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Source: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 1998), pp. 384-425

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](http://www.press.uchicago.edu)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/235073>

Accessed: 24/09/2011 19:30

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Review Article

1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks*

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A man sets himself the task of drawing the world.

As the years pass, he fills the empty space with images of provinces and kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, houses, and people. Just before he dies, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his own face.

(JORGE LUIS BORGES)

Among American students of Russia, the mood surrounding the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s rollercoasted upward from initial surprise to giddy euphoria and then downward to deep disillusionment and embarrassing perplexity. A

* I gratefully acknowledge the questions and insights of a large number of graduate students over many years at Princeton and Columbia Universities (some now assistant professors), as well as the helpful comments of Laura Engelstein, Mark von Hagen, Arno Mayer, and Philip Nord. Presentations of this material at Tokyo University's Social Science Institute; the University of California, Berkeley; and Stanford University offered further opportunities for clarification. I thank John Boyer for the original commission. Among the books reviewed are D. C. B. Lieven, *Nicholas II: Emperor of All the Russias* (London: John Murray, 1993), pp. xii + 292; Mark Steinberg and Vladimir Khrustalev, *The Fall of the Romanovs: Political Dreams and Personal Struggles in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. xviii + 444; Robert K. Massie, *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 308; Edvard Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 462; James Von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), pp. xiv + 316; V. P. Danilov and T. Shanin et al., eds., *Krest'ianskoe vosstanie v Tambovskoi gubernii v 1919–1921 gg. "Antonovshchina": Dokumenty i materialy* (Tambov: Redaktsionnoizdatel'skii otdel, 1994), pp. 332; V. S. Izmozik, *Glaza i ushi rezhima: Gosudarstvennyi politicheskii kontrol' za naseleniem Sovetskoi Rossii v 1918–1928 godakh* (St. Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburg Universitet Ekonomiki i Finansov, 1995), pp. 164; A. V. Blium, *Za kulisami "Ministerstva pravdy": Tainaia istoriia Sovetskoi tsenzury, 1917–1929* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 1994), pp. 319; Bohdan S. Wynar, *Ukraine: A Bibliographic Guide to English-Language Publications* (Englewood, Colo.: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1990), pp. xiii + 406; Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991), pp. xvii + 483; George Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR 1923–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. xvii + 289; Stephen Blank, *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917–1924* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1994), pp. 295; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The*

[*The Journal of Modern History* 70 (June 1998): 384–425]

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similar trajectory was traced in other countries, but perhaps nowhere else were the effects so ramified, for nowhere else did perceptions of Russia constitute so integral a part of the national fabric. That thousands of people in one country (the United States) could earn a living by observing another (Russia) will doubtless be of interest to future generations trying to make sense of the twentieth century. In the meantime, barbed assaults have been launched against this still enormous arm-chair army.¹

No group has come in for more criticism than political scientists, who have been thrashed for failing to predict the end of Communism and the Soviet Union. While numerous political scientists of an older generation—known by their own choosing as “Sovietologists”—have stayed busy responding to gleeful media portrayals of a crisis in the profession, younger scholars have led an impressive revitalization. Intensive field work, regional study, and the application of new methodologies common in the analysis of other regions have raised the level of data and discussion appreciably. Many scholars still obsess over personalities and warn of civil war every time there is a political disagreement within the Russian government. And transition “theory” remains a skimpy fig leaf for American autouniversalization. But panels at the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) conventions have moved beyond roundtables on Gorbachev and Yeltsin to such subjects as election campaign tactics, comparative constitutional law, the banking system, and corruption.

Historians of post-1917 Russia have also been called to account. For thirty years the two principal trends in the historiography have been efforts to represent the

Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. xix + 200; Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. xii + 377; Neils Erik Rosenfeldt, *Stalin's Secret Chancellery and the Comintern: Evidence about the Organizational Patterns* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen Institute of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1991), pp. 125; Oleg Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro: Mekhanizmy politicheskoi vlasti v 1930-e gody* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1996); Valentin Berezhkov, *At Stalin's Side: His Interpreter's Memoirs from the October Revolution to the Fall of the Dictator's Empire* (New York: Birch Lane, 1994), pp. 271; Verronique Garros, Natalya Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, eds., *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s* (New York: New Press, 1995), pp. xx + 394; David Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929–1941* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. xiii + 282; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford, 1994), pp. xx + 386; Tamara Kondrat'eva, *Bol'sheviki-iakobintsy i prizrak termidora* (Moscow: Ipol, 1993), pp. 240; Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1995), pp. xxii + 361, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1990), pp. xxiv + 944, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Knopf, 1993), pp. xviii + 587, and *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1995), pp. xvii + 431; Martin Malia, *La tragedie sovietique: Histoire du socialisme en Russie, 1917–1991* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1995); Abbot Gleason, *Totalitarianism* (New York: Oxford, 1995), pp. 307; and Wada Haruki, *Rekishi to shite no shakaishugi* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1995), pp. x, 221. Given the flurry of activity that has accompanied the opening of formerly classified archives, considerable attention has been paid to recent journal articles and even to unpublished dissertations.

¹ Joseph L. Wiczynski, *The Gorbachev Bibliography: Books and Articles in English on Perestroika in the USSR (1985–1991)* (New York, 1995), lists 8,600 items (only a fraction from outside the United States).

October coup as a worker revolution² and the contradictory New Economic Policy (NEP) as a period of quasi-social democratic evolution arbitrarily terminated by Stalin and his clique.³ Both of these compatible currents were cast in a harsh light by 1991, if not before, and a defensive retreat is underway.⁴ A third tendency (of the last twenty years)—to depict the Stalin revolution as an authentic “revolution from below”—continues to inspire new research, notwithstanding devastating criticisms since its debut.⁵ Because the three post-1960 revisionist historiographical trends have been associated with social history, 1991 prompted a return to political history and the apparent resurrection of totalitarianism, the interpretive view that, in different ways, all the self-styled revisionists sought to bury, over and over.⁶

At the same time, like their political science counterparts, younger historians have spotlighted overshadowed subjects, such as religion and nationality, embarked on local studies, and begun to adapt approaches from other fields. Yet whereas in political science the very object of study disappeared, creating intense demand for fresh faces, in history the Soviet Union lives on. Senior historians on opposing sides of debates have certified that the new documents confirm their long-held views and have maneuvered to attach their names to the publication of the choicest examples. Largely excluded from the editorships of documents, many younger scholars have sought a place in the polemics—political versus social history, totalitarianism versus revisionism—or have retreated into archival fetishism. And yet, there are stirrings of a shift, for the new generation is coming of age in a world without the problem of Communism.

Tracing the effects of 1991 on historians of Russia and the USSR, this article reviews declassified sources and recent works, with the aim of suggesting a possible new framework for interpretation and future inquiry. It begins with an overview of the archives and then treats a series of selected issues: the Russian Revolution's relation to the old regime; the articulation of October after the event; the

² Exemplified by Daniel H. Kaiser, ed., *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917: The View from Below* (Cambridge, 1987); and Tim McDaniel, *Autocracy, Capitalism, and Revolution in Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988).

³ Exemplified by Moshe Lewin, *Le dernier combat du Lenine* (Paris, 1967), trans. as *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York, 1968); and Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography* (New York, 1973).

⁴ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Revision and Retreat in the Historiography of 1917,” in *Reexamining the Soviet Experience: Essays in Honor of Alexander Dallin*, ed. David Holloway and Norman Naimark (Boulder, Colo., 1996), pp. 25–50.

⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia* (Bloomington, Ind., 1978). The original formulation came in two variants: (1) that there was widespread support once Stalin launched his revolution from above; and (2) that Stalin's action was to a significant degree a product of popular desires. Attacks usually focused on the second claim; defenses, on the first. Amid the controversy, Fitzpatrick distanced herself intellectually from those she inspired. The suddenly leaderless “revolution from below” then metamorphosed into a campaign for lower-end Gulag statistics—still in the millions, but fewer millions than “politically motivated” estimates. Thus, the protagonists themselves helped discredit their poorly expressed yet valid point that Stalinism cannot be understood solely in terms of crude coercion. See J. Arch Getty and Roberta Manning, eds., *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (New York, 1993); and Robert Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934–1941* (New Haven, Conn., 1996).

⁶ Martin Malia, “From under the Rubble, What?” *Problems of Communism* (1992), pp. 89–106.

newfound centrality of nation and its relationship to class; and the problems of intentionalism, functionalism, and *Alltagsgeschichte*. The review closes with a consideration of the career of totalitarianism. Readers will note the absence of the standard rubrics—1917, war communism, NEP, Stalinism—in favor of an approach that understands the revolution as a part of imperial Russian history and that treats the entire Soviet period in terms of the vicissitudes of the revolution. Readers will also recognize certain methodological tendencies: an emphasis on the importance of politics (while broadening the definition of the political); an attempt to relate elite actions to popular attitudes and state power to patterns of everyday life; a consideration of practices and things said as constitutive of arenas in which identities are formed and contested; and an effort to highlight the indispensability of comparative study.

By now, at least, it should be obvious that, from beginning to end, the Russian Revolution was fought over socialism. At the same time, the only way to give Soviet socialism its due—to understand where it came from as well as what it was like for those who built and lived it—is to take stock of, yet move beyond, the conceptual categories and narratives that were born in the revolutionary process and became the basis of scholarly analyses. Thus, my effort to sketch out a new framework necessarily involves a dialogue with previous historiography. At the outset, it should be said that I do not present the Russian Revolution as the embodiment of a lost social democracy, or, conversely, as a legitimization of Western society through negative example. Rather, I liken the Russian Revolution to a mirror in which various elements of the modernity found outside the USSR are displayed in alternately undeveloped, exaggerated, and familiar forms.

POLITICAL FOOTBALL: THE SOVIET ARCHIVES

Even after foreigners began to be admitted to some Soviet archives in the 1970s, the Communist party archives remained restricted to vetted party members. Alternatives existed in the Trotsky papers at Harvard University and in the collections of the Menshevik and White emigrations at the Hoover Institute, Columbia University, and the BDIC in Paris, but these materials become thin beyond the 1920s. For the 1930s, deemed formative, foreign scholars relied on the “memoirs” of defectors, none of whom worked in the inner circle; offered their own speculations, right down to putting Stalin’s thoughts in quotation marks; or conducted labor-intensive study of Soviet publications that revealed little of high-level intentions.⁷ There was one exception to the lack of insider documents on the 1930s: the party archives from Smolensk province captured in July 1941 by the Germans and, four years later, removed by the Americans who advanced into Germany. In the 1950s the

⁷ Robert Conquest declared that “truth can . . . only percolate in the form of hearsay.” J. Arch Getty went to the other extreme, denying any value to memoirs. Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin’s Purge of the Thirties* (New York, 1968), p. 754; J. Arch Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–37* (New York, 1985), pp. 211–20. Adam Ulam may have won the prize for imaginary Stalin quotations, but he was not alone. Adam Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (New York, 1973).

U.S. military granted exclusive access to Merle Fainsod, who wrote a first-rate monograph that unwittingly did much to undercut his model of the USSR as an all-controlling state.⁸ A generation or so later the same materials—by then available on microfilm—inspired a plethora of publications, most notably two parallel reinterpretations of the purges by J. Arch Getty and Gabor Rittersporn that emphasized the absence of control and diminished Stalin's role.⁹ Thus, on the basis of the incomplete records of an agricultural backwater, plus once-removed hearsay, censored official publications, and much speculation, arose a vast literature on the 1930s Soviet Union as a political system. Scholars will continue to dispute the quality of this work, its inevitable and not so inevitable limitations. But what cannot be disputed is that study of the USSR held a significance far beyond the academy.

By 1989 glasnost began to bring down the barriers to the party archives. A few well-connected Soviet scholars rushed to the media with documents on the size of the Gulag and other sensations.¹⁰ Then a trickle of foreigners was let in (accompanied by accusations of bribes involving computers).¹¹ Meanwhile, renewal of the Khrushchev-era process of "rehabilitating" purge victims led to the revival of a journal, *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* (News of the Central Committee), which published the materials on the fabrication of the 1930s trials as well as evidence that Stalin approved long lists of people to be shot.¹² Soon, however, disillusionment set in among researchers, for the most common politburo documents in the party archives turned out to be the so-called protocols of meetings outlining agenda items, those in attendance, and the decisions rendered—a few bloodless pages per gathering. Detailed background materials were absent. In many cases, even the decisions were marked "special file" (*osobaia papka*) and were nowhere to be found. Above all, there were no stenograms of the discussions. To be sure, as the compilers of a valuable document collection on the 1930s politburo point out, to some extent the

⁸ Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). See also Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, "The Odyssey of the Smolensk Archive: Plundered Communist Records for the Service of Anti-Communism," Carl Beck Occasional Papers in Russian and Eastern European Studies, no. 1201 (Pittsburgh, 1995).

⁹ For a list, see J. Arch Getty, "Guide to the Smolensk Archive," in *A Researcher's Guide to Sources on Soviet Social History in the 1930s*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola (Armonk, N.Y., 1990), p. 94, n. 4. Getty's and Rittersporn's work is discussed below.

¹⁰ Initially, different press accounts of the new materials gave incompatible versions of their content. Some "revelations" turned out to have been appropriated from no longer forbidden CIA-financed translations of books by Sovietologists; others resulted from misreading the files. For the confusion over counting Gulag convicts, see Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin's Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives* (New York, 1994).

¹¹ *AAASS Newsletter* (January 1992), pp. 10–11, and (March 1992), p. 10; and *Slavic Review* 52, no. 1 (1993): 87–106.

¹² In a few cases the documents proved surprising. A 1940 secret report, e.g., showed that the number of discharged or arrested army officers in the terror was not 25–50 percent, as previously estimated, but 15 percent, including those dismissed for drunkenness and incompetence. See *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 186–92; and Roger Reese, "The Red Army and the Great Purges," in Getty and Manning, eds., pp. 198–214. That the army purge did not extend as far down as had been supposed may leave untouched the key issue: the inexperience of newcomers to the decimated top ranks.

letters exchanged among politburo members permit a reconstruction of the initiation and resolution of issues.¹³ And, as two American scholars urge, the protocols should not be dismissed simply because they fail to provide an unequivocal answer to the origins of the terror.¹⁴ Yet the puzzle lingered: Where were all the supersecret materials? What the politburo rehabilitation commission knew began to get around. Having stormed the fortress of the party archives, foreigners now hoped for an assault on the recently discovered “Kremlin” or “politburo archives.”

One of the great peculiarities of Soviet history was the post-1917 existence of the Communist party, which instead of being abolished with the formation of a revolutionary government (*Sovnarkom*) came to serve as a political watchdog in this and all other institutions.¹⁵ Commentators have been obsessed with the party’s assumption of “control” over every organization. But few have bothered to ruminate on the fact that, by its self-definition (as belatedly codified in the 1936 constitution), the party was a “public association,” not a state agency, and that all the institutions permeated by the party, including the state, continued to operate. After army officers, bureaucrats, and engineers ceased to be holdovers from the tsarist period, the separate party meetings within every institution could seem redundant, but they persisted.¹⁶ This party-state dualism had enormous consequences in the system of administration, including the generation of two sets of documents. Soviet state archives are completely parallel to party archives in every respect but one: they lack documents on party membership and heresy hunting. Each constituent of the state, however, tended to operate like a separate kingdom, not merely managing but also owning the property under its jurisdiction, including paperwork. Rather than turn documents over to the state archives, a number of agencies—the procuracy, military, foreign ministry, and KGB—established their own “departmental” (*vedomstvennyi*) archives. Accordingly, along with the calls for access to the politburo archives came the clamor to enter these still restricted separate collections of the state.

As events overtook everyone, rumors spread of the destruction of documents. On August 23, 1991, returning to Moscow after the collapse of the putsch, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev ordered the main buildings of the KGB and Communist party “sealed” (he had already removed the politburo archives to the Kremlin in late 1990 and renamed them the USSR presidential archives). But the next day,

¹³ Oleg Khlevniuk et al., eds., *Stalinskoe politburo v 30-e gody: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 10–11.

¹⁴ Michael David-Fox and David Hoffmann, “The Politburo Protocols,” *Russian Review* 55 (January 1996): 99–103. The protocols do present a fuller picture of the onset of Stalin’s personal dictatorship. See E. A. Rees, “Stalin, the Politburo, and Rail Transport Policy,” in *Soviet History, 1917–1953: Essays in Honour of R. W. Davies*, ed. Julian Cooper, Maureen Perrie, and E. A. Rees (New York, 1995), pp. 104–33. The matter is discussed below.

