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Crimes Unpunished: An Investigative Look at the Soviet Use of Terror under Joseph Stalin, 1934-1953

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CRIMES UNPUNISHED: AN INVESTIGATIVE LOOK AT THE SOVIET USE OF TERROR UNDER JOSEPH STALIN, 1934-1953

By

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The members of the committee approve the thesis of Amanda C. Rooney defended on April 12, 2010.

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The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members.

This work is dedicated to my parents. Without their love, support, and guidance I could not be where I am today. For the many hours of listening to me as I explained interpretive issues, struggled, and succeeded I can never thank them enough. Dad, thank you for always reminding me to breathe and hold on with both hands. Mom, thank you for always providing me with opportunities and strength and reminding me to always smile and move forward.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an investigative look at the events of the Soviet Terror from 1934-1953. It analyzes these events on two key levels. The first is the historiography and its continuing mysteries and shortcomings. The argument asserted is a call for future historical research to attempt to answer questions still unanswered and for a more comprehensive inclusion of all events that occurred under the leadership of Joseph Stalin. The Terror that existed under Joseph Stalin consists of three major levels. The first is the Great Terror which encompassed the years 1936-1939. The second is the ongoing effect the Terror held on citizen life and how it transformed Soviet ways of life including jobs, family relationships, and fears. The third is the lesser terror period that occurred from 1939-1953 during the years of World War II and ended with Stalin's death. It is argued that while the Terror is a highly researched area of Soviet history, in today's world it deserves to receive more extensive coverage as other mass murders of the twentieth century. Historians should begin to undo the crimes of misinformation and uncover the truth for the victims, survivors, historians, and world understanding.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of collapsing empires and Tsars arose the Soviet Union. After the outbreak of World War I, Europe underwent drastic changes and attempted to regain its composure. In Russia the Tsarist system was toppled by a country unhappy with its traditional system of government. A provisional administration attempted to set up a stable replacement but failed when the Bolsheviks sought to seize complete control and build a new Russia based on the Marxist principles of communism. Initially this trail was blazed by men such as Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky who set up a new government with an innovative system of organization for the country. With a victory in the tumultuous Civil War of 1917 to 1923, the Bolsheviks took hold of the renamed Soviet Union. The state was now a single party entity. Only after its clear victory could the Bolsheviks truly claim the government as theirs. These events led to the eventual rise of a totalitarian dictatorship to change the world under the orders of Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili (later to be known as Joseph Stalin). With lessons learned from his predecessors and experiences, Joseph Stalin led the Soviet Union down a path of self destruction previously unseen with a death toll in the millions which started with those at the top. The stages of self destruction carried out by Stalin and followers bears a heavy weight in the history of the twentieth century. While not a new subject for research, it is one that is still largely based on speculation and unsolved mysteries. The many levels and stages of Terror that ensued following 1934 within the Soviet Union have not only marked several generations of lives, but they also carry the power of having killed an enormous amount of people. As the twentieth century is known for the Nazi war crimes and the insurmountable death tolls of two World Wars, it is vital to remember the near genocidal impact that Stalin held over his country. The lack of substantial evidence and the countless debates surrounding the Terror call for an inclusive and investigative look into this time, its events, people, and truths from 1934 to 1953. Due to the secrecy and censorship of the Soviet Union, historical references to the Terror that existed under Stalin are still today widely based on speculation,

conspiracy theories, and guided by primary source material that carries a heavy weight of bias and uncertainty. Historical records today have effectively dissected and explored the Great Terror of 1936-1939 but have also subsequently ignored the personal struggles of the everyday citizen, the lesser terror of the 1940s to Stalin's death in 1953, and other crucial aspects necessary to fully understanding this area. This serves as a crime to the historical community and to the victims and citizens themselves who endured these transformations and atrocities. While the historians cannot be completely to blame for the shortcomings to these events in the history books, it is an area of Soviet history that requires attention and answers to the large mysteries that still exist.

The Bolsheviks, who overthrew the previous provisional government, were led by Vladimir Lenin. They were a small urbanized Marxist party that believed capitalism, liberalism, and parliamentarianism were dead and would soon be replaced with socialism and communism. Believing that individuals and populations could be easily guided and perfected by state engineering, the Bolsheviks outlined a system that was deeply contemptuous of dissenting views and prepared to rehabilitate or remove anyone standing in the revolution's path. With an ideology that preached the destruction of capitalist exploitation, emancipation of the working class, transformation and removal of bourgeois values, and the creation of a socialist state and society, the Bolsheviks found it easy to justify any means taken to achieve these goals. Ideology became the excuse for any actions considered to be violations such as class discrimination, illegal arrest and imprisonment, and mass executions. To reach their ends, the party eventually began a process of purging that existed almost from the party's beginnings. While it initially did not include executions, but just the removal of individual's party memberships, it can be traced back as early as 1921 under Lenin's discretion. In *Pravda* Lenin compared Russia in 1917 with France in 1793, in particular with the Jacobins exercises against enemies.[1] "The example of the Jacobins is instructive. Even today it has not become outdated, but we need to apply it to the revolutionary class of the twentieth century, to the workers and the semi-proletarians."

[1] Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 296.

He continues to state, “The Jacobins of the twentieth century would not set about guillotining the capitalists: following a good model is not the same as copying it. It would be enough to arrest them for a few weeks so as to uncover their dirty deals, so as to show to all the exploited people exactly ‘who needs war’.”[2] Lenin condoned the use of Terror in short intervals as a means of rehabilitating the population. He believed that using terror was acceptable as long as it did not cripple the state. When Leon Trotsky threatened to use the guillotine during the seizure of power, Lenin furiously believed that a guillotine would not be necessary since the majority of people would be on the Revolution’s side and that repression would not have to last long or be severe.[3]

The historiography of the post-revolutionary Soviet Union covers the reign of two leaders, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin. In 1924 Lenin succumbed to a series of strokes leaving his unnamed but eventual successor Joseph Stalin to rule the union of Soviet nations. From 1924-1953, Stalin embarked on a reign that effected each Soviet individual differently. Their stories are as varied as the histories that represent them today. The historiography of Stalin’s dictatorship has undergone several distinct phases, each represented by access to previously restricted information and changing political atmospheres. The unique aspect of history in today’s world is the historians’ ability to confer and access works written by historians written around the world. The politics of the Soviet Union, Cold War, and today’s Russian Federation influence the writings and right to use resources. The Soviet Union in itself was a social experiment and therefore lends itself to varying explanations. Often interpretations of its history tend to fall into three schools of thought; the totalitarian model, revisionists, and post-revisionists. These schools often existed together and created a fusion of ideas and approaches. Each, respectively, has their pivotal contribution to the history of the Terror and Stalin’s dictatorship. One important aspect to remember as one searches through the history of this time and area is that as the political scene changed within Russia so did the historian’s ability to research and utilize Soviet archives without the barrier of censorship. The history of the Terror is still emerging thanks to the work of historians

