

relatively weak chief executive role. This probably reflects more than anything else protective measures taken within the oligarchy itself, whose members recognize that a strong chief executive might quickly make himself dictator in a system lacking serious societal checks on the supreme echelon of power. It remains problematical, however, whether the oligarchical structure of power could survive a profound or prolonged crisis situation requiring expeditious and decisive leadership.

Should some future chief executive attempt "to escape from the control of the collective," as Khrushchev was alleged to be doing on the eve of his removal, he will need speedily to assume the powers and methods of a tyrant if he is to escape a similar fate. Such an outcome may now seem improbable but cannot be ruled out. Should it occur, we would again have "a mono-organizational society ruled by a tyrant"—our definition of Stalinism. But would it be *Stalinism*, with a society so much richer, better educated, and more complex than that of 1953, with a new political elite, and above all a *different* tyrant? For if, as Tolstoy tells us, "all happy families resemble each other, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," every tyrant will impose his own particular variant of misery on his subjects. For the same reason, it probably casts more confusion than light to extend the "Stalinist" label even to those other Communist regimes with strongmen at the top; it is confusing in the same way, for instance, as labeling the various fascist dictatorships of the 1930's "Hitlerite." Still, as Stalin was the man whose tyranny was built in tandem with the first mono-organizational society, there is some justice in invoking his name whenever such a society throws up a new tyrant.

Tucker, Robert C., "Stalinism as Revolution from Above." Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation, Tucker, Robert C., ed., New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997, pp. 77-148

Stalinism as Revolution from Above

Robert C. Tucker

I

Western scholarship has been tardy in fixing analytic attention upon Stalinism. A bulky historical literature on the Stalin period and many biographies and memoirs dealing with the man Stalin coexist with a dearth of interpretive discussion of the "ism," by which I mean not alone the body of thought but the entire Stalinist phenomenon as an historical stage in the development of the Russian and other Communist revolutions and of Communism as a culture.

To some degree, this situation shows the impact of Soviet thought patterns upon our scholarship. From the mid-1920's, it became a firm article of doctrine in the Communist movement that the only legitimate "ism" was Leninism—or Marxism-Leninism, to use the subsequently adopted phrase. Stalin himself never countenanced the use of "Stalinism" because of the deviational implications it would consequently have carried. The forcible mass collectivization, the industrialization drive, and other events of the Stalinist revolution from above of the 1930's were officially described as Marxism-Leninism in action—the natural and logical unfolding of the original Leninist revolutionary impulse and program. There was a strong tendency in the Western sovietological literature of the 1940's and 1950's to give credence to this claim, albeit with a different moral judgment on the process. As a sample of—and perhaps epitaph on—the tendency in question, we may cite the following: "Stalinism can and must be defined as a pattern of thought and action that flows directly from Leninism. Stalin's way of looking at the contemporary world, his professed aims, the decisions he made at variance with one another, his conceptions of the tasks facing the communist state—these and many specific traits are entirely Leninist."¹ From such a standpoint, there was no special problem of interpretive understanding of "Stalinism."

Although Stalin never, not even at the height of his personality cult, tolerated the use of the term "Stalinism," he and his party allies of the mid-1920's employed (or, as Trotsky maintained, concocted) the term "Trotskyism" as the emblem of a system of political heresy against Leninism. For Trotsky and his followers, however, the heresy was the political line that Stalin and his associates were

1. Alfred G. Meyer, *Leninism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp. 282-83.

pursuing and the ideological tenets, like "socialism in one country," which they were using in justification of the line. So it is in the Trotskyist polemical literature that we find the earliest interpretive and critical discussion of Stalinism. In this interpretation, Stalinism appeared as the practice, and its reflection in theory, of a conservative bureaucratic takeover of the Bolshevik Revolution, a Soviet Thermidor, of which Stalin himself was merely the representative figure and symbol.²

In contradistinction to the first of the two positions just mentioned, I hold that Stalinism must be recognized as an historically distinct and specific phenomenon which did *not* flow directly from Leninism, although Leninism was an important contributory factor. In contradistinction to the second, I will argue here (1) that Stalinism, despite conservative, reactionary, or counter-revolutionary elements in its makeup, was a revolutionary phenomenon in essence; (2) that the Stalinist revolution from above, whatever the contingencies involved in its inception and pattern, was an integral phase of the Russian revolutionary process as a whole; and (3) that notable among the causal factors explaining why the Stalinist phase occurred, or why it took the form it did, are the heritage of Bolshevik revolutionism, the heritage of old Russia, and the mind and personality of Stalin.

Because of the presence and significant contribution of this last, the personal factor, which may be seen as an historical accident (Stalin, for example, might easily have died, like Jacob Sverdlov, in the great flu epidemic of 1918–19), my thesis that the Stalinist revolution from above was an "integral phase" of the Russian revolutionary process as a whole is *not* meant to imply that the Stalinist phase was an unavoidable one given the nature of the Bolshevik movement, of Russia, and of the historical circumstances which prevailed in the prelude. Given the diversity of currents in the Bolshevik movement of the mid-1920's, we must allow that a different, non-revolutionary form of further Soviet developmental movement was a possibility. That such a possibility did not materialize is a fact, but it could have—given such an easily imaginable difference in the historical situation as the rise of some other political leader than Stalin to power in succession to Lenin. On the other hand, my stress here on the culturalist factors in the Stalinist revolution from above implies that Stalin's personality alone must not be seen as the explanation of why Soviet development proceeded in the revolutionary manner that it did under his leadership in the 1930's.

II

The distinction between a palace revolution or coup d'état and a full-scale sociopolitical revolution is familiar and generally accepted. In the one, a swift and more or less violent change of a society's political leadership takes place without far-reaching inroads into the character of the society itself. In the other, a change

2. For Trotsky's thesis on the antithesis between Bolshevism and Stalinism, see his pamphlet *Stalinism and Bolshevism: Concerning the Historical and Theoretical Roots of the Fourth International* (New York, 1937). The thesis is elaborated further in his book *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York, 1937).

of political leadership, which may witness a coup d'état at such a critical point of transition as November 6–7, 1917, in Russia, furthers a radical reconstitution of the sociopolitical community and an attempted break with the social past, an effort to refashion the society's culture or habitual mode of life—its institutions, symbol-systems, behavioral patterns, rituals, art forms, values, etc. In the later aspect, a sociopolitical revolution conforms to Wallace's notion of a "revitalization movement."³

A sociopolitical revolution normally takes place, to start with at any rate, both "from above" and "from below." Masses of ordinary people participate in the process, while the new political leadership which the revolution has brought to power espouses the transformation of the society as a program and actively promotes it as a policy. Insofar as the revolutionary leadership's ideology contains a prevision of a transformed society, Wallace describes this as its "goal culture." The methods advanced for completing the transformative process he calls the "transfer culture."⁴

A sociopolitical revolution may, therefore, be an historically protracted process, taking place over years or decades, with intervals of quiescence, rather than only during the short time of spectacular social change when it is universally realized that a revolution is in progress. The Russian case illustrates this point. To many, "Russian Revolution" means the events of 1917 culminating in the Bolsheviks' seizure of power toward the end of that year. From a broader and historically more adequate standpoint, the Russian Revolution was a social epoch comprising the manifold social, political, economic, and cultural transformations during the period of Civil War and War Communism that ensued after 1917 and lasted until the initiation of the New Economic Policy in 1921.⁵ And on the still more comprehensive view that is being advocated here, the Revolution extended over slightly more than two decades. Otherwise expressing it, NEP society was an interval of relative quiescence between two phases of the Russian revolutionary process: the 1917–21 phase just mentioned, and the Stalinist phase that ensued in 1929–39. In saying this, I do not mean to suggest that NEP society was condemned by the nature of Bolshevism to be no more than an "interval of relative quiescence." Other outcomes, as already suggested, are readily imaginable. But given *all* the factors that were operative, Stalin's personal role included, the outcome was the one that history witnessed. The NEP, that is, proved in fact to be an interval between two phases of the Russian revolutionary process.

Bolshevik public discussion during the early 1920's reflected a sense of the NEP as an historical pause in the commonly employed description of War Communism as a time of revolutionary "advance" or of the NEP as a time of revolutionary "retreat" and "regrouping of forces." The Bolsheviks were aware—grimly so—of being surrounded by a vast mass of predominantly peasant people whose tempo-

3. See p. xv and note 5, above.

4. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Culture and Personality*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1970), p. 192.

5. Such a view is taken, for example, by W. H. Chamberlin in his classic study in two volumes, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921* (New York, 1935).

rary willingness to respond to revolutionary leadership in the 1917–1921 upheaval went along with a tenacious underlying resistance to the reshaping of their way of life and thought. The peasants who burned down manor houses in 1917 and parceled out the estates had, for example, little animus against the Russian Orthodox religion and, still more important, no wish to live and work in agricultural communes under the Soviet regime. Whence their eloquently expressive saying, quoted by Lenin on one occasion, “Long live the Bolsheviks, down with the Communists!”—the former being those who had bid them take the landowners’ land and the latter those who now wanted to deprive them of it. By early 1921 the Bolsheviks found that their continued tenure of power depended upon the suppression of the Communists inside themselves to the extent of legalizing private production and trade under the NEP in the rural economy, small industry, and commerce. To make peace with the overwhelming majority of the population, to reestablish the link, or *smychka*, between workers and peasants, they had to desist from herculean efforts toward rapid socialist transformation of the country’s economic way of life and tolerate, if not actively encourage, that small-scale commodity production of which Lenin wrote in 1920 that it “engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale.”⁶

The NEP Russia that emerged from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917–21 could be described as a society with two uneasily coexisting cultures. There was an officially dominant Soviet culture comprising the Revolution’s myriad innovations in ideology, governmental structure, political procedures, economic organization, legal order, education, the intellectual pursuits, values, art, daily life, and ritual. Side by side with it was a scarcely sovietized Russian culture that lived on from the pre-1917 past as well as in the small-scale rural and urban private enterprise that flourished under the NEP. It was a Russia of churches, the village *mir*, the patriarchal peasant family, old values, old pastimes, old outlooks along with widespread illiteracy, muddy roads, and all that Trotsky had in mind when he wrote that: “Essentially the Revolution means the people’s final break with the Asiatic, with the Seventeenth Century, with Holy Russia, with icons and cockroaches.”⁷ The coexistence of cultures was competitive in a one-sided way: it was the declared objective of the new one to transform the old one, so that, as Lenin declared in addressing the Moscow Soviet on November 20, 1922, “out of NEP Russia will come socialist Russia.”

