

## 4. The Stalin's "second" Revolution

### The 1928 Crisis and Stalin's Conflict with the Party "Rightists"

We have dwelt in detail on matters related to Stalin and his inner circle's conflict with the opposition because the dispute was of a strange character. At the time, Stalin's economic policy—setting aside the substantial issue of autarky—came close to the opposition's on several points. Already by 1927, Stalin had probably decided to significantly boost the pace of industrialization. Testimony to this is his decision to implement a number of large industrial construction projects which, at a later point, became the basis of the first five-year plan.

But after the party congress came to a close, the actual start of construction fell prey to Stalin's decision to hide from the congress the failure of the buy-up of grain, which acutely threatened provisioning for cities and industrial development. He did not wish to start a fight with the party's 'Rightists' before the congress and before he could deal with the opposition. The situation which resulted could only be dealt with by extraordinary measures: grain purchases in October-December 1927 were only half of what they had been in the same period the year before.<sup>76</sup> As we have noted, in many provincial towns, stocks of supplies covered needs for only a few days.

The crisis of the Soviet economy and the existing system of social relationships came to an immediate head in the early days of 1928. But the underlying issues reached, in fact, much deeper. In 1937, Sergei Maslov, an emigrant, wrote about the impact of demographic factors. Within a comparable area, the USSR's population grew from 139 million in 1914 to 154 million in 1929. But during this same period, the acreage under cultivation for grain decreased by 12.5 million hectares, with per capita yield dropping to 76–77% of its 1913 levels. This was accompanied by six million more head of cattle, significantly increasing grain consumption. Social tensions increased the influx of people into the cities. It thus became clear that the government could not avoid instituting rationing and considering purchasing grain abroad.<sup>77</sup>

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76 Stalin, too, admitted (*Sochineniya* 11, p. 10) that compared to January 1927, purchases in January 1928 showed a deficit of 128 million Puds (2048 thousand tons).

77 Daniels R. V., *Das Gewissen der Revolution: Kommunistische opposition in der Sowjetunion*, Berlin, Olle u. Wolter, 1978, p. 375; Reiman M., *The Birth of Stalinism: The USSR on the Eve of the "Second Revolution"*, p. 44–45; Maslov S., *Kolchoznaya Rossiya*, w. p. (Prague?), *Krestyanskaya Rossiya*, 1937 The data Maslov adopted from the Soviet

The pace of industrial construction agreed upon brought with it substantial issues. Starting in 1927, construction investment flowed significantly into new, large-capacity facilities, which meant these funds, would remain outside economic circulation for a long period of time. The government, well aware of market instability and the potential for repeated crop failure, decided to ensure economic balance by creating national reserves of grain, fuel, raw materials and foreign currency. In the 1927–28 fiscal year, approximately one billion rubles were removed from circulation. The national budget for that year was planned at 6.5 billion rubles; in the preceding year, it had been 5.1 billion. All this testified to the enormous scope of accumulation of funds. But the ability to ensure these funds would be gathered was hampered by the issues noted above and reflected in the unsuccessful purchase of grain, as well as by the USSR's problematic relationships with England, France, and the USA. Attempts by the Soviet government to get a new loan from Germany also fell flat.<sup>78</sup> The result was a significant increase in the passive balance of foreign trade and the inability to cover Soviet industry's pressing needs. The government tried to limit the extent of non-production-related and administrative costs, as well as growth in wages and expenditures for social measures, which given the actual standard of living in the Soviet Union was no easy matter. Expenditures targeting housing development were also cut, further worsening its already catastrophic state. The government manipulated tax collection, relied upon income from a restored monopoly for the manufacture and sale of vodka (Rykovka), and even decided to issue an internal loan that further reduced the limited purchasing power of citizens.<sup>79</sup>

From the end of 1926, Stalin's strategy began to target significantly speeding up the industrialization of the USSR. He was pressed to do so by the rapidly worsening imbalance in the market and the peasants' decreasing interest in boosting their farm production, especially the production of grain. These factors remained a force for many years and caused repeated grain purchase crises impossible to circumvent even under the economic concept proposed by Rykov's government. 1927 proved to be a turning point. The peasants' flagging interest in grain coincided with the USSR's deteriorating international standing and

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press of the time does not necessarily conform to statistical data available today, however it is the nature of the issue depicted by Maslov that matters. Also *Pravda*, 20.4.1928 (Kalinin M.I.).

78 *DVP* Volume 11, pp. 59–66 and ADAP, ser.: 1925–1933, doc. 259, pp. 546–548.

79 *Socialisticheski Vestnik*, No 13/155 dated 2.7.1927, pp. 5–9 (Yugov). As of 1.3.1927, the internal loan provided 563 million rubles total, 132 million rubles of which was from citizens and the rest from state organizations.

the internal political crisis. Extraordinary measures promoted by Stalin and his inner circle in early 1928 aimed to resolve the situation using forced purchases of grain from affluent peasants. This policy was implemented using thousands of worker 'activists' and law enforcement personnel sent into the villages. Court rulings and police actions were brought to bear on the 'kulaks'. Peasants with more than 32 tons of stocks were considered speculators. Functionaries who were not adequately severe in implementing these actions were severely punished.<sup>80</sup> Notes from Stalin's visit to Siberia at the time showed he was not only interested in overcoming the grain purchase crisis, but in permanently changing agricultural production to build a large network of state and collective farms. These were to be of a scope to provide grain for the market at levels which would cover the country's needs in excess of the ability of private farms.

There was a particular urgency during this period to ensure rapid industrialization.<sup>81</sup> The turn in Stalin's attitude was also motivated by the defeat of both the 'Left' and 'Unified' opposition, whose key representatives were removed from active participation in the country's political life, a decisive step for the fate of Rykov's 'Rightists', who possessed neither the power nor the stamina to resist Stalin and his supporters. Also at stake from the outset were changes to Rykov's government. After the Trotskyites and Lenin's chosen circle of political leaders were removed from political life, Stalin returned to Preobrazensky's 1924 thesis that the villages were to provide the means for jumpstarting industrialization. In Stalin's autocratic hands, this was tantamount to expropriate the peasants' property and the results of their labour.

Upon eliminating the opposition, Stalin quickly distanced himself from Rykov's 'Rightists'. After the Fifteenth Congress of VKS/b, extraordinary measures were implemented behind their backs, and Rykov was unable to comment on them until later. He, like his political circle, expressed a willingness to accept their 'necessity' in retrospect. But in doing so, he presumed they would be a one-off act, not to be repeated. Stalin utilized this willingness on Rykov's part, but he felt no obligation. Already by early March 1928, Vyacheslav M. Molotov, not acting on his own will, savagely attacked Rykov in the Politburo over a draft industrial and financial

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80 Danilov V.P./Khlevniuk O.V., *Apreskiy plenum 1928 g. (in: Kak lomali NEP: Stenogrammy plenumov)* (eds) Danilov V.P., Khleniuk O.V., Vatlin A. Ju. CK VKP/B 1928–1929 gg. Vol. 1, p. 25) indicates that during Molotov's visit to the Urals, which also took place in January 1928, 1157 local functionaries lost their posts and some were subjected to prosecution.