¹⁵ T. H. Rigby, *Lenin’s Government: Sovnarkom, 1917–1922* (Cambridge, 1979); Francesco Benvenuti, *I Bolscevichi e l’Armata rossa, 1918–1922* (Naples, 1982), trans. as *The Bolsheviks and the Red Army, 1918–1922* (Cambridge, 1988), esp. pp. 10–12. For the party’s behavior as a conspiracy in power, see the ubiquitous references to “the conspiracy” in declassified documents: *Istochnik*, no. 5–6 (1993), pp. 88–96; Khlevniuk et al., pp. 73–77.

¹⁶ See Solomon Schwarz, “The Communist Party and the Soviet State,” *Problems of Communism*, no. 1 (1953), pp. 8–13.

Russian president Boris Yeltsin decreed that all archives on the territory of Russia were to be “transferred” to Russian Federation jurisdiction (and they were).¹⁷ After Yeltsin pushed aside Gorbachev and banned the Communist party, the central party archives were renamed and opened to all comers.¹⁸ In February 1992, the working papers (1953–91) at party headquarters on Old Square were formed into a research archive.¹⁹ Yeltsin promised to open the presidential and KGB archives. Soon, however, a series of scandals erupted. Politburo documents on the former USSR’s foreign relations were published abroad without authorization. Information from KGB files on “informants” and “agents” proved to have enormous repercussions (as in Eastern Europe). Also, a backlash ensued against a contract with foreigners to microfilm millions of party documents, copies of which would be deposited in the Hoover Institute.²⁰ In the event, the presidential archives, which contain the originals of all politburo documents, reams of high-level correspondence, and the bulk of the personal files of the USSR’s general secretaries, beginning with Stalin, were retained under the control of the Russian president. As for the central KGB archives—so vast they are spread out in numerous locations besides Moscow—two teams and several individuals have been permitted to work on select materials,²¹ but the overall holdings remain mysterious.²²

A narrow group close to the government has used the presidential and KGB archives for their own publications, settling political scores and helping Russia conduct post-Soviet diplomacy.²³ As a result—alongside a number of sensational

¹⁷ *Istochnik*, no. 0 (1993), pp. 3–5, and no. 5–6 (1995), pp. 91, 94, no. 1 (1995), pp. 115–16; A. Chechevishnikov, “Istoriki i istochniki,” *Svobodnaia mysl’*, no. 14 (September 1992), pp. 116–21; “Ob Arkhive Prezidenta RF,” *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 6 (1993), p. 213.

¹⁸ The first published guide to the collection, which also contains the Comintern materials, has appeared: *Rossiiskii Tsentral’nyi Khraneniia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Noveishei Istorii: Kratkii putevoditel’: Fondy i kollektzii, sobrannyi Tsentral’nym partynym arkhivom*, ed. J. Arch Getty and V. P. Kozlov, vol. 1 of The Russian Archive Series (Moscow, 1993). Among other projects, this series has also published comprehensive guides to the former USSR central state archives (RGAE and GARF).

¹⁹ Now the Center for the Preservation of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD). Many documents, especially on international affairs, remain classified.

²⁰ *Izvestiia* (March 10 and 17, 1992); *AAASS Newsletter* (May 1992), pp. 1–2; *Komsomol’skaia pravda* (May 23, 1992); *Rossiiskie vesti* (June 19, 1992); *Moskovskie novosti* (August 16, 1992); *Otechsetvennye arkhivy*, no. 5 (1992), pp. 100–114, and no. 6, pp. 108–9. For all the xenophobia and confusion exhibited by Russian opponents of the Hoover deal, it remains remarkable that a research institution in one country would want to purchase copies of millions of files of the key archives of another country.

²¹ Arsenii Roginskii and Nikita Okhotin, “Arkhiy KGB: God posle putcha,” report of a Russian Parliamentary Commission, 1992, published only in translation in *Russland heute: Von innen gesehen: Politik, Recht, Kultur* (Moscow-Bremen, 1993), pp. 93–116. Besides Roginskii and Okhotin’s group studying the “repressions,” another group led by Viktor Danilov has focused on collectivization and dekulakization. See Viktor Danilov and S. A. Krasil’nikov, eds., *Spetspereseleny v Zapadnoi Sibiri*, 3 vols. (Novosibirsk, 1992–94).

²² Evgeniia Albats, a journalist who cites conversations with a dazzling number of top KGB officials, has asserted that an unverifiable quantity of KGB materials were “privatized” for private sale or manipulation. But she believes that many of the documents sold are forgeries. Evgeniia Albats, *Mina zamedlennogo deistviia: Politicheskii portret KGB SSSR* (Moscow, 1992), expanded and trans. as *KGB: State within a State* (New York, 1994).

²³ In connection with a 1992 United States–Russia summit meeting in Washington, the Library of Congress was able to exhibit copies of declassified Soviet-era documents. Diane P. Koenker and

nonrevelations, such as the attention-grabbing “discovery” that Stalin had prepared all along to attack Hitler²⁴—piecemeal disclosures from the presidential archives continue, aided by the appearance of a new journal, *Istochnik* (Source).²⁵ Whereas *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* afforded a (short-lived) window onto the former party archives as a way of “rehabilitating” Communists “illegally” repressed, *Istochnik* permits glimpses into the former politburo archives to discredit Communism entirely (parallels with the antisarist *Krasnyi arkhiv* [1922–41] come to mind).²⁶ But despite the break with Communism, geopolitical continuities, alongside the enduring practice of treating historical documents as a political weapon rather than a public resource, have meant that an untold number of secrets of the Soviet regime remain secrets of its principal successor.

War booty, career maker, commodity, object of power struggles, diplomatic bargaining chip—the archives of the former USSR have played many roles. But the overwhelming fact about them is not their manipulation, nor even the persistence of restrictions, but the vastness of what is there—in two sets (party and state).²⁷

Ronald D. Bachman, eds., *Revelations from the Archives: Documents in English Translation* (Washington, D.C., 1997). Yeltsin made gifts of copies of politburo and KGB documents on Solidarity, the 1956 invasion of Hungary, the Prague Spring, and the Korean War in connection with various state visits. (The documents made their way into English in *Bulletin of the Cold War International History Project*, ed. James Hershberg.) Outside of these episodes, most Soviet materials on decision-making in foreign policy at the very top remain inaccessible. See Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).

²⁴ Gennadii Bordiugov, ed., *Gotovil li Stalin nastupatel'nuiu voinu protiv Gitlera? Neplanirovannia diskussii: Sbornik materialov* (Moscow, 1995). It has come to light that in May 1941, Timoshenko and Zhukov did suggest to Stalin that the USSR take the offensive to preempt the Germans, but Stalin refused. He was aware of the German preparations, and trusted Hitler no more than he did anyone else. But according to Geoffrey Jukes (private communication) like British intelligence Stalin was taken in by adroit German disinformation that they intended merely to exert pressure to obtain Soviet raw materials. Thus, Stalin's goal became avoiding any pretext for a German invasion. He also preferred to be seen as the victim, not the aggressor, and underestimated the extent of possible German penetration. See *Sekrety Gitlera na stole u Stalina: Razvedka i kontrrazvedka o podgotovke Germansko i agressii protiv SSSR, mart-iun' 1941 g. Dokumenty iz Tsentral'nogo arkhiva FSB* (Moscow, 1995).

²⁵ Some of these documents may seem, at best, droll, such as the account of a package mailed to Stalin that contained either a turd or a spoiled sausage and whose contents caused a staff member to faint and temporarily lose her eyesight. But others, such as the assemblage in 1918 of vast gold wealth and imperial-era passports by Lenin's right-hand man, Iakov Sverdlov, or the politburo's 1923 preparations of a revolutionary coup in Germany, provide unique insights into the mood at the top, particularly the insecurity beneath the bombast. The journal revealed who shot at Lenin in 1918—not Fanny Kaplan (Feiga Roidman), executed for the act, but Lidia Konopleva, who was not implicated—and brought forth details on such war trophies as Hitler's guest book, family photo album, and skeletal remains. *Istochnik*, no. 3 (1993), pp. 126–27; no. 1 (1994), pp. 3–4; no. 2 (1995), p. 27; no. 5 (1995), pp. 112–39; no. 2 (1993), pp. 63–88; no. 0 (1993), pp. 59–60; no. 2 (1995), p. 140.

²⁶ *Istochnik* arose as a supplement to *Rodina* (Motherland), has revived the memory of tsarist-era figures long out of favor, has encouraged interest in Russian symbols and local lore, and has used the word “tragedy” as a synonym for “revolution.” For a discussion of these matters as covered in new Russian-language history textbooks, see G. A. Bordiugov, ed., *Istoricheskie issledovaniia v Rossii: Tendentsii poslednikh let* (Moscow, 1996).

²⁷ According to a joint task force of the AHA and AAASS, the central state archives of the Russian Federation contain some 38 million files, with another 160 million in autonomous republic, oblast, district, and city archives (*Slavic Review* 54, no. 2 [1995]: 407–26). The absence of private property

Not all documents have been preserved, and far from all matters were committed to paper. Even access to the presidential archives will not solve certain puzzles of Stalin's rule. But how much more do we need to know about high-level machinations? No documents will suddenly reveal that the USSR was a parliamentary democracy. In any event, the new social history sources—diaries, unsolicited letters sent to newspapers and officials, and police mood summaries (*svodki*)—have rendered far easier the efforts to get beyond high politics.²⁸ For that task, the abundant published sources, especially the newspapers issued by almost every institution, provide on a local level a record sometimes unmatched by the archives. Indeed, notwithstanding the hypersecrecy, the new society proclaimed in the USSR could not stop talking about itself. The materials it generated are staggering. Everything depends on the questions asked and the reasons for asking them.

THE OLD REGIME AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Much like the tsarist political police had, the initial interpreters of the Russian revolution fixated on the revolutionary movement. This is no surprise, since revolutionaries wrote the major commentaries. Competing narratives constituted a weapon in the revolutionary struggle, and their de facto extension into interwar analyses abroad testified to outsiders' own aspirations or fears. In particular, many emigres preferred to depict the revolution—sometimes February and October, sometimes just October—as an accident of World War I, which “interrupted” the old regime's supposed evolution toward a stable modern polity. This viewpoint was institutionalized after World War II by foreign scholars opposed to the Soviet regime, who argued that the “chance” chaos cleared a path for Lenin and his party.²⁹ The resulting “unnecessary” (and illegitimate) dictatorship was then showcased as a lesson in the dangers posed by revolutionaries.

Partly in response to depictions of the Russian Revolution as an accident or conjuring trick of the Bolsheviks, historians in the 1960s (mostly in the United States) focused anew on the revolutionary movement, but this time to reclaim it from the revolutionaries as well as the cold warriors. Attention shifted to ordinary people, above all workers, and finding “social support” for October became the field's principal research agenda.³⁰ Not all scholars of the revolution became in-

(except for a brief period in the 1920s) is a great boon to researchers. Over the years, some important archival materials were destroyed or displaced, while others were seized from abroad. See Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, “Displaced Archives and Restitution Problems on the Eastern Front in the Aftermath of the Second World War,” *Contemporary European History* 6 (1997): 27–74.

²⁸ See Nicolas Werth and Gael Mouille, eds., *Les rapports secrets soviétiques: La société russe dans les documents confidentiels, 1921–1991* (Paris, 1995); and Vladlen S. Izmozik, “Voices from the Twenties: Private Correspondence Intercepted by the OGPU,” *Russian Review* 55 (April 1996): 287–308. These sources are discussed below.

²⁹ The interruption analysis was given full expression by Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions under the Last Three Czars* (New York, 1963). See also Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966).

³⁰ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Toward a Social History of October,” *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 32–51; revised and reprinted in Kaiser, ed. (n. 2 above), pp. 1–19. For a critique, see Stephen Kotkin, “One Hand Clapping: Workers and 1917,” *Labor History* 32, no. 4 (1991): 604–20.

volved in the revisionist enterprise on 1917, and even among the multitude who did, differences could be marked.³¹ But the revisionists concurred that the October Revolution was the embodiment of consciousness, not Bolshevik manipulation, and that the key actors were the Bolshevik's putative constituency.³² They proclaimed the fall of the high-politics narrative, and the textbooks were rewritten. Thus did the Russian Revolution chiefly come to mean the self-actualization of workers and their two-way relations with political parties. Rather than being a critical object of analysis, the categories, assumptions, and exclusions of social democracy defined the questions posed and the answers given. The revolution's emancipatory promise was recaptured.

Scholars of France will no doubt recall Alfred Cobban's lectures, published in 1964, which challenged the then dominant "social interpretation." Cobban noted that "the supposed social categories of our histories—bourgeois, aristocrats, *sans-culottes*—are all in fact political ones." In the aftermath of 1968, diatribes against the social interpretation became career springboards for scholars stressing politics and ideas, and the former Communist François Furet could chastise his predecessors for having "taken the revolutionary discourse at face value because they themselves have remained locked in that discourse." The revolution, he thundered, was over.³³ Furet noted further that the latter-day French Jacobins had taken inspiration from the Russian Revolution, whose study in effect became the main refuge for the Jacobin inspiration once it was banished from France. Now the Russian sanctuary, too, has disappeared. Accordingly, although "liberalism" is a broader and more contested tradition than Furet allows, interpretations of the Russian Revolution, having since the 1960s traced a precisely inverse trajectory to that of the study of the French Revolution, will henceforth move toward liberal "apostasy." Analytically, this means a move away from social explanations and back to politics and ideas (or culture). France's recent historiographical past, warts and all, is Russia's future. Already certain trends are visible, including a reappraisal of Russia's old regime.

In a biography of Nicholas II, Dominic Lieven singles out not Nicholas's failings or the inauspicious influence on him of Rasputin and Alexandra but, rather, Russia's great-power status. Lieven might have stressed more the military waste and self-imposed foreign policy excesses, but he shows that Russia's international position challenged all its rulers from 1855 to 1917 (and, one might add, afterward).³⁴

³¹ Their sympathies ranged from the liberal Cadets, Mensheviks, "late" Lenin, and NEP Bukharin to Trotsky and the "hard" Lenin. Among the more divisive issues was who led whom—a controversy, like the entire line of inquiry, continued directly from the source materials.

³² Celebrated as the progenitor of the social history literature, Leopold Haimson followed the Mensheviks in writing of Russian workers' primitive, elemental radicalism. It had been the Bolsheviks who stressed the onset of "consciousness" (thanks to the party). Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–17," *Slavic Review* 23, no. 4 (1964): 619–42, and 24, no. 1 (1965): 1–22. Haimson, by the way, highlighted the social polarization not just between workers and the rest of society but also between educated society and the autocracy.

³³ Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 162; François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 16.

³⁴ D. C. B. Lieven, *Nicholas II: Emperor of All the Russias* (London, 1993). On many points he counters the classic study of Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (New York, 1939); as well as Robert Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra* (New York, 1967).

Lieven also argues that, whereas Wilhelm II was surrounded by friends who tied their ambitions to the new kaiser when he took the throne in 1888, Nicholas came to power without a single trusted aide. Describing the intrigues and estrangement at court with insight, Lieven suggests that Nicholas missed an opportunity to cultivate ties with the new industrial and financial circles (again, Germany comes to mind).³⁵ Without ignoring the tsar's "stubbornness," Lieven shows that every time Nicholas agreed to political concessions the consequences, from his point of view, proved woeful. Anyway, where would the process stop? The dreadful lesson of Louis XVI loomed large. And as heir to Peter the Great, among others, Nicholas, unlike the Japanese emperor, believed he could not consent to reigning without ruling. Yet Lieven notes that for a single person to rule a great power for an entire lifetime, especially when beginning at a young age, had to be enervating.³⁶ Further burnishing Nicholas's image, Lieven surmises that the elites who campaigned for constitutional government would have been too vulnerable to rule without police-state methods. Rehabilitating Nicholas, II, Lieven has in effect returned us to the views expressed in 1922 by the emigre Sergei S. Ol'denburg, who, alone among his contemporaries, even fellow monarchists, offered a sympathetic portrait of the tsar and stressed the achievements of his years in power.³⁷

Russia's monarchy is back. Lieven's de facto revival of Ol'denburg's Nicholas II finds deep echoes in Mark Steinberg's introduction to an English-language document collection on the end of the Romanovs.³⁸ Many of the diary entries and letters that Steinberg and his coeditor, Vladimir Khrustalev, have assembled were previously published, so the story of the royals' captivity was known.³⁹ Also, although the telegrams exchanged between Moscow and the Urals prior to the executions

³⁵ In the references to Imperial Germany, Lieven mentions but does not explore the point that Wilhelm had recourse to German nationalism, whereas for Nicholas's multinational empire Russian nationalism was problematic (comparisons to Franz Josef are conspicuously absent). That the Hohenzollerns also disappeared, however, raises questions about the viability of absolute monarchy whatever the advantages any particular one may have had. For all his admirable efforts at the restoration of contingency, Lieven offers no comparisons to monarchies that were transformed and survived, except Spain, which had far stronger conservative institutions and the luxury, if it so chose, of staying on the sidelines in the great power struggles.

