by only a very small minority of the Soviet population. The novel shows the Civil War, with all its brutalities and suffering, from the point of view of an independent intellectual, and is exercising a profound influence on Soviet thinking.

Unjustified repression, whether of classes or individuals, has previously always been treated in the Soviet press as a consequence of the 'cult of the individual', or at any rate of the abandonment of NEP at the end of the 1920s. But the publications I have described demonstrate that important aspects of the Stalinist dictatorship have been present, at least in embryo, since shortly after the October revolution. This issue was raised explicitly by the journalist Aleksandr Egorov, citing with approval an unfinished manuscript which Rosa Luxemburg wrote in prison:

The Bolsheviks [Luxemburg wrote], in carrying out the revolution, are the first of us to become people who act decisively, and have thus saved the honour of international socialism . . .

They were entirely right to use the iron fist to repress any opposition, but these measures must not become a general rule over a long period.

But, of course, if political life in the country is extinguished, the Soviets will also not be able to avoid progressive paralysis. Without general elections, freedom of the press and assembly, and a free conflict of opinions, the life of any social institution will die away, and become a mere form, and bureaucracy will become the only active element.

Egorov commented: 'It seems to me that in 1987 these words and this warning are even more up-to-date than in 1918'.<sup>13</sup>

All this raises fundamental questions about the Leninist approach to socialism, some of which are now being considered in the Soviet press. The East German poet Johannes Becker, in notes written after the XX Soviet Party Congress of 1956, but not published in East Germany or the Soviet Union until 1988, admitted that 'the main mistake of my life was that I supposed that socialism would bring an end to human tragedies and to the tragedy of human existence in general'. This attitude had reflected his 'petty-bourgeois, philistine and at the same time idyllic conception of socialism'.<sup>14</sup>

The shrewd economist Gavriil Popov, whom we have already met several times in our pages, reflected on the concept of human progress as it has been formed in the past 150 years. He argued that the criterion accepted both by Marx and Engels, and by the early Russian Social-Democrats, was too narrowly 'economistic':

I may be wrong, but I think that Marx' and Engels' criterion of progress was determined by the development of the economy and the productive forces. From the economic aspect, in spite of its costs the seizure of Africa looked like progress, because as a result of the seizure Africa was included in the world development of humanity. But surely the struggle of the Indians for independence and the Indian Mutiny were also progressive, because they brought millions of former slaves to conscious historical activity and, even more important, squeezed out of the English, including the workers, the parasitism resulting from the exploitation of other nations.<sup>15</sup>

Other writers have argued that rival concepts of socialism have

been struggling for mastery throughout the Soviet period, including the period when Lenin was in charge. In the discussion section of the party journal *Kommunist*, two economists strongly criticised 'the crudely egalitarian barracks models of the future society, in which equality was regarded as synonymous with identical needs, and economic incentives were replaced by detailed regulation and control of the activity of the individual in production, consumption and personal life'. They contrasted this with the alternative conception which put the freedom of human beings at the centre, and regarded communism as real humanism, which overcomes all forms of alienation:

As early as the 1920s the two poles between which socialist thought has moved were known as 'Babeuf socialism' and 'Fourier socialism'.<sup>16</sup>

Writing in the same journal, Aleksandr Gel'man approached the same issue from a different angle. He argued that the fundamental defects in Soviet socialism arose from the assumption that the new form of ownership would solve everything:

October opened up very wide possibilities for democratic transformation, but to a considerable extent they remained unrealised by the party as the directing force in society. In theory and in practice unjustified hopes were placed on the assumption that the very fact of the socialisation of the land and the factories would automatically secure a flowering of the economy and the spirit. It was not realised that ownership without democratic management was in essence not social ownership but nobody's ownership.

Gel'man argued that the long-established Bolshevik attitude to the old exploiting classes and to the non-proletarian classes generally neglected human beings and their rights. He traced a clear continuity from the Civil War to the 1930s:

Throwing one group of people after another onto the scrap-heap has occurred throughout our history. First the class enemies and the relatives of class enemies, including distant relatives, and then deviationists of various kinds, dissidents, and former prisoners of war, and we even reached the point that we discarded people for the length of their hair or the width of their trousers – and quite recently for taking a drop to drink.<sup>17</sup>

Selyunin brought together the twin errors of 'barracks socialism'

and 'state ownership without democracy', and argued that the mistaken concept of the role of incentives under socialism dated back to Thomas More's belief that compulsion was unavoidable in Utopia. This concept rapidly led to the system of War Communism. 'It was not hunger which drove us to requisitions, but rather the reverse – mass requisitions had hunger as their consequence'. It was in the context of this erroneous approach, according to Selyunin, that the Bolsheviks gave priority during the Civil War to the collective working of land, closed the opposition press and strengthened the secret police. Dzerzhinsky, the head of the secret police, believed in sending 'violators of labour discipline' as well as counter-revolutionaries to concentration camps. In 1920 Trotsky wanted to turn the whole country into a system of gigantic concentration camps, and was in effect supported by the IX Party Congress in March of that year.<sup>18</sup>

Such fundamental reassessments of the Civil War are hardly possible without also reassessing Lenin.

Many writers have handled this delicate problem by emphasising those aspects of Lenin's statements and actions that cohere with the present efforts of Gorbachev and his supporters to achieve a democratic socialist system equipped with strong economic incentives. Even after the most heated disagreements with his colleagues during revolution and Civil War, Lenin mended his bridges to them and did not hesitate to appoint them to high office. Thus in October 1917 Kamenev foolishly revealed in the press the Central Committee decision to launch the insurrection, to which he was opposed. But after the victory he was appointed to a senior position.<sup>19</sup> The Lenin presented in such accounts tried very hard to secure the cooperation of anarchists ("Are you a Communist?", he asked me . . . "No, I'm an anarchist". "Well, that's better", he said, smiling').<sup>20</sup> Various authors also have reminded us that in Lenin's day critics appeared at every party Congress; there was freedom of opposition in the Young Communist League even in the midst of the Civil War.<sup>21</sup>

Lenin's last two years as an active politician (1921–2) provide much stronger grounds for presenting him as the grandfather of *perestroika*. There is no doubt that the Lenin who introduced the New Economic Policy was a far-sighted and flexible genius. And the sick Lenin, unable to participate in political life, displayed astonishing prescience in his struggle against bureaucracy, Russian nationalism and Stalin. The less convenient aspect of Lenin's last years was his insistence on a highly disciplined party organisation, without factions or groupings, and on a one-party state. But even this has been called to the service

of *perestroika*. Dzarasov pointed out that in introducing the ban on factions in March 1921, Lenin had resisted a proposal to ban the election of delegates to party Congresses according to the 'platforms' they supported:

[Lenin:] Supposing there is an issue like, say, the conclusion of the Brest peace? . . . It is possible that it will then be necessary to elect on the basis of platforms. *Ryazanov (from the floor)*: For a single issue? *Lenin*: Of course!

Dzarasov, who was writing just before the XIX Party Conference, went on to argue that it would be appropriate at the present day to move towards electing delegates to party Conferences and Congresses on the basis of platforms; this would not involve the formation of separate factions within the party, each with their own discipline.<sup>22</sup>

The Lenin problem has also been handled by showing us Lenin conversing amiably with his critics, thus providing an opportunity to present the critics' point of view. The great Russian anarchist Kropotkin met Lenin on several occasions after the October revolution, and a recent article explained that Kropotkin warned Lenin, from the example of the French revolution, that 'dictatorship inevitably leads to terror, terror to reaction and eventually to the destruction of the revolution'. In France men who had been judges during the old regime, Kropotkin pointed out, had remained in place, and sent revolutionary leaders to the guillotine. On this point the author of the article does not conceal his agreement with Kropotkin:

Kropotkin's warning compels us to remember the dark figure of Vyshinsky, who signed the order to arrest Lenin in the summer of 1917, and then as General Procurator of the USSR conducted the vengeance on Lenin's closest colleagues.<sup>23</sup>

One writer, regretting that 'we haven't been through the parliamentary road of development' even claimed that 'Lenin prepared us for that, but didn't manage it – he didn't live long enough'.<sup>24</sup> And in Mikhail Shatrov's play, Lenin in his last years even contemplates the legalisation of his old enemies the Mensheviks! Shatrov, challenged about this, explained that Lenin's jottings for his *Notes of a Publicist* included the brief comment: 'On relationship with Mensheviks. Their legalisation'. But Shatrov's critic pointed out that a later Lenin note justified the suppression of the Mensheviks.<sup>25</sup>

The Lenin offered to us by these supporters of *perestroika* is hardly

the whole Lenin. The complaint of a conservative critic is not entirely unjust:

In my opinion Lenin's viewpoint is blatantly liberalised nowadays. The person bearing Lenin's name is a kind of Chekhovian intellectual.<sup>26</sup>

Serious obstacles still block the more honest road of pointing out Lenin's limitations and even criticising him. As we shall see in Chapter 10, Mikhail Shatrov's *Onward . . . Onward . . . Onward!* was ferociously attacked because his Lenin questioned the inadequacy of his own actions against Stalin.

In spite of all the obstacles, however, Lenin's views and actions were considered with much greater honesty in the last months and weeks before the XIX Party Conference. In November 1987, the historian Polyakov was asked at a press conference 'Will Lenin ever be portrayed as a multidimensional figure who also made definite mistakes?'. He replied, 'For the time being we are ashamed to speak about this, and, I think, wrongly so'. But the example Polyakov cited of Lenin's mistakes was his overestimation of the potential of the Western working class in 1920, and this was a mistake which Lenin had himself freely admitted.<sup>27</sup>

In one or two of the articles already cited, however, Lenin's views have been examined more boldly. Selyunin almost explicitly criticised Lenin's use of force against 'speculators', and his advocacy of collective and state farming during the Civil War and even in 1921.<sup>28</sup>

Eventually the need to discuss Lenin more frankly was mentioned openly. Criticising a poem by Boris Oleinik, a reader wrote: 'It is wrong to make Jesus Christ out of Lenin, raising him up to heaven as if he were watching life on earth'; Oleinik admitted that other people had said the same thing.<sup>29</sup> And two weeks before the XIX Conference, a consultant to the Institute of Marxism-Leninism tackled the Lenin question squarely:

In spite of vows of devotion to Lenin, Lenin, to use his own words, used to be turned into a harmless icon.

In fact, attempts to canonise Lenin, to make him into something like a 'Bolshevik Christ', are still found today. Such attempts contradict the image and character of Ilich [Lenin]. Iconography does not suit the profoundly creative attitude of Lenin to revolutionary doctrine . . . An icon is needed primarily by those who fear that the people will seriously find their way into the works of

Lenin, read the originals, the verbatim reports of party Congresses and Conferences, that people will quarrel about Lenin and socialism, thus demonstrating that these values are alive.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile one of Lenin's most controversial policies was frankly criticised. Agdas Burganov, discussing the failure of the party to prevent the rise of Stalin, treated the ban on factions, introduced by Lenin in March 1921, as an important contributing factor:

The overwhelming majority accepted into the party from non-proletarian classes were of course honest, and devoted to the people. But the trouble was that because of their insufficient class and political maturity they were a favourable medium for the advance of all kinds of adventurist, careerist and similar elements. Unfortunately this was assisted by the resolution of the X Congress 'On the Unity of the Party'. It firmly blocked any real and serious opposition to the line of the leader of the party because it provided for 'the complete elimination of any factional activity (*fraktsionnost'*)', for which the punishment was pitiless. But internal party practice then showed that any criticism of the leadership could be arbitrarily included in 'factional activity', if the criticism came from several party members (sometimes they did not know each other personally; in the end even collective complaints from working people were categorically banned).<sup>31</sup>

I believe this is the first explicit criticism of the ban on factions which has appeared in the Soviet press since the early 1920s.

The conclusions which Burganov drew from this are far-reaching. He argued that the insistence on party unity meant that even if Stalin had been thrown out his successor might well have behaved similarly:

Where is the guarantee that someone else but Stalin would have withstood the impossibly difficult test of personal power, which, as world experience has shown, is withstood by hardly anyone? . . . Kant expressed the idea that the possession of power inevitably distorts the free operation of reason.<sup>32</sup>

Gavriil Popov pointed out in a subsequent article that Lenin had understood the danger that the ban on factions would free the party apparatus from supervision and criticism, and had therefore attached great importance to building up a system of supervision. This failed; and Popov was sceptical about whether it could have worked. The supervisory system in itself involved the creation of a new and

powerful administrative apparatus (the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate and party Central Control Commission), and the new apparatus was itself free, even in Lenin's model, from the structure of society:

Most important of all. The political structures and apparatus of power were formed in the years of War Communism, of rigid methods of rule by command. Could they be capable of constructing a genuinely socialist economic basis by fully democratic methods?

According to Popov, Lenin's struggle with bureaucracy also showed that all his speeches and resolutions had little effect on the growing bureaucratism. Only a system of genuine elections can keep bureaucrats under control; this is the lesson for present-day *perestroika*.<sup>33</sup>

The most hostile criticisms of Lenin and Leninism appeared in the Soviet press as a result of the decision to publish the Nobel Prize lecture of the emigre poet Joseph Brodsky, which is even very critical of the October Revolution itself.<sup>34</sup> The Soviet version of the lecture omitted a sentence which grouped Lenin with Stalin and Hitler. But this sentence has now been drawn to the attention of the Soviet public by the always vigilant *Moscow News*.<sup>35</sup>



## **Part II**

# **The Politics of Soviet History**



# 10 The Politburo and Soviet History (Spring 1985–Spring 1988)

In the first eighteen months after Gorbachev's appointment the Politburo took a cautious or even conservative attitude to Soviet history. In May 1985, in his speech on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of victory in the second world war, Gorbachev proclaimed that 'the gigantic work at the front and in the rear was led by the party, its Central Committee, and the State Committee of Defence headed by the General Secretary of the CC CPSU(b) [Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)] Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin', and this statement was greeted with prolonged applause.<sup>1</sup> Four months later he unstintingly praised Stakhanovism at the meeting celebrating the 50th anniversary of Stakhanov's record shift in the coal mines.<sup>2</sup>

Even at the XXVII Party Congress in February 1986, while Gorbachev praised the tax in kind of 1921 (see Chapter 3), in relation to the history of the Soviet period as a whole he merely commented that 'mistakes in policy were not avoided, and various kinds of subjective distortions (*otkloneniya*)'.<sup>3</sup> And in the same month he told a correspondent of *L'Humanité* that 'Stalinism is a concept made up by opponents of communism and used on a large scale to smear the Soviet Union and socialism as a whole', and added that the Soviet party had already 'drawn proper conclusions from the past'.<sup>4</sup>

In June 1986, according to a reliable unofficial report, he revealed his underlying attitude to the problem of frankness about history to a group of Soviet writers:

If we start trying to deal with the past, we'll lose all our energy. It would be like hitting the people over the head. And we have to go forward. We'll sort out the past. We'll put everything in its place. But right now we have to direct our energy forward.<sup>5</sup>

A month later, in July 1986, an interview with Molotov was reported favourably in the Soviet press, an event which seemed to conform this reluctance to reconsider Stalinism.<sup>6</sup>

Behind the scenes, however, some important changes had already taken place. In 1985 the party Control Commission began to investigate the cases of some former party members who had not been rehabilitated in the Khrushchev period, including at least one former Trotskyist, N. I. Muralov; Muralov was rehabilitated without publicity as early as April 1986.<sup>7</sup> These investigations must have required approval at Politburo level.

The approach to Soviet history changed sharply towards the end of 1986. At the time of the Writers' Congress in June 1986 it was unofficially announced that the powers of the state censorship were to be greatly reduced. In September 1986, it was revealed on Soviet TV that a number of previously banned novels were to be published, including Bek's *Novoe naznachenie*, Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*, and Dudintsev's *Belye odezhdy*.<sup>8</sup> And at this time new reform-minded editors were appointed to major literary journals such as *Novyi mir* (Zalygin) and *Znamya* (Baklanov), and to certain newspapers, including *Moscow News* (E. Yakovlev). Yurii Afanas'ev was appointed Rector (Vice-Chancellor) of the Moscow State Historical-Archive Institute and proved, as we have seen, to be a vigorous and even intemperate advocate of the reconsideration of the past.

The appointments of the new editors, the decision to publish the banned novels, and the mass showing of *Repentance* early in 1987, must all have been authorised by someone very high in the party apparatus, perhaps Gorbachev himself. In February 1987, at a meeting with editors and other leading media figures, Gorbachev publicly reversed the attitude he had previously taken to the role of history in *perestroika*. He made his famous declaration that 'there should not be any blank pages in either our history or our literature', and his remarks about Soviet history, within certain limits, encouraged frankness and new thinking:

In the seventieth year of our great revolution we must not put those who made the revolution in the shadow. We must value each of the 70 years of our Soviet history. The party has told us about difficult matters; and we must not present them today through rose-coloured spectacles. Instead we must let the socialist law of truth have its way.

There was both joy and bitterness. But whatever occurred we went forward and did not fall under the tanks of fascism. We overcame fascism not only with heroism and self-sacrifice, but also with better steel, better tanks, better soldiers . . .

History has to be seen as it is. There was everything; there were mistakes, it was hard, but the country moved forward. Take the years of industrialisation and collectivisation. That was reality and life. That was the fate of the people with all its contradictions, its successes and mistakes.<sup>9</sup>

Following the major shift towards *glasnost*, on April 17, 1987, A. N. Yakovlev, who has since been promoted to full membership of the Politburo, presented a long report on the social sciences to the Academy of Sciences. Yakovlev's report sought both to widen and to set certain limits to the discussion. He criticised 'efforts to whitewash the activity of pre-revolutionary Russia' and the 'poetising of what is reactionary in the culture of the past', and also attacked attempts to counter-pose the national spirit (*narodnost*) against the party spirit (*partiinnost*). It was in this report that Yakovlev denounced attempts to depict Christianity as the 'mother of Russian culture' (see Chapter 2).

On the Soviet period, however, he pressed for greater openness, condemning 'violation of the principle of historicism, depersonalisation of the historical process, blank pages and spaces in whole periods, colourless presentation'. He called for 'a fresh approach to the explanation of many important and complicated periods in the history of the party, learning the necessary lessons from each of them', and presented a far-reaching list of problems:

Take the question of the analysis of the Soviet experience of economic construction. When and as a result of what decisions and for what reasons was the New Economic Policy departed from in the 1920s? How did the administrative-bureaucratic methods of management secure the right of citizenship and gather strength? Were there alternatives to this, and if so, why did they remain unrealised?

And in relation to historical studies as a whole he sharply condemned people who specialise on the exposure of bourgeois historians without engaging in serious historical research themselves, and called for a dialogue with progressive foreign historians.<sup>10</sup>

At the time of Yakovlev's report, some other quite authoritative statements sought to set bounds to historical discussion. On April 27, at a stormy meeting of the Board of the Writers' Union, the report by its secretary, Karpov, announced that 'the secretariat believes that we must not in any circumstances renounce what our literature

created in past decades'. He included among the writers he singled out for praise Sholokhov, Kochetov and Polevoi, all more or less orthodox writers, as well as the critical writers Tvardovsky and Abramov.<sup>11</sup> In May, an unsigned article in the party journal *Kommunist* complained that 'certain costs' were associated with the revival of history. 'Not only publicists but also specialists have a dilettante approach, striving to get to the centre of public attention, producing false sensations'; breadth of view was obtained at the expense of 'precision in world outlook'.<sup>12</sup>

A few weeks later, on June 17, 1987, at a meeting of the plenum of the journalists' union, the main report, presented by I. Laptev, the editor of *Izvestiya*, complained that 'people who are a long way from serious scholarship and a profound knowledge of the facts have started to express their often subjective views with unprecedented force'; the whole of Soviet history was sometimes criticised as a system.<sup>13</sup> And in July, Ligachev, a very senior Politburo member, who had at first called for greater frankness about the past, now criticised excessive emphasis on the abuses of the Stalin period.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, in June 1987, V. A. Grigor'ev, the head of the Department of Science and Educational Establishments of the party Central Committee (the influential post formerly held by the last S. P. Trapeznikov) summed up the debate with a judicious impartiality, and sought to move the historians towards serious fresh research:

At the present time two extremes have been clearly established in the evaluation of our historical past. A considerable section of the scholars are inert, lack strength and perhaps willingness to renounce deep-rooted stereotypes in the evaluation of historical phenomena, and continue to be attached to out-of-date conceptions. Another section of the historians has declared its viewpoint, and, quite loudly enough, is demanding a re-examination and re-thinking of the whole heroic path of the Leninist party, to rewrite its whole history afresh. They are supported by several literary figures and publicists, speaking from nihilist positions. Both these extreme directions must be criticised. New thought must be elaborated, based on a profound, detailed and all-sided analysis of documentary sources, on a true party approach to the evolution of the past and present.<sup>16</sup>

A few weeks later, in mid-July 1987, at a further meeting with editors and other leading media figures, Gorbachev on the whole encouraged further wide-ranging historical debate. At the meeting

some speakers expressed anxiety about the breadth of the discussion. The editor of *Druzhba narodov* complained that the impression was sometimes given that ‘we are seeking only the negative in the past, as if nothing positive happened in 70 years’. This journal published Rybakov’s *Children of the Arbat*, and so the editor should not be regarded as an opponent of reform. The chairman of the Soviet Peace Committee argued that people should not be led to think that the life of previous generations was in vain, and complained that ‘certain people think that under the slogan of *perestroika* it is possible to cross out 70 years of the history of our socialist revolution and to begin to idealise tsarist Russia’.

Gorbachev did not take up these points at the meeting. He uttered only a couple of warning notes. He condemned ‘social demagogues’ who attack cadres, and were even to be found ‘in certain editorial boards of newspapers and journals’; and he assured the meeting that the party Central Committee would criticise those who ‘offer values and discoveries outside the limits of the interests of the people and the limits of socialism’. In an unprecedented burst of frankness he warned his audience – referring to unnamed opponents of *perestroika* – that ‘they are waiting for someone to make a mistake, to permit some inaccuracy’. He later repeated this warning in reply to Zalygin, the progressive editor of *Novyi mir* – ‘they are waiting for mistakes from you and from us’. But the main thrust of his remarks was to continue to demand ‘a real revolution in minds, in thinking and in approach’; he even advocated ‘socialist pluralism in every publication’. On Soviet history, he remarked ambiguously that every day is dear to us, even when it was very difficult’, but he said nothing about the discussions on the end of NEP and on collectivisation and the treatment of the kulaks which were already raging at this time. The only specific historical issue mentioned in his speech was the Ezhovshchina, and here he came out on the side of *glasnost*:

We cannot and must not excuse or justify what took place in 1937–8. Never. Those who were in power then were responsible for this. But, comrades, this does not diminish everything we have today, and that the party and the people created.

In his concluding remarks to the meeting Gorbachev strongly advocated rethinking about history, calling for ‘profound generalisation on the path we have followed, organically linking historical analysis with the resolution of the *perestroika*’.<sup>16</sup>

The July meeting was immediately followed by a legal decision of

far-reaching significance. On July 16, 1987, the Supreme Court, acting on the basis of an appeal by the Procurator-General, declared null and void verdicts against 15 prominent Soviet economists dated 1931, 1932 and 1935. They included the outstanding agrarian economist A. Chayanov, N. D. Kondratiev of 'long cycles' fame, the financial specialist L. N. Yurovsky, the national income specialist N. Litoshenko, and the statisticians A. Chelintsev and L. Kafengauz. The others were N. Makarov, A. Doyarenko, A. Rybnikov, S. Chayanov, A. Teitel, I. Leontiev, A. Fabrikant, O. Khauke and N. Gendzekhadze.<sup>17</sup> In 1930–1 they were accused of membership of an alleged illegal 'Toiling Peasant Party', on the basis of their confessions at the time, and most of them were later executed, or died in exile. The Supreme Court also declared that the Toiling Peasant Party did not exist, even though in 1930–2 over 1000 'members' of the party were arrested.<sup>18</sup>

While a public trial of the Toiling Peasant Party was never held, these rehabilitations also clearly implied the innocence of the accused in the famous public trials of the 'Industrial Party' and 'Menshevik Union Bureau' of November 1930 and March 1931, including Ramzin, Groman and others. In the mid-1960s the rehabilitation of some of these specialists was tacitly recognised, and some of their works reappeared in Soviet library catalogues. But in the Brezhnev years Soviet publications again asserted their guilt. Thus we read in a Soviet work published in 1981 that 'in the second half of the twenties a number of wrecking organisations were established (the "Industrial Party", the "Toiling Peasant Party", the "Union Bureau of Mensheviks", etc.) installing themselves in all branches of the economy and in the state apparatus; these wrecking organisations were connected with the ruling circles of imperialist states, and financed and directed by them'.<sup>19</sup> This was an authoritative publication: it was issued under the auspices of the Institute of the History of the USSR of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR under the general editorship of Polyakov.