Doubts of this existed in some quarters, including the émigré Russian intellectuals associated with the symposium *Smena vekh* (Change of Landmarks). For Ustrialov and his fellow *smenavekhovtsy*, the NEP was the beginning of the end of Russian Communism as a revolutionary culture-transforming movement, its incipient deradicalization, and Russia’s imminent return to national foundations. On the Bolsheviks’ behalf, Lenin anathematized that perspective. And replying

6. “Left-Wing” Communism—An Infantile Disorder, in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York, 1975), p. 553.

7. Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1960), p. 94.

to those Menshevik-minded Marxists (“our European philistines”) who argued, like Sukhanov, that it had been a mistake for socialists to seize power in so culturally backward a country as Russia, Lenin defiantly replied in one of his last articles, “Why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilization in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving toward socialism?” If a definite level of culture was needed, as they said, for the building of socialism, “Why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and then, with the aid of the workers’ and peasants’ government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?”⁸

While upholding the historical correctness of the Bolshevik decision to take power in 1917 and to pursue the revolutionary political course that it did subsequently, Lenin in 1921 and after redefined the movement’s objective and strategy in the new situation marked by retreat at home and delay of other Marxist revolutions abroad. The transcending of the NEP was to take place within the framework of the NEP, by evolution not revolution. Lenin could not have been more explicit on this point. Revolution, he explained, “is a change which breaks the old order to its very foundations, and not one that cautiously, slowly and gradually remodels it, taking care to break as little as possible.” War Communism, with its forcible food requisitioning, had represented a “revolutionary approach” to the building of a socialist society; it had sought to break up the old social-economic system completely at one stroke and substitute for it a new one. The NEP signified an abandonment of that in favor of a “reformist approach” whose method was “not to *break up* the old social-economic system—trade, petty production, petty proprietorship, capitalism—but to *revive* trade, petty proprietorship, capitalism, while cautiously and gradually getting the upper hand over them, or making it possible to subject them to state regulation *only to the extent that they revive.*”⁹

The transfer culture, as Lenin now envisaged it, was the “cooperating (*kooperirovanie*) of Russia” along with the development of a popularly administered, non-bureaucratized society with a large-scale, advanced machine industry based heavily on electrification and operating according to plan. The cooperating of Russia meant the involvement of the entire population in cooperative forms of work. This would realize the utopian dreams of the “old cooperators” like Robert Owen, whose error had been not the vision of a cooperative socialism but the belief that it could be put into practice without a political revolution such as the one that the Bolsheviks had carried out. To achieve the cooperated Russia through the NEP, by the reformist methods that now defined the transfer culture in Lenin’s mind, would be the work of “a whole historical epoch” comprising

8. “Our Revolution (Apropos of N. Sukhanov’s Notes),” in *The Lenin Anthology*, pp. 705–6. For Lenin’s anathema on the *Smena vekh* tendency see his report to the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922, in *The Lenin Anthology*, pp. 525–26. Ustrialov was the intellectual leader of the *smenavekhovtsy*.

9. All quotations in this passage are from “The Importance of Gold Now and After the Complete Victory of Socialism,” in *The Lenin Anthology*, p. 512. The essay was written in November 1920.

one or two decades at a minimum. The methods themselves would consist very largely of "culturalizing" (*kul'turnichestvo*), the remaking of the popular mentality and ethos by educative means starting with the overcoming of illiteracy. Only through such a gradual, long-range "cultural revolution" would it be possible to gain the population's voluntary acceptance of cooperative socialism.¹⁰ It was the position taken by Lenin in "On Cooperation" and other last articles that Bukharin subsequently elaborated as his contribution to the theory of building socialism in one country which he defended against the Left opposition in the intra-party controversies of the early post-Lenin period.¹¹

History, as we know, did not go the way that Lenin charted; it went the Stalinist way. This was radically different from the path delineated in those Lenin articles of the final period that Bukharin, in the essay that he published in *Pravda* in January 1929 for the fifth anniversary of Lenin's death, described as "Lenin's Political Testament." Stalinism in its time of self-assertion and triumph, the 1930's, was a revolution in exactly the sense that Lenin had defined it in warning against a revolutionary approach to the further building of Soviet socialism: "a change which breaks the old order to its very foundations, and not one that cautiously, slowly, and gradually remodels it, taking care to break as little as possible." Instead of transcending the NEP evolutionarily, Stalinism abolished it revolutionarily, by decree and by force. Instead of proceeding gradually and by means of persuasion, it proceeded at breakneck speed and wielded state power coercively to smash popular resistance by terrorizing the population. Instead of taking care to break as little as possible, it broke the spirit along with the bodies of a great proportion of the generation that had come of age during the first phase of the Revolution a decade before. It also consumed a very heavy proportion of those party leaders and members who had, in the 1920's, been Stalinists in the simple sense of supporters of the general secretary and his "general line" in the fight with the oppositions.

The rural revolution called "mass collectivization" illustrates these points. In the space of a few years and at the cost of untold suffering and a famine whose toll of lives ran into many millions, a countryside with about twenty-five million peasant farmsteads functioning on nationalized land was transformed into one in which the great majority of those peasants were organized into some 200,000 collective farms (*kolkhozy*) while many more were employed as hired workers on state farms (*sovkhozy*). In the *Short Course* of party history (1938), which Stalin edited personally, the collectivization is described as "a profound revolu-

10. All quotations and the ideas summarized in this paragraph are from "On Cooperation," in *The Lenin Anthology*, pp. 707-13. The essay was dictated by Lenin in January 1923.

11. For Bukharin's thought in this period, see Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography* (New York, 1973), Chap. VI; and Moshe Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers* (Princeton, 1974), Chap. 3. Earlier treatments of enduring importance include Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), Chaps. I and IV; Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization* (Evanston, 1968), Chap. 12; and N. Valentinov, *Doktrina pravogo kommunizma* (Munich, 1960).

tion, a leap from an old qualitative state of society to a new qualitative state, equivalent in its consequences to the revolution of October 1917." The *Short Course* goes on: "The distinguishing feature of this revolution is that it was accomplished *from above*, on the initiative of the state, and directly supported *from below* by the millions of peasants, who were fighting to throw off kulak bondage and to live in freedom in the collective farms."¹²

It was indeed a state-initiated, state-directed, and state-enforced revolution from above—as was the Stalinist revolution as a whole—but the *Short Course* lied when it spoke of mass peasant support from below. Historical evidence available to us now in great abundance attests that not alone the ones classified in kulaks, whose "liquidation as a class" was proclaimed as the banner of the collectivization drive, but the mass of middle peasants and even some of the rural poor were sullenly opposed to the rural revolution and joined the *kolkhozy* only under duress or because of fear. The claim in Soviet publicity of Stalin's time and after that the collectivization was Lenin's "cooperative plan" in action is groundless. Not only was there no patient, long-drawn-out educational effort ("cultural revolution") to prepare the peasantry's mind for voluntary acceptance of cooperative farming, and no antecedent industrialization sufficient to produce the hundred thousand tractors that Lenin had foreseen as a powerful inducement to the peasants to farm cooperatively; still more important, the *kolkhozy* were (and are) socialist cooperatives only in their formal façade.

The rural revolution from above of 1929-33 proceeded simultaneously with the heroic phase of the Stalinist industrial revolution from above: that state-directed, frantic, military-oriented industrialization drive whose very slogan, "Fulfill the Five-Year Plan in Four," reflected the gap between what actually happened and the Plan as officially adopted in 1929.¹³ The relationship between these two processes presents a highly complex problem on which scholarly opinion has evolved as new factual information has become available in the recent past. It was at one time widely believed that the forcible mass collectivization was a necessity for the desired high-speed super-industrialization in that the *kolkhoz* system enabled the Soviet state to extract otherwise unobtainable (or uncertainly obtainable) agricultural surpluses to finance such basic needs of industrialization as the importation of foreign machinery and technicians and to supply the urban population with food and industry with raw materials.¹⁴ Such, indeed, appears to have been the underlying conception on which Stalin acted

12. *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short Course* (Moscow, 1945), p. 305.

13. On the disparity between plan and practice, involving also the "wild target increases issued in 1930 and 1931," see Holland Hunter, "The Overambitious First Soviet Five-Year Plan," and the comments on Hunter's article by Stephen Cohen and Moshe Lewin in *The Slavic Review* (June, 1973). Hunter's reference to the wild target increases appears on p. 239.

14. For a representative statement of this belief, see E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-29*, Vol. One, Part I (London, 1969), pp. 269-70, where the authors write, *inter alia*, "If industrialization was a condition of collectivization, collectivization was a condition of industrialization."

at the time; collectivization was envisaged as the presupposition of a form of industrialization geared to the priority of heavy industry and war industry over the consumer-goods industries whose greater development would have been a *sine qua non* of a Soviet industrialization within the frame of a continued rural NEP. In the event, however, the economic consequences of collectivization were so catastrophic that recent researches by Western scholars, supported by archival data published in 1968 and 1969 by the Soviet historian A. A. Barsov, have reached the conclusions that (1) "mass collectivization of Soviet agriculture must be reckoned as an unmitigated economic policy disaster," and (2) "the oppressive state agricultural procurement system, rather than serving to extract a net contribution from agriculture as a whole, should be credited with preventing the collectivization disaster from disrupting the industrialization drive."¹⁵

III

Only two major aspects of the Stalinist revolution from above have been discussed here. Any adequate account, even of fundamentals, would have to consider also the state-building process which went on *pari passu* with mass collectivization and industrialization: the expansion of the bureaucratic state apparatus, the huge growth of the system of forced labor, the concomitant growth of the politico-economic police empire which administered it, and the extreme centralization of the state power. Something more will be said about this below. Concentrating for the present on collectivization and industrialization, I want to ask why they took place in the Stalinist way.

According to a view which draws part of its inspiration from Trotsky's thinking and which achieved wide influence owing to its espousal by Isaac Deutscher, Stalinist industrialization-cum-collectivization (which Deutscher calls "the second revolution") was a necessitated response to a "grave social crisis" of the later 1920's. Citing Stalin's statistics, Deutscher states that in January 1928, in particular, government grain purchases fell short by two million tons of the minimum needed to feed the urban population.¹⁶ Emergency measures were applied by the government to extract grain that was being withheld from the market. The peasants were not, for the most part, politically motivated against the Soviet regime, but were driven by economic circumstances, in that the small farms produced only enough to meet the peasants' own food needs while the "big farmers" with surpluses were charging prices beyond the ability of the town population to pay and also were demanding concessions to capitalist farming. In this dilemma, yielding to the peasants would antagonize the urban working class, and refusal to yield would also bring a threat of famine and urban unrest. A "radical solution" was demanded, and Stalin, having until the very last mo-

15. James R. Millar, "Mass Collectivization and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five-Year Plan: A Review Article," *The Slavonic Review*, December 1974, pp. 764, 765.

16. Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1967), p. 313. The phrase "a grave social crisis" appears on p. 312.

ment shrunk from an upheaval, acted "under the overwhelming pressure of events" and embarked upon the second revolution in an "unpremeditated, pragmatic manner." He was "precipitated into collectivization by the chronic danger of famine in 1928 and 1929."¹⁷

Such, in Deutscher's classic version, is the "circumstantial explanation" (as we may call it) of the initial phase of the Stalinist revolution from above. It is followed by Carr and Davies with specific reference to the collectivization drive. Having shown that party policy, including that of the Lefts such as Trotsky and Preobrazhensky, had always envisaged a gradualistic approach in collectivization, Carr and Davies find the explanation for the abandonment of gradualism in favor of "direct assault" in "the now chronic and irremediable crisis of the grain collections" and "the dire need for grain to feed town and factories." They go on: "In this desperate impasse, the leaders snatched eagerly at the growing belief in the prospects of collective agriculture and in its capacity to meet the needs of a planned economy." And, echoing Deutscher, they declare that "the sudden decision reached at the end of 1929 was neither preconceived nor premeditated."¹⁸ This restates Carr's earlier argument (likewise an echo of Deutscher's) that in the summer of 1929 the system of official grain collections had effectively broken down, and: "A third successive annual crisis of the grain collections loomed ahead. The problem of supplying town and factories had become completely intractable. Gradualism was not enough." Then, too, Carr had referred to "the haphazard and impulsive character of the final decision."¹⁹ Elsewhere, referring to the industrial revolution from above, Carr mentions the so-called war scare of 1927 after the severance of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia by Great Britain, and goes on to say that "the security motive in the drive to catch up with the west by rapid industrialization should not be overlooked."²⁰

The circumstantial explanation has been offered in a still more extreme form by Alexander Gerschenkron in his thesis that the economic crisis at the end of the NEP era was also a "political crisis of the first magnitude." He explains: "Inability to maintain the food supplies to the cities and the growing resistance of the millions of the peasants, strong in their intangible diffusion, seemed to spell the doom of the Soviet dictatorship." A threat existed to the continuation of the

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 318, 322. Deutscher repeats this interpretation in briefer form in *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929-1940* (New York, 1965), pp. 67-68. For a somewhat different attempt to explain the Stalinist revolution by economic necessity, see Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917*, rev. ed. (New York, 1966), p. 244.

18. Carr and Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, pp. 264, 268, 269. Apropos Trotsky and Preobrazhensky, the authors point out (p. 265) that in 1925 Trotsky wrote of "the gradual transition to collective farming" which would be possible when the necessary technical base had been created; and that "Preobrazhensky's drastic analysis had been conducted within the framework of NEP and on the assumptions of a market economy." Further, "Preobrazhensky afterwards spoke of 'the rapid conversion of millions of small peasant holdings to collective farms' as 'a thing none of us foresaw.'" The latter statement was made at the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934.

19. E. H. Carr, "Revolution from Above: The Road to Collectivization," in *The October Revolution Before and After* (New York, 1969), pp. 104, 109. The cited essay was first published in 1967.

20. E. H. Carr, "Reflections on Soviet Industrialization," *ibid.*, p. 121.

Soviet regime in these conditions, Gerschenkron asserts, and "it was under the pressure of that threat that Stalin underwent a radical change of mind and embarked upon the gamble of the First Five-Year Plan."²¹

In Deutscher's version of the circumstantial explanation, as has been noted, Stalin, the political leader of the revolution from above, appears as a great improviser who responded to the pressure of extremely adverse national circumstances in "an unpremeditated, pragmatic manner." In consonance with this view, Deutscher calls Stalin a man of "almost impersonal personality."²² All this received later elaboration in Carr's characterization of Stalin as "the most impersonal of great historical figures." To show what he calls "the essentially impersonal character of Stalinist policy," Carr states that no element of personal conviction, nor any originality of conception, was involved when Stalin took leadership of the industrial revolution from above. The aims he ruthlessly pursued were those "dictated by the dynamic force inherent in the revolution itself." His qualities, like his convictions, were those of his milieu; they "mirrored the current stage of the historical process." His role in Soviet history was that of "the great executor of revolutionary policy" with "no vision of where it would lead."²³

In seeming inconsistency with the image of an all but mindless political improviser conjured up by the description of Stalin cited above, Deutscher does allow that the man who led Soviet Russia in the revolution from above acted on certain ideas. But he maintains that these were borrowed from others. "The ideas of the second revolution were not his," Deutscher writes. "He neither foresaw it nor

21. Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (New York, 1965), pp. 144-45. Gerschenkron further states (p. 145): "Viewed as a short-run measure, the purpose of the First Five-Year Plan was to break the disequilibrium through increase in consumer-goods output based on increase in plant capacity," although once the peasants had been forced into the *kolkhozy*, "the hands of the government were untied. There was no longer any reason to regard the First Five-Year Plan as a self-contained brief period of rapid industrialization, and the purpose of industrialization was no longer to relieve the shortage of consumer goods" (p. 146). It does not appear accurate to say that the main purpose of the first Plan was to increase consumer-goods production; in any event, the thrust of the industrialization drive in 1929-33 was toward the building up of heavy industry, and consumer-goods supply declined in Russia upon the termination of the NEP.

22. *Stalin: A Political Biography*, p. 273. Trotsky's influence is reflected in Deutscher's portrait of Stalin as a pragmatist and improviser who would act without premeditation under pressure of circumstances. See, for example, Trotsky's characteristic description of Stalin as "a man in whom energy, will and resoluteness are combined with empiricism, myopia, an organic inclination to opportunist decisions in great questions, personal rudeness, disloyalty and a readiness to abuse power in order to suppress the party." Leon Trotsky, "A Contribution to the Political Biography of Stalin," in *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York, 1962), p. 198. The book was originally published in 1937.

23. E. H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country 1924-1926* (New York, 1968), Vol. I, pp. 177, 185. The characterization is repeated with only very slight modification in *Foundations of a Planned Economy* (Vol. II, p. 448) where Carr and Davies describe Stalin as "the representative figure of the period," adding: "Stalin's personality, combined with the primitive and cruel traditions of the Russian bureaucracy, imparted to the revolution from above a particularly brutal character, which has sometimes obscured the fundamental historical problems involved." The authors do not say what they mean by "the fundamental historical problems involved," but invite the inference that they are invoking what we have called the circumstantial explanation of the revolution from above.

prepared for it. Yet he, and in a sense he alone, accomplished it."²⁴ Whose ideas were they, then? Deutscher does not directly say, although some pages later he notes that Yuri Larin, "a second-rate economist, once a right-wing Menshevik," had propagated the idea of a "second revolution" in the countryside as early as 1925.²⁵ We are left to infer that the ideas in question were those of representatives of the Left opposition like Preobrazhensky, who had propounded in the early 1920's the idea of "primitive socialist accumulation," i.e., industrialization through exploitation, chiefly, of the rural economy. Yet Deutscher also declares, and rightly so in this instance, that "there was no question, in the view of the left Bolsheviks, of driving the peasants into collective farms by force. The switch-over from private to collective farming was to be carried out gradually, with the peasants' own consent."²⁶ The strange upshot is that Stalin is treated both as a leader who acted under relentless pressure of circumstances *without* preconceived ideas, and as one who acted *with* or *on* certain ideas which, however, were not his own. But those whose ideas these presumably were did not think, in the Stalinist way, of collectivization as a revolutionary leap which the state would accomplish by coercive means. In short, whatever ideas Stalin took from the erstwhile Left opposition, the idea of a coercive revolution from above was not one of them.

IV

It is a central thesis of the present essay that the circumstantial explanation, notwithstanding a certain specious plausibility, is fatally flawed, and that we shall not attain a tenable view of Stalinism in its fundamental aspect as revolution from above until this is understood. The circumstantial explanation is flawed, first, in the utterly unproven nature of its assumption that collectivization in the terroristic form that it took was the only realistic alternative for the Soviet regime in 1929, much less a *sine qua non* of its survival as Gerschenkron suggests. Even allowing that the regime was faced in 1927-28 with something like a peasant "grain strike" (to use the loaded *Short Course* terminology), there is no serious evidence of incipient political rebelliousness in the countryside at that time; and there is evidence of general peasant acceptance of the Soviet regime, whatever the specific grievances that caused peasants to grumble or to withhold grain from the market in expectation of more return. Nor, as already indicated has it been shown, nor is it true, that the terroristic collectivization was a necessity for the

24. *Stalin: A Political Biography*, p. 295.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 319. Stalin, Deutscher observes, at that earlier time dismissed Larin's notion as a "cranky idea."

26. *Ibid.*, p. 303. Elsewhere Deutscher expands on the relation of the Stalinist course to the Left's program as follows: "The Opposition wanted industrialization and collectivization to be carried out in the broad daylight of proletarian democracy, with the consent of the masses and free initiative 'from below'; whereas Stalin relied on the force of the decree and coercion from above. All the same, the Opposition had stood for what he was doing even if the way he was doing it was repugnant to them." *The Prophet Outcast*, p. 70.

results achieved in the industrialization effort during the Plan years. As for the security motive to which Carr referred, growing out of the external tensions of 1926–27, a recent and careful scholarly review of the facts, while it indicates that the war scare was more than a mere sham and contrivance of intra-party conflicts of the time and probably enjoyed a certain credence on the part of various Soviet leading figures, also concludes that “the war scare was in fact grossly and crudely manipulated by Soviet politicians in 1927.”²⁷ There were, as I would put it, grounds for Soviet concern about external relations in Europe, although not, at that time, for serious fear of an oncoming coalition war against the USSR; but the *possibility* of war was brandished as a justification for the developing Stalinist orientation in internal policy.

The circumstantial explanation of forced mass collectivization hardly squares with the now demonstrated conclusion, cited earlier from Millar, that this course proved in practice an “unmitigated economic policy disaster,” nor is it cogent that a policy which directly and indirectly produced the worst famine in Russia’s famine-plagued history, that of 1932–34, which cost a conservatively estimated five million lives,²⁸ was necessitated by the need to avert a famine. Although historical “might-have-beens” are just as difficult to establish as are arguments of the “there-was-no-other-possible-course” type, the insistently emerging conclusion from scholarly researches based on the more abundant data now available from Soviet sources is that “a continuation of the New Economic Policy of the 1920s would have permitted at least as rapid a rate of industrialization with less cost to the urban as well as to the rural population of the Soviet Union.”²⁹ In effect, informed and thoughtful historical hindsight is confirming the basic economic realism of the program for a balanced industrialization policy within the frame of a continuing NEP that Bukharin presented in his *Pravda* article of September 30, 1928, “Notes of an Economist.”³⁰ The Bukharinist non-revolutionary alternative for Soviet industrialization policy at the close of the twenties, an alternative inspired in large part by the Leninist thinking of 1921–23 discussed earlier here, was real. Had it been adopted, it could well have worked; had it worked poorly, the cost to the Soviet economy could not have compared with

27. John P. Sontag, “The Soviet War Scare of 1926–27,” *The Russian Review*, January 1975, p. 77. See also Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1959), p. 383, where it is stated: “There was little prospect of any kind of invasion in 1928.”