81 *Iz istorii kollektivizatsii. 1928 g. Pojezdka I. V. Stalina v Sibir'. Dokumenty i materialy.* In: *Izvestiya CK KPSS, No 6/1991*, pp. 102–116.

plan for 1928–29 that he considered inadequate. Rykov reacted to the attack by resigning as Premier, but there was no replacement for him at the time, and it was difficult for Stalin to persuade him to carry on in office.<sup>82</sup>

The conflict smouldering between Stalin and Bukharin concerning the nature of Comintern was also telling. The political course Stalin had embarked on was so radical that it blocked any agreement between Communists, Social Democrats, and democratically inclined members of the public on the common fight against fascism to take place in Germany and elsewhere. The danger posed by Nazism in Germany and its ability to hold power over the long-term and violently promote its objectives was underrated; the presumption was that the fall of ‘bourgeois democracy’ would immediately open the doors to the ‘proletarian revolution.’ But the Bolshevik Rightists’ resistance to Stalin’s policies was undermined from the outset by the efforts of Rightist leaders to eschew conflict and retreat ‘with no scandal’.

As we have already noted, the USSR’s industrial development was not hastened by the rise of small and midsize peasant farmsteads that would require a protracted, significant investment. Trotsky offered a satisfactory solution that would have drawn excess population from the villages, freed space for the growth of large-scale rural production, whether state, cooperative or private, and equipped it with machinery and tools, reducing rural consumption of agricultural production. But this approach had not been implemented in the foregoing years, because it required substantial investment in heavy industry and construction the Soviet government was unable to provide. The conditions under which such an approach would be possible had dissipated by 1922–24, when the USSR failed to support construction using foreign loans, credits, and large private investments from abroad.<sup>83</sup>

Only two possibilities existed for the emerging 1928 crisis. One was Rykov’s solution, which attempted to maintain and shape the governmental strategy based upon the NEP that had been used up to that time. Rykov considered the absence of foreign investment a given that Soviet politicians could not change by themselves. Since 1925, the government had strived to boost industrial investment substantially, however, it tried to resolve the 1927–28 crisis by slowing the pace of industrial development. This was to allow the development of closer ties between

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82 Danilov/Khlevniuk, *Aprelsky plenum*, in *Kak lomali NEP, Volume 1*, pp. 18–19 and *Volume 4* p. 55 (*Tomsky*) and pp. 288–289 (*Molotov*).

83 The Soviet government is not the only one culpable for this failure. The Allies and particularly the government of Great Britain provided support exclusively to Germany, thereby opening the path to its re-militarization and the Munich Agreement (see later).

villages and the industrial sectors which were to support agricultural growth. As it turned out, Rykov was willing to content himself with prolonging the implementation deadlines given in the production guidelines for the first five-year plan of 1928–32 by two years. He believed this step would provide the accumulation of funds and the time needed to resolve the problems in the villages.

But Stalin objected that what had not been possible to attain in preceding years would hardly be attainable in upcoming years, and he was convincing to those not sufficiently familiar with the issues. His objection reeked of demagoguery and revealed Stalin's lack of knowledge about economics. Rykov's proposals nevertheless acted as a driving political force, because they put forward a solution. It must be conceded that Stalin and his circle did not fully comprehend the extent of violence that accompanied the implementation of this solution in the villages. But it was Stalin who questioned whether the USSR could successfully develop if small-scale production at the village level persisted. He saw a way out in rapidly constructing state-owned farmsteads and peasant manufacturing cooperatives<sup>84</sup>, but in so doing overlooked an important fact upon which Rykov based his thinking: establishing agricultural cooperatives would not bring material results immediately. They required a long period of consolidation, the introduction of new technology and agricultural and zoological knowledge. This meant a period of years was necessary since, to that date, the Soviet Union had not yet acquired the capacity to provide machinery to villages, and the Soviet educational system could not send the requisite numbers of experts to the villages. In upcoming years, the key reason for constructing state-owned and collective farms was to create tools to increase the quotas for grain purchases in order to provide for the needs of the cities and the development process.

Industrialization took centre stage for both Stalin and other leading Bolsheviks. On this point, they did not differ. But when Stalin proposed industrialization, almost a decade had been lost for its implementation because of his ambition for power. He therefore decided that to postpone industrialism further would only prolong and deepen the USSR's crisis. Changes in the international situation also had to be taken into account. These worsened the USSR's position in Europe and in the Far East. Another critical factor was the consolidation and economic growth in developed capitalist countries. Stalin said, 'In terms of technical and economic development, we must catch up with these countries

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84 *O rabotach apre'skogo ob'iedinennogo plenuma CK i CKK*, in: *Kak lomali NEP*, Vol. 1, 407–408; I. V. Stalin, *Na chlebnom frontie*, in: Stalin, *Sochinenija* 11, 86–87 a 88–92.

and overtake them (author's note: the developed countries). Either that or they overrun us.<sup>85</sup>

These aspects of the decision-making process that drove Soviet politics of the era must be explored because they are the only motivation for the excessive haste used in implementing the industrialization policy. Looking in from the outside in mid-1928, it might well have seemed that Rykov was entirely correct to warn against rash action. But the agricultural situation was not improving and the apparatus was getting nervous. The 'extraordinary measures' were rescinded under pressure from Rykov, but violence continued to be used in the villages on an enormous scale. Peasants were losing interest in doing efficient agriculture, and both the areas under cultivation and the numbers of cattle began to drop sharply. In late 1928 and early 1929, grain purchases covered only 61% of the planned amount. Wheat and rye purchases in particular began to fall. In the 1928–29 fiscal year, only 7.62 million tons of grain were purchased, versus 10.24 million tons the preceding year.<sup>86</sup> This impacted provisions for cities and indeed the state of the economy as a whole. Work productivity tanked, not to mention the work ethic. Soviet foreign trade, the source of machinery imports for industrial development, was short of grain as a commodity for trade. Large industrial groups and facilities such as Jugostaĭ, Donugoĭ, Azneft', the Ural metals industry and the chemical trusts were all hit the same as everyone else by austerity measures.<sup>87</sup>

Such was the situation in late 1928, but even more decisive was the country's overall condition. The 'Rightists', unaware that their attitude would be key in determining the country's fate, did not act as a unified team. Bukharin was focused on the preparation and proceedings of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern program and let Stalin know he was not eager for a conflict. In autumn 1928, he was on holiday in the South of Russia, able to influence the discussion in Moscow only indirectly. His 'Notes of an Economist', published in Pravda, generated discussion among the urban intelligentsia, but could not replace his presence in Moscow,

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85 Stalin, *Sochineniia* 11, p. 248. Although today these claims made by Stalin may be criticized with justification, it cannot be overlooked that the USSR and Europe were only 10–12 years away from World War II, the same time as had elapsed from the revolution of 1917.

86 *Vorwärts*, 19.12.1928.