The rehabilitation of these economists opened up a vast area of Soviet economics and Soviet life for reconsideration. Their most important works are being republished, and their analysis of the peasant farm and the Soviet economy of the 1920s is now taken much more seriously.

In the summer and autumn of 1987 it became abundantly clear that the Politburo was divided in its attitude to history. On September 10, Politburo member Chebrikov, the head of the KGB, criticised

‘political and ideological pluralism’, and even ominously warned that ‘imperialist special services’ were encouraging some writers to ‘blacken certain stages of the historical development of our country’.<sup>20</sup> A few days later Ligachev again condemned the ‘one-sided’ treatment of Soviet history.<sup>21</sup>

Gorbachev’s own views about the Soviet past expressed in the course of 1987 were reasonably consistent. They could be summed up in the cliché ‘Triumph and Tragedy’. His book about *perestroika*, written during his famous 52 days’ leave in the summer of 1987, praised industrialisation and declared of collectivisation that ‘it proceeded painfully, not without serious excesses and blunders in methods and pace, but further progress in our country would have been impossible without it’. The first edition even added that ‘if it had not been for collectivisation, we could have died from hunger in the war’, but this sentence was omitted in the paperback edition.<sup>22</sup>

Gorbachev’s major report on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, delivered on November 2, 1987, disappointed some Soviet intellectuals and many Western Sovietologists. In my opinion this assessment was mistaken. The report gave the strong impression that it was an amalgam of different drafts. Some parts were indeed quite conservative. It was uncompromisingly hostile to Trotsky, defended the Soviet–German pact of August 1939 unequivocally, and timorously presented the mass repressions of the 1930s as merely affecting ‘many thousands [!] of party members and non-party people’. It praised rapid industrialisation and, on the whole, the collectivisation of agriculture, and declared that ‘Bukharin and his supporters underestimated in practice the importance of the factor of time in the construction of socialism in the 1930s’.

But it combined these fairly orthodox views with a far-reaching analysis of the Soviet system during the Stalin period. Evidently influenced by Gavriil Popov (see Chapter 7), Gorbachev declared that industrialisation and collectivisation had been associated with the emergence of the ‘administrative-command system of party-state management of the country’. According to Gorbachev, this ‘in general gave its results’ in industry – a remarkably cautious statement – but such a strict system was unsuitable for agriculture and had a harmful effect on society generally:

the administrative-command system . . . affected the whole political and social life of the country. Firmly established in the economy, it also spread to the superstructure, limiting the development of

the democratic potential of socialism, and restraining the progress of socialist democracy.

. . . methods imposed by the period of struggle against the hostile opposition of the exploiting classes were mechanically transferred to the period of peaceful socialist construction, when conditions had changed fundamentally. An atmosphere of intolerance, enmity and suspicion was created in the country . . .

All this had a pernicious influence on the social and political development of the country, with serious consequences. It is extremely obvious that the absence of an adequate level of democratisation of Soviet society also made possible both the cult of the individual and the violations of legality, the arbitrariness and the repressions of the thirties.<sup>23</sup>

Such a framework of analysis had never previously been presented by a Soviet leader. Gorbachev's report was a world in advance of Khrushchev's report on Stalin to the XX Party Congress of February 1956 (which in any case has never been published in the Soviet Union).

The transformation in outlook which this represented was consolidated by Gorbachev's two major statements about Soviet history early in 1988. On January 8, at a meeting with leading figures from the media and the arts, he strongly defended the importance of the study of all aspects of Soviet history, and linked this directly with the needs of *perestroika*:

It is impossible to agree with those who propose to forget history or utilise only a certain part of it. Now we all well understand that this point of view is unacceptable. We must know the history of our Fatherland profoundly, particularly after October. Knowledge of this history, knowledge of the cause of particular phenomena, causes which lie at the basis of the huge achievements of our state, and knowledge of the causes of the major errors, and the tragic events of our history – all this will allow us to draw lessons for the present day, when we want to renew society, to disclose more fully the potential of socialism, its values. Now that we really know our history better, we know the roots of many phenomena which have disturbed us all recently and which were a direct cause of the decisions that the *perestroika* of society was necessary.

Gorbachev also announced, contrary to the practice which had prevailed ever since the 1920s, that his November report should not be regarded as sacrosanct:

The understanding of our history which we achieved in preparing for the 70th Anniversary of October is not something frozen, and given once and for all. It will be deepened and developed in the course of further research.

At the end of the meeting he returned to the importance of history. He announced that the preparation of *Essays on the History of the CPSU*, which ‘could become a textbook’, would be undertaken by a group of historians under the supervision of a commission of the party Central Committee (‘we think that this problem will not now be resolved without the help of the Central Committee’). He then offered some comments on the nature of history which had a startling resemblance to the views of the XIX-Century German historian Ranke, who believed that the task of the historian was ‘simply to show how it really was’:

This is our history, with everything that is in it. We have studied it, mastering new values in economics and in spiritual culture, and have moved forward on the road to progress. We have studied it, admitting miscalculations and mistakes, and drawing lessons from the difficult and tragic periods of our history. For us no smoothing-out of history is acceptable. It already exists (*ona uzhe est*). And it is only a matter of showing it correctly. It is a matter of our honesty, responsibility and a scientific approach. We will give what is due to everything that was great in our history, and we cannot excuse those who acted against the law, and above all committed crimes.

I do not see grounds for believing that we have cut certain roots from under ourselves. The truth is a single entity (*pravda odna*). We cannot divide it into periods. Our history took place, and we must really know and understand it.<sup>24</sup>

At the Central Committee plenum on February 18, 1988, Gorbachev again emphasised that the purpose of reconsidering the past was to strengthen socialism, and insisted that this required complete frankness: ‘we are not retreating a step from socialism and Marxism–Leninism . . . but we decisively renounce the dogmatic, bureaucratic and voluntarist legacy’. ‘Critical analysis, not avoiding anything, not concealing anything, not fearing any truth – only such an analysis can work for socialism’:

There are not and cannot be any constraints on truly scientific

investigation. Questions of theory cannot and must not be resolved by any kind of decree. We need the free competition of minds.<sup>25</sup>

Within a few weeks of the November 2 report, it was already clear in practice as well as in principle that discussion would not be restricted to its framework. In spite of Gorbachev's defence of the general strategy of collectivisation, articles fundamentally critical of it continued to appear in the press: a striking example was the extremely hard-hitting analysis of collectivisation and dekulakisation by G. I. Shmelev, which frankly defended the Bukharinist alternative.<sup>26</sup>

But the question was by no means resolved. In the first few weeks of 1988, the fierce debate behind the scenes about the limits of *glasnost* was reflected in many articles and letters in the press.

A minor article in the newspaper *Moskovskaya pravda* caused particular indignation. The journalist Lev Kolodnyi, celebrating the return of the old name 'Cheremushki' to the district of Moscow which had temporarily been renamed 'Brezhnev', raised the question of the names of other Moscow districts. Why should a district be named after Voroshilov, 'the friend of Joseph Stalin'? After the Civil War 'this person degenerated'. He helped to found the cult of Stalin with his pamphlet in 1929 on Stalin and the Red Army. A cult of Voroshilov's own infallibility developed. He permitted himself to put on trial his deputies and sentence them to death. He nearly lost Leningrad, which was saved only when he was replaced by Zhukov. And what about Kalinin, whose name is carried by a district, a major road, a Metro station and eight factories in Moscow? Kolodnyi conceded that 'he did much for the people', but pointed out that Sholokhov had accused Kalinin of being responsible for the excesses of the grain collections in 1929. Kalinin had also refused to accept letters from repressed people who saw in him their last hope.<sup>27</sup>

At the January 1988 meeting with Gorbachev, which took place the day after the publication of Kolodnyi's article, the editor of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* strongly criticised it:

V. V. Chikin . . . Yesterday a document was published, the decision of the Politburo to rename Naberezhnye Chelny and Cheremushki. A very strict and well-considered document. In *Izvestiya* I read very brief but very persuasive material, dealing with major political aspects of life, but delicately and intelligently. But then in another newspaper I came across a declaration of quite a different kind.

*Voice*. In *Moskovskaya pravda*.

V. V. Chikin. There are phrases here which sound – forgive the expression – blasphemous.

M. S. Gorbachev. This shows a thirst for sensations. Must this be a feature of our press? Write seriously about the most difficult things – of yesterday and today – but responsibly and scientifically. . . .

. . . I think you will understand that we could find many telling facts to illustrate our very serious conclusions and statements. On any question. But is it now just a matter of revealing facts to inflame passions? I am convinced that this is not the path we should follow.<sup>28</sup>

At the February 1988 plenum of the Central Committee, Gorbachev, as we have seen, supported a free investigation of the past. But he again insisted that this must be serious and free from sensations:

The Marxist–Leninist approach to the analysis of the history of society requires stubborn, tense and critical thought. This requires time, talent and responsibility. The impatience of public opinion is understandable, the wish to look as soon as possible at the closed pages of our past. Nevertheless this cannot justify rash statements, or any over-hastiness in evaluation, which can lead only to superficial conclusions, not reflecting the whole complexity of the processes which took place. It is impermissible that instead of real scientific research time-serving snippets (*kon'yunkturnye podelki*) should be thrown at the general public, which conceal rather than reveal the truth. We must spare ourselves this.<sup>29</sup>

The distinction between a serious critical article in a newspaper and a purely sensational one can hardly be satisfactorily resolved without the exercise of political judgement.

The sharp division among the Soviet authorities about the limits which should be placed on *glasnost* was revealed in the discussion of Shatrov's latest play, *Dal'she . . . dal'she . . . dal'she!* (Onward . . . Onward . . . Onward!). Shatrov's imaginative examination of the causes and consequences of the October Revolution as seen through the eyes of its principal protagonists was regarded by the more orthodox as going well beyond the bounds of legitimate discussion. I find this a little odd. It is true that there is at least one 'dangerous' moment in the play from the point of view of the one-party system:

Rosa Luxemburg's speech in which she presents lack of political freedom and of free elections as inexorably leading to political autocracy. Her arguments are not adequately answered. But, as I see it, this is fundamentally a Leninist play. It presents Right-wing military dictatorship as the only alternative to October; and its Lenin is so great a man that he insists on bearing the blame for failing to do enough to prevent the rise of Stalin.<sup>30</sup>

The play gave rise to so much anxiety that Viktor Afanas'ev, the editor of *Pravda*, seized the opportunity to criticise it at the January 8 meeting with Gorbachev (Gorbachev did not take this up). *Pravda* then devoted two critical articles to it.<sup>31</sup> The second article went so far as to claim that Shatrov 'presents Stalin not as the antipodes of Lenin, but merely as another hypostasis'.<sup>32</sup> This article also claimed that ordinary people are absent from the action of the play. (These charges are unjustified.) It also criticised the 'historical inaccuracies' of the play, making the extraordinary charge that 'the text of the so-called eve-of-death Bukharin last letter does not stand up to scientific expertise'. In fact Bukharin's letter to the party was spoken by him to his wife on the eve of his arrest; it was not written down by him, so much expertise could hardly be applied.

The most significant criticism of Shatrov's play was presented in a long closely-argued article in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.<sup>33</sup> One of the two historians who wrote this article was V. V. Zhuravlev, who was in the vanguard of reformist moves in the history profession in the spring of 1987 (see Chapter 12). The two historians, both working in the main party research institute, strongly object to the general line of thought in Shatrov's play. The article is written in an authoritative quasi-rational style. This style, which has been characteristic of party denunciations of heresy ever since the Civil War, was mercifully absent from earlier discussions in 1987-8. As an example of the way in which the article discusses the play, it even interprets Lenin's insistence in the play that he was to blame for the failure to remove Stalin as showing that Shatrov was himself blaming Lenin for 'the decisive mistake which influenced the whole course of the future development of events'.

A month later, at the end of February, *Pravda* published a short but effective reply to the criticisms of Shatrov from eight actors and playwrights, including Rozov and Gel'man.<sup>34</sup> The authors noted the outmoded ideological labels and political accusations flung at the play, which was condemned as simultaneously both 'Menshevik' and as ultra-revolutionary; they warned that this trend would 'return us

to the administrative-command methods of managing culture'. By this time, the production of Shatrov's play had already been banned in many towns.

A crucial phase in the debate was launched on March 13 by the publication in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* of a full-page 'letter' by Nina Andreeva.<sup>35</sup> The letter, published under the general heading 'Polemics', was entitled 'I Cannot Give Up My Principles'. Andreeva, teacher of chemistry in a Leningrad technical institute, is apparently of impeccable proletarian origin: her father was a worker in the port of Leningrad, her mother was a fitter in the Kirov works, where her elder brother also worked. Her brother, father and sister died in the war; another relative was repressed, and rehabilitated after the XX Party Congress in 1956. She explains that her central concern in writing the letter is the effect which indiscriminate *glasnost*' and the absence of any restraint on debate is having on her students.

The letter supports the historians who criticised Shatrov, and strongly attacks his failure to accept the dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary form of the Soviet state after October. It asserts that Shatrov 'in the logic of his evaluations and arguments is very close to the line of argument of the book by B. Souvarine, published in Paris in 1935'.<sup>36</sup> She cites as examples of Shatrov's 'tendentious accusations' his claims that Stalin was responsible for the murders of Trotsky and Kirov, and that Stalin 'hemmed in' Lenin during his last illness. She strongly defends 'industrialisation, collectivisation and the cultural revolution, which led our country into the ranks of the great world powers'. In defence of Stalin she argues that the views of those on the other side of the barricade who knew Stalin should be taken seriously. A long quotation, apparently taken from Churchill, praises Stalin and remarks that 'when he entered the hall at the Yalta conference we all, as if obeying an order, stood up, and – a strange business – held our hands on our trouser creases' (unkind Soviet critics have remarked that this soldierly stance could not have been adopted by the ailing crippled Roosevelt . . .). This quite strong defence of Stalin is softened in the course of the letter by her condemnation of the repressions, and her declaration of support for the 1956 resolution on the cult of the individual, and for Gorbachev's November 1987 report.

Andreeva reports that she and her students have come to the conclusion that the current attacks on the dictatorship of the proletariat and on former political leaders must owe their origin to professional anti-communists in the West, who have long advocated

‘the so-called democratic slogan of “anti-Stalinism”’, and also to the remnants of the defeated classes within the USSR, including the Nepmen, basmachi [Central Asian nationalist rebels] and kulaks, and to the spiritual successors of Mensheviks such as Dan and Martov, and also of Trotsky and Yagoda. [Dan, Martov, Trotsky and Yagoda were all Jews.]

The second half of Andreeva’s long letter is devoted to an extended justification of an analysis put forward by the Russian nationalist writer A. Prokhanov. He detected two harmful ideological streams or ‘alternative fortresses’ in the struggle for *perestroika*. The first and most fully-established ideological stream advocates a ‘model of a certain left-liberal intellectual socialism’. It supports a classless ‘humanism’, exalts the individual personality, engages in ‘god-seeking’, idolises technocracy and proclaims the advantages of ‘democratic’ capitalism. This stream falsifies the history of socialism by presenting the past as consisting simply of mistakes and crimes. It also displays ‘an open or concealed cosmopolitan tendency’.

At this point in her letter Andreeva again reveals her anti-semitism, in a curious reference to Trotsky which is worth quoting in full:

I read somewhere that when a delegation of merchants and factory-owners called on Trotsky in the Petrograd soviet after the revolution ‘as a Jew’, and complained about the depredations of the Red Guards, Trotsky declared that he was ‘not a Jew but an internationalist’, which greatly puzzled the petitioners.

With Trotsky the concept of the ‘national’ implied a certain imperfection and limitedness as compared with the ‘international’. And he therefore emphasised the ‘national tradition’ of October, he wrote about the ‘national in Lenin’, asserted that the Russian people ‘received no cultural heritage’, etc. Somehow we are inhibited from stating that it was the *Russian* proletariat, which the Trotskyists regarded as ‘backward and uncultured’, which carried out, in Lenin’s words, ‘three Russian revolutions’, and that it was the Slavic peoples who were in the vanguard of the struggle of humanity with fascism.

Andreeva goes on to complain that ‘militant cosmopolitanism’ is closely associated with the refusenik movement, which she stigmatises as ‘class and national treachery by persons most of whom completed first degrees and Ph.D.s at our public expense’.

The second harmful stream, to which she devotes less space, consists of traditionalists who support ‘peasant socialism’, want to overcome

socialism by moving back to the past, attack collectivisation as ‘the frightful use of arbitrary power in relation to the peasantry’, and condemn the rural commissars who persecuted the middle peasants.

Andreeva insists that the dangerous trends must be brought to an end:

The authors of time-serving falsifications under the cover of moral and spiritual ‘cleansing’ are eroding the boundaries and criteria of scientific ideology, manipulating *glasnost*, imposing an extra-socialist pluralism, and this objectively hinders the reconstruction (*perestroika*) of social consciousness.

Andreeva’s letter was not her own unaided work. According to the Moscow correspondent of the Italian Communist Party newspaper *L’Unità*, Andreeva sent a draft to Ligachev, and this was then thoroughly revised with the aid of the staff of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.<sup>37</sup> Another report claims that Ligachev gave two press briefings to selected journalists, and referred to the article as worthy of extensive discussion.<sup>38</sup> The publication of the letter was well-timed: it appeared on the eve of Gorbachev’s departure for Yugoslavia.

Behind the scenes, many people objected to the letter. On March 23 the Board of the Union of Cinematographers approved a report from Gel’man which criticised the letter as presenting ‘certain programmatic propositions of the conservative forces in the party’ and as ‘serving the interest of the bureaucracy, including the party bureaucracy’.<sup>39</sup> Similar criticisms were made at a conference in Leningrad on March 26.<sup>40</sup> The Belorussian youth paper *Znamya yunosti* decided not to reprint the letter, after some of the staff threatened to resign. *Tambovskaya pravda* reported criticisms of the letter made at meetings in Tambov. *Moscow News* strongly criticised it.<sup>41</sup>

But these were rare exceptions, and neither the Leningrad meeting nor the meeting of the Board of Cinematographers were reported in the press at the time. Indeed, most Soviet newspapers, believing the letter to be authoritative, but not liking it, made no comment on it whatsoever. Later many complaints appeared about their lack of courage. Yurii Afanas’ev claimed that the letter ‘was treated as a directive by more than thirty regional committees of the party’.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, the letter was discussed by the Politburo, apparently on two occasions. On April 5, three weeks after the publication of Andreeva’s article, and at a time when Ligachev was not in Moscow, *Pravda* published a full-page reply to Andreeva entitled ‘The

Principles of *Perestroika*: a Revolutionary Approach to Thought and Action'. The article is unsigned, which implies that it carries particular authority. It was later described by A. N. Yakovlev as 'our platform, the Politburo's'.<sup>43</sup> Its publication in *Pravda* is an interesting event, because *Pravda*, like *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, had been critical of Shatrov and of other radical reinterpretations of the Soviet past.

The *Pravda* article is difficult to summarise. Its strongly anti-Stalinist attitudes are combined with the very firm conviction that the Soviet Union is in such serious difficulties that a really revolutionary *perestroika* is a vital necessity, and with marked hostility to Russian chauvinism (A. N. Yakovlev, who may well have been involved in writing the article, lost his party post in the Brezhnev years because he was considered too critical of nationalism). These views are not of course new; they have been presented in numerous speeches and articles by Gorbachev and Yakovlev. But the article is remarkably angry, disturbed and passionate, excited and repetitive.

The article frankly admits that hostility to far-reaching *perestroika* remains widespread: 'questions have again become current to which answers already seemed to have been given . . . can't we manage without a break with the past, without radical measures? . . . don't we risk losing and destroying much of what was created in the seven decades after Great October?' Some people believe we are moving towards a 'petty-bourgeois socialism'; others simply want to stop and turn back. According to the *Pravda* article, Andreeva's letter reflects these trends, and must be seen as 'an ideological platform, a manifesto of the forces against *perestroika*'. It has the effect of dividing rather than uniting the Soviet people. It utterly lacks creativity, failing to offer new thoughts on any problem. In effect it wants 'to retain the system under which bureaucratism, corruption, usury and petty-bourgeois degeneration flowered luxuriously'.

The *Pravda* article is particularly infuriated by Andreeva's views on Soviet history. She fails to distinguish the objective from the subjective in the past: 'an understanding of history which is fatalist in its essence predominates in the article, a justification in the name of historical necessity of everything which took place in history, and this has nothing in common with a true scientific understanding of history'. Above all, the article insists, Andreeva seeks in practice to refute the assessment of Stalin by the party. In rejecting her favourable view of Stalin, the article fails to offer serious counter-argument. Instead, it in effect appeals to a new party dogmatism by its dogmatic support for the Lenin of the days of his 'last struggle':

In defence of her concept the author turns to Churchill for support. It should be noted that the panegyric to Stalin in no way belongs to Churchill. The well-known British Trotskyist I. Deutscher said something similar.<sup>44</sup> But in any case the question should be asked whether it is tactful to use bourgeois sources in assessing the leaders and prominent persons in our party and state? – particularly if the party itself already has a precise point of view, in the present specific case the assessment by V. I. Lenin.

According to the *Pravda* article, the attempts to justify Stalin are partly an effort to cling to Stalin's authoritarian methods, and partly reflect the fear that the condemnation of Stalin and his methods will also deny the heroism of those who laboured to achieve the great accomplishments of his time. But, it argued, this conclusion should not be drawn. While the heroic labours of the past were praiseworthy, we also now understand how much greater would have been the results of this labour if it had not been 'weakened by anti-Leninist and anti-socialist practice'. And as for the view that the former exploiting classes are nowadays a serious influence on Soviet thinking, this is a mere revival of Stalin's doctrine about the intensification of the class struggle during the construction of socialism, which had tragic consequences.

While the bulk of the *Pravda* article is concerned to refute the views of Andreeva and her fellow thinkers, it also devotes a couple of paragraphs to criticisms of those who parade sensational facts not for the sake of truth but to satisfy their own 'unquenchable vanity', so that 'the history of the people gives way to the history of the mistakes of the leadership'; 'this approach hurts the feelings of millions of honest people, and does not help them to draw objective and honest lessons from history'. Mistakes and misinterpretations of facts are used by the conservatives to condemn democracy and *glasnost*'; in this way forces which appear to be polar opposites in their convictions support each other in holding back *perestroika*.

The *Pravda* article also condemns *Sovetskaya Rossiya* for the form in which it published Andreeva's article. 'The nostalgia of certain people for the past is understandable, but it was not appropriate for an organ of the press to propagandise such attitudes, not merely failing to assess them properly, but also creating the impression for its readers that some "new" political platform is being proposed to them'. 'Today there are no forbidden subjects. Journals, publishers and studios themselves decide what to make public'. But the pub-

lication of Andreeva's article is 'an attempt at a gradual revision of party decisions'; we need arguments and discussions, but 'arguments which help to advance *perestroika*, leading to a consolidation of forces, to unity around *perestroika*, and not to disunity'.

These are vague frontiers for *glasnost*', drawn more firmly against old-fashioned Stalinism than against radical critics of the past. As if uneasy about the contradictions in this view of the limits to *glasnost*', and perhaps realising that Andreeva and her supporters can hardly have found this argument convincing, the author of the *Pravda* article ends with an almost desperate emotional appeal:

More light. More initiative. More responsibility. Master the Marxist-Leninist conception of *perestroika* more rapidly in all its profundity. We can and must revive the Leninist practice of socialist society – the most humane, the most just. We will follow the revolutionary principles of *perestroika* firmly and undeviatingly: more *glasnost*', more democracy, more socialism.

While these clashes of view about the Soviet past were intensifying, the official bodies investigating the repressions continued their careful work. On February 4, 1988, the plenum of the Supreme Court cancelled the sentence on Bukharin, Rykov, Rakovsky, Chernov and six other persons tried by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court in March 1938; the case was closed 'owing to the absence of any crime in their actions'. Ten other accused, including Krestinsky, Grin'ko, Zelensky and Bessonov, had already been fully rehabilitated. Of the 21 accused in the March 1938 trial, only Yagoda, head of the OGPU/NKVD until he was replaced by Ezhov, was not rehabilitated: 'no protest was offered by the Procuracy of the USSR in relation to G. G. Yagoda, who was also proceeded against in this trial'. The resolution of the Supreme Court concluded that the trial had produced no proof of espionage, that there was no evidence that the accused were associated with foreign special services, or that they had established groups to struggle with Soviet power in the North Caucasus and elsewhere, or that they had organised diversionary and wrecking acts, or terrorist acts. There was also no evidence that they had participated in the murder of Kirov, or that Bukharin had taken part in an attempt to murder Lenin, Stalin and Sverdlov in 1918. Contrary to the law, the Military Collegium had relied solely on the depositions of the accused, without alternative proofs, and these depositions had been obtained by 'crude violations of legality'.