28. Dana G. Dalrymple, “The Soviet Famine of 1932–34,” *Soviet Studies*, January 1964, p. 261.

29. Millar, *op. cit.*, p. 766. One of the sources cited by Millar in this review essay is an article by Karz, who writes that “the damage done to agriculture within the first three years of the industrialization drive was so severe that it affected adversely its ability to contribute significantly to further economic development.” Karz concludes that “there is a significant probability” that the Soviet dilemma in agrarian policy toward the end of NEP “was not one that *had* to be resolved by collectivization and the associated compulsory procurement of farm products or by the abandonment of a sensible and fruitful industrialization drive.” See Jerzy F. Karz, “From Stalin to Brezhnev: Soviet Agricultural Policy in Historical Perspective,” in *The Soviet Rural Community*, ed. James R. Millar (Urbana, 1971), pp. 41, 51.

30. For recent arguments to this effect, see Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, Chap. 9 and Epilogue, and Lewin, *Political Undercurrents*, pp. 52–61.

that which had to be paid for the Stalinist solution. Such, also, is the position of an influential school of contemporary post-Stalin Soviet politico-economic thought whose “scarcely veiled endorsement of Bukharin’s industrialization strategy” has been persuasively argued and documented by Moshe Lewin.³¹

At this point, a modification of the circumstantial explanation might suggest itself: if Stalinism was not the necessary or sole practicable course that it once seemed to be, it was nevertheless so *perceived* at the time by the decision-makers, who after all had to act without foreknowledge of the whole sequence of effects, including catastrophic consequences, which their decisions would bring about. The difficulty with such a hypothetical fallback position (and this may explain why still-living adherents of the circumstantial explanation have not taken it) is that numerous Bolshevik minds in Moscow and around the country, including some and possibly even a majority in the Politburo, *did not perceive the Stalinist course as the only possible action to take in the circumstances then obtaining*. Bukharin, in a clandestine conversation of July 1928 with Kamenev which became widely known in party circles, clearly foresaw the catastrophic consequences of Stalin’s contemplated rural revolution from above. It was, he said, a ruinous policy course signifying a return to War Communism, a course leading to civil war, to an uprising that would have to be drowned in blood.³² His prevision proved well founded in essence if not in specific detail.

The hypothetical fallback position cannot save the circumstantial explanation because it leaves open and unexplained the fact that the ruling party was divided in its appraisal of the circumstances in 1928–29 and that an influential section of Soviet political opinion opted for a course in agrarian policy and industrialization that would have been evolutionary, in accordance with the later Lenin’s counsel, rather than revolutionary. The inevitable next question—why did the evolutionists go down to defeat in the party struggle, or why did Stalinism win?—cannot be answered by reference to the socioeconomic circumstances over which the quarrel raged in Bolshevik circles. It can be answered only by reference to the factors that determined the *Stalinist response* to the circumstances and its political victory. The circumstances as such cannot furnish the explanation of the revolution from above.

V

One of the forces conducive to a Stalinist revolutionary response among Bolshevik politicians was the other Lenin—the still very influential revolutionary Lenin of the War Communism period and the heritage of Bolshevik revolutionism that the other Lenin symbolized. It is understandable that Bukharin, involved

31. Lewin, *Political Undercurrents*, Chap. 12.

32. The Bukharin-Kamenev conversation is Document T1897 in the Trotsky Archives at Harvard University. Further historical testimony to the effect that the disastrous consequences of the Stalinist course were foreseen by some well-known Soviet economists in the later 1920’s is given by N. Valentinov, “Iz proshlogo,” *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, April 1961, pp. 68–72.

as he was in a political struggle against Stalin and the policies he was advocating in 1928–29, treated Lenin's last writings as his "political testament," and that is certainly what Lenin himself intended them to be. But for the Bolshevik movement and party, Lenin's political testament was the entire corpus of his thought and writing, the whole record of his revolutionary leadership of the movement up to, during, and after the October Revolution; and Lenin's political testament in this more comprehensive sense, or Leninism as a whole, contained very much that Stalin and Stalinism had good claim to as an authoritative text and warrant for the policies followed in the revolution from above.

The very idea of a process of "revolution from above," taken in the most general terms, has a Leninist pedigree. Even in one of his last articles cited above, Lenin spoke of overtaking other nations "with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government." But the idea of revolution from above has a deeper place in Lenin's thought. When he contended in *The State and Revolution* in 1917, and in such subsequent works as *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, that the doctrine of proletarian dictatorship was the core idea of Marxism and that Marxism called for a seizure of power followed by dictatorial rule by violence against the internal bourgeoisie and associated social forces, he was saying: The revolution does not end with the party's taking of power; that is only a momentous point of historical transition beyond which the party continues its revolutionary destruction of the old order from above, i.e., by wielding the coercive instruments of state power against the revolution's class enemies. Leninist revolution from above meant the use of state power for the continuation of class war *after* the revolutionary party has achieved such power and formed its government under the title of "proletarian dictatorship."³³ This basic idea found its sharpest, though by no means its only, later expression in Lenin's prospectus of 1919 for a work (never completed) on the proletarian dictatorship. Two passages are especially notable: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is the *continuation* of the class struggle in *new* forms. That is the crux of the matter; that is what they do not understand." And: "The state is only a *weapon* of the proletariat in its class struggle. A special kind of cudgel (*dubinka*), rien de plus."³⁴ Whether Lenin ever used the phrase "from above" in arguing this notion of the proletarian dictatorship as a continuing revolutionary struggle from the vantage-point of state power is of no consequence; the idea was unmistakably present in his thought.

It is true that as early as 1919, at the height of the Civil War and War Communism, we find intimations in Lenin of the transition to the later reformist approach to the building of socialism that has been described earlier in these pages. This

33. For an argument by the young Stalin along these lines, see his essay of 1906, "Anarchism or Socialism?" in I. Stalin, *Sochinenia* (Moscow, 1954), I, 345–46. He cited as his authority here not Lenin but the passage in *The Communist Manifesto* about the proletariat's becoming the ruling class and using its political power to deprive the bourgeoisie of its capital step by step, etc.

34. *The Lenin Anthology*, p. 490. The prospectus was first published in 1925 in *Leninskii Sbornik III*. The "they" who "do not understand" were not identified; Lenin may have had in mind such people as Kautsky and the Russian Mensheviks.

transition was associated with the idea that the fundamental obstacle to socialism was the body of habit left over from the past and that the revolutionizing of habit—in other words, of culture—was *au fond* an educational task rather than one to be resolved by coercive means. In his article of May 1919, "A Great Beginning," Lenin hailed a workers' initiative of voluntary unpaid Saturday work (the Communist *subbotnik*) as a development of enormous historical significance, and observed in this connection that "the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only the use of force against the exploiters, and not even mainly the use of force."³⁵

But it would not be proper to discount on this evidence the Lenin for whom revolution was, in his own later words, "a change which breaks the old order to its very foundations, and not one that cautiously, slowly and gradually remodels it, taking care to break as little as possible"—and for whom state power, once in the hands of the revolutionary party, should be used as a cudgel against the class enemy. When Stalin in December 1926 rhetorically asked the Comintern Executive what the building of socialism meant in class terms and answered that "building socialism in the USSR means overcoming our own Soviet bourgeoisie by our own forces in the course of a struggle," he was simply drawing upon the Lenin and Leninism of the Civil War period and earlier, the Leninism in which the fundamental question for a Marxist seeking to create socialism was *Kto-kogo?*, or who will vanquish whom in the class war? To this Leninism of *Kto-kogo?*, he did subsequently add one proposition that was original with him: that the internal class struggle intensifies with the society's advance toward socialism. He was drawing upon the Leninism that had stood during 1918–21 for forcible food requisitioning from the peasant (*prodrazvërstka*), for stirring up of class war in the villages by means of the committees of the poor (*kombedy*), for the belief (to cite Lenin) that the proletarian dictatorship should mean "iron rule" and not a "jellyfish proletarian government," and for the ruthless resort to terror as an instrument of dictatorial rule. *This was Stalinist Leninism*, and the authenticity of Stalinism's claim to it is not seriously diminished by the important fact that what Leninism stood for in Lenin's own mind, as a conception of how to build socialism in Russia, underwent great modification in 1921–23.

Nor was this Stalinist Leninism Stalin's only. A considerable proportion of his generation, men who had become Bolsheviks when Bolshevism was still an anti-regime revolutionary movement and who politically came of age, as Stalin himself did, during the era of War Communism, shared his outlook to one or another degree. I am not speaking here about general ideas alone or about Leninism simply as a system of political belief, but likewise about the ingrained habits of mind, ways of defining and responding to situations, styles of action, common memories, mystique, etc., that collectively constitute the culture of a political movement insofar as a given age cohort of its membership (and leadership) is concerned. As its name indicates, War Communism had militarized the revolutionary political culture of the Bolshevik movement. The heritage of that forma-

35. *The Lenin Anthology*, p. 478.

tive time in the Soviet culture's history was martial zeal, revolutionary voluntarism and *élan*, readiness to resort to coercion, rule by administrative fiat (*administrirovanie*), centralized administration, summary justice, and no small dose of that Communist arrogance (*komchvanstvo*) that Lenin later inveighed against. It was not simply the "heroic period of the great Russian Revolution," as Lev Kritzman christened it in the title of the book about War Communism that he published in the mid-1920's, but above all the *fighting* period, the time when in Bolshevik minds the citadel of socialism was to be taken by storm.³⁶

War Communism had given way to the NEP in 1921 as a matter of official party policy, and in the ensuing new period there emerged, again under Lenin's political and ideological leadership, something that could be called "NEP culture." This NEP culture comprised a many-sided new way of Soviet life which found expression in institutions, ideas, habits of mind, and conduct. Among its elements were the restored monetary economy, the emergent system of Soviet legality, the new stress on a voluntary *smychka* between workers and peasantry, the primacy of persuasion and educative methods in the regime's approach to the people, the previously mentioned Leninist notion of gradualism and cultural revolution as the transfer culture, and a general atmosphere of relative social normalcy. But we must beware of inferring from the familiar history-book linear scheme of development from War Communism to NEP society that NEP culture displaced the culture of War Communism in the minds of the generation of Bolsheviks who were moving into political leadership in the later 1920's. It certainly did in some, indeed many, instances; NEP culture had its powerfully persuasive proponents not only in Lenin but also in Bukharin, Rykov, and numerous others, some representing the gifted party youth. But we have the weighty testimony of such men as Valentinov, Piatakov, and Stalin himself that the militant, voluntarist political culture and mystique of War Communism lived on among very many Communists. And from about 1927 on, some sensitive minds among the exponents of NEP culture became apprehensively aware of an impending new social cataclysm, a second storming of the citadel as it were.³⁷ To this it needs to be added that Lenin himself had provided possible cues for such a response in the military imagery that he had used more than once in speaking of the NEP itself: as a forced "retreat" which would in good time be followed by a "subsequent victorious advance."³⁸

36. For the argument that War Communism brought about a militarization of the revolutionary political culture of Bolshevism, the correlative argument that we must distinguish two Leninisms—that of War Communism and that of the NEP, and the further view that Stalin was a representative of the War Communist strain, see Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York, 1973), pp. 208–9, 395–420.