[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid, 302.

past and present who are willing to enter as Winston Churchill once referred to, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."[4]

Following the emergence of leaders such as Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler, historians became entranced with this political system where the state yielded seemingly unlimited authority over its populations. The desire arose to attempt to explain it and dissect it. This methodological model did not concern itself with the intricacies of life or the importance of society, rather it adopted a strict top-down procedural approach and practitioners usually adhered to a Marxist theoretical approach. This model is known as the totalitarian model. Based on the new idea of "total" political power, the totalitarian "officially proclaimed ideology penetrates into the deepest reaches of societal structure and the totalitarian government seeks to completely control the thoughts and actions of its citizens."[5] The concept of totalitarianism focused on the ideology, power relationships, and major structures of the Bolshevik Party. Hannah Arendt argued that the Nazis of Germany and State communist regimes created new forms of government. She claimed that this new form of tyranny provided a comforting, single answer to society's questions and societal ills. For the Marxists, all history related to the class struggle and for the Nazis, all history related to the racial struggle. Once those concepts are accepted, the state finds justification for all its actions and transgressions. By doing so the Totalitarian state could ignore the agency of society and individual Soviet citizens. This trend transferred to the historians that adopted this model as their theoretical approach to the writing of the Soviet Union's history. The lower echelons of society are not readily present within these works and serve little to no purpose to their studies. *The Russian Revolution* written by Richard Pipes highlights the political workings and transformations that led to the system that enabled terror to grasp its nation. As a leading Russianist with a focus on the Soviet Union, Pipes argues that the October Revolution of 1917 introduced a coup upon the Russian population that the subsequent population did not actively support. He posits that the Bolshevik Party's ideology consequently established a one

[4] Ashton Applewhite, Tripp Evans, and Andrew Frothingham, *And I Quote: The Definitive Collection* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 440.
[5] Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 241.

party dictatorship which continued and extended through Stalin's reign.[6] Highlighting a central totalitarian theme, he also contends that the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and Fascist Italy coexisted in their antipathy towards democracy and should be studied in relation to one another.[7] Pipes represents this school of thought well by illustrating the populations unsupportive nature towards the regime change and while it is difficult to completely discount the importance of the totalitarian way of thinking it leaves much to be desired. This model, or school of thought, forms the foundation for future rising movements within Soviet history and for a decade historians used it as a counterpoint to new perspectives. Along with Pipes, scholars such as Adam Ulam, Hannah Arendt, and Robert Conquest agree that totalitarianism seeks to mobilize entire populations in support of an official state ideology and is intolerant of activities that may oppose it. This allows them to utilize programs of repression and state control of societal organizations. While the method eventually came under heavy criticism, it continued to remain an essential component of the historiography throughout the 1990s. These historians, more than some others, allow for a direct and in-depth look at the politics and state structure.

Robert Conquest wrote one of the first books by a Western writer on the topic of the Great Purge. Originally written in 1968, Conquest based his work primarily on information and resources made public officially or by individuals during the Khrushchev Thaw in between 1956 to 1964, as well as émigré and exile accounts. His initial work provided one of the first comprehensive pieces while working with little access to reliable primary sources he published his now classic work *The Great Terror*.[8] While not the first inquiry into these events, the first being the Dewey Commission in 1937, he paved the way for historians to investigate and publish on the purges in the Soviet Union from 1936-1953 with a widened understanding. His initial assumptions and assertions received heavy criticism due to the lack of incontrovertible evidence. He broadened the topics scope from the Moscow Show trials to include more of the events. He claimed that the trials of the former Communist leaders were minor in comparison to

[6] Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 42.
[7] Peter Kenez, "The Prosecution of Soviet History: A Critique of Richard Pipes' The Russian Revolution", The Russian Review, vol. 50 (1991), pp. 345-51.
[8] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1968).

the true scope of the atrocities including the man-made famines, and the purges which led to an estimated twenty million deaths. In 1990 Conquest reemerged with *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* following the Soviet thaw and opening of the archives. This surfacing of uncensored official documents and primary sources allowed him to review his previous speculations and assert more accurately victim numbers and the policies of Stalin's government. He now revised his previous estimate from twenty million to thirteen to fifteen million.[9] Utilizing a myriad of narratives, diaries, and memoirs, he continues to argue the same previous thesis that the Purges consumed Soviet society and impacted every individual and that the government maintained strict control over its state.[10] Conquest provides a highly controversial perspective on the Terror, accusing the Western world of ignoring the realities of the Soviet Union. Conquest's work stands as a base, regardless of its controversies, for historians of this time period. His arguments call for a widened study of the Purges and calls out the Western intellectuals for their initial blindness to the Soviet's crimes and ignorance to Stalin's real nature.

This particular school of thought is especially problematic for the study of the Great Terror as a whole however. The mass murders occurred on several different levels, with two in particular. By adhering to a Totalitarian model of ideological importance the Terror is portrayed as a political event which was forced upon the mindless Soviet population. Therefore the story of the experiences and history is only partially told. While introducing useful avenues to explore the totalitarian regimes decisions and influence on society, there is too far of a gap allotted by ignoring the agency of the people. As well, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of the totalitarian assertions, such as Conquest's, became intensely contested by fellow historians and researchers. The hostility that rose surrounding Conquest's work in particular is important to note. His claims on the death toll became heavily critiqued for being too high or too low and originally based on speculation. During the archival opening of the 1990s Conquest's numbers were shown to be very close to accurate. Regardless of this debate however, Conquest provides one of the most significant pioneer works on the Terror. However, Conquest also falls into the assumption that

[9] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 1.
[10] Ibid, 23.

the purges largely occurred during the 1930s and affected the higher echelons of society, including the military commanders, politicians, and intelligentsia. As well he does not venture far enough into the history to provide a voice or agency to the people; rather he succumbs to the typical conclusion that while the purges drastically shook society, they were something that happened to them and not something that the populace participated in. The failure to incorporate the people as agents of the state serves as a tremendous handicap to Conquest. His work is pivotal to the understanding of this time because it serves as a base upon which other works can expand and grow. The Totalitarian model, with historians such as Richard Pipes and Robert Conquest provided political historical approaches to this subject area and often serve as a base for other historians to either agree or disagree upon.

In the 1970s and 1980s a Revisionist movement surfaced that began to call for the inclusion of social history with less direct emphasis on political history. The new focus became one of utter importance for the history of the Great Terror. It shifted the field from the centrality of leaders towards the voice of the voiceless masses, or the lower classes and argued that the people held just as much agency as the political leaders. Where the Totalitarian model failed to give the people a place in the storyline, the Revisionists allowed for the blame to be spread among the population of Soviets as well. They argued that society played a significant and active role in the success of Stalin's regime and purges. This new school appeared in the political atmosphere of the 1970s, and as the academic world began to view the traditional models as outdated, the revisionists began to ask questions such as why did this movement come about when it did and what specific elements fostered this growth? While some argue that the Revisionists introduced social history into the historiography, it is important to note that they did not focus entirely on true social history, in fact they continued to study the politics and policies present within the Soviet Union; they just gave the people a voice for one of the first times. This group expanded the historiography into new directions beyond the all-powerful Stalin perspective.