On February 5, 1988, the day following the resolution of the

Supreme Court, the Politburo Commission for the Supplementary Study of Materials Connected with the Repressions of the 1930s, 1940s and the Beginning of the 1950s received the report from the President of the Supreme Court, and duly published a summary of it in the press. The Politburo Commission did not recommend the posthumous reinstatement of the accused as members of the Communist Party; and the Supreme Court noted in its resolution that Bukharin and Rykov had ‘sometimes occupied SPECIAL POSITIONS in their assessment of the political situation, and of the position of various classes and roads for the construction of socialism’, and that some of these views had been characterised as mistaken and incorrect by leading party agencies. But it added that these mistakes, recognised by Bukharin and his supporters, did not constitute a crime.<sup>45</sup>

Like the similar decision about Chayanov, Kondratiev and the ‘Toiling Peasant Party’ on July 16, 1987, the decisions of February 1988 provided the basis for a much more objective reconsideration of their views of those who were rehabilitated. Important writings by Bukharin have since been republished (see Chapter 3). And, as we have seen, while Gorbachev’s November 1987 report criticised Bukharin’s policies of the late 1920s for underestimating ‘the factor of time’, several articles published after Bukharin’s legal rehabilitation frankly defended his policies (see Chapters 3 and 4 above).

In contrast to Bukharin, Trotsky was characterised very unfavourably as a political figure and an individual in Gorbachev’s November 1987 report, and Trotskyism was declared to be ‘essentially antisocialist’. Trotsky and the Left opposition were treated very brusquely in Soviet publications between November 1987 and the XIX Party Conference in June 1988. Little has been said about the views and lives of Rakovsky and Krestinsky, rehabilitated ‘Leftists’ who were fellow-accused of Bukharin. The report of the Minister of Defence celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the Red Army achieved the feat of not mentioning Trotsky, People’s Commissar for Military Affairs during the Civil War and the first years of NEP.<sup>46</sup>

Some articles published at that time were less unjust. A long interview with Professor Yu. A. Korablev attacked Deutscher for his claim that Trotsky had created the Red Army from nothing, and criticised ‘the well-known English historian E. Carr’ for his claim, ‘which contradicts the real facts’, that Trotsky led military actions during the Civil War and created a new army with the help of former tsarist officers. But it then grudgingly admitted:

It is well-known that L. D. Trotsky was appointed to the post of People's Commissar for Military Affairs and subsequently also headed the Supreme Military Council after N. V. Krylenko had been freed by Sovnarkom from the post of Supreme Commander and People's Commissar for Military Affairs. Carrying out the assignments of the Central Committee of the RKP(b) [Russian Communist Party] during the years of Civil War, in leading the war department and the Revolutionary Military Council, Trotsky, as Vladimir Ilich [Lenin] noted, did much for the organisation of the Red Army and to attract military specialists to its service.

The interview went on to deal with Trotsky's faults as a war leader at considerable length, leaving an extremely negative impression of his activities as a whole.<sup>47</sup> We have already seen in Chapter 7, however, that Trotsky's unacknowledged ideas have played a significant role in recent Soviet discussions about the nature of Stalinism.

Lenin once remarked that there is no such thing as a 'sincerometer' by which the sincerity of a politician can be measured. Did Gorbachev already have a very critical view of the Stalin period when he took office, or did his views evolve under the pressure of events and of the views of his supporters? We do not know for certain. But it does seem clear that he changed his mind about the political importance of a radical re-evaluation of the past as the difficulties in the way of *perestroika* became more obvious. In his statements of January and February 1988 he openly stressed the intimate connection between history and *perestroika* (see above). Even more bluntly, Gorbachev's close associate Razumovsky explained in his speech on the occasion of the Anniversary of Lenin's birth in April 1988:

The party has initiated a sober examination of the post-October history of the country not least because many of our present troubles have their origins in yesterday's departures from the political, economic and moral principles of socialism. Learning the truth about history is difficult work, it stings many people to the quick. And some people generally did not want an honest discussion of the past. We are learning to see achievements and failures in a correct light, to evaluate objectively the contribution of all Soviet generations to the birth of Soviet society . . .

This work helps to clean the path to the future. The CPSU

[Communist Party of the Soviet Union] intends to continue it, keeping silent about nothing, not sweetening the truth, however bitter it may be.<sup>48</sup>

Gorbachev and his close associates, confronted with obstacles to wider *glasnost* and to the continuation of *perestroika*, on the whole followed the famous Stalinist principle of 'widening the bottleneck' rather than 'planning on the bottleneck'. Gorbachev is well aware that previous attempts at economic and political reform have foundered on the inertia from the past. This has also been his stance in international affairs, where he has made offer after offer and even concession after concession in order to keep the momentum of the negotiations going. In 1987 and the first months of 1988, Gorbachev moved to a firmer insistence on the public expression of a plurality of views, and tried (within certain limits) to prevent the re-emergence of what he called 'the practice of bans characteristic of the period of stagnation'. With fits and starts, the boundaries of historical discussion continuously widened.

# 11 The Politburo and Soviet History: the XIX Party Conference and After

The publication of the *Pravda* article on April 5 was a considerable victory for anti-Stalinism and for *glasnost'* (though sceptical Soviet citizens grumbled that the near-unanimity with which the article was greeted in public showed that the old methods were being continued for new purposes).

The victory of April 5 was soon followed by the announcement on April 22 – Lenin's birthday – of the 1988 Lenin prizes for literature, art and architecture. Only two were awarded, and one of these went to the film director Abuladze for his trilogy of which the profoundly anti-Stalinist allegorical film *Repentance* was the final instalment (the other was received by an unknown director and architect of a state farm).<sup>1</sup>

In the weeks preceding the party Conference the Soviet press discussed the Stalin period – and even some aspects of Lenin's policies – with unprecedented frankness. If readers consult the articles dated April–June 1988 in the notes to Chapters 2–9 of the present book they will easily confirm that a further major advance towards frankness occurred at this time. Thus in April 1988, for the first time in any Soviet publication, a writer described Stalin's Soviet Union as 'an ideal totalitarian state' (see Chapter 7). The irrepressible Yurii Afanas'ev, bemoaning that 'there is not and has never been in the world a people and a country with such a falsified history as ours', claimed that under the Stalin regime 'totalitarianism was called democracy, that which was not yet begun was said to be completed, and digging a pit was called storming heaven'.<sup>2</sup> It was also in April that Lenin's ban on factions in the party was openly criticised for the first time (see Chapter 8).

In May Soviet television presented the important historical film *Protsess* at the peak viewing time. The Russian word means both 'process' and 'trial', and the film frankly discussed both Stalinism and the public trials of the 1930s. It gave plenty of time to Academician

Tikhonov and his bitter hostility to collectivisation, and to Dzarasov's fundamental criticisms of the bureaucracy (see Chapters 3 and 7 above).

On June 13, the Supreme Court announced that it had annulled the sentences of the Zinoviev–Kamenev and Pyatakov–Radek trials of August 1936 and February 1937.<sup>3</sup> This meant that all the accused in all the major public trials of 1936–8 (with the exception of NKVD chief Yagoda) had now been declared innocent. As in the case of Bukharin, this ruling was followed by the publication of articles about Zinoviev, Kamenev and others which sometimes criticised their policies, but were friendly in tone. Zinoviev has always had a bad press both in the Soviet Union and in the West. Western publications have treated him as excessively garrulous, a bully in power, a turncoat out of power. I have long thought that it would be an interesting exercise to write a favourable essay about Zinoviev. This feat has now been accomplished in two articles by Soviet historians: 'Grigorii Zinoviev: Life and Struggle', by D. Shelestov, and 'Revolutionary, Theorist and Publicist', by I. Lisochkin.<sup>4</sup>

As the preparations for the XIX Conference got under way, it became clear, however, that the 'victory of April 5' was by no means unambiguous. On May 23, a Central Committee plenum approved theses for the Conference. Having called for the avoidance of 'political confrontation', the theses stated:

The party will systematically carry out a policy of frankness and openness, of free discussion of problems of past and present, because only such a policy will assist the moral health of Soviet society, the liberation of it from everything alien to its humanist nature.

We are far from indifferent to the question not only of the goals and values of socialism but also of the means of achieving them, the price which must be paid for them. It is our party and civic duty to rehabilitate those who became victims in the past of unjustified political accusations and lawlessness.<sup>5</sup>

These were rather mildly worded sentences as compared with the *Pravda* article of April 5, and made no specific mention of Stalin or Stalinism. In the last few weeks before the Conference, as the election of the delegates proceeded, it also became obvious that many reformist delegates were not being elected. Among the historians, Yurii Afanas'ev was appointed as a delegate only after a plenum of the Moscow party committee, with Gorbachev present, overruled

the vote of the lower party organisations. Gavriil Popov, the economist/historian, whom we have met several times in these pages, failed to be elected in spite of strong protests. But V. N. Kas'yanenko, the quite orthodox editor of the party history journal, was returned without difficulty.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately before the Conference both anti-Stalinists and conservatives were extremely active in the press. Yurii Afanas'ev, in a long hard-hitting article, suggested that what existed in the USSR was 'ownership according to function', which was a kind of private ownership. He condemned the failure to discuss Trotsky objectively, and the continued practice of assuming that Lenin 'knew how to answer every question', and also criticised Danilov.<sup>7</sup>

Within a few days of the appearance of Afanas'ev's article, it was vigorously attacked by Pobisk Kuznetsov. Significantly, this reply appeared in *Pravda*, which gave it a certain authority. Even more significantly, the central feature of Kuznetsov's reply was his alarming insistence that the question of the viability of the Bukharinist alternative had already been settled by Gorbachev's November 1987 report, so that Afanas'ev was advancing 'his own special [i.e. heretical] opinion'.<sup>8</sup>

The last issue of the literary newspaper published before the Conference clearly reflected the division of opinion about history. A long sketch by Zalygin, the editor of *Novyi mir*, satirised the whole Soviet social order from Stalin to the present day by describing an imaginary press-conference in which an imaginary 'Club of Insulted Billionaires' defended bureaucracy. In contrast the conservative novelist Yurii Bondarev, in his article 'Anger and Hope', complained bitterly that 'our past and our experience have never been so smeared with tar, there has never been such a self-regarding destruction of great traditions'. Bondarev insisted that 'in the 1980s not a single mortal being has the right to destroy the faith of the youth in the holiness of the military biography of the older generation, which was not lived through in vain even though victory was not always attained'.<sup>9</sup>

A few days before the Conference, which met from June 28 to July 1, Nina Andreeva resurfaced. She told the Yugoslav press agency that she had received thousands of letters of support, and she wrote to the Conference insisting that she had been in the right.<sup>10</sup>

In his opening report to the Conference, Gorbachev had nothing to say about the contentious issues of forced industrialisation and collectivisation, and the Bukharinist alternative.<sup>11</sup> Instead, in calling

for reform he frequently referred favourably to the need to base reform on 'Leninist norms'. Thus the economic reform had incorporated Lenin's proposals about cooperation. The reform of the soviets would be based on the post-1917 experience of a powerful Congress of Soviets and Central Executive Committee. The system of control would 'revive the fine tradition of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate of Lenin's time'.

Gorbachev's 'Leninist norms' are partly mythical. By the beginning of NEP the Congress of Soviets and the Central Executive Committee were already very weak bodies, while the Inspectorate was often arbitrary in its behaviour. These institutions, far from providing a model for present-day *perestroika*, played a significant part in the emergence of the Stalinist political system.<sup>12</sup>

Together with his strong if historically dubious emphasis on the continuity between the Lenin years and *perestroika*, Gorbachev made it abundantly clear that a complete break with the Stalinist political system was essential:

With the consolidation of the command-administrative system the atmosphere of party comradeship gradually gave way to relations based on orders and their execution, on the division of party members into bosses and subordinates, and on the violation of the principle of equality between communists. Although from time to time it was recognised that this situation was intolerable, in practice everything remained as it was.

In the debate which followed, two speakers presented strongly anti-Stalinist views. Mikhail Ul'yanov, the actor who frequently portrays Lenin, argued that the 'bitter and rather horrific story of the article by Nina Andreeva' was one of the recent attempts to order the people about and frighten them. 'Many were already standing to attention with their hands on their creases' (this was a reference to Churchill's alleged statement on Stalin cited by Andreeva), 'and waiting for the next orders'. D. I. Patiashvili, the first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, praised the film *Repentance*, and called for an analysis of Stalinism as well as of Stalin's personal role:

By attacking the cult of a single individual the totalitarian cult of the apparatus of power is retained. But the latter cult is equally pitiless in driving out critical thought and social intellect. It ferociously defends the administrative-command social formation

(*uklad*) of socialism, and imposes lack of supervision, connivance and stagnation, degenerating politics and morality.

However, many of the delegates were extremely hostile to the uncompromising condemnation of Stalinism which predominated in the press before the Conference. The editor of *Znamya*, Baklanov, met with great hostility in the hall, and Gorbachev had to intervene so that he could continue his speech. Delegates who described these events after the Conference were themselves unclear why this happened, and were uncertain whether the majority of delegates opposed him, or perhaps just a vociferous minority.<sup>13</sup>

The more orthodox delegates found a powerful voice in Yurii Bondarev, who fiercely condemned ‘nihilist criticism which is becoming or has already become a dominant force in the press’:

When I read in our press that the Russians did not have and do not have a territory, that sixty- and seventy-year-old war and labour veterans are potential opponents of *perestroika*, that it is time to exclude Sholokhov’s works from the school syllabus and replace them by *Children of the Arbat*, when I read that the journals *Nash sovremennik* and *Molodaya gvardiya* [journals with a Russian nationalist outlook – RWD] are introducing hatred into our genes . . . when the press tries to persuade me that stability is the worst possible evil (thus supporting disruption and chaos in the economy), that the writer Bulgakov was driven out of this world by the ‘leader’ [i.e., Stalin – RWD], and not by a group of critics and literary figures headed by Bill-Belotserkovsky, who demanded that a very talented competitor should be exiled abroad, when provocative scandals appear on the pages of *Ogonek*, seeking to bring about a split, stirring up the whole Moscow writers’ organisation against the journal *Moskva* [another nationalist journal – RWD], when I read that fascism apparently began in Russia and not in Italy, when I hear that General Vlasov, betraying his army by going over to the Germans, was fighting against Stalin and not the Soviet people – when I think about all this irresponsible stuff, I am not surprised, when I meet young people, by the profound cynicism, irony and a certain hopelessness which they display. And I think that one gram of faith is sometimes more valuable than any amount of experience of a wise man. (*Applause.*)

This view was also presented, in much milder language, by the first secretary of the Writers’ Union, Karpov, who criticised those who

want 'to cross out all the past with a single black cross'. B. M. Volodin, first secretary of the Rostov party regional committee, attacked *Ogonek* for publishing Soifer's articles on Lysenko (see Chapter 5), complaining that Soifer had recently emigrated from the Soviet Union. Volodin reminded the delegates that in 1922 Lenin condemned a journalist who had published a summary of the views of the renegade Parvus in *Izvestiya* as 'either a stupid fool or a Whiteguard', and demanded that the journalist should be dismissed.

The Ukrainian writer Boris Oleinik backed up Bondarev's Russian patriotism with a strong defence of Soviet-Ukrainian patriotism against those who 'cast doubt on everything the people have created'. But, unlike Bondarev, he also warned against the possibility of a revived cult of the individual:

So that this should never happen even in the remote future, I am instructed to recommend, to request, the publication at long last of a 'White Book' about those black times. This must expose to the very end with verbatim accuracy and precision not Stalin alone; it must also determine the guilt of each of those who surrounded him, and name the names not only of the victims, but also of those who thought up and carried out the illegal acts. (*Applause.*)

And since persecutions began in our republic long before 1937, it is also desirable to make public the causes of the famine of 1933, which took away the lives of millions of Ukrainians, to name the names of those whose guilt was responsible for this tragedy. (*Applause.*)

On the last day of the Conference, Ligachev joined in the debate. He condemned the 'complete distortion of the truth' which was appearing in some publications. He made it clear that he opposed the cult of the individual, pointing out that some of his own relatives had been executed or expelled from the party. But he did not mention Stalin. And he insisted that 'from the historical and the political and moral point of view it would be completely impermissible to forget, and it is not forgotten in the report, that after the October revolution in the course of decades millions of communists and working people gave their strength, their manhood and their lives precisely in the struggle for more socialism':

We know the heroic accomplishments of our people, in spite of the cult of the individual and the phenomena of stagnation, and I

fully and completely support in this respect the speeches of comrades Bondarev and Oleinik. (*Applause.*)

. . . Can we agree with the presentation – and this is in our own publications – of Soviet people as slaves, and I am almost quoting, who were supposedly fed only by lies and demagogy, the whole people being subject to the cruellest exploitation?

Following this attack on the press, Ligachev almost threateningly demanded that ‘the Central Committee and the editorial staffs must draw the proper conclusions’. He was particularly critical of *Moscow News*, which he described contemptuously as ‘a newspaper – I would like to call it something different’.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of the Conference Gorbachev was himself critical of the press. Early in the proceedings, in an exchange with Ul’yanov, he complained that ‘we see that little by little the monopoly of a new group of people wants to use the press as a national platform’, and called instead for ‘pluralism of opinions’. In his reply to the discussion, Gorbachev also urged journalists to ‘increase their responsibility for the printed word’ and ‘not to claim a monopoly of the truth’. But he strongly defended *glasnost*, without any concessions to those who had demanded that it should be limited. And in the last few minutes of his speech he made a startling proposal which had the effect of widening the bounds of *glasnost* still further:

There is one further question, comrades, which was raised on the eve of the Conference and at the Conference itself – the construction of a Memorial to the victims of the repressions. You probably remember that this was referred to in the concluding remarks at the XXII Congress of the party [by Khrushchev in 1961 – RWD], but there was no practical outcome. As that report stated, it is our political and moral duty to restore justice to the victims of lawlessness. Let us carry this out by constructing a Memorial in Moscow. I am convinced that this step will be supported by the whole Soviet people. (*Applause.*)

Khrushchev’s proposal was primarily intended to honour ‘outstanding figures’ in the party and state who had been victims of the repressions – he gave Chubar’, Kosior, Rudzutak, Postyshev, Eikhe, Voznesensky and Kuznetsov as examples, and these were all political leaders who had been supporters of Stalin. Gorbachev’s proposal went much further, as it referred simply to ‘victims of the repressions’ without distinction.

The campaign for a Memorial had been launched some time before by an 'Initiative Group for Commemorating the Victims of the Repressions of the 1920s–1950s', with the support of *Literaturnaya gazeta* and *Ogonek*. Following the Conference, in what was seen as 'a precedent for the new relations between society and the state', this group met with representatives of the two newspapers and of the Unions of Cinematographers, Architects and Theatre Workers to form the 'All-Union Historical-Educational Society "Memorial"' (the Writers' Union was conspicuously absent). The voluntary committee of the society, responsible for arranging for the Memorial, included the progressive writers Baklanov, Bykov, Rybakov and Shatrov, Academician Likhachev, Yurii Afanas'ev, the actor Mikhail Ul'yanov, and – a rather sensational development even in these days of sensations – Academician Sakharov and the formerly dissident historian Roy Medvedev.<sup>15</sup>

A competition for the design of the Memorial, which will be financed by voluntary subscription, is to be held in 1989. At the inaugural meeting, Rybakov proposed that the Memorial should not be located in Moscow alone, but 'in many towns, and also in Solovki, Kolyma, Mordovia and other places where people were incarcerated and sometimes exterminated':

The Memorial must be a permanent reminder to the people of what results from the concentration of power in single hands without supervision, what results from the deification of an individual.

The Memorial must be a permanent reminder to humanity that history does not leave any lawlessness unpunished, does not forget any evil, that no tyranny remains without exposure and condemnation.

The Memorial must remind every citizen: if he does not defend his neighbour and his colleague, or just any other human being, from lawlessness and arbitrariness, then in the end he will himself become their victim.<sup>16</sup>

While these preparations for a Memorial to the victims of the repressions were under way, another type of Memorial became extremely unpopular – the pompous War Memorials typical of Brezhnev's day, of which the most shocking is perhaps the huge expressionless heroine who disfigures the beautiful skyline at Kiev. In June the collapse of the competition for the design of a War Memorial in Moscow was announced under the headline 'The Time of Pompous Monuments has Past', and a writer proposed that it

should be replaced by a memorial centre on the lines of the *Invalides* in Paris or the Hiroshima memorial.<sup>17</sup> In Smolensk, a public meeting rejected a similar proposal for a War Memorial which would tower over the historic Uspenskii Cathedral. Meanwhile funds have been voluntarily collected for a modest Smolensk memorial to Vasiliï Terkin, the soldier-hero of Tvardovsky's famous poem.<sup>18</sup>

The naming of towns, districts and factories after the political leaders of the Stalin years is another contentious historical issue which began to be resolved after the XIX Conference. It will be remembered that in January 1988 Gorbachev dismissed as 'a thirst for sensations' the proposal that places named after Kalinin or Voroshilov should revert to their original names. But a few weeks after the XIX Party Conference the Soviet Cultural Fund set up a Council for Toponymy which approved a general proposal that the historical names should be restored to Soviet towns and other places.<sup>19</sup> The furious protests of the previous January now seemed to belong to a far-distant age. At the beginning of August a letter signed by Academician Likhachev, as president of the Cultural Fund, and by the chairman of the Council of Toponymy, proposed:

As a first step return to the map of our country the following historical names: Tver' (its name up to 1931) instead of Kalinin; Nizhnii Novgorod (up to 1932) instead of Gor'ky; Samara (to 1935) instead of Kuibyshev; Mariupol' (to 1948) instead of Zhdanov; Vyatka (to 1934) instead of Kirov; Lugansk (to 1935, and 1958–70) instead of Voroshilovgrad; Petergof instead of Petrodvorets; Gyandzha instead of Kirovobad.<sup>20</sup>

At this point another organisation sought to intervene. Members of the Interdepartmental Commission for Geographical Names, an official government agency attached to the Chief Administration for Geodesy and Cartography, complained that matters were being pushed through too hastily. Should the town of Zhdanov be renamed Mariupol', a name which was given to it in honour of Mariya Fedorovna, the wife of tsar Paul I?

This attempt to halt the progress towards restoring historical names is unlikely to be successful. The newspaper in which the complaints appeared sharply remarked that 'the Interdepartmental Commission even today has done nothing either in public or officially, and has not placed its views before the Supreme Soviet of the USSR'.<sup>21</sup>

The proposal from the Cultural Fund tactfully by-passed the sensitive political issue of the merits of these personages. But after

the party Conference it became accepted practice to criticise all Stalin's close associates. An article on Molotov, entitled 'The Shadow', described Kalinin as 'following those who were backed not by truth but by force', and scathingly condemned Khrushchev and Mikoyan for their support of the repressions:

Khrushchev and Mikoyan also had lists, names and people whose fate was decided by their signatures, they also exercised personal initiative, and how could they manage without it, what kind of leader was it who was not concerned with the Main Issue in a situation of continuously sharpening class struggle – the extermination of enemy nests, the rooting-out of enemies?<sup>22</sup>

Two further important steps in the weeks after the Conference further extended the boundaries of the anti-Stalinist campaign. On July 10, the Politburo Commission made the long-awaited announcement that the Party Control Commission had posthumously restored party membership to Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy (in spite of 'certain mistakes', and their 'special positions in relation to the roads and methods of socialist construction'), to Trotsky's close associate Rakovsky, and to other party members put on trial in March 1938 (except Yagoda).<sup>23</sup> On August 5 the Politburo commission further announced that the Supreme Court had legally rehabilitated the accused in several other trials, notably including the secret trials in 1932–3 and 1937 of Ryutin and others.<sup>24</sup> Encouraged by these documents, the reconsideration of Soviet history proceeded apace.

No legal moves towards the rehabilitation of Trotsky had been announced by September 1988. But Volkogonov, in an article about Trotsky unpromisingly entitled 'The Demon of the Revolution', and written in a hostile tone, presented Trotsky's whole career far more objectively than in any previous Soviet publication. Volkogonov's Trotsky was vain and high-handed and, like Stalin, hungry for power. But Volkogonov acknowledged that Trotsky had a fine intellect, and was by no means an entirely negative figure:

There are grounds for concluding that in the years of his active work for the party (1917–24) he was not an enemy of the revolution and socialism. But he was already then *an enemy of Stalin*. Trotsky must be given his due: he was not broken by Stalin's dictatorship, unlike many others. Until the end of his life he regarded Lenin with respect.<sup>25</sup>

While Volkogonov did not directly state in his article that Stalin was

responsible for the murder of Trotsky in 1941, he provided much circumstantial evidence to this effect.