37. See *Stalin as Revolutionary*, pp. 402–3, 413, 415–16, for documentation on the survival of the War Communist spirit during the NEP. According, for example, to Valentinov, who was a resident of Moscow in the NEP years, "the party, particularly in its *lower cells*, was instinctively, subconsciously, antagonistic toward the NEP." As for the apprehensive awareness of the imminence of a social cataclysm, see the above-cited article by Valentinov, "Iz proshlogo."

38. For example, in "The Importance of Gold Now and After the Complete Victory of Socialism," *The Lenin Anthology*, p. 517.

In seeking to refute the "circumstantial explanation" of the initial phase of the Stalinist revolution, it is not the intent of this essay to deny historical significance to the circumstances facing the Soviet regime in 1927–29, most notably the grain-collection difficulties. The point is that these circumstances did not carry a single unmistakable definition of the situation and implicit prescription for policy. That widely different definitions of the situation and widely different policy prescriptions were possible is proved by the fierce debates and deep policy differences that emerged at the time. Our argument is that the Stalinist definition of the situation in terms of class war with the kulak forces and the Stalinist policy response in the form of "Uralo-Siberian methods" of forcible grain requisitioning and then mass collectivization represented, in part, an appeal to the Bolshevik mores of War Communism, and that this orientation proved potently persuasive largely because of the surviving strength of those mores among the Bolsheviks and not by any means only, as some have thought, because of Stalin's formidable organizational power as General Secretary. From this viewpoint, the great struggle over party policy in 1928–29 between Stalinism and Bukharinism was a fight between policies conceived in the spirit of the revolutionary culture of War Communism and the evolutionary NEP culture—and the former prevailed.

It must be added that Stalin himself should not be seen in all this as a man of organizational power only. It is true that the socialism-in-one-country concept originated with Bukharin and that Stalin on numerous occasions in the mid-1920's echoed the Bukharinist version of it, stressing NEP, for example, as the medium of the movement toward socialism and the peasant's amenability to such a movement. This has helped to foster the image of him as an improviser with hardly any policy ideas of his own at that time, or as one whose policy ideas were purely Bukharinist.³⁹ Against such a view, two points need to be made. First, given the exigencies of the joint Stalin-Bukharin factional battle against the Left opposition, which was pressing the need for rapid industrialization, it was politically impossible for Stalin to take issue openly with the Bukharinist policy position, or even to fail to concur in it, before the vanquishment of the Trotskyist Left at the end of 1927. Secondly, a close reading of the record shows that the Stalinist position, although not brought into the open as a policy platform before 1928, found expression sotto voce in various Stalin pronouncements of the NEP period, at the very time when he gave to many the appearance of being a Bukharinist in theory and policy.

One such pronouncement, the statement of 1926 about building socialism through "overcoming our own Soviet bourgeoisie by our own forces in the course of a struggle," has already been cited as an example of the Stalinist

39. Speaking of Stalin's alliance with the Bukharinists, Robert V. Daniels writes: "In matters of policy and doctrine their line was his guide; in matters of organization, his power was their support." "Stalin's Rise to Dictatorship, 1922–1939," in *Politics in the Soviet Union: Seven Cases*, ed. Alexander Dallin and Alan Westin (New York, 1966), p. 27. This statement is favorably cited by Stephen Cohen at the point where he himself writes: "There was, generally speaking, a rough division of labor between Bukharin and Stalin, between policy formulation and theory on one side and organizational muscle on the other." *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, p. 215.

Leninism of *Kto-kogo?* Other evidence includes: Stalin's *Pravda* article of November 7, 1925, in which he defined the present period as an *analogue of the pre-October period of 1917*, i.e., the prelude to a new revolutionary storm; and a studied restatement of this theme, with added detail, in 1926. Moreover, there was a significant theoretical difference between Bukharin and Stalin in their ways of arguing the socialism-in-one-country notion. Bukharin dwelt particularly upon the content of this socialism as an "agrarian-cooperative socialism" of the kind projected in Lenin's last articles; Stalin's emphasis fell heavily on the "one country" theme in a spirit of truculent Soviet Russian nationalism reminiscent of his Russocentric "creative Marxism" (as he then called it) of August 1917, when he prophesied that Russia, not Europe, might show the world the way to socialism. A Great Russian nationalist tendency may be seen, moreover, as an ingredient of the Civil War syndrome in Soviet culture, this war having been fought not alone against the Whites but also against their foreign supporters and foreign interventionists.

The upshot is that there were *two* versions of the socialism-in-one-country position in the mid-1920's. Although the Stalinist version had to be muted then because of the aforementioned pressures of the intra-party contest, the great rapidity of its full-scale emergence immediately upon the defeat of the Trotskyist Left further attests to its presence in the wings of the Soviet political scene even during the heyday of Bukharinism.⁴⁰ This is not to deny that Stalin showed plenty of political opportunism at that time, or at others. But to treat opportunistic behavior in a politician as incompatible with deeply held beliefs is to take a simplistic view of political man. The picture of Stalin as a leader who represented organizational power without policy ideas and who embarked upon the revolution from above in an "unpremeditated, pragmatic manner" and with "no vision of where it would lead" is a fundamental misconception.

VI

But if the surviving spirit of War Communism influenced the way in which the drives for collectivization and industrialization were conceived and carried out, it does not follow that the Stalinist revolution repeated 1917-21 or that the new Stalinist order which took shape in the 1930's was a revival of the system of War Communism. To be sure, the start of the new decade saw such reminders of the heroic period as food rationing, and other resemblances appeared. As Moshe Lewin has pointed out, however, the early Stalinist process showed many distinctive traits that differentiated it from its pre-NEP predecessor: the feverish industrial expansion, the emergence of anti-egalitarian tendencies in contrast to the egalitarianism of the Civil War period, the rise of new elites combined with the loss of the relatively independent political role of the lesser leadership ranks at the earlier time, and the political muzzling of the party rank-and-file in relation

40. This argument and the documentation of the evidence adduced in its support have been presented in *Stalin as Revolutionary*, Chap. 11.

to the leadership itself.⁴¹ Still other, major differences call for mention: the *kolkhoz* system itself, which bore small resemblance to the agricultural communes initiated during the Civil War period; the use of police terror as a prime instrument of government in a manner sharply differentiated from the Red terror sponsored by Lenin via the original Cheka; and the inter-relationship between internal and external policy. *The basic underlying fact confronting us is that when the Russian revolutionary process resumed in the Stalinist stage, it had a different character from the revolutionary process of destruction of the old order and make-shift creation of the new that had marked the earlier, 1917-21 stage; and this change of character is to be understood in terms of a reversion to a revolutionary process seen earlier in Russian history.*

It has been argued here that the idea of revolution from above had a Leninist pedigree. While that is important for an interpretation of Stalinism, it must now be stressed that the phenomenon of revolution from above has a range of forms, and that the Leninist form—revolution from above as a victorious revolutionary party's violent use of the "cudgel" of state power to repress its internal class enemies—represented only one element in Stalinism as a complex and many-sided revolution from above. Where the Stalinist phenomenon went far beyond the Lenin heritage lay in its constructive aspect. Leninist revolution from above was essentially a destructive process, a tearing down of the old order from the vantage-point of state power; Stalinist revolution from above used destructive or repressive means, among others, for what was, both in intent and in reality, a constructive (as well as destructive) process. Its slogan or ideological banner was the building of a socialist society. But in substance, Stalinism as revolution from above was a state-building process, the construction of a powerful, highly centralized, bureaucratic, military-industrial Soviet Russian state. Although it was proclaimed "socialist" in the mid-1930's, it differed in various vital ways from what most socialist thinkers—Marx, Engels, and Lenin among them—had understood socialism to mean. Stalinist "socialism" was a socialism of mass poverty rather than plenty; of sharp social stratification rather than relative equality; of universal, constant fear rather than emancipation of personality; of national chauvinism rather than brotherhood of man; and of a monstrously hypertrophied state power rather than the decreasingly statified commune-state delineated by Marx in *The Civil War in France* and by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*.

It was not, however, by mere caprice or accident that this happened. Stalinist revolutionism from above had a prehistory in the political culture of Russian tsarism; it existed as a pattern in the Russian past and hence *could* be seen by a twentieth-century statesman as both a precedent and legitimation of a political course that would, in essentials, recapitulate the historical pattern.⁴²

41. *Political Undercurrents*, pp. 98-99.

42. This argument, along with the view that Stalinism in essence was such a recapitulation of tsarist revolutionism from above, has been presented in my essay "The Image of Dual Russia," in *The Transformation of Russian Society*, ed. C. E. Black (Cambridge, Mass., 1960). The essay is reprinted in Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1971), Chap. 6.