³⁶ Lieven's brief mention of Nicholas's symbolic inadequacy, though welcome, remains conventional. The next installment of Richard Wortman's superior study of myth and ceremony in the Russian monarchy should provide a sense of how Nicholas II could be both despised and worshiped, and how the charisma of the monarchy could make the unintegrated country "a polity." Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J., 1995).

³⁷ Just as educated society remained irresponsibly uninformed about the monarchy, Ol'denburg argued, so the monarch lived in a world of fictions. Sergei S. Ol'denburg, *Gosudar' Imperator Nikolai II Aleksandrovich* (Berlin, 1922), later expanded into *Tsarstvovanie imperatora Nikolai II*, 2 vols. (Belgrade and Munich, 1939, 1949), trans. as *Last Tsar: Nicholas II, His Reign, and His Russia*, 4 vols. (Gulf Breeze, Fla., 1975-). Lieven omits mention of Ol'denburg.

³⁸ Mark Steinberg and Vladimir Khrustalev, *The Fall of the Romanovs: Political Dreams and Personal Struggles in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven, Conn., 1995).

³⁹ In addition, anti-Bolshevik forces got to the Yekaterinburg execution site within ten days of the carnage and later captured one of the former guards, on the basis of which the investigator Nikolai Sokolov established the fact and uncommon brutality of the entire royal family's demise. Nikolai Sokolov, *Ubiistvo tsarskoi sem'i* (Berlin, 1925).

were declassified only recently, the smoking gun has proved elusive.⁴⁰ Yet even if responsibility remains a matter of probability, the grisly details of implementation have come to light, thanks to the release of a report written in 1920 by the head executioner. Iakov Iurovskii tells a tale of clumsy butchery in a tiny basement, where eleven recruits fired over and managed to burn each other (some even became deaf); failed to kill the jewel-protected Romanov daughters with bullets, instead stabbing them to pieces with bayonets; and then botched the burial, which had to be redone. The ragtag squad's drunken sadism will inevitably become a metaphor for the Bolshevik regime and an enduring source of sympathy for Nicholas II, formerly Nicholas the Bloody.⁴¹

By now, one could easily begin to forget that, however pure his motives, however daunting the challenges, Nicholas brought his beloved Russia to the precipice by clinging to the autocratic idea even after his rule had technically ceased to be an autocracy in October 1905.⁴² The final push, however, came from the Duma leadership and the general staff. Worker strikes influenced elite behavior and greatly affected the capital garrison, but the strikes did not constitute, nor could they themselves bring about, "revolution." Revolution commenced with the vacuum of authority and millenarian expectations unleashed by the end of the monarchy.⁴³ Only after the removal of the tsar did peasants initiate mass land seizures, national movements establish governments, and the front (as opposed to the Petrograd garrison) explode in politicization. By seeking and obtaining the tsar's abdication during the unrest, the elites sanctioned, and further fomented, the very activity that had emboldened or frightened them to act: politics in the barracks and street. If Steinberg and Khrustalev's selection of documents highlights the importance of elite actions, it also shows that much remains obscure. Nicholas's diaries indicate, as Ol'denburg pointed out, that only the urging of his generals induced the tsar reluctantly to step down, yet as one scholar has noted, "Very little is known about the social and political history of the military establishment" immediately before, during, and after 1917.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Second-hand reports, the strongest being Trotsky's diary entry, indicate that Lenin and Sverdlov ordered the murders; but if any documents exist, they have not been made available. The central government never claimed responsibility, and the act was carried out in the name of the Urals Bolsheviks, who wrested control of "the royal baggage" from their counterparts in Siberia. The struggle over Nicholas's person in 1918 foreshadowed the subsequent struggle over his remains. See Robert Masie, *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter* (New York, 1995).

⁴¹ Using many of these documents, the playwright Edvard Radzinsky has vividly evoked the intrigue surrounding the murder of the royal family as well as the milieu in which the killers operated. His Nicholas comes across as a likable man whose tragic destiny encapsulates Russia's. Edvard Radzinsky, *Ubiistvo tsarskoi sem'i* (Moscow, 1991), trans. as *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II* (New York, 1992).

⁴² Nicholas abdicated without acknowledging the Duma, holding to the vision of autocracy until the end. See George Katkov, *Russia 1917: The February Revolution* (New York, 1967), p. 356.

⁴³ As Nicholas foretold: Steinberg and Khrustalev, p. 98. See also S. P. Mel'gunov, *Na putiakh k dvortsomu perevorotu* (Paris, 1931), esp. pp. 94–102, 143–64.

⁴⁴ Matitiahu Mayzel, *Generals and Revolutionaries: The Russian General Staff during Revolution: A Study in the Transformation of Military Elite* (Osnabruck, 1979), p. 2. Unfortunately, Mayzel's study does not nearly fill the lacuna he noted. The history of the officer corps, even just for the period 1914–21, remains to be written. In the meantime, see *Oktiabr'v stavke* (Gomel, 1922).

February has begun to reemerge from the shadow of October, and so will the war. Throughout 1917, the war was the chief political issue, and the army was the largest organized political constituency—a point obvious to contemporaries, yet more or less lost in both the cold war and revisionist historiography.⁴⁵ The exception—a major breakthrough—was Allan Wildman's study of soldiers. He showed that Russia's peasantry in uniform understood the fall of the monarchy as an end to the old hierarchies, an "overturn" or revolution that placed the army beyond the control of the Provisional Government. When the Petrograd soviet, as well as the soldiers' own grass-roots political committees, joined the efforts to mount the June 1917 offensive, the soldiers embraced the one movement that seemed to advocate what they took to be the meaning of "the revolution." Spreading from the garrisons to the front, Bolshevik ascendancy—which Wildman aptly called "trench Bolshevism"—was sudden and spectacular, incomprehensible without the war. He added that "the mandate, if there was one, was not for Bolshevik power but for Soviet power and peace, or, alternatively, the Constituent Assembly and peace"; yet he concluded that "'October' may have been a coup in the capital, but at the front it was a revolution."⁴⁶ Wildman's use of the term "October Revolution" to designate the soldiers' politicization pinpoints the chief tension in the work of the post-1960s social historians. They demonstrated what should have been obvious but was not: that popular movements in 1917 structured political possibilities.⁴⁷ But it remained unclear what was meant by social support, how it could be measured, what time period needed to be considered, or (Wildman excepted) why priority should be placed on workers' strikes instead of the national revolts against the empire, peasant land seizures, and mutinies by soldiers and sailors.⁴⁸ Most important, the goal of countering cold war denials of any popular revolution commensurate with the

⁴⁵ Cadet leader Paul Miliukov, for all his blind spots, understood that the decisive element in both February and October was the army. He had stood almost alone for the retention of the monarchy as a unifying symbol, and subsequently lambasted the Provisional Government for abolishing the institutions of the old regime without creating replacements, thus clearing the way for Bolshevism. He also mocked the "moderate" socialists' martyrdom, showing that they had failed to understand that revolution was a struggle for power. Paul Miliukov, *Istoriia vtoroi russkoi revoliutsii*, 3 vols. (Sofia, 1921–24). Only the first volume has been translated: *The Russian Revolution*, ed. Richard Stites (Gulf Breeze, Fla., 1978). See also Arthur Mendel, "Peasant and Worker on the Eve of the First World War," *Slavic Review* 24, no. 1 (1965): 23–33. A welcome shift is evident in the chronology chosen for a useful new resource: Edward Acton, Vladimir I. Cherniaev, and William G. Rosenberg, eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914–1921* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997).

⁴⁶ Allan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1980, 1988). Wildman rightly judged the Kornilov affair—more a misguided provocation by Kerensky than a counterrevolutionary coup by the Army commander-in-chief—as the turning point of 1917. See Allan Wildman, "Officers of the General Staff and the Kornilov Movement," in *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917*, ed. Edith Rogovin Frankel et al. (New York, 1992), pp. 76–101. For nationality questions, Wildman must be supplemented with Mikhail S. Frenkin, *Russkaia armiiia i revoliutsiia 1917–1918 gg.* (Munich, 1978).

⁴⁷ A point still denied by Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1995), who ignores the corpus of work by social historians. Pipes's work is discussed below.

⁴⁸ The literature on Russian workers is remarkable for its lack of discussion of the relative weight of social groups. Most scholars assumed that workers were the decisive element in 1917. See, characteristically, William Rosenberg, "Russian Labor and Bolshevik Power after October," *Slavic Review* 44, no. 2 (1985): 213–38, esp. 213; and Diane Koenker, "Moscow in 1917: The View from Below," in Kaiser, ed. (n. 2 above), p. 86.

seizure of power became entangled in tortured arguments for the legitimacy of a dictatorship.⁴⁹

Each side had a point. October was a coup d'état, and it took place against the background of multiple popular uprisings (which helped make the coup possible though not inevitable). What each side largely missed, however, was that the coup was transformed only after the fact into a qualitatively new revolution that was simultaneously participatory and coercive. In other words, if as a society-wide experience, a cause, and an all-encompassing calculus, "the revolution" began after the February abdication, the "October Revolution" took place after October, not during the war-induced radicalization of the summer and fall of 1917. Thus, what needs to be explained is not just the Bolshevik coup but also the far more remarkable fact that the Bolsheviks held power, re-formed a state, and regathered much of the empire. That was the October Revolution. In light of the experiences of other European countries, most strikingly Italy, where the forces of order overturned leftist governments in several northern Italian cities, the Bolshevik ability to hold power appears extraordinary.⁵⁰ Any explanation must take account, as Wildman and his cohort argued, of popular understandings of "the revolution." But that analysis must be moved beyond the notions of either "elemental moods" or "consciousness" and beyond 1917.⁵¹ It also must be placed within a sober understanding of the nature and evolution of the new political regime as well as of revolutionary process more generally.

"During my leisure I'm reading Tocqueville's *L'ancien régime et la révolution*," Dmitrii A. Miliutin, Russian war minister, recorded in his diary in 1881. "How much of the French ancien régime resembles our situation."⁵² Maybe—and yet, recent work has argued that tsarism did not produce the political institutions or legal tradition that served, in France and elsewhere, as a basis for liberalism. Laura Engelstein contends that the extent to which the tsarist state's administrative conception of law, not mere repressiveness, was reproduced in the Soviet regime may derive from the "incompleteness" of imperial Russia's civic revolution. This can be read less as an appeal to a Russian *Sonderweg*, much less some eternal despo-

⁴⁹ The Provisional Government, which appointed itself, also had a shaky claim to legitimacy—a problematic concept in a revolution. Perhaps the most that can be said is what Oliver Radkey noted for the Constituent Assembly vote: the Bolsheviks "failed to secure popular sanction for their seizure of power and . . . mustered only one-fourth of the electorate," but socialist parties "of all types . . . scored overwhelmingly—more than four-fifths." Oliver Radkey, *The Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950). The question, of course, is what was understood as "socialist" and who had the right to decide.

⁵⁰ For an analysis of the "missing" peasant counterrevolution, rare for its attention to the countryside, see Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917–1921* (Oxford, 1989).

⁵¹ Even Wildman's book was taken up largely with army politics rather than a layered analysis of peasant-soldier attitudes over time. And he scarcely mentioned symbols, songs, stories, or language. Meanwhile, in the most recent literature on workers, a trend already visible before 1991—to question whether "consciousness" derives directly from social position and material circumstances—has been deepened by the discovery of "representations" and "discourse." See the essays in *Russian Review* 55, no. 3 (1996): 347–429.

⁵² *Dnevnik D. A. Miliutina*, vol. 4, 1881–82 (Moscow, 1950), p. 103, cited in Boris S. Itenberg, *Rossia i Velikaia Frantsuzskaia revoliutsiia* (Moscow, 1988), p. 141. Miliutin introduced critical military reforms that, like everything else, ultimately collided with the principle of autocracy.

tism, than as a call to take up the debate sparked by Keith Baker on the ways in which the old regime “invented” the revolution.⁵³ Whether the Russian old regime differed in kind or degree from others in Europe, it certainly taught the importance of the state as an instrument for molding society—a lesson also available from French revolutionary politics.⁵⁴ That the outcome of the Russian Revolution was a more vigorous centralized authority does not mean in Russia, any more than it did in France, that the new state was identical to the old. A quintessential by-product of tsarist Russia’s absolutism, Bolshevism in power was modern and forward looking in ways that the old regime sometimes tried to be but failed.

INVENTING OCTOBER: THE PRACTICES, INCLUDING DISCOURSE

As Lynn Hunt or Mona Ozouf, among others, might have pointed out, Russia’s revolutionary rulers inherited the old regime’s civic spaces and monuments. Urban layouts and architecture could not be transformed overnight. But as James Von Geldern notes—following the 1920s eyewitness Rene Fulop-Miller and more recently Richard Stites—streets were renamed; the hammer and sickle (invented in 1918) raised above public buildings; statues erected to Blanqui, Marx, and Engels; new holidays introduced (Bloody Sunday, Paris Commune); and outdoor celebrations organized in which “the revolution,” soviet power, and October commingled. Von Geldern pays more attention to the artists involved than to the regime’s cravings for legitimacy (or the participants, admittedly harder to study), arguing that if the festivals did “strengthen Bolshevik power—which is not at all clear—they did so because artists displayed their magic according to their own rules.” Why, then, use the label “Bolshevik”? He notes that “the songs, colors, and heroes associated with the October revolution were not always exclusively Bolshevik,” but he does not explain how they became so, or when. One episode he recounts, however, shows that the “confusion” of 1918 gave way by 1920 to a powerful symbolic lexicon.⁵⁵

In the third anniversary reenactment of the “storming” of the Winter Palace, we see not only the collapsing of February into October and the Provisional Government into the old regime,⁵⁶ but also the depiction of October in the terms of the

⁵³ Laura Engelstein, “Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia,” *American Historical Review* (1993), pp. 338–81, including comments by Rudy Koshar and Jan Goldstein and Engelstein’s reply. See also Oga Crisp and Linda Edmondson, eds., *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia* (New York, 1989); and Laura Engelstein, *The Key to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992). Engelstein is my colleague at Princeton.

⁵⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Garden City, N.Y., 1955), p. 68.

⁵⁵ James Von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 13, 73. Rene Fulop-Miller, *Geist und Gesicht des Bolschewismus: Darstellung und Kritik des kulturellen Lebens in Sowjet-Russland* (Zurich, Leipzig, and Vienna, 1926), trans. as *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An Examination of Cultural Life in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1927); Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1989).

⁵⁶ The Provisional Government, which first met in the Tauride Palace (home of the Duma), moved to the Winter Palace, establishing a symbolic connection to the old regime. At the same time, the

subsequent civil war.⁵⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick has pointed out that the civil war endowed the new regime with a set of heroic myths (victory over counterrevolution and intervention),⁵⁸ but viewing the mass festival it would be more accurate to say that the civil war bequeathed a revolutionary process of just two colors: Reds (Bolsheviks) and Whites (all others). The mobilization against “counterrevolution” facilitated the Bolsheviks’ exclusive claim to the mantle of revolution as well as to the symbolic universe of the Europe-wide labor movement.⁵⁹ Bolshevik opponents, including many leaders and participants of the February revolution, were defamed with the color of the French counterrevolution.⁶⁰ Thus, though he did not understand why, Von Geldern is correct to call the reenactment a “Bolshevik” festival. His insistence that non-Bolsheviks helped conceive and organize the mass spectacle merely reinforces the point that the wider revolutionary process, not simply Bolshevik intentions, facilitated the merger of “the revolution” and the fledgling regime, while also shaping the new regime’s identity.