American-Australian Sheila Fitzpatrick's work with cultural revolution, education, and social mobility often gets her placed in the realm of social history, but rather she belongs with the studies of state-society relationships. Exposing the interconnections

and changes that occurred within soviet society, Fitzpatrick argues that social mobility existed under Stalin and that opportunities for the working class legitimized his regime. Agreeing with Conquest on the appearance of new social mobility, she exposes this mobility and posits that the Purges of the 1930s, literary communities and industrial transformations can all be explained by examining 'class struggles' of the time.[11] Her book *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931* came to be a defining and influential work within the revisionist trend.[12] She takes her initial queue from Conquest but then takes it a step further. Her work removes the top-down approach from the historiography, and attempts to give agency to urban workers in particular. Emphasizing this aspect of society as essential, Fitzpatrick examines how the Soviet workers functioned in society. In her initial book she combines several collaborative essays into one edited volume. Calling on historians such as J. Arch Getty and Robert Conquest, she creates an argument for the removal of politics from its traditional central role in historiography. Clearly coordinating the efforts of these historians, Fitzpatrick composes a work that highlights several different aspects of what she terms the 'cultural revolution'.[13] These include the voices of industrial workers, the plight of the peasant population, collectivization and the Five Year Plans, and censorship on society.[14] The only major flaw with this manuscript and its author is the absolute lack of conflicting ideas or trends among its contributors. It might be suggested that the book's success would have only been amplified had competing voices been allowed to engage in an active debate within its pages. Fitzpatrick, as does Conquest, sets the stage for future historians to build upon her arguments and to posit similar or differing points. Her overall thesis stands as a groundbreaking argument for incorporating the voice of society into the historiography. She also highlights one of the arguments put forth by this thesis that there are several aspects of the Purges open to investigation, including those of the working class. The efforts taken through these arguments set out to encourage further works of this nature into the historiography.

[11] Sheila Fitzpatrick ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1978).
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid, 11-12.
[14] Ibid, index.

One of the major issues that arose during the 1980s concerned the speculation of numbers in regards to the victims of the Terror; as mentioned before. This argument began a hostile debate centered largely on Robert Conquest which forever shaped the historiography into one that saw the flaws due to the Soviet censorship. In 1968 Conquest argues that Stalin murdered fourteen million of his own people through the process known as the Great Terror.[15] While he admits that his work is largely based on speculation from the minimal sources available, his arbitrary numbers created a stir in the historiography directly in the 1980s. S.G. Wheatcroft questions Conquest's mathematical skills and accuses him of inflating the numbers in order to dramatize the subject matter.[16] In his article "On Accessing the Size of Forced Concentration Camp Labour in the Soviet Union, 1929-1956", Wheatcroft criticizes Conquest openly for publishing *The Great Terror* without substantial evidence and believes that his numbers are highly inflated and inaccurate.[17] He places Conquest as a mathematical fraud, citing that the number most likely consisted of no more than one hundred thousand individuals.[18] Joining in on the opposite side of this debate, Steven Rosefielde's article "An Assessment of the Sources and Uses of Gulag Forced Labour 1929-1956" argues that Conquest's uninformed, shock inducing numbers were most likely correct and based on the most accurate sources available.[19] He admits that uncovering the true numbers was nearly impossible. Yet, he presents an analytical and expansive look at the data available by researching primary materials, existing literature, and actually even utilizing the same main sources employed by Conquest.[20] Collectively in the 1980s these historians sought to reveal the truth behind the Purges of Stalinist Russia. Unfortunately, the resources did not exist as censorship reigned supreme politically through Cold War ideologies. Historians such as these two brought to the field the spark to question previous sources and delve deeper and be more responsible for published accounts of such enormous events.

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[15] Conquest, *The Great Terror* (1968), 8-12.
[16] S.G. Wheatcroft, "On Accessing the Size of Forced Concentration Camp Labour in the Soviet Union, 1929-1956", *Soviet Studies* 33, no.2 (1981), 265-295, 266.
[17] Ibid, 268.
[18] Ibid, 51.
[19] Steven Rosefielde, "An Assessment of the Sources and Uses of Gulag Forced Labour 1929-1956", *Soviet Studies* 33, no.1 (January, 1981).
[20] Ibid, 52-54.

Fitzpatrick enters the historiography again in the late 1990s by expressing opinions argued in her initial edited collection more thoroughly in her critically acclaimed book *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*.[21] She addresses the historical problem of life at the bottom of the Soviet Union's social hierarchy. She argues that Stalin's policies brought food shortages, uprooted families, and led to intense famines. She showcases how ordinary Soviets integrated Stalinist policies into their everyday lives, including ideology. Focusing on the Purges of the 1930s, Fitzpatrick contends that the people who faced arrest were tried by arbitrary and incompetent officials, clerks, and salespeople who all worked for the state willingly.[22] As a true Revisionist, she argues against the Totalitarian model's assertion that Stalin and the government imposed an ideology on a mindless population. Instead she finds that the masses actively participated within the system and believed that by following Stalin they could reach a utopian state.[23] She stands opposed to Richard Pipes and adopts a clean break from the traditional Soviet historiography in regards to the 1930s. To her detriment however, she narrows the possible scope of her study by staying within the 1930s and excludes the next thirteen years or so of terror that ensued; this is a trend among many historians which is dangerous and historically irresponsible.

An emerging trend in the historiography involves revisiting the subject of the Terror with fresh perspectives and arguments. This new trend is defined by recent works such as Lynne Viola's *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements*.[24] Viola, a known student of the Revisionist school, examines the intricate details of life within the camps, such as feeding schedules, labor duties, living conditions, etc. She integrates a cultural historical approach into her work by arguing that everyday life within the forced labor camps has yet to be explored. In 2007 she develops her thesis based on letters of women stationed within the camps, such as Evroshiniia Kersnovskaia, diaries of men and women who recorded their everyday

[21] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[22] Ibid, 124.
[23] Ibid, 58.
[24] Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

activities, and interviews conducted with survivors.[25] She reveals the rampant poverty that existed inside the camps, cruelties imposed on the prisoners, the spread of illnesses, and the hunger that plagued them. For one of the first times in the historiography, Viola synthesizes the memoirs provided by others and exposes the realities of life for women and their children. She bares open for all readers to see the truth of the Gulag system that, as Kersonovskaia says, "'Corrective' is something that should make you better, and 'labor' ennobles you. But 'camp'? A camp was not a jail. So then what on earth was going on?"[26] Viola argues that Stalin's forced labor camps were designed to correct bad behaviors in Soviet citizens, but the reality was similar to that of a prison. The most significant finding of this work comes in the revelation that camp life differed for each sex drastically. While neither found proper treatment or conditions, Viola exposes the truth that far too often women faced rape and abuse in their daily lives.[27] Viola's argument forms a piece of this new trend with a mission to expose the cultural and social remnants of Stalin's Terror.[28] She contributes a new perspective and area of study for the historiography which expands it beyond its original narrow scope.