It was not, however, by mere caprice or accident that this happened. Stalinist revolutionism from above had a prehistory in the political culture of Russian tsarism; it existed as a pattern in the Russian past and hence *could* be seen by a twentieth-century statesman as both a precedent and legitimation of a political course that would, in essentials, recapitulate the historical pattern. Confronted in the aftermath of the two-century-long Mongol domination with hostile and in some cases more advanced neighbor-states in possession of portions of the extensive territories that had made up the loosely confederated Kievan *Rus'*, the princes—later tsars—of Muscovy undertook the building of a powerful “military-national state” capable of gathering the Russian lands under its aegis. Given the primacy of the concern for external defense and expansion and the country’s relative economic backwardness, the government proceeded by remodeling the social structure, at times by forcible means, in such a way that all classes of the population were bound in one or another form of compulsory service to the state. “The fact is,” writes Miliukov, “that in Russia the state exerted enormous influence upon the social organization whereas in the West the social organization conditioned the state system. . . . It was the elementary state of the economic ‘base’ (*fundament*) which in Russia called forth the hypertrophy of the state ‘superstructure’ (*nadstroika*) and conditioned the powerful counter-influence of this superstructure upon the ‘base’ itself.”⁴³

A salient expression of the tsarist pattern of revolutionism from above was the legalized imposition of serfdom upon the Russian peasantry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the peasant’s attachment by law to the soil, together with the system of *barshchina* (the *corvée*) under which the peasant was bound to contribute a certain number of days of work on the landowner’s (or state’s) land during the agricultural year. The Russian village commune, itself an archaic institution, was transformed by governmental action into a “coercive organization” for ensuring each member’s fulfillment of state-imposed obligations under the principle of mutual responsibility (*krugovaia poruka*).⁴⁴ The Stalinist rural revolution from above was in essence an accelerated repetition of this tsarist developmental pattern. It has been noted above that the *kolkhoz* as it emerged from the collectivization process was a cooperative only in its formal façade. Underneath, it bore a far from superficial resemblance to the landed estate in the period of serfdom; and it is a highly significant fact that the *kolkhoz* was actually perceived by many Russian peasants as a revival of serfdom. Westerners who traveled in rural Russia in the early 1930’s have reported that it was a common peasant practice to refer to “V.K.P.” (the initials of *Vsesoiuznaia kommunisticheskaia partiia*, the All-Union Communist party) in the esoteric meaning of “second serfdom” (*vtoroe krepostnoe pravo*).⁴⁵ Two features of the *kolkhoz* system

43. P. Miliukov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul'tury. Chast' pervaiia. 5-e izdanie* (S. Peterburg, 1904), pp. 133–34. For Miliukov’s use of the term “military-national state,” see, e.g., p. 143.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

45. See, for example, Leonard E. Hubbard, *The Economics of Soviet Agriculture* (London, 1939), pp. 115–16.

gave special point to this perception. One was that the *kolkhozy* came to operate according to arrangements under which the peasant owed the *kolkhoz* an annual obligatory minimum, specified by Soviet law, of “work-day units” (*trudodni*); this was a return to *barshchina*. Second, when the internal passport system, an institution of tsarist Russia, was revived in Soviet Russia by a governmental decree of December 31, 1932, as a means of bureaucratic control over the movements of Soviet citizens, the farm population was not issued passports. The deprivation of passports attached the peasant to the soil of the *kolkhoz* or *sovkhos* as securely as his serf ancestor had been attached to the soil of the landed estate.

The culminating phase of tsarism as a dynamic political superstructure engaged in the transformation of Russian society and development of its economic base for state-ordained purposes came in the long reign of Peter I, that “crowned revolutionary,” as Herzen later called him. Now the pattern of revolution from above emerged most distinctly, one of its prominent aspects being an industrial revolution from above aimed at building a powerful Russian war-industrial base. Intensifying serfdom, Peter employed state-owned serfs along with prisoners of war and others for industrial projects as well as the construction of canals on Lakes Ladoga, Onega, and others; and on occasion moved entire townships of people to the construction sites of the new enterprises in what are described as “Peter’s forced labour camps.”⁴⁶

Again, the parallel with the Stalinist industrial revolution from above is striking, the major difference being the greatly expanded scale of the use of forced labor in the Stalinist case. To what has been said above about the relation between collectivization and industrialization, something of importance here needs to be added. During the First Five-Year Plan, the slogan about “liquidation of the kulaks as a class” was used as a pretext for deportation of peasant families en masse—a process made all the more massive by the extreme looseness with which the label “kulak” was applied—to remote areas like the Urals, Siberia and the far North where they were set to work in timbering or on the construction of plants, such as the Magnitogorsk iron and steel complex in the Urals. The vast expansion of the forced-labor camp empire dates from this time. To cite Solzhenitsyn, “In 1929–1930, billowed and gushed the multimillion wave of *dispossessed kulaks*. . . . In sheer size this nonrecurring tidal wave (it was an ocean) swelled beyond the bounds of anything the penal system of even an immense state can permit itself. There was nothing to be compared with it in all Russian history. It was the forced resettlement of a whole people, an ethnic catastrophe.”⁴⁷ But while in size there was nothing in Russian history to compare with it, this mass

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

47. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918–1956. An Experiment in Literary Investigation I–II*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York, 1973), p. 54. Hubbard (*Economics of Soviet Agriculture*, p. 117) estimates that during collectivization “probably not less than five million peasants, including families, were deported to Siberia and the Far North, and of these it is estimated that 25 per cent perished.” More recently, Lewin has written that “what is certain is that several million households, to a total of 10 million persons, or more, must have been deported, of whom a great many must have perished.” *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, p. 508.

use of deportation and forced labor for industrialization had a definite historical precedent in Petrine Russia. In the Stalinist industrial revolution from above, therefore, just as in the rural revolution from above, there were elements of a revival of the tsarist pattern of revolutionism from above. In this respect, Stalinism showed the influence not simply of the historically recent Witte system of state-sponsored industrialization, but of the much earlier system of direct exploitation of servile labor in the Russian state-building process.⁴⁸

Here a brief comment is called for on the view, sometimes encountered in Western thought, that sees the Stalinist revolution from above under the aspect of "modernization." The difficulty with this position—apart from the nebulous character of the very concept of modernization—is its obliviousness of the strong element of "archaization" in Stalinism, its resurrection of the historic tsarist pattern of building a powerful military-national state by revolutionary means involving the extension of direct coercive controls over the population and the growth of state power in the process. Unless "modernization" is reduced in meaning mainly to industrialization and increase of the urban population (in which case the term becomes superfluous), the use of it to characterize Stalinism is misleading. If a formula for the state-building process is needed, it might best be the one that Kliuchevsky provided in his summation of modern Russian history from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century: "The state swelled up; the people grew lean."⁴⁹

The Russian historical perspective can contribute in still a further important way to our understanding of Stalinism: it helps to make intelligible the relationship between the first and second phases of the Stalinist revolution. Following the phase that took place from 1928–29 to 1933, there was a kind of pause in 1934, after which the revolution from above moved into its second phase. Signalized by the murder of the party leader Sergei Kirov in Leningrad in December 1934—an event conceived and organized from the center of power in Moscow as a pretext for what followed—the mass terror of the Great Purge enveloped the party and country in the later 1930's. The Great Purge destroyed a generation not simply of Old Bolshevik veterans of the anti-tsarist struggle but of very many of their juniors who had joined the movement after 1917 and served as active implementers of Stalinism in its first phase. It virtually transformed the composition of the Soviet regime and the managerial elite in all fields. This in turn was accompanied by still other manifestations of the revolution from above in its

48. Sergei Witte was the Russian minister of finance from 1893 until 1903. On the "Witte system" and its inspiration in Friedrich List's teaching that backward countries could overcome "the peril of remaining behind" by giving priority to the machine-building industries in industrialization, see Theodore H. Von Laue, *Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia* (New York, 1973), especially pp. 58–60.

49. V. O. Kliuchevsky, *Kurs russkoi istorii* (Moscow, 1937), Vol. III, p. 11. This is a Soviet-issue of a pre-revolutionary treatise based on Professor Kliuchevsky's lectures at Moscow University. In support of the modernization hypothesis, Hélène Carrère D'Encausse pointed out during our Bellagio discussion that Stalinism promoted modernity in the following important dimension: an integrated Soviet Russian nationhood. Her argument calls for careful consideration.

second phase, such as the destruction of the Pokrovsky school of Bolshevik historiography, the concomitant re-appropriation of major elements of the Russian past as part of the official Soviet cultural heritage, the restoration of pre-1917 patterns in art, education, law and the family. In these aspects, which extended into the 1940's, there were distinctly reactionary or counter-revolutionary overtones in the revolution from above.

It has been said, rightly in my view, that "Stalin's revolution in agriculture and industry and his assault on the party which consummated this revolution must be seen as integrated parts of one and the same process."⁵⁰ But it remains to explicate the nexus between the two phases. It does not suffice to take the position, as Schapiro does and as Deutscher did after him, that "it was primarily the need to perpetuate the Great Change in the countryside that perpetuated the terror."⁵¹ This line of explanation is strained and in the end simply unsatisfactory, if only because—as the postwar Stalinist years in Russia showed—rule by terror can be effective without being massive. It is not a persuasive argument that terror on the scale of the Stalinist holocaust of 1934–39 was necessary either to perpetuate collectivization or to prevent Stalin from losing power. Yet, the point about the two phases being "integrated parts of one and the same process" carries conviction.

A partial explanation of this linkage can be derived from the thesis that the Stalinist revolution from above recapitulated in essentials its tsarist predecessor's pattern. The latter involved the binding (*zakrepushchenie*) of all classes of the population, from the lowest serf to the highest noble, in compulsory service to the state. As the Muscovite autocracy grew in power, the hereditary land-owning nobility was transformed into a serving class (*sluzhilyi klass*, to use Miliukov's terminology again) whose title to the land was made conditional upon the rendering of military service to the state. The Petrine revolution from above reinforced this situation by instituting an aristocracy of rank (*chin*) based upon the table of fourteen military and corresponding civilian ranks, under which nobility became a function of rank rather than vice versa. In one of its phases, moreover, the reduction of the boyar ruling class of Kievan and early Muscovite Russia to a serving class during the reign of Ivan IV in the sixteenth century, the chief instrument of the process was the anti-boyar terror carried out under Ivan's personal supervision by his private retinue and security police, the *oprichnina*. Ivan himself was the first of the Muscovite rulers to assume the title of tsar. Tsarism as a system of absolute autocracy was itself in part a product of this sixteenth-century purge, which, from evidence at our disposal, we know that Stalin consciously took as a model for emulation during the Great Purge of the

50. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, p. 430.

51. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, p. 109. Schapiro's argument (*The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*) is the rather more comprehensive one that, having ruled by terror in the first phase of the revolution from above, Stalin was faced with the strong possibility of losing power if the terror came to an end, hence chose terror as the means of his remaining in command. To explain the colossal scope of the terror in the second phase, Schapiro refers only to a personal characteristic—Stalin's "thoroughness."

1930's; he had come to view Ivan Grozny and not alone Peter the Great as a Russian statesman of socialist formation. With very few exceptions, the independent-minded Old Bolsheviks were cast as his boyars.

The pertinence of this to the problem of the nexus between the two phases is clear. The Great Purge was at once the crucible of the restoration of an absolute autocracy in Russia—under Stalin now—and concomitantly a continuation of the process of formation of Stalin's neo-tsarist version of the compulsory-service state, an entity that may properly be called "totalitarian." The first phase of the revolution from above had seen the binding of the peasantry and working class in servitude to the ever swelling, every more centralized, ever more bureaucratized, ever more police-dominated Stalinist state; and this new *zakrepushchenie* grew still tighter in later years. The second phase brought the party itself and the intelligentsia in that greatly expanded Soviet sense of the term (which embraces managers, officials, specialists, technicians, and professionals of all sorts) into line with the rest of society. They too became a serving class whose status as such was made tangible and visible with the introduction in the later 1930's and 1940's of a Stalinist table of ranks that bore a distinct resemblance—as did the uniforms and insignia—to the corresponding tsarist set-up. Completing the process ideologically, the Stalinist order developed its own ideology of Soviet Russian statism, which was epitomized by Stalin's courtier, Georgi Malenkov, when he said to a party conference in 1941: "We are all servants of the state." Stalin had given the cue two years before, when, at the Eighteenth Party Congress, he corrected Engels' (and by implication Marx's) mistaken idea that socialism meant the withering away of the state.