If the context of civil war begat the process and set the terms of realizing the October Revolution, the new authorities also employed many practices that grew out of the Great War and were shared to some extent by all sides in the civil conflict. A document collection on the 1920–21 Tambov uprising, assembled by a team under the direction of Viktor Danilov, suggests that the Greens’ widespread use of torture and beheading of Communists may pale in comparison to the Bolshevik tactics of concentration camps and burning and bombing of villages. But despite their own prohibitions against confiscation, the Greens forcibly requisitioned grain from the villages under their control (while denouncing the injustices of the market). Their army, moreover, had an organization similar to that of the Red Army, right down to the formation of units for deployment against the civilian population and the use of political commissars to ensure loyalty. The Greens claimed their own definition of what was revolutionary, and who had a right to determine that.⁶¹

Grain requisitioning, internal-order battalions, and political commissars are three of the prominent techniques usually adduced to demonstrate Bolshevik sin-

Provisional Government’s own symbolic culture, according to Stites, was drowned in a sea of red flags and the strains of the “Internationale,” both appropriated from the European labor movement. Richard Stites, “Festival and Revolution: The Role of Public Spectacle in Russia, 1917–1918,” in *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism*, ed. John W. Strong (Columbus, Ohio, 1990), pp. 9–28.

⁵⁷ Von Geldern, pp. 201–7; Fulop-Miller, pp. 200–202; Huntley Carter, *The Theater and Cinema of Soviet Russia* (London, 1924), pp. 106–9, reprinted in *Bolshevik Visions: First Phase of the Cultural Revolution in Soviet Russia*, ed. William Rosenberg, 2d ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1990), 2:138–40.

⁵⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “The Civil War as a Formative Experience,” in *Bolshevik Culture: Experience and Order in the Russian Revolution*, ed. Abbott Gleason et al. (Bloomington, Ind., 1985), pp. 57–76.

⁵⁹ Across Europe the entire Left became “redder” and the Right was radicalized with the appearance of fascism, which understood itself as a response to Bolshevism/socialism, used interchangeably. Martin Malia, “The Hunt for the True October,” *Commentary* 92, no. 4 (1991): 21.

⁶⁰ “Whites,” such as the Volunteer Army in the Don, saw themselves not as counterrevolutionaries but as patriots trying to hold together the empire. See Anna Procyk, *Russian Nationalism and Ukraine: The Nationality Policy of the Volunteer Army during the Civil War* (Edmonton and Toronto, 1995).

⁶¹ V. P. Danilov and T. Shanin et al., eds., *Krest’ianskoe vosstanie v Tambovskoi gubernii v 1919–1921 gg. “Antonovshchina”: Dokumenty i materialy* (Tambov, 1994).

gularity and the causal role of ideology. Peter Holquist, in his dissertation on the “Russian Vendee” in the Don region, shows that the “Whites” no less than the Greens employed these and other devices usually attributed solely to the Reds. He underscores the role of the Great War as a source of governing practices and of Bolshevik conceptions of the possible institutional structures of socialism.⁶² Indeed, to spotlight the commonality of practices normally attributed to Bolshevik ideology does not suggest that ideology can be ignored. For one thing, the Bolsheviks insisted that they had an ideology and that it was the one true creed. They expended considerable resources to develop and disseminate their ideology, which helped them wield power at the same time as it often proved embarrassing and burdensome. Furthermore, notwithstanding the frequent shifts, Bolshevik “ideology” had a structure derived from the bedrock proposition that, whatever socialism might be, it could not be capitalism. The use of capitalism as an antiworld helps explain why, despite the near total improvisation, the socialism built under Stalin coalesced into a “system” that could be readily explained within the framework of October.⁶³ But that is to jump ahead. In the 1920s, only the problem of political power seemed resolved. “The revolution” meant October—that is, rule by the Bolshevik party—but what else? Experimentation throughout society was widespread, and even though the regime arrogated to itself the role of final arbiter, it, too, was searching for answers. Yet what needs to be kept in mind is the political frame, amid uncertainty and even panic, provided by the goal of reaching socialism (noncapitalism).⁶⁴ What socialism—and hence the revolution—meant over time (all the way to 1991), for the regime and for the people, ought to become one of the field’s main research agendas, even as we focus on the instruments that helped make socialism possible.

Perhaps the most infamous shared practice analyzed by Holquist, political surveillance, is the subject of a study by the St. Petersburg scholar Vladlen Izmozik.⁶⁵ He begins his account of what he calls not public opinion but “political control”—efforts to ascertain and manage the people’s “mood,” especially their attitudes to the authorities—with the Third Section of Nicholas I. Izmozik could have started earlier, yet the point is not origins but scope. As late as 1880 the Third Section had a mere seventy-three operatives, hardly enough to contend with the revolutionaries it targeted. The Russo-Japanese War and the accompanying upheaval brought growth, but expansion was greatest during World War I, which Izmozik rightly sees as the time when “political control” was extended beyond revolutionaries to

⁶² Peter Holquist, “A Russian Vendee: The Practice of Politics in the Don Countryside” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995).

⁶³ Socialism as the suppression of capitalism was far easier to grasp in the realm of economics, where capitalism was thought to mean private property, markets, and wage labor, or in politics, where capitalism meant “bourgeois” democracy and later fascism, than in the realm of culture. This matter is addressed below.

⁶⁴ For the depth of commitment to noncapitalism throughout the 1920s, see Alan Ball, *Russia’s Last Capitalists: The Nepmen, 1921–1929* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987).

⁶⁵ Vladlen S. Izmozik, *Glaza I ushi rezhima: Gosudarstvennyi politicheskii kontrol’ za naseleniem Sovetskoi Rossii v 1918–1928 godakh* (St. Petersburg, 1995). Unlike foreign historians of, say, France or Germany, foreign scholars of Russia did not benefit from serious critiques by in-country specialists. With Izmozik’s and other recent works, a critical scholarly community “over there” able to challenge outside scholarship is taking shape.

the army and navy. He seems less aware that political surveillance was also qualitatively transformed by the Great War. Izmozik does intimate that the step from keeping a surreptitious eye on revolutionaries to watching the army and navy may have involved a greater leap than the step from conducting surveillance on the army and navy to watching the entire society—especially if the society is viewed as an extended military battlefield. But what if society is also viewed as an arena for social engineering?

Izmozik claims that within a few days of the coup, Petrograd Bolsheviks—in contrast to the Provisional Government, which sought to maintain perustration for the army and navy but apparently did not try to gauge the civilian population's mood—sent a questionnaire to regional party groups on the masses' feelings toward “the seizure of power.” Local Bolshevik committees tried to comply with these and subsequent requests, but for a long time party communications remained irregular. More consequentially, reports on the mood in the army continued, and with the formation of a new Red Army this task soon became the responsibility of an army “political administration” (PUR), which gathered intelligence on the food situation and the “mood” in each region as the civil war front moved. The PUR asked soldiers and sailors about their “attitude toward Soviet power” and “toward Communists”—questions that were posed separately. Collecting these data, Izmozik notes, were some old regime mood-assessment specialists, who made available their valued services not just in the army but also in the Cheka.⁶⁶ Regional Chekas cultivated informants in every inhabited settlement under their jurisdiction, and their reports served as the basis for daily mood evaluations, with weekly summaries, of the entire country. As the civil war wound down, responsibility for perustration shifted from the army to the Cheka, which despite the military victory was ordered to redouble its efforts. Conducted also by soviet and party agencies, the *svodki* multiplied.

Izmozik maintains that, unlike party and soviet officials, Chekists did not dress up the situation in their domains (although he argues their reports became “less objective” by the end of the 1920s).⁶⁷ He admits, however, that throughout the 1920s the political police were anti-NEP and fought a continuous battle to increase their budget. They emphasized the actions of kulaks and the presence of monarchists, as well as the special dangers posed by the intelligentsia and “former

⁶⁶ The 1923–24 summary report for the top leadership on the activities of the GPU noted some success in incorporating foreign agents from tsarist times. *Istochnik*, no. 4 (1995), pp. 72–80. Daniel Orlovsky, “State Building in the Civil War Era: The Role of Lower-Middle Strata,” in *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History*, ed. Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg, and Ronald Grigor Suny (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), pp. 180–209, highlights the need to view 1917 from the perspective of the imperial bureaucracy and the need for a social history of the state transgressing 1917. Those tasks remain to be carried out.

⁶⁷ Viktor Danilov, who has worked in the central KGB archives and spoke at Columbia University's Harriman Institute in September 1995, argued that the central GPU *svodki* became “less objective” with the 1932–33 famine. He added that in 1918 there were just a few *svodki* but by 1919 they had expanded to weekly or ten-day and in 1921–22 became daily, but during the 1920s they varied in frequency. Initially, perhaps thirty or forty people at the top of the regime received central *svodki*, but over time the number was reduced, so that by the 1930s fewer than fifteen people saw them.

people” (gentry and merchants). Izmozik concludes that “acquaintance with this supersecret information . . . caused the leadership to feel insecure and to fear its own citizens,” but his evidence also shows how the leadership’s fears informed the collection of certain types of information.⁶⁸ Be that as it may, Izmozik’s study points to continuities in personnel and practices across 1917, places the revolution (and Bolshevism) in the context of World War I, and invites horizontal comparisons with other countries.⁶⁹

Another practice, censorship, is the subject of a less successful work out of Russia, Arlen Blium’s indignant history of the Soviet censorship agency, Glavlit, during its first decade. Citing formerly secret circulars, Blium catalogs the illiteracy of Soviet censors, the suffering of authors, and the courage of those who gave opposition. But he seems not to appreciate that the establishment and maintenance of a huge apparatus exercising effective control over newspapers, books, theater, art, radio, and, later, television was no mean feat.⁷⁰ Invoking George Orwell’s Ministry of Truth, Blium misses the point that Soviet censorship was not merely preventative but also constitutive, spreading vast stores of information and inculcating new ways of thinking and a new vocabulary. The Bolsheviks’ attention to propaganda and their ability to suppress alternatives may have been impressive, but many of their techniques could seem primitive in light of postwar advertising and image making outside the USSR.⁷¹

In the context of a comparative discussion of modernity, the focus on practices has far-reaching implications. To take one example, the “cult” of Lenin (or Stalin) need no longer be seen as a reflection of some peasant longing for a father figure (as if these and the myriad other interwar dictators were not popular with intellectuals and urbanites). Rather, the cult of the dead Lenin and the living Stalin served as sophisticated techniques of rule that substituted for the charisma lost with the monarchy and provided a key unifying force in the multinational empire. The immediacy achieved between ruler and ruled would have been comprehensible to Louis XIV or Hitler (to say nothing of Ronald Reagan). Despite such possible analogs, as well as Marxism-Leninism’s claims of scientificity, however, many commentators have used the Lenin cult and related phenomena to remark on Bolshevism’s resemblance to a religion and to suggest that it had roots in Russian Orthodoxy.⁷² Offering a new twist in this debate, Daniel Peris examines former

⁶⁸ An indication of the “mood” at the top comes from Izmozik’s revelation that in 1923, when Lenin became deathly ill, regional military commanders received a secret telegram to prepare to put down anticipated uprisings. Izmozik, *Glaza i ushi rezhima*, p. 84.

⁶⁹ As is carried out by Peter Holquist, “‘Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work’: Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context,” *Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997): 415–50.

⁷⁰ Arlen Blium, *Za kulisami “Ministerstva pravdy”: Tainaia istoriia Sovetskoi tsenzury, 1917–1929* (St. Petersburg, 1994). For an analysis of Glavlit’s assertion and attainment of regulatory powers during the NEP, see Michael S. Fox, “Glavlit, Censorship and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural Affairs, 1922–28,” *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 6 (1992): 1045–68.

⁷¹ Peter Kenez argued that only Communism could erect a “propaganda state,” yet he also observed that Communists used common methods and could have learned from the development of mass communications in Europe and the United States. Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization* (Cambridge, 1985).

⁷² Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); Fulop-Miller (n. 55 above), pp. 110–24, 447–48. For the opposite view, see Richard Stites, “Bolshevik Rit-

priests and people from clerical backgrounds who served in the Bolshevik League of Militant Godless.⁷³

After 1917, many priests preferred a quiet exit to being forced to recant publicly. Others joined the schismatic “Red” or Renovationist Church movement, and still others, mainly those with a prerevolutionary history of opposition to the Orthodox Church and autocracy, found a place in antireligious institutions. Peris argues that apostasy derived neither from pure opportunism nor from mere illusions about the socialist regime and that it testified to the intersection of priests’ educational calling and the regime’s demand for personnel, exemplified in the employment of “bourgeois” specialists and tsarist officers. Combining their command of Orthodoxy with literacy and public-speaking skills, former clergy seem to have been valued as propagandists, but their roles were fraught with tension. Peris mentions the common ground of “patriotism”: this warrants further exploration, as does his aside that “Bolshevik anti-religious propaganda consciously mimicked many of the forms and structures of Orthodoxy and transferred them to the new Soviet state.” It should, however, be kept in mind that although “religious” Bolshevism may seem peculiarly Russian, “religious” modes of thought and accompanying practices, as well as problems of scalarity, are not absent from “advanced” countries.⁷⁴ Understanding how an Enlightenment ethos of scientific social engineering and accompanying modern practices of government mixed with a theocratic party-state structure and quasi-religious systems of dogma is perhaps the principal challenge facing interpreters of revolutionary Russia.

Narratives are formidable instruments of politics. Trotsky’s celebrated *History of the Russian Revolution* depicts a grand pageant in which everything is driven by class struggle—between the bourgeoisie and the workers/soldiers (known as “the proletariat”) plus the peasantry—toward “victory.”⁷⁵ By contrast, Viktor Shklovsky, formalist and erstwhile Socialist Revolutionary, composed his unparalleled memoir, *A Sentimental Journey*, without mentioning political parties and programs: no watersheds, not even October, just an army that “escaped into Bolshevism the way a man hides from life in a psychosis,” a swirl of pointless occurrences, death, German occupation, puppet governments, Whites, Reds, “and many others without any color.”⁷⁶ Shklovsky’s blur of chaos and opportunism can be read as a denial of Bolshevism’s claims; Trotsky’s orderly progression, as a transformation of the vacuum occasioned by the monarch’s abdication into the October Revolution. Both

ual Building in the 1920s,” in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington, Ind., 1991), p. 306.

⁷³ Daniel Peris, “Commissars in Red Cassocks: Former Priests in the League of the Militant Godless,” *Slavic Review* 54, no. 2 (1995): 640–63, based on “Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless and Bolshevik Political Culture in the 1920s and 1930s” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1994). Glennys Young, *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village* (University Park, Pa., 1997), appeared too late for this review.

⁷⁴ Peris, pp. 363–64. See, e.g., Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Italian Fascism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).

⁷⁵ Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1932). See James D. White, “Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution*,” *Journal of Trotsky Studies* (July 1, 1993), pp. 1–18.

⁷⁶ Viktor Shklovsky, *A Sentimental Journey: Memoirs, 1917–1922* (Berlin, 1923; Ithaca, N.Y., 1970, 1984), pp. 60, 208.

are true—or, to be more precise, both had (and still have) important truth effects. Shklovsky's "journey" corresponds to the anti-Bolshevik treatments emphasizing accident and illegitimacy; Trotsky's "history," to the foundation of the new regime. Yet Bolshevism's triumph did not allow the imposition of a narrative comparable to Trotsky's. Rather, the fashioning and deployment of an evolving narrative and symbols helped make that triumph possible and define the parameters of the new order. Such are the implications of Frederick Corney's dissertation.

Taking his cues from the *Historikerstreit*, Corney inquires into the relationship among history, memory, and identity, offering a look at the cultural foundations of Bolshevik power. October was "written," he suggests, in newspapers, speeches, meetings, museums, and film. Officially sponsored narratives settled on a genealogy of the "revolutionary movement" dating back to the Decembrists (1825). A project to write the history of the revolution as the history of the party cultivated an image of the Bolsheviks as disciplined and unified, and it traced back before 1917 sharp differences between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. (The emigre Mensheviks reciprocated.) These and other constructions became cornerstones of the scholarly historiography, but Corney does not treat their invention as erroneous. Rather, he writes that in narrative and commemoration "lay true power."⁷⁷ To demonstrate the full force of this argument it would be necessary to capture the participatory element, to show how ordinary people did or did not make the writing of October their own, how they were admonished for remembering "wrongly" or rewarded for doing so "correctly." Corney's work underscores the need to analyze the campaigns urging people to discuss "what the revolution means to you," the millions of letters sent to newspapers and political bodies, the problems of "banditry," deviance, and moral transgression, as well as the lively politics of the village in the 1920s.⁷⁸ In such a way, we can move beyond ideology or doctrine to ritual, worldview, and language or, as some would have it, discourse.⁷⁹

Another feature of Corney's method is his attention to the historiography on the French Revolution. To juxtapose the work on France with that on Russia is to see that if the French revolution was primarily "about" the nation, the Russian Revolution was about class. As an analytical term and a popular outlook on the world,

⁷⁷ Frederick Corney, "History, Memory, and Identity: The Construction of the October Revolution, 1917–1927" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1996). Compare Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997).