87 *Germania*, 23.10.1928; *Berliner Tagesblatt*, 31.10.1928; *Kontrolnye cifry na 1929/1930* gg. assess the situation retrospectively as follows: "1928/1929 started under extraordinarily difficult conditions, enormously disturbed working relationships and organizational ties" (Volume VIII.).

where Rykov had inadequate support for negotiating the five-year plan.<sup>88</sup> Nikolai A. Uglanov, the Moscow Secretary and a leading supporter of the 'Rightists,' remained out in the rain alone, with Stalin's bureaucratic party apparatus organizing a 'revolt' of regional functionaries against him in Moscow. A similar fate befell M. P. Tomsky, another 'Rightist' and chairman of the Presidium of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions – a position to which Stalin wished to appoint his emissary, Lazar M. Kaganovich.

While a number of leading politicians, including Stalin, Rykov, Bukharin, and others were enjoying their holiday in the South, Stalin's apparatchiks, headed by Molotov, were hard at work in Moscow along with VSNCh and Gosplan. Even before they left on holiday Politburo members had discussed the proposed indicative figures for 1928–29 and found them wanting. Stalin and Molotov strived to increase them substantially, arguing that over the preceding two years, the pace of industry had anyway exceeded the tasks set. But they did not consider the resources and opportunities for growth. Their starting point consisted in an effort to rapidly satisfy urgent needs and eliminate economic deficits.<sup>89</sup> Nor did they seek opportunities to increase the scope of foreign investment; to the contrary, a reduction in the country's dependence on investment from abroad was planned.<sup>90</sup>

The steps taken by Stalin and his apparatchiks imperilled the requirements for balanced planning. Rykov had to interrupt his holiday to return to Moscow, where he was confronted with the outcome of Stalin's pressure. Construction investment of 1.65 billion rubles was anticipated compared to 1.33 billion rubles in 1927–28. The plan counted on rapidly increasing industrial production and electrical production, and expansion of the transportation network. But this was not anchored in the raw iron output, which was at only 79% of prewar levels. The

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88 L. P. Petrovsky in his article "Poslednij Rot front, (in: *Oni ne molchali* (ed. A. V. Afanasjev), Moscow, Politizdat 1991, p. 186) indicated that the draft of Bukharin article originated in Moscow and was carried to the Caucasus, where Bukharin edited it. Marecky, Bukharin's deputy, ensured the article was published in Pravda with the help of Lenin's sister, Maria Ilyinichna Ulyanova, who worked as Secretary of the Pravda editorial board. He acted without informing Stalin and the members of Politburo. In St. Petersburg, the publication of Bukharin's article was ensured by Petr Petrovsky, the Editor in Chief of Leningrad Pravda. Petrovsky. All these people were Bukharin's supporters and "pupils".

89 V. V. Kuybyshev, *Pyatiletniy plan razvitiya promyshlennosti*, in: Pravda 25.12.1928; by the same author: *Zadachi promyshlennosti v 1928/29 gg.* In: Pravda 27.11.1928.

90 V. M. Molotov, *K itogam nojabr'skogo plenuma CK VKP/b*, in: Pravda, 4.12.1928.

situation in the construction industry also prevented implementation and light industry, too, suffered from a lack of raw materials.

Planned investment volumes greatly increased the demand for resources to cover the budget: taxes and levies, state loans, a state monopoly on spirits, and the expansion of currency. Taken together, this meant an overall strain on living conditions for the citizenry. Planning bodies, moreover, included funding that could not be provided by the budget's assets: income from reducing its own production costs by 7%, construction costs lowered by 15%, increased work productivity of 17%, and so on. Agriculture was a source of difficulties, as well. Grain harvest levels had remained static since 1926, and we have already noted the increased number of inhabitants and more head of cattle and their consequences. Rykov insisted that agriculture in the country was unwell, but Stalin rejected his objections as being 'defeatist'. The plan thus called for increasing the area under cultivation by 7% and yields by 3% (originally 10%).<sup>91</sup> Even had such growth indeed come to pass, it would not have conquered the problem of purchases and provisioning and foreign trade.

The amount and content of guideline figures for 1928–29 was decided at the meeting of the Central Committee of VKS/b in November 1928. Relationships within the politburo were below the freezing point. Rykov and Tomsy referred to the danger of hunger and failure of provisioning for cities. Once again, they submitted their resignations; once again, they were rejected. No one was allowed to exit the Soviet political scene of his own free choice.<sup>92</sup> As we have noted, Bukharin did not take part in the Plenum. Tomsy and Uglanov, who were fighting for survival, remained silent. Rykov was therefore on his own, outnumbered by his opponents. The only controversial political discussion which took place before the Plenum was a presentation by Moiseĭ Il'ich Frumkin, an important member of the state economic administration who once again spoke of the state of agriculture in the country and the fact that funds allocated for industry exceeded the opportunity for their rational use.<sup>93</sup>

At the Plenum itself, Rykov was the chief opponent. He called attention to the enormous scope of the investment plans, their disproportionate nature and how it endangered their fulfilment. The most serious issues he saw in the lagging

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91 Grinko G., *Pod znamenem velikikh zadach*, in: Pravda, 30.10. and 1.11.1928, also see *O kontrol'nykh cifrach narodnogo khoziajstva na 1928/29 g.*, in: *KPSS v rezoljucijach i rešenijach*, Volume II, pp. 405–420.

92 Danilov V.P./Khlevniuk O.V./Vatlin A. Ju., *Nojabr'skiy plenum*, in: *Kak lomali NEP*, Vol. 3, pp. 16–17.

93 *Kak lomali NEP*, Vol. 3, pp. 250–256.

agricultural system and the stagnation of grain production, and he warned against relying upon the rapid development of state-owned and cooperative farms, since it was individual peasant farmsteads which would form the basis of agricultural production for the foreseeable future. To deliver such a report showed his personal courage, but there was no chance that changes to the economic policy would ensue. Members of the Central Committee had been so 'shaped' that they were no longer capable of reasoning rationally.

But these 'shaped' members of the Central Committee did not solely decide the fate of the party's 'Rightists'—Bukharin's manner of opposing Stalin's approach also contributed. In the summer of 1928, Stalin brought Zinoviev and Kamenev back from exile to Moscow, along with other members of the opposition who had given up active dissent. Some in the Rightist camp therefore began to fear these members would support Stalin. But there were no serious grounds for this worry. Zinoviev and Kamenev were no longer taken seriously by the party, but Bukharin made an appointment to meet Kamenev anyway. When he went, he was accompanied by Grigori Ya. Sokolnikov. At the meeting, Bukharin painted in vivid colours the situation in the Politburo, sharing an evaluation of Stalin that was not only harsh but fully expressed his personal aversion to the man. Kamenev made a record 'for Zinoviev'. But a subsequent investigation notes<sup>94</sup>, it was stolen by his personal secretary and used in a leaflet allegedly published by the Trotskyites.