To what extent was the Stalinist revolution "from below" as well as from above? Not until the social history of the period is written will this question be fully answerable. Undoubtedly, we should avoid two untenable, extreme positions: that taken in the above-cited passage in Stalin's *Short Course*, that the revolution from above was "directly supported from below by the millions . . .," and the opposite view that the process had no support from below. But given the still fragmentary state of our knowledge, differences of opinion and emphasis are inevitable when we move beyond this obvious starting-point. Perhaps it would be useful, as a setting for analysis and discussion, to observe two distinctions. First, the distinction between the two phases (1929–33 and 1934–39). Second, the distinction between two different possible meanings of "below": persons in low-level roles in the regime or closely associated with it, notably the membership of the Communist Party and the Komsomol; and the population at large. Using Soviet terminology, we may call them respectively the *aktiv* and the *narod*. Although numerically substantial, the former was no more than a relatively small minority of the latter.

The *aktiv*, or large elements of it, including contingents of Soviet youth, was a vitally important instrumentality of the regime in the first phase of the Stalinist revolution. Many participated in the collectivization and industrialization drives not only actively but enthusiastically and self-sacrificingly. But it is not clear whether any considerable portion of the *narod* gave the regime its voluntary support during this phase. As in the time of War Communism, the regime

attempted to foment class war in the countryside by making the poor peasants (*bedniaki*) its allies in mass collectivization. To what extent this policy was a success is not entirely plain, as there is evidence, including documentary evidence from the Smolensk party archives, that mass collectivization was not only opposed by the well-off and middle peasants in their great majority, but unpopular as well among no few of the *bedniaki*.⁵² Even a *bedniak* could grasp what "V.K.P." meant and not like it. As for worker participation in collectivization, we have the case of the twenty-five thousand industrial workers who were enrolled by the party to go into the villages as collectivizers. But evidence also exists that at least some portion of the "twenty-five-thousanders" joined this movement under pressure of dire family need combined with material incentives to assist in the collectivizing.

In the second phase, the social picture changed significantly. While the *narod* remained basically passive—indeed more passive than in the early 1930's—large elements of the first-phase *aktiv* exchanged the role of implementers of the revolution for that of its victims. Very many of these people died or went to camps during the Great Purge. To a far greater extent than the first phase, the second was a police operation, and the supreme collective victim was the Communist Party itself as constituted in the early 1930's. By this very token, however, a great many who did not actively participate in the second phase, whether they belonged to the *aktiv* or the *narod*, nevertheless became its beneficiaries. For the decimation of the pre-1934 regime, party, and intelligentsia in the Great Purge opened career opportunities on a vast scale to those from below who showed ability combined with the acquiescent, state-oriented, and Stalin-centered attitudes that were hallmarks of the *chinovnik* under full Stalinism. This influx was largely an influx of the peasant-born or of those who had been children of peasants. Citing Boris Pilniak's statement of 1922 that "the dark waters of muzhik Russia have swept and swallowed the Petrine empire," Nicholas Vakar has argued that the Stalinist revolution, by filling the Soviet hierarchy with persons of peasant stock and infusing age-old peasant mores values into the Soviet way, marked the complete *peasantization* of the Russian Revolution.⁵³

VII

This essay has advanced a culturalist interpretation of the Russian revolutionary process as one that took place in two main stages with an interval of quiescence

52. For collectivization as reflected in the archive, see Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (New York, 1958), Chap. 12. In *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* (p. 488), Lewin implies a more active, positive participation of the village poor: "In order to understand this process of wholesale dekulakization, it is also essential to bear in mind the misery in which millions of *bednyaks* lived. All too often they went hungry; they had neither shoes nor shirts, nor any other 'luxury items.' The tension which had built up in the countryside, and the eagerness to dispossess the kulaks, were in large measure contributed to by the wretchedness of the *bednyaks'* conditions, and the hatred which they were capable of feeling on occasion for their more fortunate neighbours, who exploited them pitilessly whenever they had the chance to do so."

53. Nicholas Vakar, *The Taproot of Soviet Society* (New York, 1961). The statement by Pilniak, cited by Vakar on p. 16, comes from his novel *Galy god*.

during the NEP. The first stage, it was held, produced a situation characterized by the uneasy co-existence of two cultures, a new Soviet culture growing out of the Revolution and a still-surviving old Russian culture with its stronghold in the village. The Soviet culture itself underwent considerable change during the NEP. The second, or Stalinist, stage of the Revolution yielded, as has been indicated, an amalgamated Stalinist Soviet culture that paradoxically involved at once the full-scale sovietization of Russian society *and* the Russification of the Soviet culture. The Soviet Union was re-Russified in the very revolutionary process that purported to complete Russia's sovietizing, or to transform NEP Russia into a socialist society. In keeping with the tsarist tradition, this Stalinist Soviet Russian culture bore a pronounced official (*kazënnnyi*) character. Not surprisingly, one consequence was the rebirth in Stalin's time of an unofficial, underground body of thought, feeling, and art which was heretical with reference to the Stalinist culture and which, again not surprisingly in view of Russian tradition, emerged among the educated youth and intelligentsia; this was the rebirth of the "dual Russia" phenomenon as seen in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the post-Stalin era, the underground Russia has come into semi-public view via *samizdat* and the like. So now again, in a way which is both new and old, there are two cultures in Russia.

In addition to interpreting the Stalinist revolution in culturalist terms, this essay has attempted to explain it so. The circumstantial explanation of the revolution from above was rejected in favor of one which stressed, first of all, the way in which the circumstances of 1927–28 were perceived and defined by a political leadership many of whose members, including Stalin, had come of age politically in the era of the October Revolution and War Communism and responded to those circumstances in the revolutionary spirit of the earlier time rather than in the evolutionary spirit of NEP Soviet culture. Further, the form taken by the Stalinist revolution, the relation between its two major phases, and the nature of the new Stalinist order that it created have been treated as a recapitulation in essentials of the pattern of revolutionism from above that belonged to the political culture of old Russia and was visible in the tsarist state-building process from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and the sociopolitical order it produced.

But the question inevitably arises, why did history recapitulate itself so in this instance? Cultural patterns out of a nation's past do not repeat themselves in the present simply because they were there. Nor can we explain the phenomenon by reference to like circumstances, such as NEP Russia's relative international isolation and economic backwardness, for we have argued that circumstances do not carry their own self-evident meaning, that what people and political leaders *act upon* is always the circumstances *as perceived and defined by them*, which in turn is influenced by culture. But also, we must now add, by personality. And so we come at the end to what was mentioned at the start as a third important explanatory factor underlying the revolution from above—the mind and personality of Stalin.

To a certain extent the personal factor is covered by the culturalist explanation itself. In general, there is no conflict between culturalist explanations and those

that make reference to the special historical role of a leader-personality. As cultural anthropologists have pointed out, "culture" and "personality" are, to a considerable degree, two ways of viewing one and the same phenomenon, culture being something which has its being mainly *within* people.⁵⁴ In terms more immediately pertinent to our argument, a leader-personality becomes politically acculturated through his life-experience both in early years and during manhood. Thus, 1917 and the Civil War were a formative acculturating life-experience for Stalin and many others of his party generation, leaving a deep residue of the revolutionary political culture of War Communism within them. On this level of explanation, Stalin's historical role in the late 1920's was to make himself, as effectively as he did, the leader and spokesman of an outlook that he shared with numerous others in the party leadership and not alone the men of his own faction.

The recapitulation of the tsarist pattern of revolutionism from above presents a more difficult problem of explanation in culturalist *or* personality terms, if only because Russian tsarism, in all its manifestations, was what the Bolshevik revolutionary movement had taken originally as its mortal sociopolitical enemy. However, the Russian nationalist feeling aroused in a section of the party during the Civil War years, the revolution-born spirit of "Red Russian patriotism" against which a party delegate from the Ukraine protested at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921, was an element in the culture that *could* predispose a Bolshevik to perceive certain patterns out of the heritage of old Russia as relevant to the circumstances of the present. On the other hand, it did not do so in the generality of instances of which we know. It is true that Bukharin grasped the direction of Stalin's policy thinking in 1928, with special reference to forced collectivization, and alluded to its tsarist inspiration by terming it "military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry." But the party resolution of April 23, 1929, against the Bukharinist group stigmatized Bukharin's charge as "a libelous attack . . . drawn from the party of Miliukov."⁵⁵ This was hardly an admission that Stalin's neo-tsarist Marxism (the use of such a phrase may sound monstrous to Marxists, but the Marxist *Weltanschauung* is capable of many metamorphoses) had found favor with a substantial body of party opinion. Hence, in this problem the explanatory emphasis must fall more on "personality" than on "culture."

To put it otherwise, acculturation is not to be viewed simply as a process in which an individual is affected by formative life-experiences and thereby internalizes culture patterns, including patterns out of the past, as dictated by his psychological needs or predispositions. Stalin, the commissar for nationality affairs and as such the presumable protector of the rights of the minority nations in the Soviet federation, was in fact, as Lenin discovered to his horror shortly before dying, one of those Bolsheviks most infected by "Russian Red patriotism." Lenin showed his realization of this in the notes on the nationality question which he

54. See, for example, Wallace, *Culture and Personality*, Introduction; and Ralph Linton, *The Cultural Background of Personality* (New York, 1945), Chaps. 4–5.

55. *Kommunisticheskaia partiia sovetskogo soiuza v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Moscow, 1954), Vol. II, p. 555.

dictated on December 30–31, 1922 and in which he characterized Stalin as foremost among those Russified minority representatives in the party who tended to err on the side of “true-Russianism” (*istinno-russkie nastroneniia*) and “Great Russian chauvinism.” Unbeknown to Lenin, Stalin’s sense of Russian nationality, if not his true-Russianism, had dated from his youthful conversion to Lenin’s leadership and to Bolshevism, which he saw as the “Russian faction” in the Empire’s Marxist Party, Menshevism being the “Jewish faction.” It was on this foundation that Stalin, during the 1920’s, went forward in his thinking and appropriative self-acculturation, as the generality of his Russian-nationalist-oriented party comrades did not, to envisage the tsarist state-building process as a model for the Soviet Russian state in its “building of socialism.”⁵⁶ And it was the great personal power that he acquired by 1929, with the ouster of the oppositions from the party leadership, that made it possible for him to proceed to carry out his design.