⁷⁸ On the latter, see D'Ann Penner, "Pride, Power, and Pitchforks: Farmer-Party Interaction on the Don, 1920–1928" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1995). Attacking the still popular urban lament of a hopelessly backward countryside, Penner shows that peasants were not fatalistically passive. It is time, as well, to show that the invocations of backwardness were a strategy of rule and of individual advancement.

⁷⁹ It would be unfortunate if this move entailed the substitution of disembodied "discourse" for ideology, let alone a single discourse ("the" discourse of Bolshevism or "the" discourse of Stalinism). Discourse can only make sense if analyzed alongside other practices, and in comparative perspective. For a highly suggestive, if problematic, attempt to apply discourse analysis to the Soviet 1920s, see Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton, N.J., 1997). One of the very few works concerned with gender, Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997), appeared too late for this review.

“class” was already widespread in late imperial Russia and ubiquitous during 1917. Alongside the workers who took over Petrograd factories, the sailors on Kronstadt, and the advocates of proletarian culture, the Bolshevik leadership worked to establish the category of class in law and state policies. At the same time, they removed class from any necessary connection to social origins. In Trotsky’s narrative, proletarian consciousness signifies not what any particular worker thinks but rather universal interests, upheld by the Bolshevik party, just as the converse, bourgeois or petty-bourgeois consciousness, means counterrevolution even if advocated by pure proletarians. Ironically, the social historians who defined October as a “workers’ revolution” were correct—not because workers made or participated in it, but because, following October, categories of class, above all working class and working-class consciousness, were institutionalized. Herein lay the poignancy of the Tambov peasants’ insistence on “the political equality of all without regard to class.”⁸⁰

Class was also the Bolshevik party’s *raison d’être* and the justification for its omnipresence. Such institutionalization of the party alongside the state—which differentiates the Soviet case from Italian fascism and Nazism—persisted long after the ideology that the party embodied had lost its luster and class as the exclusive way of viewing the world had been deemphasized.⁸¹ But to offer an analysis of the party’s universalization in terms of quotations from Lenin is to suggest that the process followed smoothly from, or even began largely because of, a set of pronouncements. The institutionalization of class was more than a matter of “ideology”; it formed part of the politicization that spread with the onset of “the revolution,” and in historical terms it was an astonishing development, however unfortunate, that requires explanation beyond the implementation of will. Moreover, class remained an inherently unstable point of reference, a source of tremendous conflict not just in the regime’s relations with society but also within the regime. Perhaps the greatest tensions arose in combining class with the natural sciences, the Russian classics, and the problem of “nation.”

USSR: CLASS AND NATION

From the vantage point of its Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman neighbors, the Russian empire’s resuscitation as the USSR seems remarkable, no less astonishing than the Bolshevik retention of power. Yet few scholars have focused on the links between secure Bolshevik power and regathered empire. One exception was E. H. Carr, who sought to relate internal Soviet developments to the interwar international framework. Rather than Carr, however, Richard Pipes ended up establishing the dominant narrative on the formation of the USSR by advancing the views of

⁸⁰ Danilov and Shanin et al., eds. (n. 61 above), pp. 79. See also Boris I. Kolonitskii, “Antibourgeois Propaganda and anti-‘*Burzhuï*’ Consciousness in 1917,” *Russian Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 183–96.

⁸¹ The subordination of the fascist party in the Italian state needs no comment. As for the Nazi case, the duality of the state notwithstanding, from a Soviet perspective, it seems almost as if the Nazi project needed the war to try to realize itself. During peacetime Nazi leaders continuously complained that the revolutionary element was succumbing to mere business as usual. Soviet leaders could not suppress the effect of revolutionary party-state dualism even when they wanted to.

some of the regime's national opponents. They, and he, stressed Bolshevism's will to power and recourse to repression, which made a mockery of the slogan of national self-determination and culminated in sham federalism tempered only by cultural autonomy—until that, too, was suppressed, driving national sentiments underground. With this paradigm, familiar from analyses of pre-1918 Poland, studies on the non-Russians of the USSR flourished.⁸² But the research on Soviet “nationalities” remained largely an ignored provenance of emigres (except studies on Central Asia, which were marginal for other reasons). In a way, “Soviet” history never existed; or, to be more precise, the regime's centralism and Moscow's viewpoint were replicated by the majority historiography.⁸³ Of course, the need for French history to get beyond Paris to a regional perspective is a common complaint, as is the failure to write general Habsburg history from the perspective of, say, Prague or Zagreb. Yet Pipes's work remained virtually the sole synthetic treatment of the USSR's formation during that country's postwar existence.⁸⁴ And in Pipes's study Communism, not nation, was the big question.

The key problem of Communism for the 1920s was thought to be Stalin's rise. In the United States, cold war avowals of Stalinism's inevitability, within the context of de-Stalinization and detente, sparked a quest for “alternatives,” and Bukharinism was born. In England, Isaac Deutscher refined Trotsky's idea that the revolution had been betrayed but not destroyed and thus could be “reformed” once Stalin died.⁸⁵ The Trotsky alternative never caught on, in large part because after crushing him Stalin oversaw the implementation of much of what Trotsky had advocated. As for the improbable idea that Nikolai Bukharin presented an alternative to Stalin and that the 1920s had contained the possibility of social democratic evolution, it did catch on, but it began to lose support well before the debacle of 1991.⁸⁶ The insistence on both inevitability and alternatives undervalued the extent to which, in the terms of the October revolution and the interwar international situation, Stalinism—however morally odious—was an extraordinary “achievement.”⁸⁷ Be

⁸² E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia*, 13 vols. (New York, 1950–78); Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union* (1954; Cambridge, Mass., 1964). The extent of the literature on nationalities can be gauged from the bulk of a bibliography of only English-language publications on just Ukraine. Bohdan S. Wynar, *Ukraine: A Bibliographic Guide to English-Language Publications* (Englewood, Colo., 1990).

⁸³ The same point has been made for prerevolutionary “Russian” history by Andreas Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall*, 2d ed. (Munich, 1993).

⁸⁴ The repression model was also applied by Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Le grand défi: Bolcheviks et nations, 1917–1930* (Paris, 1987), trans. as *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917–1930* (New York, 1992), with a preface by Richard Pipes.

⁸⁵ Cohen (n. 3 above); Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky: 1929–1940*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1963).

⁸⁶ For a survey of the copious research undertaken during the 1980s that effectively challenged notions of the Bukharinist 1920s, see Lewis Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society between Revolutions, 1918–1929* (New York, 1992). See also R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era* (London, 1997), esp. p. 144.

⁸⁷ In the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese have shown that the party's dictatorship can be maintained in an agricultural country if the commitment to eradicating capitalism is turned on its head. But what if the quest to achieve socialism (noncapitalism) is not to be abandoned? What if heavy industry is seen as the exclusive foundation of progress? And what if the international environment is threatening? These were the challenges that any Soviet leader in the 1920s faced. Given Stalin's grip on power

that as it may, since 1991 the task of affirming or denying alternatives to Stalinism within the legacy of October has been eclipsed by the perceived need to explain the reconstitution and subsequent collapse of the empire. “Soviet” history, bearing portraits of Benedict Anderson, may have finally arrived. At any rate, nation, not Communism, has become the defining problematic.

Gerhard Simon’s history of Soviet nationalities policy, as he notes in the English translation, traces how the USSR’s pseudofederalism became a basis for independence. Nation building was not an end but a tool of Sovietization (the long-term goal was the merger of nations). Yet Simon argues that the 1923 program for “nativization” (*korenizatsiia*)—promotion of non-Russian economic and cultural development, and preferential entry for “natives” into administration—although undermined in the 1930s, set in motion trends, especially the formation of native elites, that endured the purges and war. And with de-Stalinization, nativization was restored. All of this led to the 1980s national oppositions in the Baltic, Ukraine, and Caucasus that provoked Simon’s book. He glosses over the issue of the “Soviet people” and fails to specify the content of the nationalisms, but he shows that rather than suppressing nations the USSR fostered them. The historiographical trend started by the national oppositions and codified by Pipes was on the way to being supplanted.⁸⁸

Expanding on the “creation of nations” framework, Yuri Slezkine recovers the open-endedness of the 1920s debates over the criteria for defining nationality and for determining which peoples constituted a nation. Contrary to Pipes, in other words, even after its formal declaration, the USSR—no less than socialism—remained an ongoing project. Slezkine moves beyond Simon as well, showing that under Stalin the nativization policies were not overturned but consolidated. “The ethnic groups that already had their own republics . . . were told to redouble their efforts at building distinct national cultures,” he explains, so that, for example, although “Uzbek communities outside Uzbekistan were left to their own devices,” the republic of Uzbekistan “remained in place, got rid of most alien enclaves on its territory and concentrated on its own history and literature.” The Soviet Union, in Slezkine’s apt metaphor, became a kind of “communal apartment” in which all the “major” nationalities received rooms, sharing the kitchen and toilet facilities.⁸⁹

(discussed below), the issue is not that Trotsky or Bukharin supposedly had different ideas, but a question of what might have happened had Stalin suddenly died. Would someone else at the top have sacrificed the dictatorship or the quest for a noncapitalist modernity? If not, was someone other than Stalin capable of carrying through a course that appeared sufficiently noncapitalist and met the USSR’s geopolitical challenges—precisely the dilemma that Carr had pinpointed and that led him to embrace Stalin’s violent imposition of “planning”? Or would the October Revolution, meaning the party-state and the goal of transcending capitalism, have given way? Anything but inevitable, Stalin’s revolution was remarkable, almost incredible.

⁸⁸ Gerhard Simon, *Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion* (Baden-Baden, 1986), trans. as *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society* (Boulder, Colo., 1991). But see Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, pp. 296–97.

⁸⁹ Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 414–52. Slezkine has been taken to task for downplaying the central authorities’ “imperialism” and “xenophobia.” See Terry Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire: Ethnicity and the Soviet State, 1923–38” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1996).

Like Simon, Slezkine has little to say about the vexing issue of the Soviet nation.⁹⁰ He also omits discussion of the “all-union” structure of the planned economy and the related issue of republic versus union ownership of property. Such difficult matters aside, Slezkine has demonstrated the “modernity”—partly unintentional, yet partly intentional—of the repressive Soviet state. Anyone who fell asleep prior to 1914 and awoke in the 1930s would have been astounded by the advances in national institution building and consciousness (not to mention by the Georgian tsar and Jews, Poles, and Central Asians in government). Aside from the Duchy of Finland and the “protectorates” of Bukhara and Khiva, the Russian empire recognized only “nonethnic” administrative units. There was not even a government agency for nationalities. The Provisional Government founded a judicial commission for nationalities, but it had a hard time following, let alone influencing, developments. The Bolshevik experience involved something new, a judgment underscored by comparison with national minorities policies in interwar Eastern Europe, including but not exclusively in the “lost” territories of the former Russian empire.

With occasional allusions to minority policies of Eastern Europe, George Liber explains that in 1917 “Ukrainian” cities were not Ukrainian by language, and that although Ukrainian-speakers dominated the countryside, these peasants thought in terms of religion, locality, and insider versus outsider, not nationality. Enter the Soviet Communist party, whose nativization policy was aimed at the peasantry, to win their loyalty and overcome their backwardness. When combined with the promotion of industrialization (encouraging peasant migration to the cities), by the 1930s nativization resulted in the proliferation of urban Ukrainian speakers who thought of themselves as Ukrainian nationals. At the same time, Ukraine had state boundaries within which Ukrainian was the official language so that either Russian officials could learn Ukrainian or Ukrainians would become the officials. For Moscow, however, nativization was “a Faustian bargain.” The large Ukrainian Communist party threatened to become an independent base of support, no matter how cautiously some Ukrainian leaders conducted themselves. In fact, without trying to “blame” the victims, Liber shows that many Ukrainian officials openly advocated the cause of Ukraine over that of the Union. Moscow’s attacks on “bourgeois” nationalists in Ukraine were thus a logical, if brutal, response to its own contradictory policies. Yet although Stalin annihilated many thousands of “nationalists,” the number of non-Russians in the Ukrainian party and state apparatus continued to increase, even during the purges. The demand for staffing was nearly unlimited, and all the while the nominal federal structures were preserved.⁹¹

⁹⁰ One wonders what the Soviet Army was, if not, at least to some extent, a supranational people under arms, however predominantly Russian the officer corps. Note that in 1919 the Bolshevik authorities in Moscow issued a decree on the takeover of all republican military and supply organs. This goal was eventually achieved. After 1921 none of the republics was permitted to have its own army. National divisions in the Red Army—little studied—seem not to have endured the 1930s. For an analysis of the Soviet army that seeks to compare it with the Wehrmacht, see Roger Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925–1941* (Lawrence, Kans., 1996).

⁹¹ George Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923–34* (Cambridge, 1992). Earlier works anticipated Liber, but they tended to stress repres-

Highlighting the 1920s print revolution in Ukraine (until 1905 it was illegal to print books in Ukrainian), Liber brings out the party's stress on language and literacy and concludes that nationality was ultimately "subjective" (the number of workers who came to identify themselves as Ukrainian exceeded the number who claimed to be able to speak the language). He acknowledges the persistence of regional, religious, class, and socioeconomic differences and the fact that Ukrainian identity was not universally accepted; there were "winners and losers." Having clarified the goals, tensions, and repercussions of party policies, he invites further inquiry into the content of Ukrainian nationalism and into the relations among national and other forms of identity.⁹² In analyzing the period prior to his main focus (1917–23), however, Liber perhaps attributes too great a role to central authorities in establishing Soviet republics. Long ago Jurij Borys noted that the bilateral treaty between Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Russia signed in December 1920 did not provide for supranational citizenship and that the Ukrainian SSR went on to conclude separate international treaties with Poland, Austria, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. True, once the civil war was won Stalin began to argue that the bilateral treaties were "exhausted," yet the RSFSR did not absorb the Ukrainian and other national republics. Borys explained that, although the Red Army compelled the republics to reestablish some form of association with Russia, Moscow was compelled to recognize some form of existence for the republics. In short, the formation of ethnopolitical units was a *fait accompli*—here, too, the war was a watershed—so that the move to federation represented a concession not only of the party but also of the nationalities.⁹³

When the Bolsheviks seized power they had no nationality policy as such, Stephen Blank argues in the first non-Soviet study of the Commissariat for Nationalities (Narkomnats), formed as a temporary commission that became permanent and acquired local branches. He claims those branches were ineffective because of a leadership void, since the commissar, Stalin, was busy restoring a dressed-up empire through the party, though "this could not be admitted." Dissolved with the formation of the USSR in January 1924, Narkomnats died "even before its death," and so, Blank writes, did the "genuine" federalism it supposedly represented.⁹⁴ In

sion and the "break" under Stalin. See the revised and updated George S. N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934* (1956; Ourham and London, 1990).

⁹² A good place to start is Michael Billig (*Banal Nationalism* [London, 1995]), who shows how nationalism is rooted and reproduced in everyday activities.

⁹³ Jurij Borys, *The Sovietization of Ukraine, 1917–1923: The Communist Doctrine and Practice of National Self-Determination*, rev. ed. (Edmonton, Alberta, 1980). See also Mark von Hagen, "The Great War and the Mobilization of Ethnicity in the Russian Empire," in *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*, ed. Barnett R. Rubin (New York, in press). Now that Ukraine has become independent, perhaps "Kiev" (Kyiv) will remain, but in English it should no longer be acceptable to write of Kharkov (as opposed to Kharkiv) or Lvov (as opposed to Lviv) any more than it would be conventional to speak of the Slovak capital as Pressburg, even in German. See Paul Robert Magosci, *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas* (Toronto, 1985); and Wolodymyr Kibijovych, *Historischer Atlas der Ukraine*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1993). Skeptics might note that many commentators viewed the reappearance of Poland in 1918 as a "seasonal" phenomenon.