In the same year, 2007, Wendy Z. Goldman published *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression*.[29] She presents a social historical approach to the study of the Terror more so than Viola. Following the Revisionist trend, she gives agency to the industrial workers during the time of Stalin's Great Terror. She argues that Stalin's policies and the Communist ideology bred an atmosphere within industry that caused workers to engage in 'participatory democracy' on the shop floors.[30] She moves beyond the traditional belief that the Soviet Union overtly oppressed its urban workers. In doing so, she argues that Stalin did not solely orchestrate the Purges. By providing a voice to members of society, specifically industrial shop workers,

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[25] Ibid, 4, 167.
[26] Ibid, 168.
[27] Ibid, 43.
[28] For further research see Veronica Shapovalov's *Remembering the Darkness* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), Elizabeth Wood's *Performing Justice* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), Melanie Ilic's *Women in the Stalin* Era (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001) and Anne Applebaum's *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).
[29] Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[30] Ibid, 8.

who willingly and actively worked within the ideology to root out possible 'enemies of the state', Goldman presents a convincing argument that society allowed the Purges to occur.[31] By working within labor history of the Stalinist period, she finds that the shop floors of factories adapted to the Purge atmosphere and used it to their own advantage. This stands in contention to previous scholars of the Totalitarian model that argue the Great Terror imposed fear and terror into the lives of an unsuspecting population. She composes her narrative based on official factory records, such as the Minsk factory archives, personal accounts left behind in memoirs, diaries, and personal interviews as well.[32]

Outside of the schools and trends exist a few historians whose works have shaped the field immensely. Whether by showing historians how not to distort facts or by serving as beacons of guidance for future Soviet historians. Historians of all schools and disciplines can find it difficult to research or come to a definitive decision regarding many aspects of Soviet history. Depending on the period of research, many differing conclusions can be assumed and asserted by authors. As for the study of the 1930s and what has come to be termed the "Great Terror" by authors such as Robert Conquest, it can be even more difficult because for a long time several aspects of it were hidden or locked away in archives. At times the subject itself carries a heavy weight of moralistic tendency or emotional tags that follow its story, but historians have been attempting for years to uncover the truth behind this catastrophic event and to explore its origins. While some choose to place the fault at the hands of Joseph Stalin, others stray from this version and consider it to be an inevitable process of the Socialist system put in place after the October Revolution 1917. As the Soviet archives opened and as interviews were allowed to be conducted, as in the case of Orlando Figes, commonly held assumptions began to become into question and new conclusions reached. Despite the years of publishing and the effect that had on the schools of thought, these works by historians offer a perspective worthy of inspection to obtain levels of insight into such an event of historical proportions.

[31] Ibid, 103.
[32] Ibid, 270.

Historiography regarding Soviet history varies largely according to dates written and political opinions. One thing that becomes very obvious as researches explore these bodies of works is that because the Soviet archives and politics have opened and closed their doors so many times, the findings by historians can change drastically. It cannot always be blamed on the authors, although at times it can be, since at times they are/ were not given the most accurate information. Authors such as Robert Conquest who originally wrote his work *The Great Terror* in 1968 with limited resources and somewhat unreliable sources, and then wrote a reassessment to it in 1990, epitomize the situation where once unavailable sources are released and now theses written thirty years earlier now in need of a face lift. This is just one of the issues that face Soviet historiography in this field. When it comes to subjects concerning Stalin's rule especially because for so long facts were completely hidden, under Khrushchev the party line became to blame Stalin for everything, especially the purges, and then as the Soviet era continued leaders such as Yeltsin, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and others fluctuated on their approaches towards Soviet history. The major questions that are important within this field include issues over responsibility for events, such as the purges, issues over what actually happened, statistic issues, and how to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources.

For example, one of the best known sources on the Great Terror of the 1930s is by British historian Robert Conquest called *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, published in 1968. While dealing with a brief period of Soviet history from the death of Sergei Kirov, one of Stalin's chief lieutenants in 1934, to the Eighteenth Party Congress in 1939, the author delves into the events and occurrences of this period. Conquest was one of the initial authors to research this period of time, and due to this had to rely largely on unofficial sources and documents on which he based his findings. By piecing together the vast amount of sources he researched Conquest explores the purge of the writers, methods of obtaining confessions, life in the labor camps, and the military purges, just to mention a few. Although a comprehensive and lengthy book, Conquest theorizes that this period in the 1930s was when the mechanisms of terror were turned against the party itself, the military, the secret police, and the Soviet citizens as a whole. The picture that he portrays is an all encompassing terror that

seized the Soviet Union. Conquest's work is clearly influenced by the Khrushchev period of 1956-64 and the influences of the "thaw" which allowed some information to become available to the public; either officially or unofficially.

While exploring the topic thoroughly, Conquest covers the beginning, the middle and the ends with appendices which include casualty figures and other interesting pieces. The author does take some controversial stand points in this version. Conquest took the stance of going up against some commonly held beliefs, such as whether or not Stalin was a detour from Lenin's plan, as Khrushchev stated, or whether or not he was a continuation. Conquest takes a controversial stand at the time of saying that it was a continuation of Lenin's program, as well as giving at times over due credit to Stalin's paranoia. Also, he investigates the importance of Stalin's role and that of Yezhov as well. The author in addition does not delve too much into whether or not there were other factors involved, but overall he makes a very convincing case with the limited resources available to him at the time. Evidence of this limited scope of evidence can be seen in his estimation that Stalin was directly responsible for the deaths of twenty million people within the USSR, which turns out to be a bit of an over-exaggeration perhaps.[33] Despite these minor weaknesses, the book is a revealing and vital contribution to this area of study. Overall, his thesis and his argument were a success for the time and discovered the true impact of the purges and life in the Soviet Union under Stalin and his reign of terror.

Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered 1933-38 by J. Arch Getty was published in 1985. This large monograph comes just twenty years after *The Great Terror* by Robert Conquest. The author approaches the subject from a revisionist approach and attempts to set himself apart from other authors on this subject. He takes a second look at previously available sources and uses them to support his thesis that the purges and terror were not based on Stalin alone, but rather that it was an inevitable byproduct of the October Revolution of 1917. He also makes the claim that the purges were nothing more than simply removing party members from the party apparatus. He brings to question conventional norms held within Soviet history, yet appears to avoid making any wide debates through his book. The great

[33] Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (1990), 533.

thing about this work is that the author does not dwell simply on the numbers of victims and other numerical aspects primarily but spends more of his time pursuing an attempt to revise and rehabilitate this time period. He attacks the image of Stalin as the ultimate plotter of the purges and states that it was inevitable that these events would occur because the system was inefficient and needed to be cleansed. Along with this at times it comes across that he is highly pro-Communist, whether that is the case or not, at times he seems to be rehabilitating the Soviet Communist Party against some of the shame that was put upon it by the Khrushchev "thaw" and by historians such as Robert Conquest.

While Getty's work is important because it calls into question commonly held tenets of Soviet history and offers a debate to historians. It appears that at times he re-works the sources to the point that he almost distorts them to fit his purpose. Despite that weakness, the only other fault that was obvious at times was the attention paid to his personal opinions on the subject. Due to its distance from the Khrushchev area, he discounts the "secret speech" and is clearly straying from the "thaw" period that Conquest adhered to in 1968. The work does provide an interesting perspective and allows the reader to take a different point of view on this well researched topic. It offers a break from the other exhaustive studies on the Great Purges, but still has its flaws. In comparison to Conquest's goliath work on the subject, Getty comes up a little short, but still offers a valuable component of work to the historiography on this subject.

Orlando Figes offers a groundbreaking book to the public and scholars alike in his work *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia,* published in 2007. The author covers the time period of 1917 to 2006 in great detail. His approach differs from the other authors because he delves into more of the social bottom level of the subject. He researches the everyday lives of Soviet citizens living under Stalin within the Soviet Union. While briefly covering topics of historical importance in order to maintain the narrative he has created, Figes presents an extraordinarily new perspective on this subject. In the chapters on the Great Terror, Figes presents an image of people in the thirties attempting to find happiness especially an emphasis placed on it by Stalin saying, "Life has become better, comrades. Life has become more joyous."[34] He also

[34] Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Picador, 2007), 159.

stretches his argument to show the downside of the terror by showing the dark side of it. On page 239, Figes states that, “For Stalin and his supporters, the Great Terror was a preparation for the coming war.”[35] He enters into great detail about the fear that caused the people to begin to “whisper”, as the title insinuates, and shows the terror that infiltrated everyday life while people all around were being arrested or sent to the Gulag system.

Orlando Figes briefly enters into theorizing why the Terror occurred and in large part blames Stalin for those events. He moves beyond the statistics and the facts that are displayed by other authors such as Robert Conquest and ventures into an area that is somewhat more difficult to approach, that is the personal effects of a political decision or strategy. He dwells on the personal lives of specific people within the Soviet Union and shows how they reacted to being falsely accused, how families maintained ties, the rising of a new generation of Soviet citizens within the USSR, and especially focuses on the character and life of a poet by the name of Simonov and his situation within the country. While often avoiding the usual history from the top down approach of focusing on the regime and its decisions, Figes advances the topic to the bottom level and looks at how the people themselves faced the events every day. Uniquely, he adds his own point of view at times without completely straying from the message he intended for his work.

The author utilizes primary reports largely based on interviews conducted by a team of interviewers. As well, he uses diaries, documents and personal accounts to formulate his theories and to put together his narrative throughout the six hundred and sixty-five page book. Oral history is probably one of the largest downfalls of this book. Since he largely did not conduct the interviews himself and in fact relied on Russians to interview Russians, one cannot be clear of the complete meaning conveyed or intended by the interviewee. As well, as it may be known, Oral history has its pitfalls overall as a practice. Human error, misinterpretations, nostalgia, forgotten events or facts, and many other issues plague the field. That being said, it is a highly useful tool in understanding a specific period of time or how it affected those who lived through that time. Figes relies heavily upon these interviews and cites them thoroughly. He also

[35] Ibid, 239.

appears to be over-dramatizing the situation by focusing on the human experience too closely. At times it becomes overly moralistic and sensationalized. One other weakness is that once Figes moves beyond the October Revolution in 1917, his use of facts and placing the story tends to becomes less effective since it is not exactly his area of specialty. The book is also lengthy and at times seems to drag but provides an excellent example of a historian attempting to widen the scope of this history.

Despite the apparent weaknesses of the book, Orlando Figes enters into an area of research that is not commonly written about and brings it to an accessible level to a large audience of readers. As well, the influence of the story of the ordinary citizen cannot be ignored since they are the people that were affected by the events written about by other authors such as Conquest and Getty. Figes does tend to take more a Conquest line of thought in regards to Stalin's role and in contrast to Getty's approach that plays down Stalin's role in the terror. Overall, he brings something new to the field despite its weaknesses it is a valuable piece of work. In contrast as well to both of these authors, Figes covers a much broader area throughout his book rather than primarily focusing on the period of 1934-39.

Robert W. Thurston published an article called "*The Social Dimensions of Stalinist Rule: Humor and Terror in the USSR 1935-1941*". It was published in 1991 by the Journal of Social History. As well, it is an exploration into social history and how humor survived the Great Terror and also how it showed the inner side of the Soviet people during this tumultuous time. The author's thesis is to improve understanding of what Soviet social cohesion and personal relations were in the time of the Great Terror; otherwise known as the author is investigating into the terror's impact on personal life and explores the significance of humor and even relates it to the situation that occurred with African American humor. He utilizes general opinions taken from selected survivors in the form of memoirs and interviews from Project Soviet Social System, which were conducted in the years 1950-1951. Thurston thankfully admits to the faults that lay with the oral history sources that he uses and recognizes their strengths as well. He cites that the interviews were taken in the Cold War years which were riddled with tensions but were also interviews and questionnaires distributed by Harvard University students and the interviewees were ex-Soviet citizens of who mainly left the USSR after

World War II involuntarily. Despite the faults that follow oral history. Thurston states that historians can still see what life was like through the jokes and anecdotes as long as one is aware of the issues surrounding the sources; which is a similar issue that Orlando Figes had with his book *The Whisperers*.

Through this article Robert W. Thurston discusses the role of five categories of jokes he designates as jokes about Stalin, those critical of the regime or Soviet life in general, those about the NKVD, anti-Semitic, and dirty jokes. Through these mediums, Thurston looks at how in his view even though telling jokes was a dangerous and daring thing to do at a time when anything short of glorifying Stalin could be reason enough to go to the Gulag. The existence of these jokes and stories shows there was a high level of trust between individuals before the jokes could be shared, also they show that not everyone thought Stalin was a god, and that people found their own ways to handle the situation during the Terror. While admitting that fear existed, Thurston tends to play it down in his article and claims that the Terror was not random but rather that a lot of what was going on had to deal with trust between people and the possibility of informers. Overall his argument is interesting and the insight that it provides is fascinating as well. However, at times he seems to be stretching his argument to a very thin point. Especially when he asserts that ordinary people were indeed allowed to criticize their superiors and the conditions around them, including that they were "permitted satire of the bureaucracy and even of the Terror".[36] It appears the author is claiming a large amount of freedom at this time, but yet other sources, such as Figes and even Conquest and Gellately would argue otherwise citing the need to trust no one at this time because even people's children were informing on their parents. Nevertheless, the author successfully shows that on a broad scale Soviet people maintained the ability to laugh and to have close ties with specific others during the Great Terror, and that they laughed through the fear to make it manageable. The author is minimally successful but definitely shows a new and different side to this well researched topic.