If the thesis concerning the recapitulation of the state-building process places heavy emphasis upon personality even in the context of a culturalist approach, a final explanatory consideration concerning the Stalinist phenomenon narrows the focus onto personality to a still greater degree. Unlike any other Bolshevik, to my knowledge, Stalin, as we have noted, defined the Soviet situation in 1925 and 1926 in eve-of-October terms, implicitly presaging thereby a revolutionary assault against the existing order, i.e., the NEP, in the drive to build socialism. Then, looking back in the *Short Course* of 1938 on the accomplishments of the Stalinist decade, he described them, and collectivization in particular, as equivalent in consequence to the October Revolution of 1917. Underlying both the definition of the situation in the mid-1920’s and the retrospective satisfaction expressed in the late 1930’s was Stalin’s compulsive psychological need, born of neurosis, to prove himself a revolutionary hero of Lenin-like proportions, to match or surpass what all Bolsheviks considered Lenin’s supreme historical exploit, the leadership of the party in the world-historic revolutionary success of October 1917. The great revolutionary drive to change Russia in the early 1930’s was intended as Stalin’s October.

In practice it achieved certain successes, notably in industrialization, but at a cost of such havoc and misery in Russia that Stalin, as the regime’s supreme leader, aroused condemnation among many. This helps to explain, in psychological terms, the lethal vindictiveness that he visited upon millions of his party comrades, fellow countrymen, and others in the ensuing years. It was his way of trying to come to terms with the repressed fact that he, Djugashvili, had failed to prove himself the charismatically Lenin-like Stalin that it was his lifelong goal to be. If this interpretation is well founded, he was hardly the most impersonal of great historical figures.

56. The demonstration and documentation of this thesis is one of the aims of my work in progress, *Stalin and the Revolution from Above, 1929–1939: A Study in History and Personality*. In *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929*, I have sought to demonstrate the thesis concerning Stalin’s Great Russian nationalism and its youthful origins.

VIII

Having sketched here a primarily culturalist interpretation of Stalinism as revolution from above, based on the Soviet 1930’s, it remains to conclude with a comment on the historical sequel. I wish to indicate in particular the relevance of the analysis to the Stalinist phenomenon in its subsequent development. We may distinguish two subsequent periods: that of the Soviet-German conflict of 1941–45 and that of postwar Stalinism (1946–53). In this sequence, 1945 forms a sort of historical pause or hiatus, rather as 1934 did between the two phases of the revolution from above of the 1930’s.

The Second World War was, in a way, an interim in Stalinism’s development. Not that the “Great Fatherland War,” as it was called in Stalin’s Russia, had no serious impact on Stalinist Soviet Communism as a sociopolitical culture, but that mainly it reinforced tendencies already present before the war began. Thus, the war gave a powerful further impetus to the Great Russian nationalism which had become evident in Stalin’s personal political makeup by the beginning of the 1920’s and a prominent motif in Stalinist thought and politics in the 1930’s. The official glorification of national Russian military heroes of the pre-Soviet past, notably Generals Suvorov and Kutuzov and Admiral Nakhimov, and the opening of special Soviet officers’ training academies named after them, were among the many manifestations of this trend.⁵⁷ Too, the war intensified the militarist strain in Stalinism, which has here been traced back to the time of War Communism. It strengthened and further developed the hierarchical structure of Stalinist Soviet society as reconstituted during the revolution from above of the 1930’s, and augmented the already far-reaching Stalinist hypertrophy of the state machine. There were also covert trends at that time toward the official anti-Semitism which became blatant in the postwar Stalinist campaign against “rootless cosmopolitans,” the murder of large numbers of Soviet Jewish intellectuals, and the infamous “doctors’ affair” of Stalin’s last months in 1953.⁵⁸

In the postwar period after 1945, we see a situation which appears to conflict with a revolutionary interpretation of the Stalinist phenomenon. The dominant note in Soviet internal policy during those years was conservatism, the reconsolidating of the Stalinist order that had taken shape in the 1930’s.⁵⁹ An example of such conservatism was the early post-war action of Stalin’s regime in cutting

57. On Stalinism and Russian nationalism after 1939, see in particular the informative account by F. Barghoorn, “Stalinism and the Russian Cultural Heritage,” *Review of Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April, 1952), pp. 178–203; and his *Soviet Russian Nationalism* (New York, 1956).

58. In “New Biographies of Stalin,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1975), p. 104, Jack Miller has called attention to “Stalin’s covert use of antisemitism against Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev, when in coalition with Bukharin he was routing them in 1926–27,” and adds: “The extent to which antisemitism appeared in the Party machine during this phase of Stalin’s rise to supreme power is of special interest in the ‘russifying’ of Marxism.”

59. In “The Stalin Heritage in Soviet Policy” (*The Soviet Political Mind*, Chap. 4), I have argued that Stalin turned conservative in his post-war internal policies.

back the private garden plots which—for purposes of both war-time morale and the nation's food supply—the collectivized Soviet peasants had been allowed surreptitiously to increase in size during the war years. True, this was a "conservative" action in the special sense of reinstating what had been a revolutionary change at the time of collectivization fifteen years before.

But Stalinism as revolutionism from above did not end with the completion of the state-directed revolutionary processes of the 1930's and the coming of the Second World War. It reappeared in 1939–40 and again in the late war and post-war Stalin years in a new form: the externalization of Stalinist revolution from above. The years 1939–40 are singled out in this connection because they witnessed the Soviet takeover of eastern Poland and the three Baltic countries during the time of Soviet-Nazi collaboration under the Stalin-Hitler pact of August 1939. Under an organized sham pretense of popular demand, the eastern Polish territories were incorporated into the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet republics; and Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia became constituent ("union") republics of the USSR. Meanwhile, under cover of the Red Army occupation of these lands, the Soviet party, police, and economic authorities proceeded with the forcible transplantation to them of Soviet political culture in its Stalinized form, complete with deportation of all suspect elements of the population into the Russian interior. The revolutionary transformations from above, interrupted by the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, were resumed and completed upon the Soviet reoccupation, later in the war, of what had been eastern Poland and the independent Baltic states.

Then the Stalinist revolution from above was carried into the Balkans and much of East-Central Europe in the wake of the Soviet Army's occupation of Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, the rest of Poland, and the eastern parts of Germany. Czechoslovakia likewise succumbed to it following the Communist coup of February 1948. Yugoslavia, where a Communist movement had come to power independently through successful partisan warfare during the German occupation, quietly but effectively checked the subsequent efforts of Stalin's emissaries to direct the Yugoslav transformation from above in such a way as to ensure firm Soviet control of the Yugoslav Communist political system; and as a result Yugoslavia was excommunicated by Stalin later in 1948.⁶⁰

In its war-time and post-war externalized form, the Stalinist revolution from above comprised both the takeover (or attempted takeover) of a given country, normally via military occupation, and then the use of a Soviet-directed native Communist party and its subsidiary organizations as agents of the country's transformation into what was called at first a "people's democracy." The establishment and consolidation of Muscovite control over the organs of power in the country concerned was, as indicated above, an essential element of the process. There were variations in the methods and timetables, but in essence the East European revolution, insofar as it took place under Soviet auspices in a number of smaller countries, involved the transfer to foreign lands of much of what had

taken place in Russia in the 1930's. The same may be said of the postwar revolutionary transformation in North Korea, which had been occupied by the Soviet Army at the war's end. China, a potential great power in its own right, presented for that very reason a special problem for Stalin—and for Stalinism. Insofar as the Stalinist revolution from above had been aimed at transforming Soviet Russia into a great military-industrial power capable of fully defending its independence and interests in the world, Stalinism was not likely to appeal to the very Russian-nationalist-minded Stalin as a proper prescription for Communism in China, save to the extent that Russia could place and keep China under its control. Very likely it was these considerations, together with the shrewd realization of the impossibility of long-range success in keeping a Communist China under Russian control, which explain Stalin's ambivalence toward—not to say distaste for—the coming of the Chinese Communists to power. By the same token, we can see in all this a key to the attraction that certain aspects of Stalinism, not including its Russian nationalism, had for Mao.

Finally, despite what has been said above about the generally conservative nature of Stalin's post-war internal policy, it may be suggested that in some paradoxical sense Stalinism as revolution from above returned to Russia during 1946–53 within the setting of the conservative internal policies then being pursued. For Stalin's very effort to turn the Soviet clock back to the 1930's after the war carried with it a shadowy rerun of the developments of that earlier decade. In other words, the post-war reaction was a reaction to a period of radical change—from above. In his major postwar policy address of February 9, 1946, Stalin placed a series of further five-year plans on Russia's agenda as a guarantee against "all contingencies," i.e., to prepare the country for a possible future war. This meant the re-enactment of the pre-war policy of giving priority to heavy industry over consumer goods, with all the privation that entailed for the Soviet population. A minor recollectivizing campaign was put through following the above-mentioned early postwar decision to cut back the size of the peasants' private garden plots. Furthermore, in the dictator's final period there were increasingly clear indications that he was preparing, if on a lesser scale, a sort of replica of the Great Purge of the 1930's. There would be show trials of the Soviet Jewish doctors, accused of complicity in an imaginary international Anglo-American-Jewish conspiracy to shorten the lives of Soviet leaders; and no doubt other show trials as well. These would provide the dramatic symbolism needed as an accompaniment and justification of the purge, just as the show trials of the Old Bolsheviks of Left and Right did in the earlier version of the revolution from above.⁶¹

61. An interpretation of the show trial as an element of Stalinist political culture has been presented by the present writer in "Stalin, Bukharin, and History as Conspiracy," first published as the Introduction to *The Great Purge Trial*, edited by Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen (New York, 1965), and reprinted in *The Soviet Political Mind* as Chapter 3. The transplantation of the Stalinist show trial to post-war Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia in particular, is discussed by H. Gordon Skilling in his essay below, and also in *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, N.J., 1976), Chap. XIII.

60. The classic account remains Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York, 1953).

Before the first of the new trials could begin, however, the dictator suddenly fell ill and died. So providential was the timing of this death for very many whose lives were threatened by the oncoming new Stalinist blood purge, including men in highest places, that it has aroused a persistent suspicion that Stalin's passing was hastened in one way or another.

However that may have been, Stalin in his macabre way remained to the end a revolutionary, albeit from above. Of few if any of those whom he chose as his associates and executors, and who survived him in power, could the same be said. This helps to explain why, in Russia at any rate, Stalinism after Stalin was going to differ very significantly from the Stalinism of his time. Without its key progenitor alive and in charge of events, Stalinism lost its very Russified revolutionary soul. Then and there it became what it has remained ever since: extreme Communist conservatism of strong Russian-nationalist tendency.

DIMENSIONS OF STALINISM IN RUSSIA