The entire matter was presented to the Politburo in February 1929, and to the joint meeting of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of VKS/b. For the first and last time, representatives from both camps, Stalinists and Rightists, exchanged opinions on the state of the party no holds barred. But even now, the Rightists were passive in that they did not request personnel or structural changes and once more tendered their resignations. Stalin's choice was to bind them to 'absolute' support for the 'party's decision', which he thought much more purposeful. In the future, they were not to deviate from the party line—i.e., from Stalin's attitudes. The era in which conflicts of opinion were possible was definitively over, and this was true for closed party forums, as well.<sup>95</sup> Any visible traces of political or ideological pluralism were erased from the party apparatus in the USSR. Bukharin and Tomsy had already lost their membership in the Politburo by the autumn of 1929. Rykov, bolstered by his years of experience, held out until 1930.

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94 See *Kak lomali NEP*, Vol. 4, pp. 558–699.

95 Khlevniuk O., *Chozjain: Stalin i utverzheniye stalinskoy diktatury*, Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2010, pp. 103–112.

## Stalin, his First Five-Year Plan and Related Issues

In retrospect, it is not difficult to see what the changes to the Soviet system Stalin enacted in that era meant, in terms of both their content and their impact: a new 'second revolution' to revise the original results of October 1917. Stalin himself later characterized what happened as a 'victory of the socialist system' within the 'sphere of the national economy' and the rise of an exploitation-free society. This new state, he claimed, came about because the elements of capitalism in society were overcome, thereby allowing the 'complete victory of socialism'.<sup>96</sup>

Thus did Stalin see the results of the revolution. In reality, something utterly different took place: society was subjected to a totalitarian system, a unified, hierarchical system of economic and social control in the hands of a centralized bureaucracy reined by the governing party. Within the party, also structured hierarchically, there was the autocratic principle of the supreme 'leader'. There was bureaucratic control of information, of ideology, and of culture, along with the unified control of all basic aspects of foreign policy and economic, social, and cultural relationships.

Within this understanding of the 'revolution', eliminating the private sector took centre stage, along with pluralistic elements present in political life and ideology, as well as in culture and education. For this reason, a great role was played by the 'cultural revolution'. It could not be attained to by using censorship alone and controlling cultural content, but required a unified system of general and professional training and education. Backing this understanding of socialism was the Stalinist interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and the concept of 'socialism within a single country'.

The starting point for implementing the 'revolution' lay in the crises noted above in the post-revolution economic system and post-revolution social relationships. We have zero sympathy for Stalin's projects or the methods by which they were implemented. They elevated mass violence and terror to the level of fundamental tools for social change. But it should not be forgotten that pre-revolutionary Russia lacked all of the economic, social, or educational preconditions a society needs to develop political democracy, a modern market economy, and to radically increase the standard of living. The war and the revolution substantially worsened this already wanting initial state. The lack of maturity of the economic, social, and cultural structure of the country and the multiethnic character of its population,

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96 Stalin I., *Voprosy leninizma*, Issue 11, Moscow, Gospolitizdat 1952, pp. 142–145 and 548–550.

multiplied by the country's area and its sparse communications and information network, changing little throughout the 1920s, made fertile ground for the rise of the Stalinist totalitarian system.

Our task is not to focus on industrialization and collectivization in detail. These processes were marked from the outset by Stalin's attempt to press forward with developmental tasks at an excessive pace, an effort which was moderated only in the mid-1930s. His interest in power and social prejudices led Stalin to bypass an opportunity to hasten the USSR's industrial development in the 1920s, and to not make the effort needed to broaden the scope and underline the importance of the economic and cultural relationships USSR had with the developed countries. The excessive number of large unfinished construction projects that resulted from Stalin's rapid development policy tied up significant funding and material assets, deepened the disparities in the development of the Soviet economy, and caused a substantial loss of material assets and harm to the health and lives of the people.

There was also substantial loss of intellectual capacity within society. It centered on the loss of the 'old guard's' expertise as to what was happening abroad, and of the knowledge possessed by the now-rejected members of the opposition. Added to this was the loss of expertise and experience gained by state economic institutions during the 1920s and those who staff them, brought together by Rykov's government. For support, Stalin and his circle looked particularly to members of the party apparatus. They could not replace the lack of knowledge with their own resources.

There was no factual basis for the excessive pace of construction. Whatever the country might have lost by slowing the pace of industrialization, it would have compensated by the experience acquired from the construction process and more effective use of material and human resources. The 'basic variant' of the five-year plan that maintained Rykov's original proposals differed from the later, so-called 'optimum' variant by 20%, equal to an additional year. Rykov wanted to ease the situation for villages, whose economies were sorely in need of consolidation after the violent interference of previous months. But in May 1929, the optimum variant, which for the most part ignored Rykov's proposals, was nevertheless approved. It presumed that the investment of 26.5 billion rubles from 1923–24 until 1927–28, would increase to 64.5 billion rubles in the five-year plan running from 1928–29 through 1932–33. Agricultural production was to increase in value from 16.6 to 25.8 billion rubles, but the prerequisites for this growth existed only on paper. Most investment was being channelled into manufacturing the means of production, to allow the value of industrial production during the five-year period to

grow up to 3.5 times.<sup>97</sup> In August 1929, indicators for oil and coal extraction and iron production were almost doubled and the manufacture of locomotive engines, tractors, and means of transport was increased by many multiples.<sup>98</sup> Investment into agriculture was reduced, as it was for consumer goods production, housing, and cultural development. To add to this, complications and losses attributable to the world economic crisis that started in autumn of 1929 demanded additional mobilization of domestic resources but were not taken into account in time.

But we do not wish to make categorical judgments. The balance of planned development in the USSR did not depend solely on the steps taken by Stalin and his political circle. It also depended upon what the victorious World War I Allies did, particularly Great Britain, France, the USA, and Japan. With the exception of the governments headed by David Lloyd George and J. R. MacDonald in England, and E. Herriot in France, the Allies exerted relentless pressure upon the USSR before seeking opportunities to develop their relationships in a positive vein. Such opportunities were available in the mid-1920s and bore the promise of influencing the course of Soviet politics.

When the world economic crisis broke out in September 1929, it impacted the price of grain. The result was that although Soviet grain exports increased significantly in 1930–31 due to Stalin's policy, the profits made still did not cover imports. This dramatically increased the USSR's debt, which grew from 615 million gold rubles as of 1 October 1929 to 1.4 billion rubles as of 31 December 1931, more than double. The Politburo was forced to make a decision on radically reducing imports, greatly complicating the completion of key construction projects.

But the five-year plan nevertheless represented a step forward, regardless of the unreasonable demands it made and the unjustified material and human losses. It initiated an investment impulse, however distorted, which stood industry on its own feet. 1500 industrial enterprises were built and launched into operation, and in subsequent years, the pace of industrial growth increased, as well, not just for new construction projects, but also because of the launching of projects initiated under the first five-year plan. This led Soviet industrial production to increase by approximately three times from 1928 until 1940, an average of 10% per year, and large one-off production volumes were implemented by large

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97 G. T. Grinko, *The Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union: A political interpretation*. London, Martin Lawrence Limited, 1931, pp. 57–118.