After the party Conference, the debate about Yurii Afanas'ev's radical views continued in *Pravda*. On July 26, it published a reply by Afanas'ev to Pobisk Kuznetsov's pre-Conference article. Afanas'ev reiterated his earlier views, somewhat incoherently (his reply, dated July 1, was evidently written while the Conference, at which he was a delegate, was in progress; after receiving it, *Pravda* apparently sat on it for nearly four weeks). According to Afanas'ev:

Stalin abolished NEP, and turned the Bolshevik party into an order of sword-bearers (he did not do this alone, but at the head of a whole social stratum). . . I do not consider the society which has been established here to be socialist, not even 'deformed socialism'.

Afanas'ev's reply included a broad hint that Ligachev might resign. At the beginning of June, Ligachev had used the word 'someone' on several occasions when he attacked unnamed Soviet persons who were spreading rumours about disagreements in the Politburo.<sup>26</sup> Afanas'ev waspishly enquired: 'If now "someone" had to retire, to go on to personal pensions, would that be a return to Stalinist terror against Leninist party cadres? Or would retirement, as distinct from hard labour and death by shooting, be somehow compatible with people's power and normal political struggle?'

*Pravda*, in a move which is unusual these days, published an official editorial reply to Afanas'ev in the same issue, in heavy type. This reply must have been approved by Viktor Afanas'ev, the editor, and may well have been endorsed by a Politburo member. The reply strongly emphasised that the Soviet Union is 'a socialist system of society based on social ownership of the means of production'. And, against Yurii Afanas'ev's advocacy of 'alternatives to the choice made by the party at the end of the 1920s', it reiterated Kuznetsov's point that this issue had already been settled by the present party leadership in connection with the 70th Anniversary of the revolution. It complained that a major fault of Afanas'ev was that he 'does not bring to the fore the huge creative activity carried out by the people under the leadership of the party [in the 1930s, and 1940s], but sees repressions and crimes as the determining feature of development'.

This seemed to be an authoritative view. A few days later, however, a long article appeared in *Pravda* from I. Dedkov and Otto Latsis, political observer and first deputy editor of the party journal *Kommunist*.<sup>27</sup> Dedkov and Latsis began by criticising Afanas'ev's statement

that 'I do not consider the society which has been established here to be socialist', on the grounds that it failed to take into account 'the results of popular labour', achieved in spite of the system imposed by Stalin. But their conclusions differed even more sharply from those of the editors of *Pravda*. Dedkov and Latsis followed Afanas'ev in strongly defending the concept of alternatives. And they did not support the *Pravda* view that socialist *ownership* prevailed in the USSR. On the contrary, they argued that what had prevailed before *perestroika* were 'relations under which national wealth, formally socialised, has really been used as "nobody's" for everyone'. According to Dedkov and Latsis, what Lenin saw as the real advantage of socialism – work for oneself – still has to be introduced in practice in the USSR:

But in spite of the most serious deformations, socialism survived even in the most bitter time. It primarily lived in the consciousness and creative labour of the people, in its ideals and hopes. Thus the ideological and moral impulse of October was preserved, in spite of everything . . .

The majority of the people worked in the name of socialism at all times. That is why the country knows where it is going, and does not doubt that it is following the path of renewal and further development of democratic and humanist socialism.

The view that socialism continued to exist after the end of the 1920s only in the consciousness and labour of the people, and not in the form of ownership of the means of production, is quite different from that held by the editors of *Pravda*, or for that matter by any Soviet Communist before 1988 (at least in public). Dedkov and Latsis argue that the right course is between the two extremes of a conservatism which is inspired by Stalinism and an impatience which tries to whip events on unrealistically. But their radical analysis of Soviet history after 1929 leans more towards Yurii Afanas'ev than to Viktor Afanas'ev.

A month after the Conference, the differences in approach to Soviet history between different Politburo members were again expressed in public. At the Central Committee plenum of July 29, Gorbachev reported the results of the Conference with respect to history judiciously and carefully:

The delegates subjected the mistakes and crimes of the past to

sharp criticism, and also categorically rejected attempts to wipe out the historical achievements of the Soviet people.

But he also firmly stated that 'conservative tendencies and nostalgia for the past are as yet far from being overcome'.<sup>28</sup>

The speeches of several Politburo members made to party meetings after the plenum were reported in the press. On August 5, Ligachev, who devoted much of his address to the weaknesses of market economies, was slightly on the defensive about history, more or less repeating the balanced formula used by Gorbachev on July 29. But he significantly refrained from criticising what Gorbachev called 'nostalgia for the past'.<sup>29</sup>

Five days later, on August 10, A. N. Yakovlev, while also noting that 'we would be useless as communists if we forgot what has been achieved', placed this acknowledgment of positive features of the past in the context of a fundamental reappraisal of world history:

We are overcoming not only the sins of the recent and more remote past, but also the difficult historical inheritance of the whole of humanity, which has also been deposited in our social genes. People have been accustomed for centuries to offer external obedience to force and power.

Later in his speech Yakovlev condemned private property because it splits people and society asunder, but added that "'nobody's" property' (i.e., impersonal state ownership) 'is no less destructive'.<sup>30</sup>

On the following day, at a meeting in Lithuania with media representatives and intellectuals, a writer asked Yakovlev directly about the *Pravda* discussion:

[*M. Slutskis*] In order not to waste much time, I would like to ask you, Aleksandr Nikolaevich: what is your view of Afanas'ev's article in *Pravda* of July 26 and the comment on it?

*A. N. Yakovlev*: I will begin with the simplest issue. When the comment claims that there was no alternative in society when Stalinism occurred, that of course is out of order [*ne delo*]. What, no alternative? Why such a commitment to Stalinism? A well-known proposition, it sometimes goes the rounds. It was also expressed here, and it's impossible to agree with that.

Yakovlev then turned to Afanas'ev's article, and had no criticism of his views about Stalinism ('however you characterise the Stalin period, you won't find words for it'). He disagreed, however, with

Afanas'ev's view that *perestroika* at present was insufficiently socialist. Yakovlev also took the opportunity to praise Latsis, who had been dismissed in the Brezhnev period, and made clear his own view that until *perestroika* the Soviet Union had turned away from socialism:

Our main objective is to return socialist characteristics (*sotsialistichnost'*) to society and to socialism.<sup>31</sup>

Yakovlev thus relegated Soviet society before *perestroika* to the same category as the pre-Soviet class societies of the past, and presented *perestroika* as making it possible to return to socialism, and move to an entirely new phase in world history. But for Ligachev, the new phase in world history began in October 1917, and has never been fundamentally interrupted.

At the end of the following month, in his farewell speech to the Supreme Soviet, the veteran outgoing President, Andrei Gromyko, combined praise for *perestroika* with firm insistence that in spite of 'disruptions' in the past, 'the star of socialism has always been shining since October 1917'. But the assumption of the post of President by Gorbachev, and in the Politburo the transfer of Ligachev to responsibility for agriculture, together with other personnel changes, greatly strengthened the position of the more radical supporters of *perestroika*, and the more radical critics of the Stalinist past.<sup>32</sup>



**Part III**  
**Professional History**



# 12 The Professional Historians

With a few exceptions, Soviet historians were very slow to join in the reconsideration of history. The new publications about the Soviet past by writers and journalists flooded into the press from the beginning of 1987. But even critical historians like Danilov, Polikarpov and Samsonov published very little until the summer and autumn of 1987. Throughout 1987 the historical journals continued to plod their blinkered way along safe and well-worn paths. Major reforms in the history profession did not begin until 1988.

In the summer of 1987, a Soviet writer was therefore able to proclaim with pride that literature had overtaken the historians in quenching the thirst of millions for the truth about all the country had lived through. He compared literature to the infantry, 'heroically overcoming the obstacles in front of it without waiting for the arrival of the main forces'.<sup>1</sup> The senior historian Yurii Polyakov agreed that 'the writers have long since overtaken the historians in posing sharp questions'.<sup>2</sup>

There are five main centres of authority in the Soviet history profession.

First, overriding control is in the hands of the Department for Science and Educational Establishments of the Central Committee, which overlooks history on behalf of the party.

Secondly, the Institute of Marxism–Leninism, the main party research establishment, has a substantial sector for party history, and supervises similar republican and local institutes; it is also responsible for the all-important central party archives. It is associated with the party Academy of Social Sciences which may also carry out substantial research on party history, but with very little publicity.

Thirdly, the History Division of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, itself part of the Social Sciences Sector of the Academy, manages historical research within the Academy. The History Division of the Academy contains all those full and corresponding members of the Academy who are historians; these gentlemen exercise considerable personal influence on decisions about historical

research, particularly that conducted within the Academy. The major Academy research institute concerned with pre-revolutionary and Soviet history is the prestigious Institute of the History of the USSR.

Fourthly, the state archives (quite separate from the party archives) are the responsibility of the State Archive Administration of the USSR (GAU), the head of which is a non-voting member of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

Finally, it must be noted that the mass of practising historians themselves play a varying but considerable part in the decisions about their own activities. This was true even in the days of Brezhnev (and to some extent even in the days of Stalin). Historians of high intellectual quality and achievement who are well-regarded by their Western colleagues have high prestige in the USSR, and are often taken seriously even by bureaucrats.

As far as the study of XX-Century history is concerned, all five 'centres of authority' were demoralised, ossified, or even actively reactionary in the decade or so before 1985 (see Chapter 1). Independent-minded historians were in low spirits.

The first significant new appointment in the field of history was made towards the end of 1986, when Yurii Afanas'ev was appointed as Rector of the State Historical Archive Institute. This was at that time a quite minor higher educational establishment, responsible for the training of archivists.

In his inaugural address to the Institute, Afanas'ev launched a far-reaching campaign for radical thinking about Soviet history.<sup>3</sup> This aroused much hostility among more orthodox historians. F. M. Vaganov, the head of the State Archives Administration, and himself the author of a well-known history of the Right deviation, phoned *Moscow News* and told them that publishing Afanas'ev's address was a mistake. The editors invited him to express his own views in the paper, but he failed to do so. Three months later, however, a letter was brought to the paper signed by four minor historians occupying chairs of party history, with the statement that the text had been agreed with Vaganov (who had not signed the letter). The letter from the minor historians was a fierce and tedious defence of old-fashioned orthodoxy, and was rather contemptuously rebutted in a reply by Afanas'ev.<sup>4</sup> Note that the higher education establishment headed by Afanas'ev trains archivists for the State Archive Administration headed by Vaganov.

Afanas'ev is himself a specialist not on Soviet history but on the *Annales* school of French history, as more orthodox historians have

frequently pointed out. In his struggle to open up the discussion, he organised a series of lectures, mainly by historians specialising on the Soviet period. On March 27, 1987, the first lecture, by Borisov, was attended by a huge crowd; and two weeks later, on April 13, Borisov lectured again in the Central House of Literature. This second lecture was followed by a remarkable discussion, widely reported in the Western press. The discussion was not reported in the Soviet press, but an apparently reliable transcript of it was published in an emigre Russian-language newspaper in Paris.<sup>5</sup> During the discussion D. G. Yurasov, a 22-year old student, told the meeting that he had worked in the Central Archives of the October Revolution and in the special archive of the Supreme Court and the Military Collegium, and reported the remarkable data he had found there:

There is a confidential letter from Gorkin, then chairman of the Supreme Court of the USSR, addressed to Khrushchev. It is signed by Gorkin himself and by the head of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court General-Lieutenant Borisoglebskii. In this letter they report that from 1953 to 1957 inclusive about 600,000 people were rehabilitated. They are divided as follows: Military Tribunals rehabilitated about 200,000 people approximately, I don't remember the exact figure; regional, territorial and other courts also rehabilitated about 200,000 people; the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court about 48,000; plenums of the Supreme Court, etc. are also listed, a total for 1963–7 of 612,500 people, this is absolutely precise. *Eidelman* [chairman of the meeting]: Posthumously? *Yurasov*: Simply rehabilitated, both posthumously and still alive. The Military Collegium rehabilitated 31,000 condemned to the supreme sentence, i.e. executed by shooting. From 1935–40 the Military Collegium condemned a total of 50,000 people. In 1953–7 it rehabilitated 48,000, including 31,000 who had been executed.

Yurasov also supplied the meeting with other previously unknown information. He reported that all anti-Soviet crimes from 1929 onwards were recorded in a card index of the 1st special department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, to which he had not had access. He gave horrifying details of the torture of the great Soviet theatre director Meyerhold; his left arm was broken and he was forced to drink urine. He confirmed that Beriia was not executed immediately he was deposed, but on December 23, 1953, after a trial for rape as well as other crimes. Yurasov himself has a personal card

index of 80,000 people who had been 'repressed', and has been collecting the data for nearly ten years (i.e., since the age of twelve!). He warned the audience that essential materials were fast disappearing. Materials from the end of the 1930s 'have already been partly destroyed, because the period for preservation has expired'; moreover, 'it was decided to transfer later material to the KGB, because there was nowhere to store it'.

Astonished by this impromptu speech, Borisov, the official lecturer, admitted that Yurasov 'knows much more than I do and, I expect, more than anyone else in the hall; I am very grateful to him'. Yurasov, asked after the meeting 'aren't you afraid, young man, that your sincerity won't do you any good?' replied 'Well, it will become clear whether a *perestroika* has really begun, or whether it's merely words again!'<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, major changes in personnel had taken place in the Institute of Marxism–Leninism. In January 1987, G. L. Smirnov was appointed Director, and shortly afterwards V. V. Zhuravlev was appointed as a deputy director with responsibility for history. On April 29, 1987, two weeks after the celebrated Borisov lecture at which young Yurasov intervened, and following Yakovlev's report to the Academy of Sciences (see Chapter 10), a 'round table' was held at the Institute which placed it at the forefront of cautious moves to greater openness among professional historians. Among others, Afanas'ev, Volobuev and Danilov took part: the participation of these three heretics at the Institute's invitation was in itself a remarkable event. Zhuravlev, in the chair, while firmly warning against too sweeping a rejection of the past, called for a 'profound examination' of the 1930s, and a fresh approach to the 'cult of the individual' different from that of the Khrushchev period.<sup>7</sup> A similar balanced or 'centrist' line was taken by V. A. Grigor'ev, the new head of the influential Department of Science and Education Establishments of the Central Committee. At this time Zhuravlev also sought to attract progressive historians to his staff from other institutes, and gave the impression to foreign visitors that he was an enthusiastic reformer.

But the efforts of the Institute to spearhead the drive for *glasnost* in Soviet history were, it is said, met unsympathetically by Ligachev. And in the main historical establishments in the Academy of Sciences no change whatsoever had taken place. In an interview in March, Afanas'ev pointed out that S. P. Trapeznikov's cronies remained in place:

Some of them continue today to 'lead' historical science and untiringly call for 'bold initiatives and discussions'. At the session of the History Division of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR Corresponding Member P. V. Volobuev named some of these people and sharply criticised the state of our historical science. But his voice was quite a lonely one. On the other hand, some administrators issue calls 'not to hurry with *perestroika*'.<sup>8</sup>

This unsatisfactory situation was to continue for many months. The division between the more orthodox and the more critical became increasingly sharp during the summer of 1987. In May, the historian S. V. Tyutyukhin argued that there was a 'serious gap between the interest of our people in history, which is growing and continues to grow, and the ability of professional historians to satisfy this interest'. He recommended that an all-Union conference of historians should be called, the first for 25 years, and urged the publication of a popular historical journal and the establishment of a Historical Society of the USSR. He also proposed that older historians should be granted higher pensions and make way for younger ones. This article appeared in the newspaper *Izvestiya*, the first time that the subject had been brought before such a large audience.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, the Director of the Institute of Party History attached to the Ukrainian Central Committee, in an article in the Ukrainian party newspaper, rebutted and strongly attacked Yurii Afanas'ev, singling out his use of the phrase 'the Stalinist period (*epokha*)' to describe the 1930s, pointing out that this 'contradicts scientific concepts of the essence of revolutionary transformations in our country expressed in the programme documents of the party and realised in practice'. He also objected to proposals to review the decisions of the 1930s against M. Hrushevsky and other Ukrainian historians, and to republish their work.<sup>10</sup>

A few weeks later the deputy director of the same Institute, while making some criticisms of Afanas'ev and Burlatsky, took an entirely different line. He called for a thorough re-examination of the role of Bukharin by historians, and strongly criticised historians for lagging behind the writers by failing to undertake a serious analysis of the personality and activity of Stalin.<sup>11</sup>

The division among historians was particularly evident when the discussion about Afanas'ev's outspoken views resumed in July 1987. In an article in the newspaper *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, entitled 'Do Not Idealise but Do Not Dramatise', F. M. Vaganov and A. N. Ponomarev

complained that Afanas'ev and his sympathisers, 'on the pretext of *perestroika*, propose as a priority task re-examination and re-thinking of the whole history of the Communist Party and of Soviet society', and claimed that in fact the party programme was carried out 'firmly and faithfully by the party both during V. I. Lenin's life and in all subsequent stages of our history'. They indignantly repudiated Afanas'ev's view that 'thinking ceased for twenty years', pointing out that 'over ten thousand learned works' (!) were published by historians in this period, including numerous large collective works.

The article by Vaganov and Ponomarev offered some specific criticisms of the interpretation of the 1917 revolution advocated by Volobuev, I. F. Gindin and others, and admitted that there were 'weaknesses and faults' in historical studies. But it failed to express its point of view on any of the specific issues of Soviet history which are now so widely discussed in the USSR. Instead, in an astonishing abdication of the responsibility of historians for their own calling, the authors argued that the main fault of Soviet historians was their failure to understand present-day society, and even recommended 'a fundamental *perestroika* of research':

All social scientists should for a time leave their studies and travel to collective farms, state farms, industrial enterprises, soviets, schools . . . and study the processes of revolutionary transformation which are taking place.<sup>12</sup>

The editors of the newspaper evidently lack any sympathy for Vaganov and Ponomarev, and they elicited a vigorous reply from G. Volkov. This deplored the ignorance of Soviet history among the young, giving the example of a student who knew nothing about Stalin's police-chief Beriia. Volkov reminded his readers of the legend of the young slaves, related by the Kirgiz author Chingis Aitmatov. The heads of the slaves were shaved and covered with a tight cap made of fresh skin from the udder of a camel. When the skin dried out, the cap tightened, the slaves suffered torments in the baking sun, and if they lived they lost their memories for ever, could not even remember their tribe or their clan, and became stupid, hard-working and absolutely obedient.<sup>13</sup>

The Vaganov-Ponomarev article also attracted a whole page of readers' letters. Two letters from a carpenter and a 'veteran of labour' supported Vaganov-Ponomarev, but fourteen criticised them. A policeman on behalf of his colleagues criticised other policemen who were nostalgic about the days of Beriia when everything was decided

quickly and there was no-one the public could complain to. One correspondent rudely recommended that Vaganov and Ponomarev should take their own advice, leave their studies and go to collective farms – ‘but not for a time, for ever!’.<sup>14</sup>

The division among historians was reflected at this time in the great variation in the frankness of Soviet biographical articles by historians about leading personalities on the occasion of their anniversaries. Some articles, while containing interesting material, followed convention in carefully avoiding critical periods and events: see for example, the full-page biography of the senior economic official V. I. Mezhlauk (1893–1938), which hardly hinted at any criticism of Soviet economic policy of the 1930s, and did not even mention that Mezhlauk was ‘repressed’.<sup>15</sup> Newspaper articles by historians on major events of Soviet history often also displayed a similar blandness; an example was the feature on industrialisation which occupied a whole page of *Pravda* in July 1987, and included an article by the usually thoughtful historian V. Lel’chuk (jointly with A. Kolesnichenko).<sup>16</sup>

Other publications by historians appearing at this time were far more critical in their approach. The most remarkable was by the military historian V. Polikarpov, one of the scholars from the Institute of the History of the USSR who was in great difficulties during the reign of Trapeznikov. In the popular illustrated magazine *Ogonek* Polikarpov published a long article on the career of F. F. Raskol’nikov (1892–1939), revolutionary hero, who refused to return from Paris to Moscow in 1938–9 and died under somewhat mysterious circumstances in a Paris hospital in September 1939.<sup>17</sup> Raskol’nikov was posthumously rehabilitated by the Supreme Court on July 10, 1963, and articles about him then appeared in the Soviet press at that time after over two decades of silence.<sup>18</sup> After Khrushchev’s fall, at a social science conference on September 5, 1965, S. P. Trapeznikov accused Raskol’nikov of ‘always being an active Trotskyist ideologically’, attacked him for failing to return from abroad, and denounced him as ‘a traitor who collaborated with Whiteguard and fascist filth’. Raskol’nikov was in effect ‘unrehabilitated’ for a further 20-year period.

Polikarpov’s article on Raskol’nikov sympathised with his decision to remain abroad and justified the appearance of his famous ‘Open Letter to Stalin’ in the emigre press on the grounds that Raskol’nikov merely handed his letter to the French press agency Havas, and the emigre press chose to reproduce it. Polikarpov reproduced extensive passages from Raskol’nikov’s letters to Stalin of October 18, 1938,

and October 17, 1939. In the second letter Raskol'nikov attacked the trials of 1937–8 as 'surpassing medieval witch-trials', and denounced Stalin for 'compelling your followers to wade, in anguish and disgust, through pools of blood shed by their comrades'. Stalin was accused of disrupting the Red Army, depriving 'the writer, the scholar and the artist of even the minimum of inner freedom':

Your crazy bacchanalia cannot last for long. The list of your crimes is endless. The list of your victims is endless, they cannot be enumerated. Sooner or later the Soviet people will put you in the dock as a traitor to socialism and the revolution, the chief wrecker, a real enemy of the people, the organiser of famine and judicial forgeries.<sup>19</sup>

In some important respects the article is circumspect in its citations from Raskol'nikov's letter. It omits his accusation that Stalin had destroyed the party, and his swingeing attack on the 'enslavement' of Soviet factory workers. It does not tell us that Raskol'nikov impugned Stalin for making 'privileged groups' the social basis of his power, or that he denounced Stalin's socialism as 'just as remote from real socialism as the tyranny of your personal dictatorship is without anything in common with the dictatorship of the proletariat'.<sup>20</sup> But in spite of these omissions the publication of this letter in a popular magazine with a circulation of 1,500,000 copies was an extraordinary move towards frankness.

The new possibilities for professional historians to enter previously forbidden territory were further revealed by articles published in the weeks following the July 1987 plenum. At the end of July, the literary newspaper published an interview with Yurii Polyakov.<sup>21</sup> Polyakov, author of an outstanding study of the transition from War Communism to NEP published in 1967,<sup>22</sup> transferred his personal research to historical demography and other topics in the 1970s, and for understandable reasons failed to publish any substantial work on mainstream Soviet history. In his interview he called for much greater frankness – the historian 'must not in any case avoid sharp problems, round off corners, or knowingly write untruths or half-truths'. Polyakov claimed that 'the failure of historians to publish objective studies has left the field open for widely-read literary publications which harm historical education by their lack of concepts, numerous factual mistakes, primitivism and vulgarisation of the past'. He called for much less caution on the part of editors of historical journals, whose practice had been to 'remove everything at all doubtful', and

in a striking passage anticipated a great widening of historical debate:

It seems to me that most scholars are of one mind in realising history must extend its boundaries, and are ready to remove the cap of invisibility from the facts of the past. Only the sleepest retrogrades are against this. Dogmatists are still quite powerful, and as before see their main task as paraphrasing and superficially commenting on party documents. On the other hand, critics who doubt almost every achievement of Soviet power are more and more active. I have no doubt that with the frank expression of views – which previously did not exist in practice – the polarisation of views will increase. The main discussions are ahead.

The most important event in the historical profession in the last months of 1987 was undoubtedly the publication of the three increasingly critical articles about the collectivisation of agriculture by Danilov between August and November. These articles were reviewed in Chapter 4.

In spite of these significant straws in the wind, the academic establishment in history remained unreformed, and very little of interest about the Soviet period appeared in historical journals. Academician Fedoseev, veteran head of the Social Sciences Sector of the Academy, Academician Tikhvinskii, head of the History Division, Dr S. S. Khromov, Director of the Institute of History and a former party official, and the editors of the major historical journals all remained in their posts.