The fifth book cited is Robert Gellately's *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe*, published in 2007. This work is a five hundred and ninety-four

[36] Thurston, 553.

page work on these modern European dictators. Gellately explores how Stalin utilized the terror to solidify his political position, how it was used within the countryside, how it became a mass operation, and how it eventually turned against the party elite. He covers all of the regular areas of interest, the show trials, the purges of the party, collectivization, and others. Gellately relies heavily on newly released numbers to calculate the extent of the terror, such as when he discusses that, "One way of calculating the extent of the terror in the 1930s and before the war in 1941 is to look at recently revealed statistics on prisoners in the Gulag".[37] While throughout the book, the thesis is to show the differences between Stalin and Hitler by comparing and contrasting them while showing the blatant similarities between Lenin and Stalin in carrying on similar practices. The book takes the Getty approach in straying from the normal tenets a bit and raising debate through his work, especially in terms of placing Lenin in line with dictators such as Hitler and Stalin. The book shows the Terror as a time that effected many aspects of life, and he includes the act of collectivization within the countryside as a part of that terror. One point of interest within the text is Gellately's point of showing that quickly after the Bolshevik take over censorship was put into place by Lenin and thus the practice of terror had begun.

In contrast to other authors, such as Getty, Gellately does put the blame on Stalin largely and shows how he personally signed the documents and endorsed the terror. Unlike Getty as well though, he does not view Stalin's terror as detour from Leninist policies but rather as an unconcealed continuation of such practices. As well, he contrasts with Figes's work in that while noting the importance of the human aspect and their experience, he does not dwell on it or add his moralistic impression of the events within his book. The author cites several other sources as his evidence and utilized the primary documents from archives and other areas to support his thesis that the terror was obviously a system used to sweep out the "undesirables".[38] As well, he argues that the terror was not all knowing and omnipresent, but rather was enforced by a small police force that rounded up large amounts of people. Gellately also explores the use of the Gulag camp system as an institution and as a tool of the terror. The

[37] Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 264.
[38] Ibid, 240.

author's intent for writing this book is what sets him apart from the previous authors because his purpose is clearly from the beginning to compare and contrast the dictatorships of this time within the Soviet Union and that of Germany. Yet, the important point that the reader and historian can take from Gellately's book in regards to the Great Terror is that it was uniquely Soviet at that time and that it was a system of repression used on denunciations and on Soviet citizens themselves. Clearly having sources available to him that were not open in 1968 for Robert Conquest, Robert Gellately shows the orders that were issued throughout this period, including those that deemed who was considered a "dangerous or socially harmful element" within Stalin's Soviet Union. This book overall is a positive aspect of Soviet historiography on this subject because it uses the most current information available and avoids a moral tone for the most part, while remaining accessible to readers of different backgrounds. It also highlights several key components such as Stalin's continuation of Lenin's policies and the unique nature of the Purges.

Once again visiting a work prepared by J. Arch Getty and this time with Oleg V. Naumov, these two authors offer insight into why the purges began and the responsibility and foresight that went into the Great Terror in their book titled *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-39*, which is located within the Annals of Communism series. It was published in 1999. This work is slightly different from the rest because along with the stimulating and educational commentary that makes up the book it is also combined with a major collection of documents released from the archives on the Great Terror. These documents largely deal with the big time cases of such men as Kirov, Bukharin and others. The focus of this section pertains to the 'how' rather than the 'why' the purges occurred. This source is also much more of a political history than the others are because it largely deals with history from the top down approach and focuses on the politics within the Bolshevik party. The main argument presented within this text is that the purges did not occur due to a master plan initiated by Joseph Stalin but rather were developed over phases and over time and also could not be foreseen. While admitting through their commentary that Stalin played a central role and that none of the plans or initiatives could have been carried out without Stalin's consent, at times it is played down and the blame is pushed

onto other actors of the time, such as Yezhov. Yezhov was the head of the NKVD and was responsible for the arrests of millions, yet Stalin's signature is on many of the lists as well. However, while the authors do admit these facts through their work, they also state that Stalin was merely responding to pressures and to developments that were out of his control[39]. They also go on to blame others within the governmental structure for being greedy and using the purges to remove potential rivals within the system. The authors also explore the Bolshevik party and place much of the focus on their interactions and discussions being the primary source for implementing the purges. They also differentiate between what they believe to be minor purges, such as those that occurred in 1933, which removed excesses and responded to the assassination of Kirov, and the new phase of mass repression that occurred after June, 1937 which turned to "former Kulaks, anti-Soviet and criminal elements".[40]

Overall the authors are successful in presenting a new way of separating the 'how' and the 'why' from this sensitive subject, yet they seem to waver between who was behind it. At times they blame Stalin and admit his role in the initiation and the level it ascertained, and at other times they blame it on secondary actors and the weak condition of the Soviet government. One interesting concept that they do raise is in regards to how the purges were conceived, and they theorize throughout that the purges were pre-planned and developed much earlier than their implementation. The documents that the book presents are unique and eye-opening. They provide the reader with an inside look and offer a personal perspective to understanding this time period. However, they also appear to be picked carefully to enhance the authors' personal viewpoints. Despite its apparent wavering between decision makings, the book has a true strength in that it appears to open new arguments and thoughts for larger discussion. It does not venture too far from Getty's book, *The Origins of the Purges*, but this essay differs in that the other author seems to balance out his approach to Stalin not being the mastermind. Perhaps that is where the vacillation between ideas happens.

[39] J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks,1932-1939*, Annals of Communism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 8.
[40] Ibid, 470.