98 *KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh*, No. II, p. 457.

industrial facilities.<sup>99</sup> The country thus managed to close in on the developed countries to some extent. In spite of this, the already low living standard of the population continued to be exploited as a substantial source of investment. There was an imbalance between investments in industry and the social sphere.<sup>100</sup> It is estimated that in 1932, the actual wages of Moscow workers amounted to only 53% of the 1928 level, dropping by almost half over the four-year period.<sup>101</sup> In summer of 1932, the Politburo had to moderate the course it had set and, as part of the rationing system, drastically decrease bread rations.<sup>102</sup> This measure, along with supply shortages, brought hunger. In the first half of 1932, mortality rates more than doubled along the lower reaches of the Volga. In the area of Kiev, they increased by 70% and in Moscow, by one-third.<sup>103</sup> The situation in Soviet villages was also becoming more complex, with rapid development altering the living conditions of peasants. While Rykov wished to apply economic levers in rural areas, Stalin reached for violence and created an atmosphere of general tension.

The original Bolsheviks had been afraid to use excessive violence and the rural environment; their experience during the 'war communism' era and the 1921 famine was still fresh in their minds. Stalin realized the urgency of reconstructing the villages in the late 1920s, but by then they had already undergone frequent changes. All traces of independent peasant organization disappeared, at both the regional and the local levels. Peasants who resisted were subject to repression, making it unwise to stand out, and affluent peasants learned the futility of excessively enlarging their farms, instead maintaining them at a level which minimized the chance that Soviet organs would label them kulak farms. The governing party controlled the villages via the Soviets, tax and purchasing bodies, and enforcement authorities, and they were able to extract the necessary grain and other produce from them even if the peasants hadn't enough to spare. Change also came to the village elite, which now consisted of former Red Army

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99 Davies R. W., *Soviet Economic Development from Lenin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge 1998, p. 43.

100 For more details, see, e.g.: Sutton Antony, *Western technology and Soviet Economic Development 1930 to 1945*. Vol. 2, Stanford 1971.

101 Kuromiya Hiroaki, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution. Politics and Workers, 1928–1932*. Cambridge 1988, p. 305.

102 See, e.g., *Stalin i Kaganovich: Perepiska. 1931–1936 gg.* Eds. Khlevniuk O. V. et al. Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2001; *Pis'ma I. V. Stalina V. M. Molotovu 1925–1936 gg. Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. Kosheleva L. et al. Moscow, 1995.

103 Davies R. W. - Tauger M. B. and Wheatcroft S. G., *Stalin, Grain Stocks and the Famine of 1932–1933*, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54 (1995), No. 3 (Fall), pp. 649–650.

soldiers and members of Soviet authorities who became permanently established in the villages and knew their way around.

Partially because of the conflict between Stalin, Zinoviev and comment, prior to 1926 Stalin was satisfied with the Rykov government's policies, so long as they consolidated the situation in the villages and brought temporarily shut down capacity back online. But this began to change after the mid-1920s, when it became clear that the policies in force could not remedy the lack of balance in the marketplace and prevent the increasingly grave supply crisis. Stalin's apparatus tapped extraordinary measures and relied on violence from 1928 forward, but this did not lead to a general peasant uprising, as the Bolshevik leadership had feared, but rather to individual instances of terror and passive resistance: cattle were killed, acreage under cultivation was cut. Stalin and his supporters believed they would be able to deal with these issues.<sup>104</sup>

Stalin did not neglect the concerns of the peasant revolts, but was sober in his assessment. By that time, he had already gained extensive experience in using power to resolve problematic points, and he did not believe economic tools could change the way agriculture was done within a short timeframe. The forced purchases of grain helped to deal with the situation in spring 1928, but by that time Stalin had already come to the conclusion that the Soviet economy's problems could not be resolved without replacing the small-scale peasant production that dominated the village with large-scale, modern agricultural production.

## Collectivisation of Agriculture and Its Consequences

During this era, Stalin certainly was not failed by political courage in his conceptualization. This made it possible to turn around development in a number of areas which had seemed impossible to conquer at the time. It was the kind of courage which made him sure of having enough power at hand to prevent peasant uprisings or, if need be, to violently suppress them. But the notion of building cooperative farms to escape the dilemmas faced by Russian and Soviet agriculture was neither Stalin's idea nor Bolshevism's. It sprang from the influence of a number of politicians and academics who had focused on issues related to Russian agriculture. Politically, these people were SRs and liberals, or people close to them ideologically. The original notion held by Stalin's apparatchiks

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104 According to Stalin's information from January 1934, the 1929–1933 loss (in millions of individual animals) was: numbers of horses fell from 34 to 16.6; cattle from 68.1 to 38.6; sheep and goats from 147.2 to 50.6; pigs from 20.6 to 12.2. See I. Stalin, *Sochineniya* 13, p. 321.

identified the cooperative with the 'commune', a legacy of the war communism era. It was anticipated that all peasant property would be made collective within the commune.

In the end, three things were key for Stalin: determining what to produce and the scope with which to produce it; making sure the state received the requisite amount of agricultural production; and equipping production units with the needed tools, machinery, and people to get the job done at the necessary level. But these things were frequently done only in retrospect as part of the simple steps used to create the kolkhoz collective farms. On Stalin's initiative, worker 'activists' were sent to the rural areas together with members of the security forces to implement, with local functionaries, forced purchases of grain and agricultural products. Following this, came declarations of the need to replace small-scale, backwards peasant production with an extensive network of production cooperatives and state owned farms, something which took place in succeeding years using repression and the eviction of rebellious peasants.

As early as late 1929, Stalin declared that the 'basic mass of peasants' had turned from the 'capitalist way' to opt for the 'socialist way'. On this basis, he deduced a need to transform the policy of restricting kulaks to one of liquidating them as a class by expropriating their property and evicting them from their home villages.<sup>105</sup> They thus lost everything, including their real property. The number of farmsteads to be taken was not to exceed 3–5% of the total number, and was to vary by region and by the number of affluent peasants. In actual practice, this limited the scope of violence only partly. The greater number of kulaks was relocated within their own local areas and individual regions, but they still had to set themselves up in a new location from scratch. Affluent peasants who were seen as part of an 'anti-Soviet element', opposed to collectivization, were evicted to remote regions. In 1930–31, approximately 380,000 peasant families

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105 Stalin I. V., *Sochineniya*, 12, pp. 124–125, 169–170. For more detail see Ivnickiy N. A., *Kollektivizatsiya i raskulachivaniye (nachelo 30-ch godov)*, Moscow, Magistr, 1996, pp. 10–70. Also: *Tragediya sovietskoy derevni. Kollektivizatsiya i raskulachivanie. Dokumenty i materialy 1927–1939*. Vol. 2, pp. 126–130. Up to 25,000 worker activists were sent to regions where the "gulag liquidation" was taking place. The number of people active in OGPU increased by 800 and in the OGPU army by 1000. The property confiscated from gulags was given to the cooperatives and local Soviets, but it was also used to pay gulag taxes and obligations. The latest work by Ivnickiy "N. I. Golod 1932–1933 godov v SSSR" (Moscow, Sobraniye, 2009, p. 49) indicates that in winter and spring 1930, up to 180,000 activists were sent to villages to support collectivization and "de-gulaging".