The election of six full and ten corresponding members to the History Division of the Academy of Sciences in December 1987 resulted in the consolidation of the conservative bloc. Members of the Academy are elected in the first instance by the appropriate Division of the Academy, subject to confirmation by the General Meeting of all Academicians. Outstanding candidates specialising in XX-Century history who failed to be elected included Volobuev and Polyakov, candidates for full membership, and Arutunyan, Danilov, Drobizhev and Shkaratan, candidates for corresponding membership. On the other hand several far less well-qualified historians of the Soviet period were elected: thus Kukushkin (long-standing Dean of the History Faculty of Moscow University) became a full member and Kas'yanenko (editor of the party journal *Voprosy istorii KPSS*) a corresponding member.<sup>23</sup> Kukushkin and Kas'yanenko are long-standing administrators, and some Soviet historians speak favourably of their administrative activity. But their writings on Soviet history

are orthodox and without originality. Soviet historians have unkindly joked that the old Academicians elected such a feeble cluster of new Academicians so that there would be someone worse than they were who would be thrown out when *perestroika* eventually reached the Academy.

But, a little late in the season, the ice was now beginning to crack. In the autumn of 1987 Danilov was elected head of the Soviet peasantry sector of the Institute of the History of the USSR, the post which he had been forced to relinquish at the end of the 1960s. And in mid-winter came an unexpected thaw. On January 7, 1988, a meeting of the bureau of the History Division of the Academy of Sciences discussed a report from Khromov about the progress of *perestroika* in the Institute of the History of the USSR. This was an 'extended sitting' of the bureau, attended by historians of various viewpoints, and by the new deputy head of the Science and Education Department of the Central Committee, V. V. Ryabov. Ryabov was particularly critical of Khromov's report:

This report contains more data about plans for the future in connection with *perestroika* than about real achievements at the present day. It remains unclear why historical science permits itself a substantial lag . . . and why the Institute does not cultivate the development of scientific schools and approaches which differ from each other in their creative approach, while being unified in their Marxist-Leninist methodology. Historical science owes a large debt to the Soviet public.<sup>24</sup>

On the following day, January 8, a round table of leading historians under the auspices of *Voprosy istorii* discussed the future of Soviet history. Strong criticisms were made of scholars who had established a monopoly or near-monopoly control of branches of history. The published version of the round table reported fierce attacks on the mediaeval historian Academician Rybakov.<sup>25</sup> Apparently Academician Kukushkin was also strongly criticised.

Two weeks later, on January 21, what was described as a 'general meeting' of the History Division of the Academy also heard Khromov's report. In a long resolution it criticised the backwardness of the Institute of the History of the USSR, and blamed the management of the Academic Council of the Institute for failing to encourage new research and new approaches. The resolution confirmed an earlier decision that the famous banned book on collectivisation should be revised as a two-volume work for publication in 1990 and 1991 by

the five original authors under Danilov's editorship. It also called for the re-examination of the "portfolio" of completed works by researchers in the Institute which were rejected in their day for reasons not related to their scientific level'.<sup>26</sup>

By now a revolutionary *perestroika* was under way. The old editor of the principal history journal, *Voprosy istorii*, had resigned in the summer of 1987, but his post was vacant for three months. By January 1988 A. A. Iskenderov, a respected and reform-minded historian of pre-revolutionary Russia, had been appointed editor.<sup>27</sup> The new editorial board of 23 persons contains only five names from the old board, and is fairly reform-oriented.<sup>28</sup> New members of the board include Volobuev and Danilov.

By the beginning of 1988 Khromov, Director of the Institute, had reached retirement age, and was not allowed to stay on. Following the new principles of democratisation, the History Division of the Academy balloted the staff of the Institute about the two candidates, Novosel'tsev and Sherstobitov. Both candidates promised to identify themselves with the interests of the collective. Novosel'tsev, a distinguished historian of Ancient Rus', who had no connection with the existing establishment of the Institute, received the majority of votes. Under the new as under the old Academy rules, the History Division of the Academy (i.e., its conservative-minded Academicians) has the ultimate right to appoint the Directors of its institutes, much to the indignation of many research workers.<sup>29</sup> But it evidently thought it prudent to accept the democratic vote.

Further remarkable changes followed. Perhaps the most notable event before the Party Conference was the publication in *Voprosy istorii* of a six-page letter from Danilov entitled "The Discussion in the Western Press on the Famine of 1932–1933 and the "Demographic Catastrophe" of the 30s and 40s in the USSR'.<sup>30</sup> This reviewed the whole discussion of the famine in the Western literature, including the estimates of Conquest and Rosefielde as well as Wheatcroft, Anderson and Silver. It firmly rejected Conquest's estimate that 7 million died of starvation in 1932–3, and cautiously favoured an estimate that 3 million died. But Danilov frankly admitted that his view must be provisional because Soviet scholars have not worked on the demographic problems of the 1930s and 1940s; he commented bitterly that in consequence of such scandalous omissions Soviet history has a 'deservedly low' reputation both in the USSR and abroad. When this research was at last undertaken by Soviet historians, Danilov argued, the 'experience and results of the research

carried out by our colleagues and our opponents abroad must be taken into account and utilised'. He also envisaged the prospect of 'joint scientific discussion and joint search for truth between historians of different schools (*napravleniya*) even in such a sensitive and political matter'.

In spite of such developments, a great deal has yet to be done to complete the *perestroika* of the history profession. All the conservative Academicians, and the editors of all the other historical journals, except *Voprosy istorii*, still remained in place at the time of the XIX Party Conference. And there is a great shortage of trained young historians of the Soviet period: in the 1970s independent-minded students went into other disciplines, or at best into other periods. The general problems facing *perestroika* in the Soviet Union are particularly sharply reflected in the Soviet history profession.

While the battles are continuing, all historians are agreed that the restrictions on access to archives constitute a major obstacle to serious research. On December 9, 1986, a joint session of the bureau of the Division of History of the Academy and the Collegium of the State Archive Administration was attended by Vaganov. A resolution pointed to 'many difficulties and unresolved issues', including 'difficulty for researchers in access to archival funds', agreed to specific measures, and also agreed that the fulfilment of the resolution would be examined at a further joint session in 1988.<sup>31</sup>

Some improvements have occurred. While British scholars are still not allowed to consult the catalogues (*opisi*) relating to the Soviet period, and depend on Soviet archivists to supply a limited range of files on their topics, access to material on the Soviet period has improved since as early as 1981, particularly after the archival protocol signed in March 1984 between the State Archive Administration and the British Academic Committee for Liaison with Soviet Archives.<sup>32</sup> *Glasnost'* in the 1980s, like de-Stalinisation in the 1950s, does not have a simple chronology applicable to every aspect of Soviet policy.

For Soviet scholars the main improvements have occurred in 1987 and 1988. In the libraries the state censorship organisation Glavlit has already moved over half the books in the 'special reserves (*spetsfondy*)' into general library stores; this includes the writings of Kerensky, Milyukov, Bukharin and Rykov (but apparently not of Trotsky); and henceforth all Ph.Ds have the right to work in the special reserves.<sup>33</sup> Some documents in the central state archives have

been removed from restricted access.<sup>34</sup> The detailed records of the suppressed population census of 1937 and the partly-published census of 1939 are also being released for the use of Soviet scholars. Records of the secret trials and interrogations of persons arrested in the 1930s and 1940s have been made available to the special Politburo Commission investigating the repressions. And the archives of the Communist International have recently been opened 'for the party'.<sup>35</sup>

But, even in the summer of 1988, the all-important records in the state archives of the Council of People's Commissars and its commissions apparently remained closed. In the party archives the records of the Politburo and other leading party bodies remained largely inaccessible. Such important government departments as the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the OGPU also kept their archives firmly barred, even to senior historians.<sup>36</sup> The popular journal *Ogonek* pointed out that it had to confine itself to publishing reminiscences from survivors of the repressions because the answers to the important questions 'are so far still gathering dust in interdicted archives'.<sup>37</sup> Here is a strange paradox of *glasnost*'. Both Gorbachev and the more conservative members of the Politburo frequently call for a careful, detailed and objective study of the 1930s and 1940s, avoiding sensationalism. But without a much greater access to the archives this is impossible.

# 13 The Crisis in History Teaching

In the Soviet Union history is taught in schools on the basis of a standard syllabus and standard series of textbooks in each of the fifteen republics. 'Fifty million pupils are being taught', an educationalist complained, 'and for every group and every year there is one single textbook'.<sup>1</sup> In higher education establishments, the main courses also follow standard textbooks on general and Soviet history and the history of the Communist Party.

The history of the Russian Empire in the XX Century, and of the Soviet Union, is taught in the top two forms – now forms X and XI – to seventeen-year olds. The current syllabus and textbook were approved in 1986, and are on strictly orthodox lines. Following Brezhnevite principles, Stalin's name appears only once in two substantial pages of the syllabus for the Soviet period, and then simply in a list of leading figures. The years 1926–37 are designated 'The Struggle to Put the Leninist Plan for the Construction of Socialism in the USSR into Practice'.<sup>2</sup>

The two textbooks for the top forms, in which Academician Kukushkin played a major part, together with Dr Sherstobitov, elaborate the syllabus along equally orthodox lines.<sup>3</sup> The latest edition of the textbook for form IX (now form X) appeared in 1986, and was published in 3,890,000 copies. It covers Russian and Soviet history from 1900 to 1937. Following a long-established pattern, it enthuses about the collectivisation of agriculture, the elimination of the kulaks as a class, and other policies of the Stalin period. It has nothing whatsoever to say about the decline in agricultural production in the early 1930s, the famine of 1932–3, or the Ezhovshchina. And as for the former kulaks, they were 'settled in special settlements in the new places where they lived', 'they were all provided with work, and the legal status of the settlers was regulated'. The book has only ten lines about Stalin, 'a great theoretician and organiser', who 'later made a number of serious mistakes'. Critics of party policy are grossly misrepresented. Thus in the 1920s Trotsky's proposed economic plan 'in the last resort was designed to turn our country into an agrarian

and raw-material appendage of industrially developed countries', while Bukharin's agricultural policy was 'an attempt to disrupt our advance on the road to socialism'.

The textbook for form X (now form XI), covering Soviet history between 1938 and 1982, follows similar lines. Its best feature is a lively though quite uncritical account of the war. It includes twenty lines of criticism of Stalin taken from the June 1956 resolution of the party Central Committee.

The textbooks for the republics are apparently just as bad. According to a Belorussian writer, the history text for his republic fails to mention many major Belorussian figures from the XVI Century to the 1930s. He points out that 'for an absolute majority of citizens historical memory begins with the school textbook, so it is not at all surprising that the majority of the population of Belorussia have, to put it mildly, an indistinct concept about the past of their native region'.<sup>4</sup>

This criticism is relatively mild. Speaking about school history textbooks generally, an educationalist complained that 'they give a false treatment and false conception of historical development; it is not merely because they are full of resounding fanfares, but also because they contain only the result and not the process, they are absolutely dogmatic, they do not reason, they do not discuss alternatives'.<sup>5</sup> According to an *Izvestiya* correspondent, school history teaching has 'deluded generation after generation, poisoning their minds and souls with lies'.<sup>6</sup> Yurii Afanas'ev declared with his usual acerbity that 'you will not find a single page that is not falsified' in the school textbook on the history of the USSR; 'the whole textbook is a lie, with which teachers are compelled to stuff young heads'.<sup>7</sup>

The traditional presentation of Soviet history is reinforced by the Russian literature course. Here the set book by Mikhail Sholokhov is his classic about collectivisation, which identifies with those enforcing collectivisation and dekulakisation (see Chapter 4 above). The set book on the second world war is Aleksandr Fadeev's *The Rout*, in which the author approves the albeit painful decision of a guerrilla leader to poison a wounded partisan in order to save the detachment.<sup>8</sup> Both the morality and the political line of these novels are nowadays rejected by many Soviet citizens.

Higher education textbooks and syllabuses suffer from similar defects. Afanas'ev claimed that 'higher education textbooks are the same [as the school textbooks], especially on Soviet and party history; in recent decades we have hardly moved conceptually beyond the

boundaries of the Stalinist *Short History of the CPSU(b)*.<sup>9</sup> Until very recently the old concepts reigned undisturbed in the responsible education offices in Moscow. On April 1, 1988, a document was approved for circulation in 700,000 copies entitled 'Rules for Acceptance and Syllabus of Entrance Examinations for Candidates for Entry into Higher Educational Establishments in the USSR in 1988'. Its section on the socialisation of agriculture advised students to prepare to answer questions on 'the strengthening of the policy of limiting and driving out the kulaks' and on the 'obdurate resistance of the kulaks to collectivisation'. Its topics for the 1930s also included 'the intensification of the class struggle in the towns', 'the development of Soviet democracy' and 'the flourishing of Soviet literature and art; the struggle with hostile ideology'. An article criticising this syllabus was headed 'An April Fool Joke?'<sup>10</sup>

The revelations and controversies about history have aroused great interest among students and even among school pupils. We have already noted the huge crowds of students attending special lectures on Stalinism in the spring of 1987. Such knowledge gained outside the official syllabus has caused great tension between students and their lecturers. Students, writes a senior Moscow university teacher, 'acquire information on their subject not only from lectures and seminars but also, and to a considerable extent, from newspapers and scholarly, political and literary journals. This information often outstrips the spoken word of the teacher'.<sup>11</sup> Students criticise lecturers for failing to deal with such subjects as the famine.<sup>12</sup> They raise all the major historical controversies dealt with in the press and on television, and demand to be given the opportunity to read about the party disputes in primary sources rather than in selected quotations. 'Teachers are in despair', the literary newspaper reported, 'students don't know how to answer exam questions on party history'.<sup>13</sup>

School history is in similar disarray. Yurii Afanas'ev, writing the lead article in the young communist newspaper on the first day of the 1987/88 school year, pointed out that there had long been a gap between 'the truth which the young generations learn from their fathers and grandfathers' and the 'present traditions of teaching history', but this gap had been considerably widened by the publication of major new literary works on Soviet history. He cited a letter he had received from a tenth-former in Kursk, who listed the 'blank spaces' which he was trying to fill up for himself. Afanas'ev argued that the divergence between 'accepted history' and 'history in the home' led to 'spiritual torture and moral trauma'. Children often

left school with the attitude that you shouldn't believe anyone.<sup>14</sup>

Afanas'ev's assessment was confirmed by other sources. The Soviet school is in an 'extremely complex situation', explained a Moscow history teacher, appealing in the principal scholarly history journal for systematic information.<sup>15</sup> According to a member of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences:

From the ground floor you can see that historical consciousness, historical education in schools, is in a serious crisis. And one shouldn't close one's eyes to this, because every year two-and-a-half million proud possessors of historical knowledge which has been sent down from on high are leaving school . . .

Three years ago we all seemed to be standing on one side of the barricades . . . But then we reached 1988. The smoke dispersed, and it turned out that it wasn't a barricade at all but an immense obstruction.<sup>16</sup>

Lecturers and teachers have reacted to the crisis in different ways. Some eagerly seek to incorporate the new knowledge and outlook in their teaching in spite of the syllabus. One Soviet professor was heard to say after seeing the film *Repentance* that he was going to make big changes in his lectures on the 1930s. Others blunder along as best they can. But others insist on sticking to the old ways. A schoolteacher told her class that she would give a reduced mark to anyone who spoke unfavourably about Stalin.<sup>17</sup> And in the prestigious Moscow Physical-Technical Institute lectures on history have moved sharply in the direction of anti-semitic Russian nationalism: the troubles of collectivisation were blamed on Trotsky, Kaganovich and Yagoda (who were all Jews) rather than on Stalin. When the young communists at the Institute invited Yurii Afanas'ev to address them, the party committee banned the lecture. 'We don't need to stuff historical rubbish into the heads of the students', said the professor responsible for ideology.<sup>18</sup>

With the approach of the annual school examinations, the sense of crisis grew. In May the State Committee for Education took the unprecedented step of cancelling the final leaving examination in history and social science and the annual examinations on the history of the Soviet period due to be held for other forms. The examination was replaced by an ungraded individual interview or 'free conversation' conducted by the teacher, and pupils were given a grade based not on this interview but on their work during the year.<sup>19</sup> The State

Committee later reported that the interviews had revealed both the greater interest in history on the part of the pupils and that the pupils' opinion frequently differed from that of the teacher.<sup>20</sup>

The crisis remains. Pupils in senior forms entered the 1988/89 year with the textbook problem only partly resolved. At first it appeared as if new textbooks would be prepared by the old team;<sup>21</sup> and the textbooks were not scheduled to appear until the third quarter of 1990.

But soon the State Committee for Education launched a sweeping change. It announced that a substantial 'insert' or pamphlet on Soviet history would be made available for pupils, and a handbook and a series of books for teachers. A television series for pupils, addressed by leading scholars, would discuss problems of Soviet history.<sup>22</sup> In addition the literary newspaper is publishing a series of articles to assist the teaching of Soviet history in schools.<sup>23</sup> The scholarly journal *Voprosy istorii* will also include articles for schoolteachers, designed to help the preparation of what will amount 'in essence to a completely new course'.<sup>24</sup>

For the future, a Commission was set up by the State Committee on Education to deal with historical education in schools, together with a new Committee to handle the textbooks for the VII–X forms. In 1988–90 an open competition is to be held for a textbook on the XX-Century history of the USSR, and a new textbook will henceforth be published every two years.<sup>25</sup>

History teaching at a higher level faces similar problems. By the beginning of the new academic year, September 1, 1988, the commission set up by the Politburo to prepare *Essays (Ocherki)* on party history had not yet made any public report of its activities. The importance now attached to this matter was demonstrated with the announcement that Gorbachev acted as chairman of the Commission.<sup>26</sup>

The textbook crisis will evidently not be resolved quickly. The editor of the principal history journal gloomily concluded that 'in terms of any concrete results, judging by all we know, new textbooks will not appear for another five years'.<sup>27</sup> But something like the outlines of a revolution in history teaching are now beginning to take shape.

**Part IV**  
**The Debate in Context**



# 14 Truth and Bias in the New History

On a number of occasions in the course of this book I have drawn attention to major and minor errors in recent Soviet publications about the past. Sometimes these are simply mistakes; but often they are due to the bias of the author. The debate about history is a debate about politics. The much greater frankness about the past has not produced an entirely objective or even an entirely accurate history. The protagonists of a more radical approach to Soviet history are sometimes cavalier with their facts and hasty in their judgements.

This is particularly apparent in the case of creative writing. Fiction is not of course required to be historically precise. The Stalin monologues in *Children of the Arbat* are an imaginative reconstruction, as Anatolii Rybakov freely admits. But he has also claimed that 'not a single action in the novel was invented, they are all supported by evidence'.<sup>1</sup>

This is certainly not the case. The Syrtsov–Lominadze affair of 1930 is reduced in the novel to a disagreement between Stalin and Lominadze about China (evidently about the debacle in 1927 in Canton, where Lominadze was representative of the Communist International). But in fact Syrtsov and Lominadze were in serious disagreement with Stalin in 1930 about economic and social policy. Other major disputes involving policy are also reduced to Stalin's suspiciousness and sensitivity. This is of some importance, because frequently we have no knowledge of what was happening at the top in the party apart from that supplied by Rybakov. When we allow this powerful novel to influence our understanding, we must bear its one-sidedness in mind.

Nor can it be assumed that non-fiction articles are providing us with a dispassionate attempt to reach the truth. We have already seen that Academician Tikhonov's statistics about the peasantry are unreliable. The onslaught on Soviet statistics by V. Selyunin and G. Khanin, which attracted a great deal of uncritical attention both in the Soviet Union and in the West, also contains serious flaws as well as extremely valuable insights.<sup>2</sup> It treats the index of industrial

production prepared in the People's Commissariat of Finance in the 1920s as extremely reliable, although it was based on a small number of products, underweighted machinery and omitted armaments.<sup>3</sup>

The statistics provided by Soviet publicists and even by Soviet economists about the agonising question of the number of victims of famine and repression under Stalin are also often unreliable. Some Soviet authors, as they have privately explained, simply took their data from Western studies of Stalinism like Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror*, without being able to acknowledge this, and without any independent check. Others have simply made guesses which are biased towards obtaining a maximum figure. Thus Bestuzhev-Lada, in an essay which was used in the West to derive a figure of no fewer than 50 million victims of Stalinism, stated that one-eighth to one-sixth of all 25 million peasant households were 'dekulakised', and thus 'turned from living persons into the dead or half-alive'. This would give a figure of 3.1 to 4.2 million dekulakised households, or at least 16–21 million persons. This estimate excludes the victims of the famine (including presumably those exiled during the famine). On the number who were arrested and perished in the repressions of 1935–53, Bestuzlov-Lada simply asserts that 'it could hardly be lower than the number "dekulakised" and dying from famine in 1929–33'.<sup>4</sup> But the statement that one-eighth to one-sixth of households were dekulakised is not supported by any evidence. Danilov, using the best data so far available, provisionally estimated that the number of dekulakised households, excluding deaths from the famine and exiles during the famine, amounted to 1.0–1.1 million, or some 5 or 6 million persons. Danilov's comment about speculative estimates of peasant deaths is apposite:

Unfortunately some authors try to put figures as high as possible, without any concern for their reliability and logic. They want to shock the reader with the deaths of 13 or 15 million people, as if the figure of 'only' 4 to 5 million is insufficient, in their opinion, for us to condemn utterly the Stalinist coercion of the peasantry.<sup>5</sup>

As with statistics, so with ideas. In some recent Soviet accounts of the views of the outstanding economists of the 1920s who were destroyed in the repressions of the 1930s, the prejudiced and mendacious hostility of the past is replaced by uncritical enthusiasm. Thus an informative full-page article on Kondratiev identifies itself uninhibitedly with Kondratiev's point of view, and in doing so thoroughly misrepresents it.<sup>6</sup> The author claims:

Kondratiev was not, as he was later accused of being, an opponent of rapid industrialisation. He was convinced that it was possible to carry out everything intended in this sphere, if one did not forget about balanced development, which he was so concerned about.

It can easily be established from the writings of Kondratiev and other experts in the People's Commissariat of Finance (Narkomfin) that this is not true. Their general concept – reiterated over and over again while they had the right to speak – was that the rate of accumulation in post-revolutionary Russia could at most equal and must in no way exceed the tsarist rate of accumulation. Moreover, Kondratiev's barely hidden belief was that priority must be given to agriculture. In 1963, when I was working with E. H. Carr on our volumes on the Soviet economy in the 1920s, I asked Al'bert Vainshtein, Kondratiev's deputy, to outline to me Kondratiev's concept of industrialisation; I explained that it was difficult for an outsider to assess the real thoughts of economists of that time in view of the censorship which already prevailed in the Soviet press. After 25 years, I cannot hope to recall his reply exactly, but the spirit of his assessment of Kondratiev's views was absolutely clear. 'He was against industrialisation (*on byl protiv industrializatsii*)', Vainshtein replied in some surprise. He then went on more exactly to explain that Kondratiev's concern was the prosperity of the peasantry, including the commercially-minded peasantry, and that he believed that the rate of industrialisation should be such that it did not interfere with that prosperity.

The same uncritical treatment is afforded to people in the opposite camp, provided they were not closely identified with Stalin. An interview with Bukharin's widow, for example, presents her father, Yurii Larin, entirely positively as pre-revolutionary hero and post-revolutionary builder of socialism.<sup>7</sup> Nothing appears of his pre-revolutionary Menshevism, or of his stormy role as eccentric, brilliant and independent Leftist dissident within the party throughout the period from the revolution until his death in 1932. The innocent reader would not have the faintest idea that Larin had been a stubborn fighter against Kondratiev and the 'Narkomfin professors' long before Stalin, or that he had been one of the principal advocates, with Sabsovich, of over-ambitious planning in 1929.

Yurii Larin was only a minor theme in the interview with his daughter, and this misrepresentation would perhaps not be worth

mentioning in itself. But the interview provided the opportunity for the conservative Yurii Maksimov to publish a detailed criticism of its treatment of Larin, and thus cast considerable doubt on the reliability of those advancing radical points of view on Soviet history.<sup>8</sup> In an era of *glasnost*, objectivity can be recommended to participants in the Soviet debate on pragmatic grounds as well as in the name of higher principles.

An even more striking example of Soviet history as it should not be written is provided by Otto Latsis' article in *Kommunist* on the last stages of NEP. This article, which celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the XV Party Congress of December 1927, grossly distorted the place of that Congress in the history of Soviet planning.<sup>9</sup> Latsis enthusiastically praised the resolution of the Congress on the five-year plan, emphasising its judicious support for balanced growth. But he failed to point out that this resolution was produced at a time when various specific rival drafts of the five-year plan were being discussed and circulated. To the indignation of the Left Opposition and the vexation of many of those on the side of the majority, it failed to contain a single figure, or to offer a specific judgement on any of the major economic problems tormenting the politicians and the planners.