Robert Service's *Stalin: a Biography*, published in 2004, is one final example of works delving into this subject area. The reason this book comes at the end is because unlike the others it is a biography of one man and includes several references and a section pertaining to the events of the Great Terror. Service describes Stalin's role in the mass terror in the late months of 1936 as being pre-planned for the two previous years.[41] The author also denotes responsibility to Stalin for mass arrests and deportations prior to the implementation of mass terror in 1936. One thing the author emphasizes is that Stalin was responsible for the terror of 1937-38. Service concludes that it is clear that Stalin "had decided to deal with the objects of his security worries in a sustained burst of NKVD mass arrests and murders".[42] He presents a much scholarly, unbiased work with this biography and shows many sides of the argument, and eventually proves his own. The superb part of this book in particular is that, while admitting the issues with historical accuracy that invades the study of the Soviet Union, Service still presents a complete biography of Stalin. Through this biography, he explores how Stalin, as a human being removed of the Cult of Personality, came to power, his beginnings, his middle and his end. He also shows how while a tyrannical ruler, Stalin's power was limited in scope at times and that his fear of being surrounded by enemies was not completely ungrounded. In contrast to the works by Getty, Service provides as neutral and unbiased perspective that is possible while utilizing opened archives and sources to prove his point about the Terror and Stalin's role. The way the author presents the Great Terror puts a new perspective on the reign of Stalin and the Communist Party within the Soviet Union.

Throughout this research, it becomes inevitably clear that to study Soviet history was to engage in a painstaking game of accuracy and inaccuracy. Depending on the time period of publishing, an author of any school of thought could be misguided by incorrect information, propaganda, or politics of the time. As a reader today, it becomes apparent the importance of being aware of the politics and the history present throughout the reign of the Soviet Union. The Great Terror especially is a subject of great mystery. For years the archives and documents regarding the events were

[41]Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2004), 346.
[42] Ibid , 351.

shrouded in mystery and secrecy. Then under Nikita Khrushchev a period of "thaw" emerged, but even that "thaw" on secrecy was biased by his intent to remove himself from what he perceived as the Stalin stain. What he released and spoke about was still just as biased and confusing as the things that Stalin had hidden for years. As well, as politics have progressed within the Soviet Union and even the Russian Federation today, the story always has the opportunity of changing. Authors such as Robert Conquest who revise their works when new resources are uncovered are working constantly to portray the purges in the most honest light available. Other such as Getty are working to fight against the commonly held beliefs and attempting to uncover a new answer to the questions. Then authors such as Figes and Thurston are trying to show the social history aspect and relying on somewhat unreliable oral history projects. Finally authors such as Robert Service are attempting to be accountable and unbiased in their work but removing the political emphasis and focusing more on the individual in charge.

The Terror appeals to a wide array of audiences within the historical field and outside it. Europeanists tend to find an interest in this subject material because the Soviet Union served as such a mystery to them as it controlled the largest multiethnic empire in the world. As well, due to the Terror's ramifications for the Soviet Union at the beginning of World War II, individuals interested in this time period would find a welcome topic in discovering how the Red Army and the Soviet Union were shaped by the internal attacks that it faced. International Affairs researchers would find interest in the discussion of terror used against a population as well as the subsequent call for investigation and international attention to a long overdue set of crimes; especially in the wake of the revival of the discussion on the Armenian genocide. Cold War historians serve as a potential audience because the reason for the cover ups and censorship largely occur during the time of the Cold War and the politics of this time dictated which records were available and how far speculations had to go. This thesis serves as a call to historians of several disciplines to revisit the Purges and scrutinize the political, social, cultural histories of these events which are largely plagued by the faults of their own primary source materials.

Not immune from the deficiencies of the Soviet primary pitfalls, Soviet Terror primary resource base holds several difficulties that one must be aware of before venturing out as well. It is vitally important to recognize the existence of dissident sources and historians that materialized as byproducts of the Soviet Union. Cast from their homeland of Russia at the Bolshevik seizure of power, the 1970s to 1990s experienced the introduction of occasionally heavily biased accounts of life under Joseph Stalin. Resentment, bitterness, hatred, and whole slew of descriptive words can be used to describe these individuals. In 1989 Harvey Fireside published an article describing the usefulness and influence of dissidents. His article "Dissident Visions of the USSR: Medvedev, Sakharov, and Solzhenitsyn" explores how these three men shaped the Western view of the Soviet Union.[43] He contends that their stories fashion a unique Marxist critique of Soviet life and present an intensely critical view of the Stalinist government.[44] He argues particularly that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a renowned author of works such *The Gulag Archipelago*, presents an eyewitness testimony of his experiences in the Gulag forced labor camps.[45] While this account serves as primary research, Fireside encourages scholars to proceed with slight reservations to its accuracy due to Solzhenitsyn's open hatred for the Soviet Union and Stalin, and his émigré status to the United States.[46] These dissident historians and authors provide an excellent example of biases that exist within sources for not only Revisionists, but the Totalitarians and the Post-Revisionists. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is cited in nearly every historical work on the Stalinist Purges and proves that these dissidents and their opinions have become deeply intertwined with the historiography. As well, Fireside argues that Roy Medvedev and his extensive works on Stalinist atrocities paint the Soviet Union as a highly corrupt and morally repugnant society.[47] He posits that Andrei Sakharov describes life under Stalin as one without a voice in which ideology consumes society's very being.[48] Fireside warns throughout however that the opening of the

[43] Harvey Fireside, "Dissident Visions of the USSR: Medvedev, Sakharov, and Solzhenitsyn", *Polity*, vol.22, no.2, (Winter 1989), pp. 213-229.
[44] Ibid, 213.
[45] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
[46] Fireside, 220.
[47] Ibid, 215.
[48] Ibid, 222.

archives allows historians more than ever before to recognize the warped perspective these dissidents provided the West with up to that time.[49]

The primary resources utilized throughout this thesis are composed of two parts. The first consists of the official documentation and records taken from the Soviet archives. The Library of Congress's work *Revelations from the Soviet Archives* provided the majority of this type, and the others were supplemented from the works themselves or through secondary contribution. These sources are obviously biased towards the Stalinist regime since they were contrived under his rule. However, they also provide the best resource for numbers and the official policies and practices of the Soviet government in relation to the Terror. The bulk of the official records utilized here are also used by other historians as evidence of the Soviet government's participation in the Terror; while not used in an innovative sense, these documents are at times the only proof available that events occurred or that defendants were present. The second category of primary source is that of the individual. This includes diaries, memoirs, oral interviews, and other personal means. As hinted at previously, these sources in themselves carry a heavy weight of bias with them. Depending on the person's outcome from the Terror or their circumstances during, the individual's account may be purposely falsified or have leanings towards a specific mindset. Typically the two mindsets that exist are those of the pro-Stalinists and those considered anti. The intrinsic value of these resources greatly outweighs their possible biases. However, it is important to remember these when searching through them. These sources each were closely analyzed and compared with known facts to insure their authenticity and historical value. It is still possible that biases exist and thus this only proves the central argument further that due to insufficient sources and works the majority of the history of the Terror era is based on speculation and mysteries of truth.