were moved, amounting to 1,800,000 persons. The relocations continued in 1932, with the overall numbers of relocated people increasing to 2.2 million.<sup>106</sup>

These changes touched more than just the kulaks. As we have already noted, the governing party, state administrative bodies, and enforcement authorities also implemented plans to purchase grain, food, and potentially industrial raw materials. These actions also generated resistance, which were painted as anti-Soviet by the bodies in power and strictly punished. The collectivization and purchase of grain was thus accompanied by extensive extrajudicial actions, along with sanctions that were formally within the law. Together, a system of mass social and political terror was created as a necessary tool for 'socialist construction' in the villages. From 1929 forward, it was supported by a system of forced labour camps, the infamous Gulag Archipelago. The number of Gulag camps and prisoners grew throughout the entire pre-war period consisting, as of 1 March 1940, of 53 camps, 425 correctional labour colonies, and 50 colonies for juveniles, for a total of approximately 1.67 million prisoners.<sup>107</sup>

Most Gulag prisoners came from the villages. They had nevertheless a varied background, coming from all strata of Soviet society, including, in addition to peasants, so called 'NEPmen'—private business people, small factory owners, craft workshop owners – along with workers who protested work and accommodation conditions. When Stalin changed his repressive policies in the latter half of the 1930s, something we will address later, the percentage of prisoners coming from the ranks of governing party members grew. Persons accused of counter-revolutionary activities made up from between 26.5% of the prisoner population in 1934 to 34.5% in 1939.<sup>108</sup> Criminals were another important segment of the prison population, significantly influencing the atmosphere of the camps and the prisoners' living conditions. The prisoners were in any event used for the most

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106 The data is conflicting. The highest number is quoted by Hildermeier M. (*Geschichte der Sowjetunion, 1917–1991: Entstehung und Niedergang des ersten sozialistischen Staates*, München, C. H. Beck, 1998. p. 368): 5–6 million people and 1 million out of 25 million farmsteads. Most figures come from the 1930–31 period. The number of relocated, however, must be compared to the number of villages inhabitants: 100.9 million (82.1 % of inhabitants) in December 1926.

107 Krasilnikov S. A., *Rozhdenie Gulaga: diskusii v verkhnikh eshelonakh vlasti*. Istoricheskyy Archiv, 1997, No. 4, pp. 143–144. GULAG – main camp administration. It was created in 1930 within the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD).

108 For more see Zemskov V. N., *Spetsposelentsyy v SSSR 1930–1960*, Moscow, Nauka, 2005, pp. 16–74.

difficult work under the extreme conditions of the Russian North and in marshy areas during the construction of irrigation canals in Central Asia.

Stalin's claim that the peasants had 'turned toward socialism' in fact reflected only the peasants' attempts to escape the waves of violence, and their hope that expressing agreement with collectivization would permit them to escape it. Residents of villages from which kulaks had been evicted found themselves tempted by the notion that expropriation would expand the assets of the cooperatives they were about to join. But to that point, Stalin's collectivization program had not created the preconditions necessary for effective collective farming and the state could not provide modern equipment to the collectives, or tools, quality cattle, or agricultural and zoological technicians, or mechanical engineers. Some buildings fell into disrepair, arable land deteriorated, and cattle suffered from disease.

In November 1929, the number of farms gathered into kolkhoz cooperatives began a rapid rise, attaining 57% of the total number of farmsteads in the USSR by March 1930, 58.6% in Russia. After publication of his article 'Dizzy from Success' that same March, Stalin sharply attacked the lapses that had taken place in establishing the kolkhoz collectives, and their numbers rapidly sank to 21.8% in the USSR and 20.4% in Russia before levelling off and then rapidly rising again to attain 55.1% by July 1931. Even at their point of deepest decline, then, the kolkhoz collectives accounted for approximately 20% of the total number of farmsteads and had almost returned to their original presence within six months. This likely says that some peasant farmers were not motivated to join the kolkhoz totally by violence.<sup>109</sup> One factor was the traditional differentiation of agricultural regions into those that produced and those that consumed agricultural products. The consuming regions did not have the same dependence upon agriculture, nor did they undergo the same pressure to increase performance as did the producing regions.<sup>110</sup> In central and northern Russia, peasants made extra money by craftwork or left to work in industry. In the South, by contrast, they were bound more securely to grain and food production, which became the centre focus for state and purchasing authorities. In the consuming regions, consolidation into

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109 Hildermeier M., *Die Geschichte der Sowjetunion*, s. 389.

110 In the Moscow and Leningrad regions, the urban population accounted for up to 50% of the populace. A high percentage the population in Donbas, Kharkov and Baku in the Transcaucasia was also urban. In other regions of the European section of the USSR, the urban population accounted for 10% to 20%. See *Naseleniye Rossii v XX vijke: Istoricheskie Oчерki* (eds.) Polyakov Ju. A., Moscow, ROSSPEN 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 143–147.

kolkhoz collectives freed a portion of the labour force for industry and craftwork, and was advantageous not only to the state, but benefited a significant section of the village populace, as well.

This, however, directs our attention to another factor in the village situation: the overpopulation of a significant area of the Russian countryside and the relative poverty of Russian villages. Kulak farms in Russia and Ukraine accounted, according to official estimates, for about 2 to 5% of farms.<sup>111</sup> But any settlement with two horses and two cows might also be designated 'kulak'. About a third of the farmsteads comprised settlements that, using the Russian benchmark, were poor and failed to provide their owners an adequate livelihood or clothing. The establishment of kolkhoz collectives hence could appear attractive to a number of village dwellers who could now improve their prospects by leaving for the city.

War and the 1921 famine had given rise to a middle-aged generation that tipped the gender balance strongly in favour of women in the Russian villages. Young people between 15 and 19 years of age accounted for approximately half the population.<sup>112</sup> Many could not find work and lacked personal prospects in the villages. This naturally played an important role in a situation in which industrialization allowed people to leave for the cities and employment in industry came to the fore. The reduced consumption of agricultural production in the villages also was in line with state economic policy. Technical crops were grown in the enormous expanses of northern Russia and Siberia as well as in Central Asia, where cattle farming was developed and natural resources were mined. But making use of this production depended upon developing the consumer goods sector and the consumer-oriented portion of the transport sector, undoubtedly impacting the pace of agricultural development and the nature of collectives and collective farming.

These circumstances naturally influenced the extent and form taken by violence, as well as its relationship to the kolkhoz collectives and state agricultural policy. Near Moscow and Leningrad, in the districts of northwest and central Russia, peasants had adequate opportunities to leave the village or acquire additional earnings in the cities and at construction sites. This was also likely true for the Central Volga Basin, and for a portion of Left-Bank Ukraine. This gave rise to a peculiar geography of violence in the villages, something also true in regions where the purchase of grain and other agricultural products was important to

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111 Ivnický N. A., *Golod 1932–1933 godov v SSSR*, pp. 60–61. The actual state of gulag farmsteads was estimated at 2.3%. 200,000–250,000 gulag farmsteads were self-liquidated in 1930–1931.