Latsis further claimed that in 1928, when Gosplan completed the preparation of the plan, it was 'relying mainly on the directives of the XV Congress'. Where things went wrong, he argued, was when the 'optimum' variant of the plan was treated as the only variant, and the lower 'initial' variant was dropped. According to Latsis, a five-year plan somewhere between the optimum and initial Gosplan variants was 'in the main realistic, at least in relation to the quantitative elements of the five-year plan'. This is all quite wrong. The ambitions of the five-year plan adopted in April 1929 went far beyond the assumptions being made in December 1927. The optimum variant differed only in rather minor respects from the initial variant. Both variants were entirely unrealistic in their assumption that their quantitative goals could be made compatible with the market relations of NEP by swingeing reductions in industrial costs and prices.

Latsis' errors were partly due to ignorance. But when he lacked knowledge he always assumed that, if he knew the evidence, it would show that NEP could have been continued without much difficulty, and was brought to an end only because of Stalin's political blunders and ambitions.

I need hardly add that even if all the information and analysis were

presented in accordance with the highest standards of objectivity, the conclusions of the authors, and their selection of the data, would still naturally be strongly influenced by their life experience, by their reaction against the restrictions placed on their knowledge and thought in the years before 1985, and by their perception of the urgent present needs of their society.

Strongly held convictions influence the general conclusions of many of the critical writers about the history of the 1930s and 1940s. Confronting the stark truth about the Stalinist system in unprecedented detail, they are utterly repelled by it. This leads them both to underestimate the industrial achievements of the Stalin period, and to argue that such achievements as they are prepared to acknowledge occurred in spite of Stalin and the Stalinist system, which they tend to see as playing an entirely negative role.

Trotsky faced the same political and emotional problem when he wrote *Revolution Betrayed* in 1935–6. He was honest enough to assess Soviet industrial achievements very positively. In order to explain these successes without providing an historical justification for Stalinism he argued that they occurred in spite of bureaucracy, and were a result of public ownership and planning. This attempt to attribute successes to planning and failures to the bureaucracy fitted uneasily with the evidence, and many of his followers moved to alternative explanatory models.

The most objective of the present Soviet authors recognise the scale of the industrial achievements. But they are anxious to dismantle the traditional system of central planning, and are unwilling to attribute the successes of the past to the 'administrative-command system'. Instead they are explained in terms of the hard work and socialist consciousness of the people. On this version of Soviet history neither the system of planning priorities nor the people who administered the plans played any positive role in economic development. This framework for analysing the Stalinist economy has not advanced beyond Trotsky's.

Every age has its characteristic biases. In 1970–85 the Stalin period was, perhaps, perceived through the eyes of the complacent official and the secret policeman, and of those promoted industrial workers who had retained their enthusiasm for the system. The view of the Stalin period which now predominates is more that of the scientist and the intellectual, and of the peasant as understood by the intellectual. It is significant that so far the factory workers, the backbone of Stalinist industrialisation, have hardly appeared at all in the critical novels, essays and studies.

While caution is necessary in reading the recent Soviet publications, I must also emphasise that the present discussions are by no means a mere repetition of the debates of the 1970s, but with the conclusions bearing what the Russians call an 'opposite sign'. In the 1970s Soviet publications crudely omitted and censored facts in accordance with elaborate rules prescribed from above. They lied about the past in order to present us with their 'truth'. But now the barriers of censorship and possibilities of distortion are much reduced. Since the beginning of 1988 there has been almost no subject relating to the Stalin period which could not be discussed; and sensitive issues of the Lenin period are not entirely barred from the press. And the arguments, though heated, are much more closely related to evidence than they were in the Brezhnev years.

Most important of all, rival views about the past can now be openly presented. After the XIX Party Conference, Aleksandr Yakovlev made the most encouraging statement for the future of Soviet intellectual freedom – and hence for the future of history – which has ever come from a member of the Politburo. Explaining that the *Pravda* reply of April 5 to Nina Andreeva was 'our platform, the Politburo's', he nevertheless insisted:

But, comrades, we do not accept a decision to boycott *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the newspaper. I consider that to boycott a newspaper is to follow a road from the past. Let them have their say, if someone very much wants it. And let people know that such a person has such a point of view. Every article must find its own reader, and we must come to a way of life which we consider democratic through the struggle of opinions.

However unpleasant it was to read Andreeva's article, she expressed one point of view. Let's answer it. In Riga I answered an article about the market, also in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, I expressed a completely opposite point of view on this subject. Should we cut off the editor's head?

We must proceed by political methods.<sup>10</sup>

# 15 Conclusions: History and the Reconstruction of Soviet Society

We have shown in these pages how, in the course of 1987 and 1988, the revelations about the Stalin period, and the critical analysis of the past, became much franker and on the whole more profound. Simultaneously wider and wider sections of the population were caught up in the excitement of the debate.

In this chapter I summarise the main trends of the debate and consider its implications for *perestroika*, for the future of the Soviet system.

Gorbachev and his advisers did not anticipate either the scope of the debate or its impact on society. But their commitment to *glasnost* led them to resist attempts to halt discussion or set narrow bounds to it. Moreover, Gorbachev had insisted from the outset that the reform of the economy must involve the reconstruction of society, and the active participation of Soviet citizens in the management of affairs. During 1986 and 1987 it became increasingly obvious that social and economic changes in the present were inhibited by the immense social and psychological burden of the past. By the spring of 1988 Gorbachev and the Politburo members closely associated with him openly acknowledged that the reconsideration of the past was essential to *perestroika*. 'The party has initiated a sober consideration of the post-October history of the country, not least because many of our present troubles originated in past departures from the political, economic and moral principles of socialism', said Razumovsky, adding that 'this work helps to cleanse the path to the future'.<sup>1</sup>

It is almost a platitude among the reformers that the Stalinist bureaucratic system of crude orders from above deeply inculcated apathy and lack of initiative in Soviet citizens. Stalin's ideas still predominate in our minds, said the writer A. Kunitsyn, and 'ordinary Stalinism in everyday life is no less dangerous'. The obverse side of despotism was slavery: Stalinism rested on blind obedience, and 'the

development of socialism in our country will be held up and distorted as long as society has not finally freed itself from its powerful inheritance from the age of Stalinism'.<sup>2</sup>

Considerable progress has been made in exposing and denouncing the evils of Stalinism. Circumstantial reports, in daily newspapers as well as periodicals, about the famine, the mass executions and the terrible conditions of the labour camps have forced the truth about the dark side of the Stalin period on the attention of the entire Soviet population.

Old attitudes die hard; in spite of these exposures many people retain a favourable view of Stalin. An angry reformer confronted with such views published a somewhat pejorative list of categories of people who defend Stalin. It included the secret police, part of the war veterans, old people who are shocked by the anti-Stalin campaign, those who are frightened of change, and young people who want a new boss who will clear up the mess in the country.<sup>3</sup> The events surrounding the Nina Andreeva letter confirmed that it would not be easy to persuade many people to abandon a Stalinist outlook.

But attitudes have begun to change. The huge mass demand for the journals which are critical of Stalinism has continued to rise, and the failure of the authorities to provide sufficient paper to cover the potential subscriptions for 1989 led to successful protests. Public opinion polls indicate that a critical or even hostile view of Stalin now prevails (though the polls are so casually reported in the press that some caution is in order). A survey in April 1988 of 1200 students from eleven higher educational establishments located in various regions revealed that 69 per cent 'approve the criticism in the press of the cult of Stalin's personality', while only 18 per cent 'consider that such publications can shake the faith of young people in the ideals of socialist society'.<sup>4</sup> In June 1988 a survey of Muscovites revealed that 55 per cent believed that Stalin 'played a negative role in the life of our country', 31 per cent found 'both positive and negative features in his activity', and less than 1 per cent (as compared with 16 per cent in November 1987) held 'a high opinion of Stalin's role in the history of our country'. However, in spite of the distressing descriptions of the collectivisation of agriculture in the press, Muscovites were more sharply divided in their attitudes to it. Of those questioned, while 32 per cent held that it was 'not specially necessary', 44 per cent held (as had Gorbachev's November 1987 report) that it was 'necessary but was carried out with mistakes', and 21 per cent still held that it was simply 'necessary', for various reasons.<sup>5</sup>

Presumably peasants would take a more critical attitude than Muscovites.

The frank exposure of unpleasant and horrifying facts about the past is a relatively easy task. It is far more difficult to make an analysis of Stalinism which will provide the basis for the construction of a socialist society in the future. But by the summer of 1988 something like a 'new radical consensus' (my phrase) predominated in journals and newspapers which are strongly committed to the Gorbachev version of *perestroika*, such as *Novyi mir*, *Druzhba narodov*, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* and *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*. The new radical consensus rejects outright the collectivisation of agriculture at the end of the 1920s, and argues that Lenin's strategy of voluntary peasant cooperation should have continued, and that administrative planning should not have replaced the mixed market economy of NEP. It also holds that in the political system Leninist principles were abandoned soon after Lenin's death, if not before. The whole Stalinist period is seen as a substantial departure from the road to socialism.

This viewpoint is more fundamentally critical than the Gorbachev report of November 1987. While denouncing Stalinist repressions, and calling for the abandonment of the 'administrative-command system' established in the 1930s, Gorbachev's report held to the view that the collectivisation of agriculture had in principle been essential. Gorbachev rejected the Bukharinist alternative as impracticable because of 'the factor of time'.

The radical critics of the Stalinist past differ among themselves on several important issues. Their main dispute is about how fundamental was the departure from socialism in the Stalin period. Yurii Afanas'ev and others consider that the Soviet Union completely abandoned the road to socialism at the end of the 1920s. 'I do not consider the society which was established here to be socialist', he wrote, 'even a "deformed" socialism'.<sup>6</sup> On this view Stalin in effect carried out a successful counter-revolution (though Afanas'ev did not use that word). In contrast the mainstream supporters of Gorbachev argue that in spite of the distortions socialism survived, though some concede that this was 'primarily in the consciousness and creative labour of the people, in its ideals and hopes'.<sup>7</sup>

The discussion among the radical critics has been conducted in broadly Marxist terms. We saw in Chapter 1 that official Marxism had fallen into so much disrepute in the Brezhnev years that the Marxists were only a minor group among those who sought to reform Soviet society. In 1987 and 1988 we have seen nothing less than the

rebirth of Soviet Marxism. The Marxist analysis of the Soviet experience is now one of the focal points of the whole debate.

The new radical consensus, in all its variants, has met with very strong opposition. In our account of the debate two groups have been particularly prominent. First, many writers, historians, officials and ordinary members of the public are convinced that too much of the Soviet past has been rejected. Mikhail Alekseev, editor of *Moskva*, who courageously published much of the truth about the 1932–3 famine in the Brezhnev years, put his view in one crisp sentence: ‘As far as Stalin is concerned, for me the evaluation of his personality given in the resolution of the party Central Committee of June 30, 1956 [‘On the Cult of the Individual and its Consequences’], remains fundamental’.<sup>8</sup> This resolution criticised the man but not the system.

Leading party members who were responsible for ideology in the Brezhnev years are perhaps the most influential group to have opposed the critical re-evaluation of the past (see Chapter 12). F. M. Vaganov, specialist on the Right deviation of 1928–9 and head of the state archives, claimed that the party programme was carried out ‘firmly and faithfully by the party both during V. I. Lenin’s life and in all subsequent stages of our history’. The Director of the Ukrainian Institute of Party History argued that dekulakisation was a vital necessity for the establishment of socialism.

Outside these more official circles the view is still widely held that the Soviet Union had to industrialise rapidly if it was to survive in a hostile world, and that this could not have been done without extraordinary measures. This was the view taken, with qualifications, by Gorbachev himself in November 1987. It was argued eloquently by the writer Yurii Prokushev:

We sometimes say: it was terrible, just terrible in the past. And what would have happened if there had been no Kuznetsk combine, no Magnitka? [These are the huge iron and steel complexes in the Ural mountains and beyond, built in the 1930s – RWD.] We would have all been in fascist slavery, in Maidenek – Uzbeks, Jews and Russians. So there must not be this exaggeration, this wish to see our whole history in one dark colour.<sup>9</sup>

In the Politburo Ligachev has insistently defended the achievements of the Stalin period as a major stride towards socialism in spite of the repressions, and has in effect argued that no other viewpoint is legitimate.

The Russian nationalists are the second influential group which

strongly rejects the new radical consensus. Sergei Vikulov, editor of *Nash sovremennik*, speaking to the Board of the Writers' Union, bitterly criticised the unwise uncovering of the past – and this was as early as May 1987, when the revelations had hardly begun:

Some people have turned *glasnost*' solely towards the past, and have decided that the time has come to settle accounts (it's not clear with whom), to blow the archive dust from the known and half-known, to hurl everything at the head of the ordinary philistine (*obyvatel'*) avid for sensation, giving little thought to the ideological or moral side of the very fact of publication, or to how far it encourages or discourages optimism.

He conceded that works unpublished in the past should now be published, but argued that they should appear in small-circulation journals, not in mass-circulation magazines read by ordinary workers in factory and farm.<sup>10</sup> (Remember Mr Griffith-Jones, who asked the jury in the *Lady Chatterley* case: 'Is it a book that you would even wish your wife or servants to read?')

Like the radicals, the nationalists are by no means unanimous in their views. Many of them – especially the writers about the peasantry – condemn collectivisation as the great destroyer of Russian peasant traditions and the Russian village commune, which they see as crucial threads in the skein of Russian history. Others regard collectivisation as a necessity resulting from the struggle to transform Russia into a super-power. They all regard themselves as descendants of the XIX-Century Slavophiles rather than of the Westerners. They all emphasise the continuity between the pre- and post-revolutionary eras. For them the history of the Soviet Union is only incidentally, if at all, the story of the effort to construct a socialist society. It is fundamentally the story of the emergence of Russia as a great world power. The war with Napoleon and the French in 1812 and the war with Hitler and the Germans in 1941–5 are episodes in the long struggle of the Russian people for national independence against the foreign invader and foreign influences.

Some influential Russian nationalists take their nationalism to reactionary extremes. They are hostile to what they call the 'liberal intelligentsia', which includes anyone who is strongly critical of Russian conduct in the past or present. But their most bitter criticisms are directed at Freemasons and Jews, whom they regard as alien groups which endanger Russian independence. In the early 1930s the reconstruction of Moscow involved the destruction of some of the

most important historical monuments, including the Kitai-gorod wall and the Sukharevka tower. All groups, whether liberal or nationalist, condemn this as barbarism. But the nationalist writer Vadim Kozhinov criticises *Children of the Arbat* for blaming Stalin for this destruction. According to Kozhinov, the real culprit was Kaganovich, then first secretary of the Moscow party. He further argues that liberal writers have underplayed the importance of Yagoda, head of the OGPU/NKVD until 1936, and his close associates Roshal', Pauker, Berman, Rapoport, Firin and Kagan in establishing the labour-camp system. All the people in this list are Jews. Kozhinov also claims that it was not Stalin who was primarily responsible for the famine of 1932–3, but Yakovlev, the People's Commissar for Agriculture, whose real name was Epshtein: 'it can hardly be denied that this man bears the main responsibility for the tragedy of 1933'.<sup>11</sup>

A recent thriller, *Sudnyi den'* (The Day of Judgment), describes with the utmost seriousness a plot by international Freemasons in the 1960s to use their Soviet contacts to disrupt the USSR.<sup>12</sup>

These are characteristic examples of the revival by one wing of the Russian nationalists of the anti-semitism and chauvinism deep-rooted in the Russian Empire, and strengthened after the second world war by Stalin's 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign of the late 1940s.

How far do these different views about the past coincide with different approaches to the present-day Soviet Union and its problems? Everyone claims to be a firm supporter of *perestroika*. But different groups hold very different views of what *perestroika* should mean. It is broadly true that those, like Ligachev and Bondarev, who are less critical of the Stalinist past, do not believe that *perestroika* should involve the creation of a fundamentally new economic or political system. What is required, they believe, is moderate reform. The Russian nationalists, for quite different reasons, are also opposed to sweeping changes in the system. They are concerned with the restoration or strengthening of traditional values, and stress the damage to the fabric of society caused by hasty Westernisation in the past.

Some notable public figures do not fit into this pattern. Kurashvili strongly insists that in the past 'our period of extraordinary administration was necessary . . . NEP could not have achieved the results which were actually achieved in a single decade'.<sup>13</sup> He is nevertheless a radical reformer, arguing that the system of tight control from the

centre has outlived its usefulness. And Academician Likhachev, like Kurashvili an uncompromising advocate of democratic reform and *glasnost*, at the same time strongly emphasises Russian national values and traditions – he is a Russian nationalist in the best sense.

The radical critics of Stalinism – who now dominate the Press and the media – all believe that *perestroika* must involve a radical reform of the Soviet system. But they differ among themselves in their views about the future no less than in their views about the past. It would often not be unfair to say that their views about the past are strongly influenced by their proposed strategies for the future.

An important group of economists, including Selyunin and Nikolai Shmelev, claim that the rise of the market brought economic growth and prosperity, both before the revolution and in the 1920s. For them, the establishment of an all-powerful free market is by far the most important element in *perestroika*; and some of them believe that this must involve the restoration of a substantial private sector.

But other radical critics of Stalinism, such as Danilov, look back to the growth of cooperation in agriculture and other sectors of the economy as the most positive feature of the 1920s. Their banner is Lenin's statement that a socialist society will be a 'nation of civilised cooperators', and they believe that *perestroika* must involve the development of various forms of cooperation as well as the market.

For most radical reformers, political or social reform is as important as economic reform, and a prerequisite for it. They all agree in general terms that the 'administrative-command system' must be dismantled, and that the political system must be democratised. But their different assessments of the past support different conclusions about how democratisation can be achieved.

Burganov and others concluded that it was the outlawing of factions in 1921 which made possible the usurpation of power, and that genuine democracy must involve the right of some kind of 'platforms' or 'factions' to be formed within the party (see Chapter 9).

But many reformers, among whom the most vocal is Butenko, claim that a socialist democracy cannot be established in the Soviet Union without a radical social reform. The usurpation of power by Stalin was accompanied by the rise of a dominant bureaucracy as a distinct class; and economic and political reform requires the elimination of that class, a kind of social revolution.

As we have seen in Chapter 7, another influential group of reformers argues that this view of Stalinism is erroneous. While political power was usurped by Stalin and his entourage, this did not

change the fundamentally socialist nature of society. For them political and economic reform must involve the elimination of bureaucratism but not of a separate bureaucratic class.

The struggle for control of the Soviet future among these groups and schools informed by different visions of the past is not yet over. But, with the appointment of Gorbachev as President on October 1, 1988, and the other political changes at the top at that time, the advocates of a radical interpretation of *perestroika* now dominate the party and the government at the centre, if not yet throughout the USSR.

In this victory, or provisional victory, the mental revolution about the past has played an important part. The views of Soviet history presented by Gorbachev and his various supporters are neither complete nor unbiased. But they embody an essential truth about the past – the conviction that the repressive state, the censorship and the administrative economic system have crippled initiative throughout society and distorted if not extinguished the democratic aims of the Bolshevik revolution.

This reappraisal of the past has helped to convince many Soviet citizens that their leaders are genuinely anxious to abandon the old system, and to persuade at least some of those who identified themselves with the Stalinist past that they were in grievous error. It has helped to undermine the widespread apathy and cynicism.

But if the provisional victory of the radical interpretation of *perestroika* is to be consolidated, Soviet citizens in large numbers will have to be convinced that they should go further, and play an active part in furthering the cause of *perestroika*. And *perestroika* will have to begin to produce results, to achieve both greater political participation and greater economic efficiency.

As the experience of reform in Hungary and China has shown, this is an extraordinarily difficult task. Even by the end of 1988 most people in the Soviet Union, even if enthusiastic about the progress of *glasnost*, remain sceptical about *perestroika*. This is with good reason. The programme of political and economic reform, as embodied in party decisions and in legislation, is in important respects inconsistent and ambiguous, and as yet *perestroika* has achieved little in practical terms.

Major issues remain open. Will democratisation mean that opinion groups, 'factions' or 'platforms' can exist in the party? By October

1988, none of the political leaders associated with Gorbachev had even hinted that this would be possible. In a key-note article on 'the democratisation of inner-party life', Razumovsky insisted on the crucial importance of the Leninist principle of democratic centralism – 'freedom of debate at the discussion stage and unity of action after the majority has adopted a decision'. But he conspicuously refrained from saying anything whatsoever about the right to form 'platforms' in the course of the discussion.<sup>14</sup>

The future shape of the economic system also remains unclear. The crucial issue is the extent to which market forces will be permitted to determine economic decisions. The Politburo is committed to the replacement of the centralised supply system by wholesale trade, and to the elimination of shortages and queues in retail trade. But a furious argument is still taking place about the price reform which this would entail, and especially about whether there should be large increases in retail prices to bring supply into line with demand. And there is no agreement that prices should be allowed to depend on supply and demand rather than be fixed by the state. This is one illustration of the vagueness of the present economic reform.

The adoption of realistic policies to combine market and plan can only be hindered by the naive interpretation of Russian and Soviet economic history offered by Selyunin and other passionate supporters of the market. The party journal recently published a shrewd article by the British economist Alec Nove, arguing both that a shift to the market in the Soviet economy is essential, and that the Thatcherite faith in the universal efficacy of the market prevalent among some Soviet economists could seriously harm the reform.<sup>15</sup> Soviet historical experience will provide an adequate guide to economic reform only if a similar realism informs Soviet analysis of the market economy of NEP, and of the centrally-planned administrative system which replaced it.

The most constructive legislation on economic reform so far adopted makes wide provision for the establishment of independent cooperatives and for self-management within state enterprises. But even here much more needs to be done. It is not yet clear whether the cooperatives will be genuine cooperatives, or will turn into a form of private enterprise; and the extent to which they will become a major section of the economy depends on the shape of the economic reform as a whole. And the introduction of self-management in state factories is in practice still at an early stage. It remains entirely unclear how self-management will be combined with state planning,

and how it will affect the job security and other rights of the workers.

Finally, we do not yet know whether *perestroika* will lead to a social revolution, in which the bureaucratic hierarchy gives way to some form of socialist democracy. So far Gorbachev himself has rejected general criticisms of Soviet administrators as a social group on several occasions. In July 1987 he attacked those whose criticisms of cadres were too sweeping as 'social demagogues'. And in September 1988 he told representatives of the media:

Wage war on bureaucrats. But at the same time bear in mind that revolutionary renewal will not work without a good body of cadres (*kadrovyyi korpus*) which has accepted the ideas of *perestroika* or has developed and established itself in the process of *perestroika*.<sup>16</sup>

Gorbachev is a determined opponent of 'equalisation (*uravnilovka*)', like Stalin in 1931 (though this aspect of Stalinism is rarely mentioned by the reformers).

Even within this limited framework, however, immense social change is possible. The system of social privileges for the elite began, with Lenin's support, during the great shortages of the Civil War, and was greatly extended under Stalin and Brezhnev. The special facilities for the privileged groups in Soviet society – from special shops to prestigious university places for their children – have been strongly criticised in the Soviet press. The continued wide differentiation of incomes advocated by Gorbachev is compatible with the elimination of this heritage from the past. It remains to be seen how far the reforms will go in this direction.

In spite of its limitations and ambiguities, Gorbachev's programme for the reconstruction of the Soviet Union is revolutionary in its implications. On a number of occasions, and particularly in his report to the XIX Party Conference, Gorbachev was at pains to present *perestroika* as a return to 'Leninist norms' (see Chapter 11). He is evidently convinced that it is politically essential to hold up Lenin and Leninism as a model and a frame of reference. This treatment of the Lenin tradition as an absolute is a severe limitation on the objective reconsideration of the past, as we saw in Chapter 9.

It is true that in an important sense the Soviet Union has been returning since 1985 to the flexibility and broadmindedness of Lenin's political leadership. But, as Gorbachev must himself be aware, *perestroika* is in major respects modifying or going beyond Lenin's thought and practice as a politician in power.

In economic reform Gorbachev and his colleagues are at

variance with Lenin in stressing the permanent importance of market relations in a socialist society. Lenin, in common with almost every other Soviet Marxist in his time, believed that socialism implied a moneyless economy in which the market had been completely replaced by planning.

But the most important difference between Gorbachev and the post-revolutionary Lenin is that Gorbachev's *perestroika* is more oriented towards direct democracy. Gorbachev and his colleagues are seeking to introduce some form of self-management, while Lenin insisted on replacing workers' control by a system of one-man management in which the manager was appointed from above. Above all, *perestroika* seeks to introduce wider political rights within and outside the party, to establish a framework for genuine elections, and to strengthen elected Soviets as compared with the party. In contrast, Lenin presided over the subordination of government to party, and the centralisation of the party, including the banning of factions.