⁹⁴ Stephen P. Blank, *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917–1924* (Westport, Conn., 1994).

fact, the staff at Narkomnats wielded a notion of “non-imperialist colonialism,” stressing development, to distinguish the USSR from the tsarist and the British overseas empire.⁹⁵ For Blank, efforts to modernize national cultures were ploys to extend control. He equates localism with democracy, even though he notes that many Tatars pressed for “unification” of Soviet Muslims around Kazan. He makes no mention of competition with the British or of Turkey, whose secular modernization partly inspired the analogous Soviet efforts to transform Central Asia.⁹⁶ Nor does he seem to understand that, at least until the calamity of the German uprising planned for November 1923, the Bolshevik leadership thought in terms of a Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia to which new members would be added when revolution broke out elsewhere. Having befuddled the reader on 1917–24, Blank ends with a comment on 1991 that history proved to be “a sorcerer even more powerful than Stalin.”⁹⁷

The shock of 1991 serves as the subject of a book-length essay by Ronald Suny, who condenses the literature on nationalism into two simple views: “sleeping beauty,” where nationalism exists to be awakened; and “bride of Frankenstein,” where the monster is constructed. Taking the latter approach, Suny argues that, much more than the tsarist empire, the USSR became a “prisonhouse of nations” precisely because it “incubated” those nations (albeit unevenly and from different starting points). But eventually Frankenstein’s bride also turned on her master. After Moscow initiated reforms that unintentionally delegitimated the system, the nationalities made demands for autonomy and then independence—hence the collapse.⁹⁸ To explain 1991 largely as a result of nationalism, however, is to miss the specificity of Communism, just as earlier obsessions with Communism obscured the importance of nation.⁹⁹ The ideas behind a class-based world (Communist ideology) were hollowed out before the institutional structures of the class-based world (the Communist party) were, but the void in the ideas predestined the loss of the structures, and, unexpectedly for many, losing the party turned out to involve losing the USSR. A resolution at the pivotal Eighth Party Congress, in 1919, had specified that decisions of the Russian Communist party were “unconditionally binding on all branches of the party, regardless of their national composition,” so that the Ukrainian Communist party and those of the other republics had the status of regional committees “wholly subordinated” to the Russian party. As Zinoviev explained in 1919, the goal was “one single centralized party beside a federation

⁹⁵ Francine Hirsch, “Empire of Nations: Colonial Technologies and the Making of the Soviet Union, 1917–1939,” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1998).

⁹⁶ On the influence of Turkey, see Gregory Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton, N.J., 1974), p. 219. For related issues see Mikhail I. Volodarskii, *Sovety i ikh iuzhnye sosedi Iran i Afganistan, 1917–1933* (London, 1985), trans. as *The Soviet Union and Its Southern Neighbors Iran and Afghanistan, 1917–1933* (Ilford, Essex, 1994). For the connections between Bolshevik nationality and colonial policies, see E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution* (New York, 1954), 3:234–35.

⁹⁷ Blank, p. 225.

⁹⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Calif., 1993).

⁹⁹ An interesting exception is Hans Kohn, *Nationalism in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1933).

of states," a relationship that held after the formation of the USSR in 1924.¹⁰⁰ Remove the USSR Communist party, however, and one is left with a federal union of states that may choose to withdraw, as the constitution permitted.

In the late 1980s, even 1990, the nationalism of the periphery could threaten yet not "tear apart" the Union. Rather, once it became clear that the erosion of the party as a political structure had also undermined the USSR, many members of the decisive Soviet central elite could and did abandon the "system" because they had given up on Communism and they had somewhere to go, above all the Russian republic, but also Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. In that sense, "nationalism" served more as a refuge and a vehicle to power than as a causal factor.¹⁰¹ The "cause" of the USSR's dissolution lay in the fateful legacy of the revolutionary process that bequeathed the administratively redundant Communist party.¹⁰² The party resurrected the tsarist empire, but unfortunately for the USSR the party proved to be both a nation maker and a perishable structure. Suny, for all his efforts over the years to clarify the tangled relationships between class and nation, underplays the point that 1991 represented the "defeat" of class, as embodied by the party, perhaps because to him class still signifies possible liberation rather than an instrument of repression.

Suny mentions in passing the existence of a "generalized Soviet culture" that grew alongside national identities.¹⁰³ Various defined in the secondary literature, the problem of revolutionary, Stalinist, or Soviet culture has proven particularly confounding. Attention to the great cultural flowering of 1917–30 induced some to argue for the "authenticity" of the revolution (skeptics who observed that the flowering predated 1917 only provided more evidence). That the cacophony of styles seemed not to lead in a single direction was hailed as a sign of the (relative) openness of the 1920s. That in the 1930s the party (Stalin) made a series of binding pronouncements, combined with arrests, seemed to confirm the picture so dear to intellectuals inside and outside Russia of an intelligentsia martyred by Philistine functionaries. But in the late 1980s this framework was exploded by Boris Groys, who argued that "Stalinist culture" was a result, not a rejection, of avant-garde tendencies.¹⁰⁴

Groys's work appeared alongside a number of works on culture after 1917.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ See Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union* (n. 82 above), p. 245; Borys, p. 51.

¹⁰¹ The extent to which the leadership of the Russian republic understood that it was terminating the Union remains difficult to judge. Russia's leadership pressed forward with the formation of a Russian KGB and Russian Army prior to the August 1991 failed putsch. Until late in the game, however, they may have been under the illusion that their actions would "liberate" Russia from the USSR without necessarily destroying all ties to other republics. John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, N.J., 1993).

¹⁰² For an elaboration, see Stephen Kotkin, "In Search of the Nomenklatura: Yesterday's USSR, Today's Russia," *East European Constitutional Review* 6 (1997): 104–20.

¹⁰³ Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, p. 106.

¹⁰⁴ Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalins: Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion* (Munich, 1988), trans. as *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton, N.J., 1992).

¹⁰⁵ Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990); Christopher Read, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The*

In a kind of Hegelian *Aufhebung* of this literature, Katerina Clark analyzes the transformation of “revolutionary” into “Soviet” culture. Casting aside the idea of 1917 as big bang, she begins in 1913 and proceeds at a level deeper than artistic movements: namely, that of foundational myths. Within the frame of St. Petersburg’s role in Russian culture, she identifies the avant-garde’s basic disposition as perceptual millenarianism, a combination of iconoclasm and new monumentalism that both threatened and paved the way for Stalinism. Over two decades, intellectuals’ aesthetic utopianism and quest for purification helped create a certain atmosphere. Their loathing for the marketplace—what Clark calls “Romantic anticapitalism”—became the cement of Soviet culture and guided their partial embrace of Stalin when he cast the money changers out of the temple. In short, rather than Carl Schorske’s familiar paradigm of political frustrations being transformed into cultural production, the Russian high-cultural “hothouse” facilitated the political outcome.¹⁰⁶

In assigning a wider “responsibility” for Stalinism to culture makers (or to the amorphous discursive environment they helped constitute), Clark’s analysis is reminiscent of Sheila Fitzpatrick’s.¹⁰⁷ Characteristically, each uses the term “Soviet culture” (for which Clark interchanges “Stalinist culture”). Contemporaries, however, thought in terms of both Soviet (meaning supranational) culture and “socialist” culture.¹⁰⁸ To elide the problems of socialist and Soviet culture is to confuse the problematics of class and nation and to detach the search for socialist culture from the parallel quests for socialist economics and politics. Even if the inability to define the precise nature of “capitalist” or “bourgeois” culture meant that the forms of socialist culture remained elusive despite their codification in “socialist realism,” many ordinary individuals as much as the regime understood socialism to be an ensemble—a noncapitalist “civilization” comprising property relations,

Intelligentsia and the Transition from Tsarism to Communism (London, 1990); Denise Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, 1992).

¹⁰⁶ Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995). Analyzing novels, poems, film, music, architecture, linguistics, and more, Clark strives to make sense of seemingly disparate trends, often with recourse to the handy term “paradox.” She avoids treating concrete actions of the party. Nor does she much engage the existing historiography. Her work overlaps to an extent that of Karl Schlogel, *Jenseits des grossen Oktober: Das Laboratorium der Moderne Petersburg, 1909–1921* (Berlin, 1988). See also Thomas Lahusen, *How Life Writes the Bovic: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin’s Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1997), a thoroughly original study that appeared too late for review.

¹⁰⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992). Whereas Fitzpatrick highlights the institutionalization of the petit bourgeois tastes of empowered traditional intellectuals, Clark paints a portrait of the triumph of avant-garde intellectuals’ deepest longings. Together they stress different aspects of 1930s culture: on the one hand, paternalist elitism, party-mindedness (abject loyalty), sanctioned revolutionary tropes, and monumentalism and, on the other, shameless *meshchanstvo*. Following Nicholas Timasheff, Fitzpatrick calls the resultant “Soviet” culture of the 1930s a Great Retreat, yet she hints that such an outcome was predictable. Clark’s more articulated view is that liminality, by definition, cannot last; at some point there is a need not simply to smash but also to forge icons. Nicholas S. Timosheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York, 1946).

¹⁰⁸ One valuable collection of essays studiously sidesteps the problem in its title: Hans Guenther, ed., *The Culture of the Stalin Period* (New York, 1990).

political institutions, and culture. We need not ratify such a worldview, but it should serve as an object of analysis.

SOCIALISM BUILT: INTENTIONALISM, FUNCTIONALISM,
AND *ALLTAGSGESCHICHTE*

Imagine a country that goes through tumultuous upheaval but in which the foundations of an unprecedented new society without private property are pronounced built (1936). Just then, hundreds of thousands of that country's party and state officials, engineers and artists, military and police officers turn out to be dangerous enemies. Having been in positions of authority throughout the struggle culminating in socialism's victory, the elites, along with many others, are suddenly accused of monstrous crimes, especially spying for the country's main foreign adversaries, and "wrecking," and they confess. A vast number of the functionaries who carry out the mass arrests are themselves arrested—and yet the regime survives completely intact. What got the process started? Why did it more or less stop in 1938? Did anyone control it? What accounts for its scope? Did people believe the accusations and confessions? Did the terror accomplish anything? Was it intended to?¹⁰⁹

There have been two approaches to the terror. The first, acknowledging Lenin's role in helping to found the system, argued that Stalin directed the slaughter. Scholars of this approach disagreed on whether Stalin acted gratuitously (out of paranoia); because the system, lacking legitimacy, required terror; or from a need—again, either psychological or organizational—to solidify his dictatorship. Rumors of a plan to replace Stalin with Kirov at the Seventeenth Party Congress, in 1934, and of Stalin's involvement in Kirov's assassination were usually taken as a sign of some "threat" to Stalin's absolute rule. But it remained unresolved whether he launched the terror for "rational" or "irrational" purposes. And despite being designated the prime mover of all things, his intellectual capacities were usually belittled.¹¹⁰

A second approach, somewhat contradictorily, sought to reduce Stalin's role by inquiring into the actions of others in the leadership and by shifting the problematic from the implementation of will to the chaotic operation of the "system." On the one hand, there may have been two factions in the politburo, "moderates" and "rad-

¹⁰⁹ Consider William Sheridan Allen's study of Norheim during the Third Reich. Not only did the local Nazis survive their regime; a large number of the town's pre-1933 Social Democrats were still alive to meet the author when he arrived in the 1970s. Obviously, Nazism had many targets—Jews and others considered as racially inferior—yet the Soviet terror victimized not just kulaks and class aliens but enormous numbers of Soviet-era people as well, individuals who went through Soviet schools, worked in Soviet institutions, sacrificed for and built socialism. Moreover, victims of the terror were made to sign elaborate confessions of improbable crimes. And such confessions were elicited even when victims were about to disappear without trace and no further practical use would be made of their testimony. The Soviet terror of 1936–38 indicates a political dynamic different from that of Nazism. William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922–1945* (New York, 1984).

¹¹⁰ Conquest (n. 7 above); Roy Medvedev, *K sudu istorii* (New York, 1967), abridged and trans. as *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York, 1980). Among these authors' many differences, Medvedev "exonerated" Lenin.

icals,” whose existence was deduced from oblique statements in the press and whose struggles could have precipitated the carnage. On the other hand, there was the center’s frustration over foot-dragging in the localities, or perhaps a congenitally defective bureaucratic machine that in the (mis)performance of its duties somehow spun “out of control.”¹¹¹ Oddly, neither these self-proclaimed revisionists nor those they attacked seemed aware that they were debating what has been called in the scholarship on the Third Reich “intentionalism” versus “functionalism.” Furthermore, rather than fostering a discussion of language, popular psychology, modes of political practice, the role of the individual will in history, the dynamics of interagency rivalries, the ambitions of subordinates, and the significance of having or not having explicit instructions, this incognizant intentionalist and functionalist debate on Stalinism became absorbed with controversies over the number of victims and the size of the Gulag population.¹¹² Of course, it was not simply the absence of a comparative perspective or imaginative approaches (à la Ryszard Kapuscinski) but also the lack of documents and memoirs from inside the regime that conditioned the Stalin literature. What has happened since 1991?

Declassified materials flatly refute an alleged division at the top in the 1930s between “moderates” and “hard-liners.” Relations among members of Stalin’s politburo appear to have been friendly. Clashes occurred frequently, but they centered on issues of bureaucratic domains.¹¹³ Stalin’s political dominance of the periphery was not in question, and no incident of a serious challenge to his authority from any locality has come to light.¹¹⁴ His proactive command of the mechanisms of power, painstakingly set out more than a decade prior to 1991 by Neils Erik Rosenfeldt, has been confirmed.¹¹⁵ From a small group of hand-picked assistants, Stalin’s

¹¹¹ Getty, *The Origins of the Great Purges* (n. 7 above); Gabor Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933–1953* (Chur, Switzerland, 1991). Of the differences between these two, one of the most salient is that Getty assigned Stalin to the moderate faction, while Rittersporn saw him as a radical.

¹¹² For an authoritative discussion, see R. W. Davies, “Forced Labour under Stalin: The Archive Revelations,” *New Left Review* 214 (1995): 62–80.

¹¹³ Kaganovich, thought to have been a hard-liner, opposed the purges on the railroads (his sphere of responsibility), at least in the early stages. Even Ordzhonikidze’s blowup with Stalin in 1937, leading to his apparent suicide, seems not to have been over the policy of the terror but over specific people whom Ordzhonikidze sought to protect. A. R. Rees, *Stalinism and Soviet Rail Transport, 1928–41* (New York, 1995); Khlevniuk et al., eds. (n. 13 above), pp. 88–91; Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin i Ordzhonikidze: Konflikty v politbiuro v 30-e gody* (Moscow, 1993). Khlevniuk concludes that Ordzhonikidze’s death was a suicide. Access to the Ordzhonikidze files of the presidential archives has not altered this view. See Oleg Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro: Mekhanizmy politicheskoi vlasti v 1930-e gody* (Moscow, 1996), a summary of the author’s various recent books.

¹¹⁴ To facilitate the implementation of central decisions, local party bosses—whom Stalin appointed and could dismiss—were given enormous authority. Tremendous pressure was then brought to bear through incessant directives, demands for reports, traveling commissions, summons to Moscow, NKVD surveillance on the party, and spies within the local satrap’s apparat. Getty based much of his reinterpretation of the purges on the “resistance” of local officials to central directives, but what he has described was the system’s *modus operandi*: the center’s constant complaints about nonfulfillment of its decrees was how the brutal regime managed its local officials—a point made by Fainsod (n. 8 above), pp. 77–78, 92.

¹¹⁵ Neils Erik Rosenfeldt, *Knowledge and Power: The Role of Stalin’s Secret Chancellery in the Soviet System of Government* (Copenhagen, 1978), and *Stalin’s Secret Chancellery and the Comintern: Evidence about the Organizational Patterns* (Copenhagen, 1991).

personal secretariat grew to a staff of ninety highly qualified functionaries by the early 1930s. They worked alongside the party's nerve center or "secret department," which was headed by one of the key members of Stalin's personal secretariat. From the mid-1920s the interlocking personnel of these two bodies had responsibility for all communications, including the coded traffic with Soviet embassies, and for preparing the politburo agenda. They decided many issues before decision-making bodies met. Responsible only to Stalin, they alone supervised the military and NKVD.¹¹⁶

Already in the 1920s, the constraints on Stalin between politburo meetings were few, but for a long time that body could vote to rescind his actions and even remove him. Stalin reckoned with the politburo by having far more information than anyone else (including on politburo officials), conspiring with select members in pre-politburo meetings or correspondence, supervising the ad hoc and permanent politburo commissions that dealt with major issues, and taking preemptive policy decisions. He compromised when he sensed the need, but he advanced his power relentlessly.¹¹⁷ By the time of the terror, the frequency of formal politburo sessions decreased, and the commissions appointed by Stalin could legally take decisions in the politburo's name. Through skill and considerable effort, he had finally, though perhaps superfluously, rendered the politburo incapable of removing him.¹¹⁸

None of this is meant to suggest that we return to biography or to Robert Conquest's attribution of everything that happened to Stalin, a flattering endorsement of the dictator's megalomania. Rosenfeldt cautions that although "Stalin had a solid grip on the available instruments of power," this "did not guarantee that he always could get the system to operate according to his will."¹¹⁹ One could go much further: understanding how the regime functioned requires moving beyond the dictator, just as the revisionists clumsily tried to do.¹²⁰ Their reinterpretations collapsed from internal contradictions even before the rubble was razed by the new documents. But the revisionists nonetheless called attention to the glaring inadequacies in the (still prevailing) orthodox view and initiated a healthy trend toward functionalism.