112 *Ibid*, pp. 154–155.

the likelihood of cities, for foreign trade, and for funding the five-year plan. In consumption regions, the government implemented its goals by allowing peasants to leave for construction projects and life in the cities. But this sheds no light on the role played by violence during the collectivization and industrialization of the USSR, the extraordinary scope of which made it possible to set in place an extensive directed economy in less than a decade. Because of the violence, traces of pluralism were apparent in the economy and elsewhere in social life only on a scattered basis. This represented a visible change over the 1920s, when violence was extensive but not omnipresent.

The high point of violence in villages came in 1932–33, when it brought extensive famine to areas producing grain for the market. The famine is said to have impacted up to 70 million people, but estimates of the victim numbers differ. Most authors who have researched the tragedy say there were somewhere between 4 million and 8 million casualties.<sup>113</sup> But these figures are not rock solid. The regime tried to conceal both the extent and the very existence of the famine. In determining its scope after-the-fact, this act of concealment left its mark, as did the later ‘bargaining’ over the number of victims in an effort to condemn the Stalinist regime or use the numbers to justify a national, Russian, or Ukrainian goals. We may therefore only note that the estimates of victim numbers do not really paint the picture of the monstrous nature of the event and its underlying causes.

## The 1932–1933 Famine and Changes in Stalin’s Politics

The key cause of the extraordinary violence and casualties was not collectivization itself so much as it was the efforts we have noted by Stalin and his circle to acquire grain and other agricultural produce in amounts sufficient to implement exorbitant plans for industrialization. The danger of these plans collapsing was real. In fighting to implement them, Stalin and his associates were also fighting for their own political lives. This was probably a vital motivation for Stalin and his supporters to ruthlessly plunder Ukraine and Russian villages between 1929–1933.<sup>114</sup> 1932–33 famine, to be explored in detail later, was also able to occur because Stalin and those around him deliberately ignored the experience

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113 The figures indicated by historians vary on the order of millions; figures from internal reports by the leading bodies of that time are often more modest. See Ivnický N. A., *Golod 1932–1933 godov v SSSR*, pp. 243–245.

114 Kondrashin, Viktor V., *Golod 1932–1933 godov: Tragediya sovietskoy derevni*, Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2008, pp. 70–71.

they had gained from the 1921–22 famine with identical causes. Victims of the new famine were much worse off than their predecessors in 1921–22 had been, but the fact that Stalin and his circle concealed the famine effectively blocked domestic and foreign aid for the victims.

The nature of Stalin's 'second revolution' cannot, then, in any respect be brought into line with Stalin's declarations on 'building socialism' and 'eliminating exploitation'. We have already spoken of the fact that a totalitarian society arose in the USSR that in no way eliminated or moderated the level of oppression, but rather made it into a permanent fixture.

The famine, and the responsibility Stalin and his circle bore for it and the death it brought to millions of people, severely impacted the USSR's development in the 1930s. Today, we may question the statements of historians that the regime managed to completely conceal the 1932–33 famine. The Soviet leadership did manage to suppress news about it and limit the circulation of both private and official correspondence that carried information about it. It was successful in keeping the information from spreading abroad, and it managed to conceal it as well from people who lived in regions hundreds or thousands of kilometres distant from the famine. But it could not hide the knowledge from those who lived in the affected regions and those who lived in neighbouring regions. This amounted to tens of millions of inhabitants. Nor could it keep the information away from a broader group of functionaries in the governing party and state institutions, nor enforcement officers or soldiers deployed in these areas, nor the thousands of activists involved with the kolkhoz collectives and purchasing. We must therefore modify our current ideas about the degree to which the famine was concealed. The regime could not have prevented a relatively broad circle of party members and functionaries, and a wide swath of the citizenry, from knowledge of it, nor keep them from discussing its causes and noting its consequences.

The political repercussions were severe. At the time the famine occurred, the conflict between Stalin, Rykov, and Bukharin over how the first five-year plan was to be conceptualized was still an urgent issue. For many party members and functionaries, the famine was further testimony that Rykov's and Bukharin's objections to Stalin's plans and methods, as well as the objections of the Left, had a basis in fact. They saw Stalin's responsibility for the famine as indubitable, and people originally behind Stalin and his circle, as well as others in the middle-aged generation about to take over high-level functions, became hardened in their repudiation of Stalin and those around him.

But tensions had already been present in the party since the 'Rightist deviants' were purged from the leadership. Clear proof was a group that arose in 1930 around Sergei I. Syrcov, appointed by Stalin to head the Russian Federation, and

Vissarion V. Lominadze, known as Beso, the Secretary of the VKS/b Transcaucasus Bureau and a favourite of Stalin. The circle that formed around these two consisted of middle-aged party members opposed to Stalin's manner of leading the party and to many aspects of his economic policies.<sup>115</sup>

The way Stalin developed his policy of repression testifies to the situation at the time. Until the 1930s, the targets of Stalin's repression were older 'experts' helping to implement governmental policies. Stalin saw them as supporters of Rykov's policy, which he wished to sabotage and accordingly their arrest took on a political dimension, with many accused of preparing a coup.<sup>116</sup> A number of trials took place at which evidence was brought forward against the so-called Industrial Party, the Menshevik 'Bureau of the Union' and the 'Peasant Party of Work', among others.<sup>117</sup> The majority of those accused were sentenced to death or to long prison terms as Stalin and his circle tried to intimidate the party by instilling a vision of a broad-based conspiracy of anti-Soviet powers.<sup>118</sup>

More significant changes to Stalin's repressive politics began to take shape in the late 1932 and early 1933, clearly tied to the failure of his economic policy, which had expanded the basis for rebellion within the party. The first in this series of rebellions was that of Martemjan N. Rjutin, former party secretary for the Moscow workers District Presnja, who gathered a small number of members of the 'Union of Marxists-Leninists' and requested that Stalin and his regime be ousted. The 'Union' was denounced.<sup>119</sup> But this was not the only such instance. Soon on, thirty-eight important members of the 'Bukharin school' were arrested,

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115 *Pis'ma I. V. Stalina V. M. Molotovu 1925–1936 gg.*: Sbornik dokumentov, pp. 188–190; *Oni nie molchali*, eds. A. V. Afanasiev, 1991, pp. 125–144. The group's existence was denounced, its members stripped of functions and persecuted.

116 *Pis'ma I. V. Stalina V. M. Molotovu 1925–1936 gg.*, pp. 190–191, 220, 222.

117 A substantial role was also played by the "Academic Case" (1929–1931), in which many scientists were accused. In the end, the lawsuit announced against the "Peasant Party of Work" was not followed through. Extensive arrests impacted former officers of the pre-revolution army active in the Red Army. Arrests were also initiated in Ukraine and Belarus targeting the national intelligentsia.