In an important sense, then, *perestroika* is returning not to the Lenin of NEP or the Civil War, but to the Lenin of 1917. In terms of ideas, though not yet of practical achievements, Gorbachev was not being entirely fanciful when he called upon another country and another revolution for the antecedents of *perestroika*. Referring to the Paris Commune of 1871, he assured a delegation from France:

If you are looking for the roots of our *perestroika*, you can go back to the French revolution, and then to the Commune.<sup>17</sup>

He could perhaps have added that its roots can also be found in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

# Appendix: Major Events in Russian and Soviet History

988		Adoption of Christianity by Kievan Rus'
1240–1380		Mongol domination of Russia
1533–84		Reign of Ivan IV ('the Terrible')
1694–1725		Reign of Peter I ('the Great')
1861		Emancipation of the serf peasantry
1890s		First industrialisation drive
1905		First Russian revolution
1906–11		Stolypin's agrarian reforms
1914		Outbreak of first world war
1916	December	Murder of Rasputin
1917	February/March	Revolution overthrows Tsar
	October/November	Revolution establishes Bolshevik or Soviet government
1918	March	German–Soviet treaty of Brest-Litovsk
1918–20		Civil War and foreign intervention ('War Communism')
1921–9		New Economic Policy (NEP)
1921	March	X Communist Party Congress ends grain requisitioning, bans 'factions' within Party
1924	January	Death of Lenin
1926–8		Pre-1914 industrial and agricultural output restored
1927–8	Winter	Grain crisis
1927	December	XV Party Congress expels Trotsky
1928	(October)–1932 (December)	First five-year plan
1929	End of year	Mass collectivisation of agriculture and 'dekulakisation' begin
1932–3		Widespread famine
1933	January	Hitler appointed Chancellor of German Reich
1933–7		Second five-year plan
1934	January–February	XVII Party Congress
1934	December 1	Murder of Kirov in Leningrad

1936–8		The 'Ezhovshchina' 'Great Purges'); execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov and Bukharin
1941	June 22	Nazi Germany invades USSR
1941	October	Moscow under siege
1942	November	Soviet victory at Stalingrad
1945	May 9	Victory over Germany
1953	March	Death of Stalin
1956	February	XX Party Congress: Khrushchev denounces Stalin
1964	October	Khrushchev dismissed; replaced as First (General) Secretary of party by Brezhnev
1982	November	Death of Brezhnev; replaced by Andropov
1984	February	Death of Andropov; replaced by Chernenko
1985	March	Death of Chernenko; replaced by Gorbachev
1988	June	XIX Party Conference

# Notes and References

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  2. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 14, 1988 (F. Burlatskii).
  3. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, March 21, 1987.
  4. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, June 14, 1988 (P. Rodionov).
  5. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6, 1988, pp. 82–4 (E. Ambartsumov).
  6. *Kommunist*, no. 3, 1966.
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  9. E. G. Gimpel'son, *Voennyi kommunizm: printsipy, praktika, ideologiya*.
  10. V. P. Danilov, *Sovetskaya dokolkhoznaya derevnya: naselenie, zemlepol'zovanie, khozyaistvo* (1977), and *Sovetskaya dokolkhoznaya derevnya: sotsial'naya struktura, sotsial'nye otnosheniya* (1979). The first volume has been published in English as *Rural Russia under the New Regime* (London, 1988).
  11. *Protokoly prezidiuma Gosplana za 1921–1922 gody* (1979), vols 1, 2(i) and 2(ii).
  12. See for example G. Gerasimov in *Soviet News*, December 18, 1979.
  13. M. Alekseev, *Drachuny* (1982).
  14. *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika*, vol. xxiii (1983), pp. 456–9.

## PART I THE MENTAL REVOLUTION

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  2. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 7, 1987 (A. Voznesenskii).
  3. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 19, 1987.
  4. *Russkaya mysl'* (Paris), May 29, 1987.
  5. See the detailed figures for print-runs in *Moscow News*, February 21, 1988.
  6. *Izvestiya*, July 20, 1988.
- 2 Russia Before the Bolshevik Revolution**
  1. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 26, 1987.
  2. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, January 20, 1988 (O. Dmirtsev).
  3. *Moskovskaya pravda*, December 20, 1987 (L. Kolodnyi).
  4. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 18, 1986 (V. Kaverin).
  5. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, January 13, 1988 (M. Ganina).
  6. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 6, 1987 (A. Misharin and V. Rozov).
  7. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 18, 1987.
  8. *Ogonek*, no. 46, 1987, p. 4 (Bulat Okudzhava and Mikhail Ul'yanov).
  9. See for example V. Kantor's contribution to the debate in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 17, 1988.
  10. *Kommunist*, no. 2, 1988, pp. 72–81; Moiseev is a consultant to the Computer Centre of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. See also

the Young Communist League newspaper *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, March 10, 1988, which presents long extracts from Vernadsky's diaries containing a preliminary version of these concepts, written in 1884 when he was only 21.

11. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 10, 1987 (B. Mozhaev).
12. See for example *Kommunist*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 54–63 (interview with A. A. Nikonov, president of the All-Union Agricultural Academy VASKhNIL), *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, January 29, 1988 (V. Konovarov), *Izvestiya*, January 30, 1988 (V. Gavrichkin). For Chayanov's rehabilitation, see Chapter 10 below.
13. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 27, 1987.
14. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, February 5, 1988.
15. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 18, 1986.
16. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 3, 1988 (contribution to debate by V. Gorokhov of the All-Union Institute for Systems Research).
17. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 8, 1988.
18. *Ogonek*, no. 39, 1987, p. 7 (A. Move, chairman of the section for criminal law and trials of the Moscow Regional Lawyers' Committee).
19. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 17, 1988 (V. Kantor).
20. *Pravda*, June 19, 1988 (Yu. Baturin).
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22. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, November 18, 1987 (G. Semenov).
23. *Moskovskaya pravda*, June 3, 1988 (S. Dzarasov).
24. *EKO*, no. 9, 1987, pp. 15–6 (A. S. Tsipko).
25. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 2, 1987.
26. *Vestnik Akademii Nauk*, no. 6, 1987, p. 69. I have retained the small letters for God and Christianity which have been used by unbelievers ever since the revolution.
27. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 9, 1987.
28. *Moscow News*, no. 48, November 29, 1987.
29. *Pravda*, March 28, 1987.
30. See the criticism of him in *Druzhba narodov*, no. 5, 1988, by M. Ryabchik, a Ukrainian.
31. *Druzhba narodov*, no. 6, 1988; see also J. Hough, *Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform* (New York, 1988), pp. 115–6.
32. See *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 17 (E. Anisimov); the issue is discussed in *Radio Liberty Research* RL 271/88 (June 28, 1988 – A. Bohr).
33. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, October 7, 1987.
34. *Znamya*, no. 1, 1988, p. 201 (G. Kh. Popov and N. Adzhubei); for Popov's criticism of Marx' and Engels' view of progress, see Chapter 9 below.
35. *The Spectator*, August 6, 1988.
36. 'Kakoi sotsializm narodu nuzhen', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 20, 1988 (an extremely influential article).
37. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, no. 5, 1987, pp. 19–30, especially p. 260.
38. Cited in *Znanie-sila*, August 1987, pp. 54–5 (V. Kobrin); Cherkasov's notes were first published in 1953.
39. See M. Perrie, *The Image of Ivan the Terrible in Russian Folklore* (Cambridge, 1987), ch. 1.

40. *Znanie-sila*, August 1987, pp. 54–9 (V. Kobrin).
41. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 3, 1987 (A. Egorov).
42. *Druzhba narodov*, no. 4, 1987, p. 108; see also p. 111.
43. *Druzhba narodov*, no. 5, 1987, p. 78. This novel has been published in English as A. Rybakov, *Children of the Arbat* (London, 1988).
44. *Novyi mir*, no. 2, 1987, p. 67.
45. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 20, 1987, citing A. Prokhanov.
46. The novel was Yu. Davydov, *Solomennaya storozha* (1986); see also the interview with Davydov in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, December 23, 1987. On the novel's hero Lopatin, see F. Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (1960), pp. 354–6.
47. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, December 23, 1987 (Yu. Davydov).
48. *Moscow News*, February 8, 1987.
49. 'Pravda i istina', *Nash sovremennik*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 160–75, especially pp. 169–73.
50. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 22 (remarks made on January 8, 1988).
51. 'Istoki', *Novyi mir*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 162–89.
52. 'Kakaya ulitsa vedet k khramu?', *Novyi mir*, no. 11, 1987, pp. 150–88. Klyamkin's views are further discussed in Chapter 3.
53. G. Kh. Popov and N. Adzhubei, 'Pamyat' i " 'Pamyat' " ", *Znaniya*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 188–203, especially pp. 190, 201. For Popov's articles on the serf reform, see *Znanie-sila*, no. 3, 1987, pp. 65–71 and no. 4, p. 82ff; EKO, no. 1, 1987, pp. 144–75.

### 3 The New Economic Policy and the Alternatives to Stalinism

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2. *Moskovskie novosti*, November 9, 1986.
3. *Kommunist*, no. 1, 1988, p. 55; and see *Kommunist*, no. 1, 1988, p. 102 (V. Belkin).
4. *Novyi mir*, no. 5, 1988, p. 171.
5. *Kommunist*, no. 18, 1987, p. 18.
6. See R. W. Davies (ed.), *From Tsarism to the New Economic Policy* (forthcoming).
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8. *Novyi mir*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 172–3.
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10. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 13, 1988 (V. Listov).
11. *Nedelya*, no. 26, 1988 (L. M. Batkin).
12. *Novyi mir*, no. 5, 1988, p. 171.
13. *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, January 14, 1988 (L. Piyasheva); see also her article in *Druzhba narodov*, no. 7, 1988, pp. 179–97; see also Chapter 14.
14. *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, September 27, 1987.
15. *Ogonek*, no. 50, 1987, p. 7.
16. *Izvestiya*, October 3, 1987.
17. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 22 (reporting discussion held on January 8, 1988).

18. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 7, 1987, p. 145 (reporting 'round table' held on April 19, 1987).
19. See *Sel'skaya zhizn'*, February 2, 1988.
20. *Nedelya*, no. 26, 1988 (L. M. Batkin).
21. *Izvestiya*, October 3, 1987.
22. 'Kakaya ulitsa vedet k khramu?', *Novyi mir*, no. 11, 1987, pp. 150–81. This article is summarised and discussed by Teodor Shanin in *Detente*, no. 11 (1988).
23. *Novyi mir*, no. 11, 1987.
24. *Moscow News*, June 14, 1987.
25. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 22, 1987.
26. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 14, 1988.
27. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 6, 1988. Dzerzhinsky and Frunze both died well before the clash between Stalin and Bukharin in 1928.
28. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 3, 1988.
29. O. Latsis, *Kommunist*, no. 18, 1987, pp. 79–90; *Novyi mir*, no. 6, 1988, pp. 124–78.
30. *Novyi mir*, no. 6, 1988, pp. 128–32.
31. *Gorizont*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 26–38.
32. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 13, 1988.
33. See for example *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 15, 1987 (G. Anashkin), *Izvestiya*, August 11, 1987 (Yu. Feofanov).
34. *Znamya*, no. 6, 1988, pp. 173–4.
35. *Yunost'*, no. 4, 1987, pp. 6–11, the print-run of this issue was 3,100,000.
36. *Doctor Zhivago* (London, 1958), pp. 416, 428–9. This novel was eventually published in the Soviet journal *Novyi mir*, nos. 1–4, 1988.
37. *Znamya*, no. 1, 1988, p. 161.
38. *Pravda*, January 12, 1927. Bukharin's view of Esenin was cited by Yu. Prokushev in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 9, 1988, and by Yu. Maksimov in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 6, 1988. The latter wrote that 'you sometimes begin to wonder if the town of Bukhara was named in honour of dear comrade Bukharin'. A rather lame defence of Bukharin by E. Evtushenko appeared in *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, April 14, 1988.
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41. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 13, 1988.
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44. See the worries of E. H. Carr about the role of accident and personality in history described in E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (2nd edn, R. W. Davies (ed.), 1986), pp. xxvi–xxxii (Pelican edn, 1987, pp. 165–70).
45. *Znamya*, no. 6, 1988, p. 125. My account of Latsis' views which follows is based on this article (pp. 124–78).

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49. *Ogonek*, no. 50, 1987, pp. 4–6.
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51. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 7, 1988, pp. 150–1 (contribution by Yu. A. Burganov to discussion on April 21, 1988).

#### 4 The Repression of the Peasantry

1. *Moscow News*, July 12, 1987.
2. See R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: the Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929–1930* (London, 1980), pp. 129–31, 152–5.
3. *Moscow News*, August 9, 1987.
4. *Novyi mir*, no. 6, 1987.
5. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 5, 1988, p. 81.
6. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 14, 1986.
7. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 8, 1987.
8. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 3, 1988.
9. *Znamya*, no. 4, 1987, p. 183.
10. *Novyi mir*, no. 5, 1988, p. 177.
11. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 11, 1987.
12. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 2, 1987.
13. *Don*, nos 1–3, 1987; *Druzhba narodov*, nos 1–2, 1988.
14. 'Po pravu pamyati', *Znamya*, no. 2, and *Novyi mir*, no. 3, 1987.
15. See *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 4, 1987 (E. Sidorov).
16. *Yunost'*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 10–32 (with afterword by A. Tvardovsky's colleague Yu. Burtin).
17. *Druzhba narodov*, no. 6, 1988, p. 145.
18. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, May 12, 1988.
19. It was briefly mentioned by E. Mal'tsev in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 18, 1987.
20. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, November 25, 1987. Similar accounts appeared in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 13, 1988 (Yu. Chernichenko) and May 11, 1988 (previously unpublished novel by Vladimir Sosyura).
21. *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, July 22, 1988.
22. *Kommunist*, no. 18, November 1987, pp. 28–38.
23. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 130.
24. *Pravda*, August 26, September 16, 1988.
25. *Pravda Ukrainy*, September 11, 1987; *Ukrains'kii istorichnii zhurnal*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 15–27. The latter article also appeared in the Soviet journal published for Ukrainians abroad: *Visti z Ukraini*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 7–9, no. 4, 1988, pp. 6–9. An account of these materials appears in *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 103/88, March 7, 1988 (D. Marples).

26. *Molodoi kommunist*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 78–86.
27. *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, June 17, 1988.
28. *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, July 22, 1988.
29. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 7, 1987, pp. 144–5.
30. See especially *Don*, no. 2, 1987, pp. 21, 81.
31. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 22–4.
32. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 9, 1987, pp. 32–53.
33. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 1, 1988, p. 146.
34. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 5, 1988, p. 81 (V. E. Mel'nichenko).
35. *Kommunist Ukrainy*, no. 1, 1988, p. 6.
36. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 6, 1988, p. 102 (L. F. Morozov).
37. *Agitator*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 21–5 (Prof. I. Gorelov and Dr. A. Osipov); this article, by members of staff of the prestigious Academy of Social Sciences of the party Central Committee, is liberally furnished with errors of fact.

## 5 Stalin and his Entourage

1. Anatolii Rybakov, *Children of the Arbat* (London, 1988); the novel first appeared in Russian in *Druzhba narodov*, nos. 4–6, 1988. For a careful discussion, see J. Barber in *Detente*, no. 11 (1988), pp. 8–11.
2. *Trud*, June 19, 1988.
3. *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, June 25, 1988 (O. Volobuev and S. Kuleshov).
4. Isakov told at least two versions of this story, one to Konstantin Simonov (*Znamya*, no. 5, 1988, p. 73), and the other to L. Gurunts (*Zvezda*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 184–5). The essentials are the same, but the details vary considerably.
5. There are also two versions here, and the words attributed to Stalin differ: *Znamya*, no. 5, 1988, p. 69; *Zvezda*, no. 3, 1988, p. 186.
6. *Moskovskaya pravda*, September 4, 1988; the historian was N. G. Pavlenko.
7. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 28, 1988 (O. Moroz).
8. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 28, 1988.
9. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 22, 1988.
10. *Pravda*, July 29, 1988.
11. *Ogonek*, no. 16, 1988, p. 13 (recorded by A. Mirkina).
12. *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, September 1, 1988; Zhukov's letter was to the writer A. D. Sokolov.
13. *Trud*, June 19, 1988; see also Chapter 8.
14. *Pravda*, July 29, 1988; Kuznetsov was describing the years 1951–3.
15. *Pravda*, July 29, 1988.
16. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 21, 1988 (S. Mikoyan); *Ogonek*, no. 18, 1988, p. 29 (reminiscences of senior procuracy official G. A. Terekhov, recorded by A. Golovkov).
17. See Simonov's speculations in *Znamya*, no. 4, 1988, p. 94.
18. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 21, 1988 (S. Mikoyan); *Moscow News*, February 7, 1988.
19. *Znamya*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 102–4. For other materials see *Moscow News*, February 7, 1988; *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 21, 1988 (S.

- Mikoyan), April 2, 1988 (Yu. S. Borisov); *Ogonek*, no. 18, 1988, pp. 28–31 (A. Golovkov); *Druzhba narodov*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 222–45 (Professor Ya. Rapoport, one of the doctors who were arrested).
20. *Znamya*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 96–100 (K. Simonov).
  21. *The Dethronement of Stalin* (Manchester Guardian, 1956), p. 32.
  22. J. A. Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges: the Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 206.
  23. S. Mikoyan, 'Sluga', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 21, 1988.
  24. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, April 2, 1988 (Yu. Borisov).
  25. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, April 2, 1988 (Yu. Borisov).
  26. 'Zhena prezidenta', *Ogonek*, no. 13, 1988, pp. 28–9 (L. Razgon).
  27. *Ogonek*, no. 13, 1988, p. 29.
  28. *Trud*, June 19, 1988 (D. Volkogonov).
  29. *Pravda*, July 29, 1988 (N. Kuznetsov); *Ogonek*, no. 13, 1988, p. 29 (L. Razgon).
  30. *Pravda*, July 29, 1988 (N. Kuznetsov).
  31. *Ogonek*, no. 16, 1988, p. 13 (Zhukov's memoirs, recorded by A. Mirkina).
  32. *Pravda*, November 3, 1987.
  33. *Ogonek*, no. 13, 1988, p. 14.
  34. *Ogonek*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 13–5 (A. Livanova).
  35. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 21, 1988 (S. Mikoyan).
  36. *Zvezda*, no. 3, 1988, p. 185.
  37. *Znamya*, no. 4, 1988, p. 94.
  38. *Pravda*, July 29, 1988.
  39. *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 9, 1987, p. 49 (interview with K. Simonov).
  40. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, April 2, 1988 (Yu. Borisov).
  41. *Trud*, June 19, 1988.
  42. *Ogonek*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 26–9, and no. 2, 1988, pp. 4–7, 31.
  43. *Ogonek*, no. 2, 1988, p. 5.
  44. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 25, 1988 (L. Gorbanevskii).
  45. The discussion is summarised by J. Ellis and R. W. Davies in *Soviet Studies*, vol. ii (1950–1), pp. 209–64. We of course knew nothing of Stalin's role behind the scenes.

## 6 Stalinism and Soviet Society

1. 'Zubr' (literally, the Auroch – i.e. the Dinosaur, the affectionate term by which Timofeev-Resovsky was known): *Novyi mir*, nos. 1–3, 1987.
2. *Druzhba narodov*, nos. 4–6, 1987.
3. *Neva*, no. 3, 1987, pp. 46–7; this long novel is serialised in nos. 1–4.
4. *Oktyabr*', no. 4, 1987, pp. 48–68.
5. *Nash sovremennik*, no. 3, 1987, pp. 124–36; the stories are dated 1969–1981.
6. *Yunost'*, nos. 3 and 4, 1987.
7. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 17, 1987.
8. 'Nepriidumannoe', *Yunost'*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 5–40; this incident is described on p. 19.
9. *Yunost'*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 22–3.

10. *Yunost'*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 23–4.
11. *Nedelya*, no. 19, 1988, p. 16.
12. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, May 17, 1988 (N. Savel'ev).
13. For these reports, which appeared in Kazakh and Central Asian newspapers, see *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 379/88 (August 19) and 397/88 (September 1).
14. 'Zona', *Izvestiya*, August 4, 5, 6, 1988 (L. Shinkarev, an *Izvestiya* correspondent).
15. *Pravda*, June 27, 1945.
16. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 18, 1986.
17. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 11, 1987.
18. *Novyi mir*, no. 4, 1987.
19. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 13, 1987.
20. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 3, 1987.
21. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 7, 1988, p. 138 (V. I. Tetyushev).
22. *Izvestiya*, August 2, 3, 1988.
23. *Pravda*, August 5, 1988.
24. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 24, 1988.
25. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 21, 1988 (S. Mikoyan); this information was provided by Snegov.
26. The Supreme Court decision was reported in *Izvestiya*, August 5, 1988.
27. 'Kak zhivoi s zhivymi', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 29, 1988; see also 'Neustrashimyi Ryutin', *Krasnaya zvezda*, July 23, 1988 (I. Anfert'ev).
28. *Ogonek*, no. 50, 1987, p. 6.
29. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 4, 1988 (A. Vaksberg).
30. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 23, 1988 (B. Tulin and V. Shvarts).
31. *Moscow News*, April 10, 1988.
32. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, August 21, 1988.
33. A. Afanas'ev in *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, January 15, 1988 (Afanas'ev is a senior journalist on the newspaper staff).
34. *Znamya*, nos. 7 and 8, 1988 (A. Zhigulin).
35. *Moscow News*, July 31, 1988.

## 7 The Stalinist System

1. *Oktyabr'*, no. 4, 1987, p. 204.
2. *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 4, 1987, pp. 54–65.
3. A. Bek, *Novoe naznachenie* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1977); details of the banning of the book in the USSR appear on the dust jacket.
4. *Znamya*, nos. 10 and 11, 1986.
5. T. H. Rigby, in R. C. Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation* (London, 1977), pp. 53–76.
6. *Yunost'*, nos. 3 and 4, 1987; *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 17, 1987.
7. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, no. 3, 1987, pp. 62–72.
8. *Neva*, no. 3, 1987, p. 4.
9. *Neva*, no. 3, 1987, pp. 31, 35.
10. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, April 26, 1988.
11. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 12, 1988.
12. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 20, 1988.
13. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 12, 1988.

14. *Moskovskaya pravda*, January 31, 1988.
15. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 2, 1988, pp. 110–33; the report was prepared by Yu. S. Aksenov and L. K. Vinogradov.
16. There is no definite or indefinite article in Russian. 'Byurokratiya' could be translated 'bureaucracy' (i.e., the phenomenon) or 'the bureaucracy' (i.e., the social group). It seems to me that only the latter translation fits with Butenko's argument.
17. The phrases in inverted commas are cited by Zhuravlev from *Eighteenth Brumaire* and are translated here from the Russian.
18. *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 46–53.
19. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 7, 1988, pp. 139–41.
20. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 7, 1988, p. 139.
21. *Obshchestvennye nauki*, no. 2, 1988, p. 67.
22. 'Obrok s gosudarstvennoi nivu' (Feudal Rent from the State Pastures), *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 18, 1988. He has published a further article in *Ural*, no. 1, 1988, which I have not seen.
23. *Kommunist*, no. 12, 1988, pp. 73–84 (L. Gudkov, Yu. Levada, A. Levinson and L. Sedov).
24. *Pravda*, October 3, 1988.