A natural conspirator, Stalin did not hold forth in the presence of a stenographer. Others in the secretive leadership left an insubstantial record of reminiscences.

¹¹⁶ Dmitrii Volkogonov, "Stalin: Triumf i tragediia," *Oktiabr'*, no. 12 (1988), p. 89 (omitted from the book version); *Istochnik*, no. 5–6 (1993), p. 94; Khlevniuk et al., eds., pp. 14–15; Rosenfeldt, *Stalin's Secret Chancellery and the Comintern*, pp. 15–17. Nicholas II had refused to form a royal secretariat to keep track of the flow of information and implementation of his decisions, or even to employ a single private secretary. The tsar opened and sealed his own mail. Lieven (n. 34 above), p. 117.

¹¹⁷ See *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925–1936*, ed. Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov, Oleg V. Khlevniuk (New Haven, Conn., 1995), esp. pp. 112, 152–53, 198, 218; and Khlevniuk et al., eds., pp. 94–111. For a succinct statement of Stalin's developed political technique, see the instructions he issued on how to conduct espionage, as quoted in Leonid Shebarshin, *Ruki Moskvyy: Zapiski nachal'nika Sovetskoi razvedki* (Moscow, 1992), pp. 172–73.

¹¹⁸ One has to wonder whether, if a majority of the politburo had moved against Stalin even in the mid-1920s, it could have succeeded given his supervisory functions over the NKVD and the communications networks. Assassination may have been the only sure way to dislodge him.

¹¹⁹ Rosenfeldt, *Stalin's Secret Chancellery and the Comintern*, p. 71.

¹²⁰ For an attempt to get beyond the demonization of Stalin and trivialization of his leadership capacities, see the introduction by Lars T. Lih to *Stalin's Letters to Molotov*, pp. 1–63.

Poskrebyshev, who served as Stalin's top assistant from the late 1920s almost until the dictator's death and knew more about the workings of the regime than anyone, died apparently without leaving memoirs. So did Malenkov. Beria was shot before he had the chance to set down his recollections.¹²¹ Khrushchev's are highly revealing—and full of anti-Stalin inventions, such as the defamation that Stalin disappeared for two weeks after the Nazi invasion.¹²² Molotov and Kaganovich engaged in interesting but highly protective discussions very late in life.¹²³ Only for the war years do we have insider recollections on policy making and intentions, supplied mostly by Soviet generals, that compare with the writings of Nazi officials.¹²⁴ True, Stalin took extended working vacations away from Moscow during which time he wrote and received numerous letters. But thus far only some of these letters have been made available.¹²⁵ Without “table talks,” memoir-exposes on the 1930s, the full range of extant internal correspondence, or NKVD materials in the central KGB archives, it remains difficult to reconstruct the origins of the terror. The politburo protocols provide almost no evidence on this subject. Undaunted, Oleg Khlevniuk, the author of many recent works, nonetheless presses forward.

Khlevniuk reveals that in 1935 a top NKVD official reported that some local prosecutors refused to sanction arrests and that party rank and file wrote letters questioning the necessity of a bloodletting following Kirov's murder. Beginning in 1936, written protests against the NKVD arrests were circulated, evidently inciting Stalin to even more rigorous action. By late 1938, such petitions had become a flood, and in a few cases people passed out leaflets in the streets. Khlevniuk shows

¹²¹ For an attempt to get beyond condemnation and show Beria's considerable administrative abilities and technocratic world view, see Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton, N.J., 1993).

¹²² The declassified register of visitors to Stalin's Kremlin office shows nearly constant meetings with Stalin, confirmed by the memoirs of Zhukov and others, from June 21, 1941, until June 29–30, when no such meetings were recorded (they resumed the next day). Some of Stalin's work days during this time lasted nearly twenty hours. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, no. 6 (1990), pp. 216–22; *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 6 (1994), pp. 4–44; and Steven J. Main, “Stalin in June 1941: A Comment on Cynthia Roberts,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 5 (1996): 837–39.

¹²³ Feliks Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: Iz dnevnika F. Chueva* (Moscow, 1991), abridged and trans. as *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics* (Chicago, 1993), and subsequently authenticated with tapes, and *Tak govoril Kaganovich: Ispoved' stalinskogo apostola* (Moscow, 1992). Kaganovich left behind some fourteen thousand pages, begun not long after 1957, when he was ousted from power, and still in progress at the time of his death in 1991 (at age ninety-seven). Lazar M. Kaganovich, *Pamiatnye zapiski rabocheho, Kommunisto-bol'shevika, profsoiuznogo, partiinogo i sovetsko-gosudarstvennogo rabotnika* (Moscow, 1996), which reveals little of internal regime matters.

¹²⁴ Zhukov's unparalleled memoirs have now appeared in a twelfth edition, with all the original material formerly removed by the censor and with markings on the passages forcibly added in the Brezhnev period. G. Zhukov, *Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1995). Mention might also be made of the letters of Stalin's daughter Svetlana and the conversations with Djilas, both long available.

¹²⁵ Some letters from the presidential archives that Stalin exchanged with his second wife Nadezhda (in the years prior to her 1932 suicide) have been published. They hint he may have been a human being. In August 1929, Nadezhda, twenty-three years younger than he, wrote: “I kiss you firmly [*krepko*], firmly, just as you kissed me when we parted.” Stalin usually signed his brief responses, “I kiss you:” *Iosif Stalin v ob'iatiakh sem'i: Iz lichnogo arkhiva* (Moscow, 1992). Stalin decided what was, or was not, retained in his personal archive.

that the purges were expressly halted in November 1938 and that pressure from the petitions, still palpable at the Eighteenth Party Congress, in 1939, played a role in Stalin's calculations.¹²⁶ Khlevniuk has less success showing when Stalin began the purges and why. He points to collectivization and the famine, which bred internal disapproval of Stalin's rule, and shows that there were mass arrests following Kirov's murder, but he neglects to explain why 1937–38 did not therefore occur in 1935. His best evidence on intentions are the lists prepared for Stalin just prior to the February-March 1937 Central Committee plenum enumerating party officials who had been dismissed or reprimanded in the past. (Between 1922 and 1937, 1.5 million people were expelled from the party; in many places former Communists outnumbered Communists.) These were among the core victims of the terror, but the lists come too late to prove the argument that "the purges" began in 1932, or even 1935. Nor do the lists explain why the purges affected so many others not included therein, to say nothing of why hundreds of thousands of people participated in the mass campaigns. Contending that the purges had a "rational" aim—strengthening Stalin's position—Khlevniuk proves that the terror sowed doubts where there had been few.¹²⁷ In short, not only the putative goals but also the process and consequences of the 1936–38 terror, as well as related waves during and after the war, await further analysis.

In August 1940, while working in Germany overseeing the procurement provisions of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Valentin Berezhkov was summoned to Moscow. He recalls being worried about possible arrest and yet feeling a rush of patriotism on reaching the USSR's side of the border, where he was then subjected to a humiliating search. Promoted, he served as one of Molotov's two German interpreters on the November trip to Berlin (and was supposedly complimented by Hitler for his Berlin accent, acquired at a Lutheran school in Kiev). After a stint at the Soviet embassy in Germany, in September 1941 Berezhkov suddenly became an English interpreter for Stalin, whom he discovered to be shockingly "short and haggard" with a "tired face" and "smallpox scars." Berezhkov reports hearsay from events he was not present to observe, speculates on Stalin's reasoning, and shows 1991 hindsight on the failures of the Soviet economy; but his recollections on what he did see are nonetheless instructive.¹²⁸

As a youth, Berezhkov experienced the economic revival of the NEP—a distant memory during the famine. By the mid-1930s, however, he recalls that "many of

¹²⁶ Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *1937-1: Stalin, NKVD, i Sovetskoe obshchestvo* (Moscow, 1992), and "The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937–38," in Cooper, Perrie, and Rees, eds. (n. 14 above), pp. 158–76.

¹²⁷ Khlevniuk's conclusion that the terror's main aim "was the removal of all strata of the population, which in the opinion of the country's leaders were hostile or potentially hostile," amounts to a reiteration of the leadership's justification. A similar argument is advanced by Dmitrii Volkogonov, who claims that Stalin took seriously the appeals by Trotsky and his son, Lev Sedov, for an overthrow of the regime and the assassination of the dictator. Maybe. But this is no "explanation" of the terror. Dmitrii Volkogonov, *Trotsky: Politicheskii portret*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1992), abridged and trans. as *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary* (New York, 1996).

¹²⁸ Valentin Berezhkov, *At Stalin's Side: His Interpreter's Memoirs from the October Revolution to the Fall of the Dictator's Empire* (New York, 1994), p. 201. Berezhkov's comments about his immediate boss, Molotov, are particularly interesting. See also Derek Watson, *Molotov and the Soviet Government: Sovnarkom, 1930–41* (New York, 1996).

us began to feel that the terrible hardships . . . had not been in vain,” and that “in the final analysis Stalin was right” for forcing industrialization and collectivization. Working in Kiev Intourist, Berezhkov claims he believed all the foreigners he hosted to be rich and that “in the Soviet Union we were building a system that would be fair for all.” But the country was isolated, with enemies on all sides. His father was arrested but then released, so he “came to believe that if a person was truly innocent, no one was going to harm him.” His desire to retain his faith despite the terror is unmistakable. In 1938 Berezhkov was graduated with a degree in engineering and catapulted upward. Within two years he would meet Hitler and within three, Stalin. “The young people of my generation did not know about Stalin’s atrocities,” he writes, having walked the halls of the Kremlin. “On the contrary, we thought he was like a wise, just, caring, if strict father of the peoples of our country.” He relates his astonishment, on arriving in capitalist Riga in 1940, at the abundance and affordability of food. Further doubts developed after the war, he claims, but Stalin’s death hit him “hard,” as did Khrushchev’s secret speech.¹²⁹ Berezhkov’s memoirs show the coexistence of belief with fear and the willingness to suspend disbelief. Such memoirs indicate that the strength of Stalinism should be sought not solely in terror, nor even in the regime, but also in ordinary people’s identities.¹³⁰

Asserting the discovery of approximately two hundred diaries from the 1930s, Verronique Garros, Natalya Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen offer translations of ten (most excerpted). Noting that an “ignorant” woman got a job, went to a party school, and became a big factory director, one diarist, Fedor Shirmov, himself a former peasant, recorded that “it just goes to show what can come of it when our government and politically conscious party members . . . show their concern . . . and rid [these ignorant people] of their addiction to that priestly hocuspocus they’ve got circulating in their blood. After which we get big people with big talents and knowledge of our Great Socialist Society.” Relating the story of his own “new life” under socialism, Shirmov became ill in 1938 and discontinued the diary. He dedicated and sent the manuscript to Stalin. By contrast, Andrei Arzhilovskiy, who in 1936 was fifty-one and recently released from the Gulag (he seems to have been arrested for theft), privately noted that party symbols were displayed the way icons used to be and that the propaganda was “contrived and false.” But “we’ll just keep quiet,” he suggested to himself. “Not everybody has to join in. It is also possible just to stand on the sidelines.” His private opposition revealed a certain disillusionment. “I’m becoming more and more convinced that there’s no such thing as socialism,” he wrote, shortly before his rearrest. “There are aristocrats, bureaucrats, and then there are people like me who do the dirty work.”¹³¹ Other diarists record their deprivations yet assert their faith, while those in positions of

¹²⁹ Berezhkov, pp. 227–35, 347–49.

¹³⁰ For an elaboration, see my *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995).

¹³¹ Verronique Garros, Natalya Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, eds., *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s* (New York, 1995), pp. 93, 114, 119, 153–54.

power put forward patriotic justifications for implementing brutal policies. The editors eschew commentary or analysis, thereby missing an opportunity to compare the modes of thought in these diaries with those that were published or with analogous materials written by people living under other dictatorships. They do not explain whether Soviet people thought differently “in private” or whether such a concept as “private” even existed under socialism. Nor do they point out how deeply the question of socialism, and particular ways of understanding that question, permeate the diaries.¹³²

The 2 million peasants who migrated to Moscow in the 1930s, argues David Hoffman, “settled on the outskirts” and “were left to organize their own communities.” Their “peasant culture,” the “habitual” and the “traditional,” is said to have survived, most prominently in the important genre of peasant songs (*chastushki*) recovered by Hoffman. True, the new urbanites had no constitutional or linguistic basis for solidarity (they were “robbed” of terms by the regime), but the categories imposed from above did not fit, and the result was a high level of “passive conformity” (a la Detlev Peukert on the Nazi social dynamic, whom Hoffman could have cited).¹³³ But Kenneth Straus, using the same 1930s Moscow regional archives, stresses the breakdown of barriers to entering the labor market and points to the mass influx of peasants into factories as a case of unusual opportunity. The source of jobs, housing, and identities, factories served as social melting pots, facilitating the formation of a Soviet working class—defined not in opposition to a bourgeoisie but as a status open to everyone. In place of class struggle there was factory patriotism and, despite new kinds of differentiation, integration into a new, if “sclerotic,” society.¹³⁴

How could the immigrants to Moscow be both culturally resistant to the new regime’s value system and integrated into that value system? Obviously, Hoffman’s idea that the people managed to elude the strictures of the new society cannot be squared with Straus’s picture of the factory as community organizer. But if Hoffman underplays the institutions and specific vocabulary that people had to confront to find employment or receive an education, Straus neglects to specify the terms on which the people were integrated. Neither author quotes many people whose worldviews they purport to describe, and neither refers to socialism. The idea of a negotiation rather than a straight imposition is welcome, but the terms of identity people wielded—social origins, native village, occupation, age, gender, nationality, party affiliation, civil status—were all in some measure refracted through socialism, whether in affirmation, denial, or confusion. And crucial to understandings of socialism were notions of the capitalist world, which in the interwar period was associated not with prosperity and peace (as after World War II), but with imperial-

¹³² For a more analytical approach, see Jochen Hellbeck, ed., *Tagebücher aus Moskau, 1931–1939* (Munich, 1996); and Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubny (1931–1939),” *Jahrbucher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44, no. 3 (1996): 344–73.

¹³³ David Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929–1941* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994), based on his Columbia University dissertation for which I was an outside reader.

¹³⁴ Kenneth M. Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin’s Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class, 1928–1933* (Pittsburgh, 1998).

ist war, depression, and fascism. Incessant journalistic coverage ensured that images of the outside world played a profound role in shaping mentalities within the enclosed USSR.

Hoffmann's challenge to the idea of integration, without seeking to return to the notion of atomization, highlights the potential differences between the city and the village, where two-thirds of the Soviet population still resided on the eve of World War II. A study by Sheila Fitzpatrick on the countryside in the 1930s argues that peasants had to accept collectivization or perish but that they still participated in working out what the kolkhoz meant in practice. Collective farmers came to learn that the kolkhoz granted access to a larger plot, meadows for grazing, a lower level of taxation, insurance against disability, and maternity pay. Even though in the late 1930s the regime tightened the screws, by then peasants were complaining not of forced inclusion but of exclusion from the collective farms. For the regime, however, this was no success, according to Fitzpatrick, because peasants predisposed to the new value system fled for the towns, while those left behind were seething from the famine and the regime's refusal to acknowledge it. During the 1937 census a majority of villagers openly admitted they still believed in God. She thus concludes that, whereas a sense of Soviet nationhood was "broadly disseminated" in the cities, the "metamorphosis of 'peasants into Soviets'" did not take place, at least prior to World War II.¹³⁵

Fitzpatrick's analysis, a long way from her one-time espousal of revolution from below, draws on the staple of *Alltagsgeschichte*: the little people who supposedly managed to foil the state. Once again at the historiographic forefront, she now asserts that with the innumerable denunciations sent to the authorities in which peasants freely employed the language of kulak and sabotage, the party "had become the peasants' patsy, being jerked and manipulated at will."¹³⁶ The household plot could not be legally sold or leased, yet such transactions were reported; and despite the prohibitions peasants hired wage laborers, including surrogates to do farm work. Secret police reports, which Fitzpatrick takes largely at face value, noted that rural inhabitants "strongly disliked" Stalin. Perhaps. But even if the urban, industrial socialism tied to factories had greater appeal, villagers' frequent urging of the regime to implement its policies and live up to its promises may indicate more than attempts at manipulation. Peasant letters to the authorities seem to have been based on expectations of the social justice and social welfare associated with the revolution. The trickier question is whether peasant critics, or anyone else, imagined an alternative for realizing the hopes and values embodied in the regime's official pronouncements and in grassroots petitions.