118 Barsenkov A. S./Vdovin A. I., *Istoriya Rossii 1917–2004*, Moscow, Aspekt-Press 2006, pp. 222–223; Litvin A. L., *Sudebny protsess nad nesuschestvuyushey partiej*, in: *Menshevistsky protsess 1931 goda*, Moscow, ROSSPEN, 1999, Vol. 1, pp. 4–5.

119 *Pis'ma I. V. Stalina V. M. Molotovu 1925–1936 gg.*, pp. 218, 220. Ryutin conceived two characteristic documents: A letter to party members and a treaty requesting Stalin and his regime be removed. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and died during the purges in 1930s. For more details see Starkov B. A., *Dielo Ryutina*, in: *Oni ne molchali*, 145–178; Khlevniuk O. (*Chozjain*, 154–156) says Stalin demanded death

allegedly for organizing and opposition conference, but in reality this was a simple meeting of graduates of party academic institutions. Most were sentenced to imprisonment for various terms.<sup>120</sup> But this was not the end of it. Three other high-level party functionaries were also denounced: Alexandr P. Smirnov, formerly a Secretary of the Central Committee of VKS/b, Vladimir N. Tolmachev, an RSFSR People's Commissar for the Interior and Nikolay B. Eysmont, People's Commissar for Trade of the USSR. Their sin was to express a lack of satisfaction with Stalin's economic and social policies, for which they were removed from their functions and, after some period, sentenced for 'anti-Soviet activities'.<sup>121</sup>

The lively discussion these moves provoked at prominent Moscow universities made clear that what was involved was more than just isolated cases. Some younger and middle-aged party members had serious doubts about Stalin's policies and Stalin felt the impact personally when his wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, a student at the Moscow Industrial Academy, committed suicide.<sup>122</sup> Stalin's interest in bringing 'old guard experts' to trial cooled sharply.<sup>123</sup> How many party members were alienated from Stalin is not central. What is of consequence is how badly shaken Stalin and his circle were, and that they lost faith that the party would support them, or that mid-level members of the party intelligentsia who had come on board after the revolution would do so. The chasm that stood between Stalin and these party members was filled with the bodies of the millions who had died during the famine, and it could not be erased by punishing rebelling groups or individuals. The death of millions in the famine was not a misdemeanour; Stalin and those around him likely lost faith it would be forgotten and forgiven once time had passed. In consequence, he significantly hardened internal party policy with

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for Ryutin at the Politburo. See the draft resolution of the Central Committee dated 2.10.1932 on Ryutin–Slepkov (RGASPI, f. 17 op. 2, Vol. 487, l. 26–27).

120 Barsenkov / Vdovin, *Istoria Rossii*, 213, more details Rogovin Vadim, *Vlast' i oppozitsiia*, pp. 289–291.

121 *Nashe otechestvo*, Vol. 2, 302–303. The case was discussed at the meeting of the Central Committee of VKS/b 7–12.1.1933. A statement alleged to have been made by Eismont was pointed: *A choice must be made between Stalin and the peasant uprising*. RGASPI f. 17, op. 2, d. 514 v. II.

122 The death of Nadezhda Alliluyeva has been interpreted in various way in the literature. Some authors attribute it to the political tensions of the era, others to family tensions. Supporters of the first version say Alliluyeva committed suicide in reaction to Stalin's policies or to the response his policies generated.

123 The last in this succession of lawsuits struck employees of the British company Metro-Wickers in spring of 1933.

a new purge in 1932–33 that saw 450,000 members thrown out of the party.<sup>124</sup> This represented a clear turning point in Stalin's reaction to what was going on in the country, and its consequences became clear only after some time. Stalin lost interest in repressing the 'counterrevolutionary' stratum of the 'old intelligentsia'. His focal point became manifestations of internal party disagreements with his policies. Although he continued to hold Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, as well as Rykov and Bukharin, responsible for the rebellion, he now interpreted efforts to remove him as terrorist acts.<sup>125</sup>

This shift in ideology must be explored in the context of the modern Russian political tradition, which treated the assassination of government officials as an accepted fact. Party leaders initially backed away from the notion, probably in fear for their own lives, and thus, in late 1932, Stalin was not able to get capital punishment approved for party members.<sup>126</sup> He did manage to get approval for the party purge that we have already noted. Expulsion from the party should not be underestimated as a punishment, because once expelled, former party members were no longer protected from the OGPU. These purges therefore became an important step on the road to the tragedy of the late 1930s.<sup>127</sup>

A profound issue came into being as part of this. The party was dominated by a restricted group of functionaries who knew each other. But those who had been expelled created a significant force from Stalin's point of view. They were used to organizing, they had contacts within the party, and they had their own hierarchy of political authority comprising the formerly popular party leaders. In 1932, they were joined by a large number of educated functionaries of the middle-aged generation who had already begun working in high-level posts within the party and the state apparatus, and in the press and social science institutions. This was, therefore, a political grouping which could significantly impact both the members and the leaders of the party, felt not only at party headquarters but also within the republics and the regions, where opposition attitudes often

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124 See the resolution cited on the Ryutin and Slepikov cases.

125 A letter Trotsky wrote to the CIK of the USSR on 1.3.1932, in which he reacted to being deprived of his citizenship, was misused: '*Stalin has led us into a blind alley... Lenin's pressing advice must finally be fulfilled: to eliminate Stalin.*' Trotsky, Lev, *Prestupleniya Stalina*, Moscow, Izdat. Gumanitarnoy literatury, 1994, p. 194.

126 See the letter from Stalin and Zhdanov to Kaganovich and Molotov dated 25.9.1936. In: *Stalin i Kaganovich: Peregovory*, 682–683.

127 *Sovietskoye obshchestvo: vozniknoveniye i razvitiye, istorichesky final*, ed. Ju. N. Afanasjev, Moscow, RGGU, 1997, 126 and 132; Khlevniuk O. V., *Politbyuro: mekhanizmy politicheskoy vlasti*, p. 62.

merged with national interests and the interests of regional structures. During the 1932–33 party purge, party secretaries in a number of republics and regions were ousted, likely because Stalin wished to prevent any political force capable of endangering his leadership from forming.<sup>128</sup> It was at that time he probably began to consider creating tools to punish party members on a mass basis. In a 1936 letter to Molotov and Kaganovich, frequently cited in the literature, Stalin and Zhdanov stated the acts of repression had come four years too late, making reference to 1932.<sup>129</sup> It was then that some in the party leadership had been able to head off the notion of putting party members to death. But in allowing party members to be imprisoned commonly for political offenses, the door to severe punishments had already been opened.

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- 128 At the Plenum of the Central Committee in February and March 1937, Stalin labelled the origin of friendly groups of functionaries an anti-party phenomenon: “What does it mean when I bring a whole group of friends with me... It means you have gained a certain independence from local organizations and, if you wish, a certain independence from the Central Committee.” *Voprosy istorii*, 1995, No. 10, p. 13.
- 129 *Stalin i Kaganovich: Perepiska. 1931–1936 gg.* (Ed. Khlevniuk O. V.), pp. 682–683.