## 8 The Second World War

1. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, September 3, 1988. In addition, due to the fall of the birthrate, an additional 22–23 million births did not occur.
2. *Nedelya*, no. 5, 1988 (I. V. Bestuzhev-Lada).
3. *Nedelya*, no. 13, 1988 (V. Shmidt); a further article by Bestuzhev-Lada appeared in no. 15. How far the use of Stalin's name as a battle-cry was initiated from above remains unclear, but it is certain that many soldiers were inspired and comforted by their image of Stalin.
4. J. Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad* (London, 1975), and *The Road to Berlin* (London, 1983).
5. *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 12, 1987, p. 15.
6. *Istoriya vtoroi mirovoi voiny*, ii (1974), p. 206; see *Kommunist*, no. 9, 1988, p. 94.
7. *Kommunist*, no. 12, 1987, p. 76.
8. *Ogonek*, no. 20, 1988, p. 23 (General A. V. Gorbatov).
9. *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 12, 1987, p. 15 (V. Kulish).
10. *Moscow News*, October 10, 1987 (S. Lipkin); *Ogonek*, no. 40, 1987, p. 19.
11. For the account of the ban, see *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 12, 1987, p. 15 (V. Kulish). Simonov's article appeared in *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 6, 1987.
12. See A. Nekrich, *Otreshis' ot strakha* (London, 1979), chs 7 and 8; Nekrich emigrated in 1976.
13. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, January 20, 1988.
14. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 23, 1987.
15. Speech at the conference on history and literature, April 27–28, 1988, reported in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 18, 1988.
16. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 22, 1988 (V. Shaposhnikov).
17. Reported in *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 6, 1987, p. 54, which

- published the first instalment of the memoirs. This issue went to press on April 11, 1987.
18. *Kommunist*, no. 9, 1988, p. 93 (N. Pavlenko).
  19. *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, May 24, 1987 (A. Samsonov), June 14, 1987 (I. Stadnyuk).
  20. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, June 21, 1988.
  21. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 20, 1988 (A. Vaksberg).
  22. 'Uroki pravdy (Lessons of Truth)', *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 16–25.
  23. *Pravda*, November 25, 1985; *Literaturnaya gazeta*, October 7, 1987.
  24. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, November 25, 1987 (Lieutenant-General M. Manakin, Hero of the Soviet Union).
  25. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 23, 1987.
  26. See *Moscow News*, February 7, 1988.
  27. *Moscow News*, February 7, 1988. Samsonov quotes an 'ordinary soldier-artilleryman' in support of his view, almost as if in reply to Shubkin.
  28. *Yunost'*, no. 5, 1988, p. 16.
  29. *Znamyia*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 3–65 (D. Gusarov).
  30. Both cited in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, November 12, 1986 (A. Mal'gin).
  31. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 6, 1987.
  32. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 10, 1987 (cited by A. Latynina).
  33. *Moskovskaya pravda*, October 15, 16, 1987.
  34. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 18, 1987.
  35. *Znamyia*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 149–50. According to Vannikov's account, Nudel'man, with Vannikov's support, eventually came out on top.
  36. *Ogonek*, no. 42, 1987, pp. 4–5.
  37. *Nedelya*, no. 12, 1988 (S. Apt).
  38. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 10, 1988 (V. Kondrat'ev).
  39. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, January 15, 1988 (A. Afanas'ev).
  40. See *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, March 19, 1987 (O. P. Temushkin).
  41. See, for one example of an extensive literature, *Nauka i zhizn'*, no. 12, 1987, pp. 5–15 (V. Kulish).
  42. *Ogonek*, no. 12, 1988, p. 18.
  43. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 8, 1988.
  44. *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, March 27, 1987; for these events see *Problems of Communism*, November–December 1987, pp. 45–50 (J. D. Dunlop).
  45. *Izvestiya*, August 21, 1987; subsequent correspondence appeared in *Izvestiya*, August 29, September 5 and 11, 1987; these are the source for our subsequent account except where otherwise stated.
  46. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 25, 1986.
  46. E. A. Brodskii, *Oni ne propali bez vesti* ('They Were Not Missing without Trace') (1987), reviewed in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, November 11, 1987.
  48. *Izvestiya*, May 4, 1988.
  49. *Moscow News*, May 8, 1988.
  50. *Krasnaya zvezda*, September 5, 1987 (V. Tolubko and A. Kovalenko).
  51. *Pravda*, August 21, 1987; a full page of correspondence about the article appeared in *Pravda*, September 7, 1987.
  52. *Pravda*, September 5, 7, 1987.

**9 Lenin, the Civil War and its Aftermath (1917–22)**

1. For a sensitive discussion of Soviet political institutions in this period, see T. H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom, 1917–1922* (London, 1979); for the trial, see M. Jansen, *A Show Trial under Lenin: the Trial of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Moscow 1922* (London, 1982).
2. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 73–4; for the article he is criticising, see *Novyi mir*, no. 8, 1987, pp. 241–2 (O. Chaikovskaya).
3. *Novyi mir*, no. 11, 1987, p. 170. *Smena vekh* (Change of Landmarks) was a reply to the anti-revolutionary book *Vekhi* (Landmarks), written by the liberal (formerly Marxist) Peter Struve and others after the defeat of the 1905 revolution.
4. E. Meshcherskaya in *Novyi mir*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 198–242, and *Ogonek*, no. 43, 1987, pp. 26–30.
5. *Novyi mir*, no. 7, 1988 (P. Cherkasov).
6. *Izvestiya*, September 6, 1987 (A. Vasinskii).
7. M. Kuraev, 'Kapitan Dikshtein', in *Novyi mir*, no. 9, 1987.
8. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, July 10, 1988; the decree was abrogated on March 16, 1919.
9. *Nash sovremennik*, no. 4, 1988, p. 169 (V. Kozhinov, discussing critically a story by Yurii Trifonov).
10. See for example E. Losev's long article in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, July 10, 1988.
11. *Novyi mir*, no. 12, 1987, pp. 257–8 (G. Terekhov).
12. *Novyi mir*, nos. 1–4, 1988.
13. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, October 28, 1987.
14. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 27, 1988, previously published in the DDR journal *Sinn und Form*.
15. *Znamya*, no. 1, 1988, p. 199.
16. *Kommunist*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 69–70 (V. Mau, I. Starodubrovskaya).
17. *Kommunist*, no. 9, 1988, pp. 17–8.
18. *Novyi mir*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 163–70.
19. *Moscow News*, November 8, 1987 (discussion between Yu. Afanas'ev and M. Shatrov).
20. *Ogonek*, no. 44, 1987, p. 11 (account by Yu. Gal'perin of life of K. V. Avashev, who became head of the Air Force, and was executed in 1931).
21. *Ogonek*, no. 12, 1988, p. 4 (L. A. Gordon); *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, February 24, 1988 (M. Stepanchenko (Polozova)).
22. 'Golosuyu za platformu (I Vote for a Platform)', *Moskovskaya pravda*, June 3, 1988.
23. *Yunost'*, no. 5, 1988, p. 65 (E. Starostin).
24. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 4, 1988 (B. Oleinik).
25. See *Vestnik vysshei shkoly*, no. 4, 1988, p. 65 (Yu. V. Aksyutin); Lenin's notes are in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, xlv, pp. 205, 396–7.
26. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, January 17, 1988 (D. Urnov).
27. *Moscow News*, November 15, 1987.
28. *Novyi mir*, no. 5, 1988, especially pp. 166, 168, 186.
29. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 4, 1988 (article by B. Oleinik and M. Novikova).
30. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, June 14, 1988 (P. Rodionov).

31. *Druzhba narodov*, no. 6, 1988, p. 148.
32. *Druzhba narodov*, no. 6, 1988, p. 149.
33. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 21, 1988.
34. *Knizhnoe obozrenie*, no. 24, 1988.
35. *Moscow News*, June 19, 1988.

## PART II THE POLITICS OF SOVIET HISTORY

### 10 The Politburo and Soviet History (Spring 1985–Spring 1988)

1. *Pravda*, May 9, 1985. Apparently Gorbachev did not join in the applause (C. Schmidt-Hauer, *Gorbachev: the Path to Power* (London, 1986), p. 130).
2. *Izvestiya*, September 21, 1985.
3. *Pravda*, February 26, 1986.
4. *L'Humanité*, February 8, 1986, cited in M. Walker, *The Waking Giant* (London, 1986).
5. *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 399/86, a document first obtained by *L'Unità* and *La Repubblica*.
6. See Wheatcroft, 'Unleashing the Energy of History', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1.
7. See Wheatcroft, 'Unleashing the Energy', p. 131.
8. See *Nash sovremennik*, no. 7, 1988, p. 106.
9. *Pravda*, February 14, 1987.
10. *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR*, no. 6, 1987, pp. 61, 68–70.
11. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 29, 1987.
12. *Kommunist*, no. 7, May 1987, p. 67.
13. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, June 20, 1987.
14. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 7, 1987; he has made more than one statement of this kind (see, for example, *Pravda*, March 24, 1987).
15. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 8, 1987, p. 140.
16. *Pravda*, July 15, 1987.
17. The fullest account of the rehabilitation appears in *Moscow News*, August 16, 1987.
18. An emigré 'Toiling Peasant Party', with branches in Prague, Paris, Estonia and the Far East, published a journal in Prague at this time (see *Vestnik krest'yanskoi Rossii*, nos. 13–4 (25–6)); at the end of 1930 it published a manifesto denying the guilt of those arrested in the USSR but calling for a peasant war to remove the communists from the villages (see *Vestnik krest'yanskoi Rossii*, no. 8 (20)). Al'bert Vainshtein, Kondratiev's deputy, whom I met in Moscow in 1963 and 1967, told me that the first he heard of the 'Toiling Peasant Party' was from the lips of his OGPU interrogator.
19. *Ot kapitalizma k sotsializmu*, vol. 2 (1981), p. 154; the chapter concerned was written by I. B. Berkhin.
20. *Pravda*, September 11, 1987.
21. *Pravda*, September 17, 1987. On Ligachev's role at this time, see Wheatcroft, 'Unleashing the Energy', pp. 94–6.
22. Cited in M. Harrison, 'Stalinist Industrialisation and the Test of War',

- unpublished report of work in progress, Department of Economics, University of Warwick (May 5, 1988).
23. *Pravda*, November 3, 1987. The report is further discussed in S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Steadying the Energy of History', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1987), pp. 57–114, and in my article in *Detente*, no. 11 (1988), pp. 12–13.
  24. *Pravda*, January 13, 1988.
  25. *Pravda*, February 19, 1988.
  26. *Oktyabr'*, no. 2, 1988, pp. 3–26.
  27. *Moskovskaya pravda*, January 7, 1988. For Sholokhov's letter of June 18, 1929, see *Moscow News*, July 12, 1987, and Wheatcroft, 'Steadying the Energy', pp. 63–4. Kolodnyi wrongly assumes that this letter refers to the upheaval of 1930.
  28. *Pravda*, January 13, 1988.
  29. *Pravda*, February 19, 1988.
  30. *Znamya*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 3–53.
  31. January 10, 1988 (V. Glagolev); February 15, 1988 (Profs. G. Gerasimenko and O. Obichkin).
  32. In Christian theology, the three persons or 'hypostases' of the Godhead are believed to be of the same 'substance'.
  33. January 28, 1988, by two historians, Dr. V. V. Gorbunov and Prof. V. V. Zhuravlev.
  34. *Pravda*, February 29, 1988.
  35. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 13, 1988.
  36. The English edition is B. Souvarine, *Stalin: a Critical Survey of Bolshevism* (London, n.d. [?1939]); it includes a lengthy postscript taking the story up to 1938.
  37. *L'Unità*, May 23, 1988; see the summary in *Radio Liberty Research* RL215/88 (May 26, 1988).
  38. *Christian Science Monitor*, April 27, 1988 (P. Quinn-Judge); see also *New York Review of Books*, August 18, 1988 (P. Reddaway).
  39. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, April 9, 1988.
  40. See *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, May 3, 1988.
  41. See *Moscow News*, May 1, 1988.
  42. *Pravda*, July 26, 1988; the editors of *Pravda* noted, 'We leave this figure to the conscience of the author. We have not found confirmation of these data'.
  43. *Sovetskaya Litva*, August 14, 1988.
  44. Deutscher did in fact write at least one sentence which appears in Andreeva's article: 'Stalin found Russia working with a wooden plough and left her equipped with atomic piles' (*Manchester Guardian*, March 6, 1953). I have not managed to trace the rest of the long quotation attributed by Andreeva to Churchill.
  45. The Politburo commission report is in *Pravda*, February 6, 1988; long citations from the Supreme Court resolution of February 4, and from the Procurator's protest, appear in *Nedelya*, no. 7, 1987, pp. 16–17.
  46. *Krasnaya zvezda*, February 23, 1988 (report by Politburo member General D. T. Yazov).
  47. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, February 21, 1988.

48. *Pravda*, April 23, 1988.

### 11 The Politburo and Soviet History: XIX Party Conference and After

1. *Pravda*, April 22, 1988.
2. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6, 1988, pp. 71–4 (conference on history and literature, April 27–28, 1988).
3. *Izvestiya*, June 14, 1988 (article by Yu. Feofanov).
4. *Nedelya*, no. 29, 1988; *Leningradskaya pravda*, June 21, 1988.
5. *Pravda*, May 27, 1988.
6. *Moskovskaya pravda*, June 4, 1988.
7. *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, no. 24, June 17, 1988. For this criticism of Danilov, see Chapter 4.
8. *Pravda*, June 15, 1988; Kuznetsov's article, 'Questions to a Historian', was not described as a discussion article.
9. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 22, 1988.
10. Tanjug report of June 24, 1988, cited in Radio Liberty Research RL 275/88. In an exchange with the actor Mikhail Ul'yanov at the Conference, Gorbachev reported that her letter had been received, and would be considered by the Presidium of the Conference. A letter from Andreeva to Ul'yanov was published in *Moscow News*, August 14, 1988.
11. The proceedings reported below are taken from *Pravda*, June 29–July 4, 1988, except where otherwise stated.
12. See T. H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom, 1917–1922, passim*, and E. A. Rees, *State Control in Soviet Russia: the Rise and Fall of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, 1920–34* (London, 1987), chs 1–2.
13. See *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 13, 1988 (O. Suleimenov), and *Pravda*, August 5, 1988 (D. Granin). The editor of *Pravda*, a rather conservative newspaper, met with almost equal hostility. Many delegates evidently believed strongly that the press was too eager to criticise them and was unreliable.
14. This phrase was in the broadcast speech (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* SU/0195 C/3, July 5, 1988), but does not appear in the Soviet newspaper report of the speech. The anomaly was referred to by *Moscow News*, July 10, 1988.
15. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 6, 27, August 10, 31, 1988.
16. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 31, 1988.
17. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 1, 1988.
18. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 13, August 17, 1988.
19. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 20, 1988.
20. *Izvestiya*, August 4, 1988.
21. *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, August 27, 1988.
22. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 7, 1988 (V. Amlinskii).
23. *Pravda*, July 10, 1988.
24. *Pravda*, August 5, 1988; this document presented a consolidated list of persons rehabilitated in recent months, part of which had already been reported in the press.
25. *Pravda*, September 9, 1988.
26. *Pravda*, June 5, 1988. On this whole incident see *Radio Liberty Research* RL 338/88 (July 29, 1988 – J. Wishnevsky).

27. *Pravda*, July 31, 1988.
28. *Pravda*, July 30, 1988.
29. *Pravda*, August 7, 1988.
30. *Pravda*, August 11, 1988.
31. *Sovetskaya Litva*, August 14, 1988 (the meeting was on August 11).
32. For Gromyko's speech and the personnel changes, see *Pravda*, October 1, 2, 1988.

### PART III PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

#### 12 The Professional Historians

1. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 8, 1987 (A. Turkov).
2. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 29, 1987. Polyakov is a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences and head of a department in the Institute of the History of the USSR.
3. *Moscow News*, January 11, 1987; an article by V. Loginov along similar lines appeared the previous November. These articles are discussed in detail by Wheatcroft, 'Unleashing the Energy' (1987), pp. 105–7.
4. *Moscow News*, May 10, 1987.
5. *Russkaya mysl'* (Paris), May 29, 1987.
6. For further details of the meeting, see Wheatcroft, 'Unleashing the Energy', pp. 110–18. According to a Western account Yurasov was expelled from the Institute, and obtained a job at a film studio. He was then permitted to enrol for a correspondence course at the Institute, and gives lectures on the Stalin years in his spare time. (*Radio Liberty Research*, RL193/88 (May 11), citing *Information* (Copenhagen), March 7, 1988.)
7. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 7, 1987, pp. 137–52.
8. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, March 21, 1987.
9. *Izvestiya*, May 3, 1987.
10. *Pravda Ukrainy*, June 9, 1987 (V. I. Yurchuk).
11. *Pravda Ukrainy*, July 31, 1987 (V. Mel'nichenko).
12. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 4, 1987. Ponomarev is deputy director of the Institute of Party History for Moscow and Region.
13. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 4, 1987. For the legend, see C. Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1988), pp. 124–30. This novel was published in the USSR in 1980.
14. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, July 28, 1987.
15. *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta*, no. 28, July 1987 (A. Nikonov).
16. *Pravda*, July 26, 1987. This was often the result of censorship by the editors (see the account of Danilov's *Pravda* article in Chapter 4).
17. *Ogonek*, no. 26, June 1987, pp. 4–7; Polikarpov reports that he suffered from inflammation of the lungs which turned into meningitis and proved fatal; but emigré accounts claim that he was poisoned (see preface by B. Pearce to F. F. Raskolnikov, *Kronstadt and Petrograd in 1917* (London, 1982), p. xi).
18. See, for example, V. S. Zaitsev in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 12, 1963.
19. *Ogonek*, no. 26, June 1987, no. 6.

20. The letter appears in full in Raskolnikov, *Kronstadt and Petrograd in 1917*, pp. 345–56.
21. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 29, 1987.
22. Yu. A. Polyakov, *Perekhod k nepu i sovetskoe krest'yanstvo* (Moscow, 1967).
23. For the candidates, see *Vestnik Akademii Nauk*, no. 11, 1987; for those elected see *Izvestiya*, December 25, 1987.
24. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 130–1.
25. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 28–30.
26. The resolution is in *Istoriya SSSR*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 207–10; see also the interview with Danilov in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, April 1, 1988.
27. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 3.
28. For the names of the old and new boards, see *Voprosy istorii*, nos. 1 and 2, 1988.
29. See E. Dabagyan and A. Karavaev in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 8, 1988, and A. Galaeva in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, October 5, 1988.
30. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 116–21.
31. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 2, 1987, pp. 127–9.
32. In August 1987, the Soviet archives journal published, under my editorship, notes sent to me by Maurice Dobb on a Gosplan meeting attended by Keynes in September 1925 (*Sovetskie arkhivy*, no. 4, 1987, pp. 97–8); this little step towards *glasnost'*, and towards collaboration between British and Soviet historians, was agreed in principle with Vaganov and the editor of the journal as early as October 1984.
33. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, March 22, 1988.
34. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 2, 1987, pp. 128–9.
35. Statement by A. M. Yakovlev in *Sovetskaya Litva*, August 14, 1988. According to Yakovlev, none of the other Communist parties would agree to this, so it remains unclear how far access will in fact be available for party historians.
36. See B. Ilizarov in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 1, 1988.
37. *Ogonek*, no. 8, 1988, p. 28.

### 13 The Crisis in History Teaching

1. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 26 (G. V. Klokova, head of a laboratory on history teaching in the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR).
2. See J. Muckle, *A Guide to the Soviet Curriculum: What the Russian Child is Taught in School* (London, 1988), pp. 129–41. These were previously forms IX and X.
3. Yu. I. Korablev, Yu. S. Kukushkin, I. A. Fedosov, V. P. Sherstobitov, *Istoriya SSSR* (1986) (for form IX); V. D. Esakov, Yu. S. Kukushkin, A. P. Nenarokov, *Istoriya SSSR* (for form X). Both volumes are under the general editorship of Kukushkin and the whole series of history textbooks is under the general editorship of Academician V. A. Rybakov.
4. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 17, 1988 (V. Orlov). Apparently all textbooks written in the republics 'have to be taken to Moscow for approval' (*Sovetskaya Litva*, August 14, 1988).

5. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 26 (G. V. Klokova). See also the comment by G. Nikanorov, a school teacher, in *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, April 14, 1988.
6. *Izvestiya*, June 10, 1988 (I. Ovchinnikova).
7. *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, June 17, 1988.
8. See *Moscow News*, July 24, 1988.
9. *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, June 17, 1988.
10. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 8, 1988.
11. *Pravda*, July 19, 1988 (L. Leonova, head of Department of History of CPSU(b), Faculty of History, Moscow University).
12. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6, 1988, pp. 104–6 (A. I. Ovcharenko).
13. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 4, 1988 (V. Amlinskii).
14. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, September 1, 1987.
15. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 5, 1988, p. 185.
16. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3, 1988, p. 28.
17. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, May 20, 1988.
18. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, July 23, 1988.
19. *Uchitel'skaya gazeta*, May 21, 1988; *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 13, 1988.
20. See *Halbjahresbericht zur Bildungspolitik und pädagogischen Entwicklung in der DDR, den UdSSR, der VR Polen, der CSSR und der VR China*, no. 1, 1988, pp. 53–6.
21. For form X (old form IX) *Istoriya SSSR* was listed in Soviet book catalogues in the summer of 1988 under I. Fedosov, and for form XI (old form X), *Istoriya SSSR* was listed under V. Esakov, both members of the old group of authors. The author of the book on world history, *Noveishaya istoriya*, was to be V. Furaev, who was responsible for the 1976 edition.
22. *Uchitel'skaya gazeta*, July 31, 1988.
23. The first, by Viktor Listov, appeared in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, July 13, 1988, and dealt with 1917–27; the second, by G. Boryugov and V. Kozlov, appeared in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, October 12, 1988, and dealt with 1928–37.
24. *Moskovskaya pravda*, September 14, 1988.
25. *Uchitel'skaya gazeta*, July 31, 1988.
26. *Pravda*, October 5, 1988.
27. *Moskovskaya pravda*, September 14, 1988.

#### PART IV THE DEBATE IN CONTEXT

##### 14 Truth and Bias in the New History

1. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 19, 1987.
2. *Novyi mir*, no. 2, 1987, pp. 181–201.
3. The method used to construct the index is described by Ya. P. Gerchuk in *Voprosy kon'yunktury*, ed. N. D. Kondrat'ev, vol. 2, part i (1926), pp. 79–106; see also *Ekonomicheskii byulleten' Kon'yunktturnogo Instituta*, no. 2, 1926, pp. 12–20.
4. *Nedelya*, no. 15, 1988. On the basis of Bestuzhev-Lada's figures, Peter Millar wrote in the *Sunday Telegraph* (London), May 15, 1988, that 'a

Moscow newspaper, *Nedelya (The Week)*, has numbered Stalin's victims at as many as 50 million, a figure far higher than any suggested even by Western historians'. The 50 million was obtained by adding Bestuzhev-Lada's figures for both arrests and deaths during dekulakisation, famine and repression.

5. *Pravda*, September 16, 1988.
6. Larisa Piyasheva, 'Economist Nikolai Kondrat'ev', *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, January 14, 1988; see also her article in *Druzhba narodov*, no. 7, 1988, pp. 179–226.
7. *Ogonek*, no. 48, 1987, pp. 26–31.
8. 'Retush' tragedii?', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 6, 1988; the article appears under the heading 'Point of View'.
9. 'Problema tempov v sotsialisticheskome stroitel'stve: razmyshleniya ekonomista', *Kommunist*, no. 18, 1987, pp. 79–90.
10. *Sovetskaya Litva*, August 14, 1988 (discussion with Lithuanian media representatives and intellectuals).

## 15 Conclusions: History and the Reconstruction of Soviet Society

1. *Pravda*, April 23, 1988.
2. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 28, 1988.
3. *Nedelya*, no. 5, 1988 (V. Bestuzhev-Lada); see also the discussion between Yu. Levada and V. Sheinis in *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, May 3, 1988.
4. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, July 23, 1988.
5. *Vechernyaya Moskva*, August 17, 1988 (G. Zhuravlev); it seems that those surveyed were asked to place themselves in one of these rather vague categories.
6. *Pravda*, July 26, 1988.
7. *Pravda*, July 31, 1988 (I. Dedkov and O. Latsis).
8. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 11, 1987.
9. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 9, 1988 (speech at Board of Workers' Union).
10. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 6, 1987.
11. *Nash sovremennik*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 160–75.
12. The novel, by V. Ivanov, is serialised in *Nash sovremennik*, nos. 4–6, 1988.
13. *Ogonek*, no. 12, 1988, pp. 4–5.
14. *Kommunist*, no. 13, 1988, pp. 3–15; this issue was signed for the press on August 15, 1988.
15. *Kommunist*, no. 12, 1988, pp. 57–9.
16. *Izvestiya*, September 16, 1988.
17. *Pravda*, September 30, 1987.

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Since Mikhail Gorbachev took office in 1985 every aspect of the Soviet past has been under scrutiny. There has never been anything quite like this in the whole history of Russia. Tens of millions of Soviet citizens are eagerly absorbing and debating the vast outpouring of novels, books, articles, films, and TV programs about their past. Much new information has appeared, often sensational, about how the Stalin regime worked and what it meant for top politicians, generals, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens. Stalinists, Russian nationalists, democratic socialists, and others are locked in bitter debate. Was the victory of Stalinism inevitable? Was there an alternative road to socialism? Even Lenin and his policies are now questioned. The Politburo itself is deeply divided about how far the debate should go and what conclusions should be drawn from it. The reconsideration about the past is part of the discussion about the way forward for Soviet society: How big should be the role of the market? How much freedom and democracy? This book reviews the whole discussion about history and considers its impact on the Gorbachev revolution.

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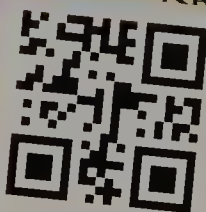
**R. W. Davies** is a Professor in the Centre for Russian and East European Studies of the University of Birmingham. He is a historian and specialist on Soviet affairs who has published many books and articles on the history of the Soviet Union between the wars and on the Soviet economy today. He has visited the Soviet Union on many occasions to study in libraries and archives, and to meet Soviet historians.

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