¹³⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York, 1994), p. 325. See also Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York, 1996), which portrays a deadly clash of cultures between town and countryside. Viola places greater emphasis on acts of resistance than does Fitzpatrick, but each underscores the hollowness of the Kolkhoz system. For another work in this new resistance genre, see Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda, and Dissent, 1934–1941* (New York, 1997).

¹³⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, p. 260. Fainsod made much the same point (n. 8 above), pp. 151–52.

Work on the socialist society of the 1930s—urban, rural, and non-Russian—continues. Regional case studies, with all their benefits and challenges for generalization, have begun to proliferate. Even the Gulag has become an object of primary-source research. At the same time, attention has turned to World War II. It has long been argued or assumed that the 1930s were the definitive “formative period” of Soviet socialism, so much so that analyses often arbitrarily break off in 1939 (my work included). But Amir Weiner’s dissertation on war memories in Ukraine has invited a deeper look at the ways in which the Great Fatherland War shifted the conceptions and practices of the October revolution, especially its multinational structures, and encouraged the downgrading of class, notwithstanding the endurance of the party and the drive for purity.¹³⁷ With time, the fortunes of the recast revolution as it moved into the postwar period will also attract detailed study, and perhaps the compartmentalism into “epochs”—1917, Civil War, NEP, Stalinism (1930s), High Stalinism (1940s and 1950s)—will finally give way to an appreciation of long-term trajectories, replete with contingency and surprise.

TOTALITARIANISM: A WELL-EARNED RETIREMENT?

After October 1917, France’s counterrevolution haunted Russia.¹³⁸ When in the mid-1920s the “left opposition” around Trotsky openly wondered whether the NEP meant Thermidor, Stalin briefly applied the taboo term to his opponents while routing them. Following his deportation, Trotsky toyed with conceptions of a Soviet Thermidor, blaming the bureaucracy for the “degeneration” of the socialist revolution, yet hinting the fault lay in the peasant nature of the country—a view close to that of the Mensheviks, his old party. But he refused to question the socialist nature of the USSR.¹³⁹ For its part, the Menshevik emigration also contemplated yet never fully embraced the Thermidor analogy, concluding that Stalin’s dictatorship was qualitatively different from anything in the French Revolution. In that spirit, some of the Mensheviks turned to the writings of Nikolai V. Ustrialov, a former Cadet

¹³⁷ Amir Weiner, “The Making of a Dominant Myth: The Second World War and the Construction of Political Identities within the Soviet Polity,” *Russian Review* 55, no. 4 (1996): 638–60, based on his “Myths and Identities: The Second World War and the Construction of Collective Identities in the Vynnytsia Region, 1943–1975” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1994). See also Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, 1994). Volkogonov’s study of Stalin, though tending to substitute biography for history, also breaks new ground to the extent that it highlights the war. Dmitrii Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph i tragediia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1991), abridged and trans. as *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (London, 1991).

¹³⁸ Tamara Kondrat’eva, *Bolcheviki et jacobins: Itineraire des analogies* (Paris, 1989), which appeared in Russian as *Bol’sheviki-iakobintsy i prizrak termidora* (Moscow, 1993). See also Dmitry Shlapentokh, “The Images of the French Revolution in the February and Bolshevik Revolutions,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 16, no. 1 (1989): 31–54; G. I. Il’ina, “Obraz evropeiskikh revoliutsii i russkaia kul’tura (mart 1917 g.–noiabr’ 1918 g.),” in *Anatomiia revoliutsii, 1917 god v Rossii: Massy, partii, vlast’* (St. Petersburg, 1994), pp. 383–93.

¹³⁹ Trotsky’s followers criticized his inconsistencies. Michael Fox, “Trotskii i ego kritiki o prirode SSR pri Staline,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 11–12 (1992), pp. 33–45. It was left for others, notably Milovan Djilas, to systematize the view that Stalinism arose because the bureaucracy formed a “new class” and pursued its “class interests.” Milovan Djilas, *The New Class* (New York, 1957).

and until 1934 an intellectual leader of the emigration in Harbin who had characterized the NEP as a welcome Thermidor but later wrote of the USSR's "ideocratic type" of dictatorship rooted in Russian religious philosophy.¹⁴⁰ This critical stance originated by the revolution's biggest losers eventually met up with the work of cold war social scientists, the revolution's greatest opponents.¹⁴¹

With the postwar expansion in Soviet studies, social scientists in the United States articulated a "model" of totalitarianism borrowed (and simplified) not just from the Mensheviks but also from the anti-Nazi emigres, especially Hannah Arendt, who had in turn adapted the concept from antifascist Italians denigrating Mussolini's pretensions to have achieved a total identification of state and people.¹⁴² Few noted that "totalitarianism" was Stalinism's positive self-characterization (just as it had been Italian fascism's and, via Carl Schmitt, Nazism's). The infamous Stalin-era short-course history of the party (1938) anticipated the field of Soviet studies—with the values inverted—by asserting that the USSR embodied the magical realization of a single organized will (the party and its ideology). At no time did Stalin adopt the language of counterrevolution, and scholars of totalitarianism concurred in his "fulfillment" of October. It was Trotsky (returning the favor Stalin had bestowed by inventing the derogatory "Trotskyism") who coined "Stalinism" as an opposition to Leninism and an expression of negative social phenomena. Following this lead, social historians, notably the profoundly influential Moshe Lewin, reversed the short-course/totalitarian model of causality by tracing the deep "social influences" of (peasant) society on the Soviet state. Even though Lewin and other social historians of the 1930s mostly embraced the Bukharin alternative, they in effect completed Trotsky's project, denying the Soviet view that the socialism built under Stalin was continuous with Leninism and blaming Stalin for a Thermidor while suggesting that the existence of a "backward" peasantry was at the root of the revolution's "deformation."¹⁴³

Giuseppe Boffa has delineated and summarized a large number of interpretations of Stalinism and noted that each has captured some aspect of the phenomenon.¹⁴⁴ On fundamentals, however, his register can be reduced to two: (1) the view known as Marxism-Leninism or Soviet socialism internally and as totalitarianism

¹⁴⁰ A law professor, Ustrialov (1880–1937) had been in charge of the press in the Kolchak government, and then fled to Harbin in 1920, where he taught international law. In 1925 he was hired by the Soviet authorities to work for the Chinese Eastern Railway in Manchuria. After the railroad was sold to Japan in 1935, Ustrialov returned to the USSR. He was arrested and executed in 1937. Kondrat'eva, *Bol'sheviki-ikobintsy*, pp. 71, 87.

¹⁴¹ On the Mensheviks' use of the term "totalitarianism" from 1940, see Andre Liebich, *From the Other Shore: Russian Social Democracy after 1921* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), pp. 235–42.

¹⁴² Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956). See also Leonid Schapiro, *Totalitarianism* (New York, 1972).

¹⁴³ Lewin's work combines incisive descriptions of the bureaucratic state with almost facile generalizations about Russia's "archaic" peasantry. Moshe Lewin, *The Making of Soviet Society* (New York, 1985). See also Nick Lampert and Gabor Rittersporn, eds., *Stalinism: Its Nature and Aftermath: Essays in Honour of Moshe Lewin* (Armonk, N.Y., 1992); and Andrea Graziosi, *Stato e industria in Unione Sovietica* (Rome, 1993).

¹⁴⁴ Giuseppe Boffa, *Il fenomeno Stalin nella storia del XX secolo* (Rome, 1982), enlarged and trans. as *The Stalin Phenomenon* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992).

externally (among some Menshevik émigrés and their cold war bedfellows); and (2) the view of those who differentiate Stalinism from Leninism (Trotsky and his social history descendants). Either an analyst argued for some form of a Soviet “Thermidor,” implying the existence of a legitimate revolution betrayed by Stalin, or he/she rejected Thermidor and thereby adopted the self-presentation of the regime as an unfolding of Leninism (whether to be celebrated or condemned).¹⁴⁵ In 1991 this debate was in a sense closed: the whole Leninist structure collapsed onto the historical dust heap (*svalka*) to which Trotsky once consigned the Mensheviks and where he too resides. To put the matter another way, the “Thermidor” came in 1991 and was against the Leninist framework, not within it. Hence the crisis of social history revisionism (the 1917 “workers’ revolution” and Bukharinism) that was predicated on the possibility of a better socialism within the revolution.¹⁴⁶

Among those who have been quick to proclaim the supposed triumph of totalitarianism, however, serious differences persist over whether the USSR became totalitarian because of Russia’s unique traditions (i.e., Ustrialov’s original idea) or because of Marxism-Leninism. These positions have been articulated by Richard Pipes and Martin Malia, respectively. Pipes singles out the institutional peculiarities of Russia’s old regime, particularly its “patrimonial” nature, to which he adds the unique personality of Lenin.¹⁴⁷ Torn from the context of the emperors, ministers, and generals who ordered and commanded the incomprehensible slaughter of the Great War, as well as the brutality and searing inequities of autocratic Russia, Pipes’s Lenin appears to pursue political goals largely out of sadism and an otherworldly lust for personal power.¹⁴⁸ Whatever his motivations, Lenin embarked on a colossal Tocquevillian futility, according to Pipes, since the failure “to carry the revolution abroad” made “inevitable” the revival of Russia’s bureaucratic traditions (and thus the rise of Stalin). Underneath the red cloak and atop the mass graves, Pipes claims to have revealed the eternal Russian autocracy, an Oriental despotism—a view that does justice to neither late-imperial Russia nor Tocqueville.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Even such interpretative schools as “developmentalism” or the Russian tradition of state-guided revolution from above entered the scholarly discourse as a result of having been cultivated as sources of legitimacy by the Stalin regime.

¹⁴⁶ Lewin and his allies clashed sharply with the other group of revisionists of the 1930s, the proponents of a “revolution from below,” despite the stated common ground of rejecting the totalitarian view. The Lewinian group attacked the revolution from below for its implication that Stalinism had some support and thus legitimacy. On the fate of “the revolution from below,” see n. 5.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, rev. ed. (New York, 1995), *The Russian Revolution* (New York, 1990), and *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York, 1993). In the one-volume summary, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1995), Pipes has added an emphasis on Bolshevik “ideology,” apparently under the unacknowledged influence of Malia’s work.

¹⁴⁸ This is especially evident in Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven, Conn., 1996). These declassified directives—most only a few sentences long—confirm that Lenin placed an extremely high value on propaganda and spared no one and nothing; that he held onto illusions about, and was deeply involved in, secretly fomenting revolution abroad; and that, as noted by Molotov, who worked side by side with both Lenin and Stalin, Lenin may have been the “more severe.” The documents devastate the rosy images of Lenin, but Pipes’s glosses often strain credulity.

¹⁴⁹ Pipes’s views on Russia’s eternal despotism harken back to a centuries-old tradition of Polish warnings about Muscovy/Russia. See Jesse Clarkson, *A History of Russia* (New York, 1961), pp.

Malia, by contrast, wants to differentiate the Soviet experience from that of tsarist Russia. He offers a subtle analysis of how the old regime's constitutional crisis, the stress of the war, and the mass politicization of 1917 made possible the Bolshevik seizure of power and then proceeds to trace the almost mechanical unfolding of the "logic" of the Marxist aspiration to create socialism. German social democracy, he argues, showed that industrial development led not to the revolutionary suppression of capitalist exploitation but to a welfare-state amelioration, a circumstance recognized by Eduard Bernstein, who proposed abandoning the goal. Karl Kautsky countered by advocating an enigmatic parliamentary evolution toward full socialism, while Rosa Luxemburg put her faith in the quixotic mass strike. Lenin's invention of the vanguard party, Malia concludes, was the only practical way to realize the Marxist goal of creating integral socialism (noncapitalism). And because no society willingly permits the suppression of private property and the market, Stalinism was the only practical way, in Russia or anywhere else, to complete the Leninist project and build socialism. In short, Marxism has a "genetic code," and "reformed" socialism is a contradiction, like being half pregnant.¹⁵⁰

For decades Malia has been arguing for the importance of politics and ideas; yet to assert that Marxism is causal begs the question of how it could have been made operative. Just as no state, empire, or grand historical undertaking is possible without popular participation, no ideas can have any effects unless they become part of a larger framework of shared myths and are combined with an array of practices. Marxism without Russia's geopolitical ambitions and sense of a special mission, without piece rates and the confession, could not have "caused" anything. As for the argument that Lenin's was the only way to achieve full socialism, Malia could be right, yet 1991's apparent vindication of his views may also have rendered them less pertinent. Abbott Gleason observes that "totalitarianism was the great mobilizing and unifying concept of the cold war" as understood by ordinary Americans, such as his father, who never read Brzezinski, let alone Arendt. Having underscored totalitarianism's uncanny political utility, Gleason wonders what the new academic generation will make of it.¹⁵¹ The answer may not be far to seek, for the choice to employ any analytical category is ultimately a political one, and now that the "pigs" have presided over the change of Animal Farm back to Manor Farm, as Orwell predicted in 1945, the "need" for totalitarianism as a devastating political weapon may well recede with those who engaged in the serious battles of the cold war.¹⁵²

With its blatantly caricaturish notions of the operation of power, totalitarianism

129–30. Pipes's doctrinaire denial of any popular revolution or any positive content to Soviet socialism, against all the evidence, and his cavalier dismissal of the aspirations, however misguided, of millions of people—to serve a political purpose (cold war)—is a page out of Lenin's tactical manual.

¹⁵⁰ Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York, 1994), slightly enlarged in translation: *La tragedie sovietique: Histoire du socialisme en Russie, 1917–1991* (Paris, 1995). Along with Reginald Zelnik, Malia directed my Ph.D. dissertation.

¹⁵¹ Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism* (New York, 1995).

¹⁵² Anyone who views the collapse of Soviet socialism as a blow to the possibility of a critique of capitalist societies might consider that the critical stance Orwell maintained toward both the USSR and the injustices in his own society involved a balancing act that few others seemed to manage.

is no better than its twin, the Stalin-era short-course history, at accounting for Soviet realities, change, or the interconnectedness of the USSR with the rest of the world. Pipes and Malia in different ways argue for the uniqueness of the USSR, yet their narratives link Russia to Europe and America at every turn. From the senseless carnage of World War I, the ill-intentioned German assistance to Lenin, the United States' entry into the war (leading to Germany's defeat and saving the Bolshevik regime), and the bungled intervention in Russia's civil war that delivered proof of international counterrevolution to the fascism, depression, and Nazism and the technology transfer by a Who's Who of leading capitalist firms, America and Europe did much to make Stalinism possible and popular. In this article, I have argued further that the linkage extends beyond events. Let us not forget that an Enlightenment science of society, as well as revolutionary politics, originated in France; languages of class in England's pioneering fossil-fuel industrialization; conceptions of ethnofederalism in the Habsburg empire; worship of machines in Germany and futurist Italy; giant corporate trusts in America; and welfare states everywhere. Combining all this and more, Soviet socialism forms an intimate part of Western history, however singular the Bolshevik "autocracy" and its "Orthodox" rituals, or the partly indigenous, partly Marxist-inspired struggle to transcend capitalism, may appear.¹⁵³

To characterize these commonalities, I have employed the term "modernity" (not modernization). Today (and hence retrospectively), modernity may seem synonymous with parliamentary democracy and the market; but at the time of the Russian revolution and throughout the interwar period, experiments with nonparliamentary and at least partially nonmarket structures enjoyed great popularity—a circumstance anxiously acknowledged in the "reforms" then undertaken by the great bulwarks of parliamentarism and the market. We would do well to recapture this interwar conjuncture, but not in order to repackage familiar comparisons based on a typology of political regime. Rather, I think we need to consider how the goals and techniques of social welfare, as well as their accompanying terrain of social identities, helped constitute forms of power and resistance that existed under a variety of political regimes. To my mind, Soviet socialism is more than simply a matter of dictatorship and noncapitalism. It is a pivotal case for understanding the matrices of social welfare and thus of the early twentieth-century modernity and subjectivity that emerged transformed in the Great War. What could be called the microstructures and microprocesses of the welfare state can only be understood—in their Soviet variant too—by recourse to analytical tools finer than the blunt instruments of the totalitarian model.

¹⁵³ For an attempt to place the Soviet experience within the context of socialist utopian thought, including Marxism, and the twentieth-century "age of war," see Wada Haruki, *Rekishi to shite no shakaishugi* (Tokyo, 1992).