The overarching thesis of this work is that the history of the Terror consisting of the years 1934-1953 is based primarily on speculative facts, censored and doctored records, and somewhat unreliable individual testimonies which has resulted in the several stages and levels of the Terror being neglected. This has left the history lacking in several areas which are highlighted through the investigation of the Terror as a

[49] Ibid, 228.

whole. In Chapter One, the argument is put forth that the period known as the Great Terror from 1936-1939 holds the most inclusive and extensive work done by historians. It is easy to discover the events of the Moscow Show Trials due to their publicity at the time and the purges of the Party elite and intelligentsia marked the first stage of the Stalinist repression. While serving as the best known aspect of the Terror due to historians like Robert Conquest, mysteries still exist that are debated to this day, such as Stalin's fault in the assassination of Sergei Kirov and others. In Chapter Two, the argument surrounds the rich and largely unexplored Terror that affected everyday lives. Due to the biases and traps of using this type of primary source material, many historians avoid it all together. The works that we do have are largely written by the individuals themselves or in more recent works such as Orlando Figes's contribution. Chapter Three calls for more attention to be shown to the lesser terror, as coined by Michael Parrish. This constitutes the period of the 1940s to Stalin's death in 1953. Largely passed over due to World War II or its lack of excitement, this period provides a crucial look at the techniques and practices that began during the 1930s and progressed through to the 1950s.

CHAPTER 2

THE GREAT TERROR'S FIRST STAGE

By 1936, Terror existed throughout the Soviet Union, and as S.P. Kolosov wrote: "I am afraid to open my mouth. Whatever you say, if you say the wrong thing, you're an enemy of the people. Cowardice has become the norm."[50] The virtual witch hunt that ensued after Kirov's murder left the Soviet Union searching for opposition and treacherous spies in every corner of society. In 1936 upon his return from the USSR, Andre Gide wrote, "In my opinion, no country today not even Hitler's Germany is the spirit more suppressed, more timid, more servile than in the Soviet Union."[51] Those who had formerly or still questioned or held thoughts different than those of Stalin, now feared to even speak. It began as an attack against those immediately connected to the assassination and then began to spread. These purges acted as a means to an end. Officially the leadership explained these actions as a way to eliminate any possibility of sabotage to the revolution, espionage, or other harmful elements of society. The focus tended to lie with the purge of the Communist leadership, government bureaucrats, and leaders of the Red Army; however, they also included members of the intelligentsia, peasants, and kulaks, or wealthy peasants.[52] It also affected a number of national minorities accused of being a fifth column. After the years of Civil War and revolutionary movements, it seemed coherent that there could be enemies of the state lurking among society. With Stalin's victory in the struggle for power following Lenin's death and his personal need to remove any possible threat to that power, he purged the Party of anyone who did not follow the Stalinist, or as he referred to it, Leninist, line. The purges that ensued affected the Party, army, members of the scientific community, artists, prominent members of the cultural society, and many others. Robert Conquest referred to this time as the Great Terror, as it is well considered the height of Stalin's schemes

[50] Gudrun Persson, "And They All Confessed…," http://art-bin.com/art/amosc_preeng.html (accessed September 2008).
[51] Ibid.
[52] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (1990), 250.

against Soviet society.[53] Through the original show trial of 1936, terror had seized the social system and eventually acquired a life of its own. During the time period of 1936-1938, the largest amount of arrests, convictions, and executions occurred. While figures, statistics, and information are still not definitive, many historians have taken an insurmountable amount of time researching and investigating the first level of Stalin's Terror. Working with questionable data and documentation, the best that Soviet historians of this time can do is still speculate about the majority of the facts of this secretive and censored time. This stage is illuminated throughout classic and contemporary historical sources as the main Terror, the time when the Communist Party turned on itself and purged the country of anyone different.

The majority of the historiography focuses on this period due to émigré reports, diaries, memoirs, and famous speeches such as the one made by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 entitled "On the Personality Cult and its Consequences."[54] The Great Terror from 1936-1939 showed the Soviet Union and eventually the world what Stalin was capable of doing to secure his power but the story was never fully clear to those in the West or East. The archives opened their doors wider than they had ever been before by 1990. With the fall of the Soviet Union and international curiosity, the KGB and the FSB began to release documentation. Under Mikhail Gorbachev, General Dmitri Volkogonov was allowed access to previously classified records. This access allowed him to produce figures in relation to the Purges of this time that had previously been little more than pieced together speculation. By his count, collectivization from 1937-1938 cost the Soviet Union approximately nine million lives. In addition to this an average of five million people were arrested with roughly nine hundred thousand sentenced to death. By his total estimation the Stalin era claimed somewhere between nineteen and twenty-two million lives excluding war victims.[55] These figures correspond closely to those estimated by Robert Conquest in 1968 and reiterated for the most part in 1990. By his approximation, only ten percent of those sent to the Gulag concentration camps from

[53] Ibid, 3.
[54] Nikita Khrushchev, "Secret Speech – On the Cult of Personality", *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 84th Congress, 2nd Session,* (June 4, 1956), 9389-9403.
[55] Dmitri Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 524.

1936-1938 survived.[56] With the majority of people tried behind closed doors, true numbers are still to some extent guesswork.

Before hundreds of thousands of victims faced false accusations, executions, and camp sentences, a secret organizational system of policing began that monitored society and removed elements deemed a threat. From the beginning of the Bolshevik seizure of power, they relied on a strong network of secret police forces. This organization was used to buttress their rule and to enforce their policies and laws; through time it would become the carrier of Terror for the Stalinists. Originally the secret police started with the Cheka created in the wake of December 1917 as a temporary institution to help Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks consolidate power. Led by Feliks Dzerzhinsky, they were empowered to investigate any counterrevolutionary efforts that existed as a threat. From simple beginnings, the Cheka rose to the position of executing a campaign of terror against the propertied classes that threatened the revolution. It proved to be a crucial component to the revolution's success. Yet, once the Civil War ended and the Bolsheviks seemed securely in power, the threats that had formally faced the new regime faded. The Cheka was then disbanded and its functions were transmitted in 1922 to the State Political Directorate. With this change, the repression against Soviet society became moderate. This only lasted a short while until Joseph Stalin rose to power. Under his leadership the secret police acquired its previous powers and in 1934 was renamed the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, or NKVD.[57] Not controlled by the Party, the NKVD became a major instrument of Stalin during the Great Terror of the 1930s, becoming one of the most powerful and feared Soviet institutions.

While Stalin brought the use of purging to a new level within the Soviet Union he did not invent the practice. The use of purging did not begin with the Great Terror. The term originated as a means to expel members from the Party ranks. Initially beginning under Lenin, the process of purging can be seen as early as 1921 as cited previously.[58] In *Pravda* Lenin compared Russia in 1917 with France in 1793, in particular with the

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[56] Conquest, 338-9.
[57] Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941,* (Washington, D.C.:Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009), 148.
[58] Alexander N. Yakolev, *A Century of Violence in Soviet Russia*, trans. Anthony Austin, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 65.

Jacobins exercises against enemies.[59] "The example of the Jacobins is instructive. Even today it has not become outdated, but we need to apply it to the revolutionary class of the twentieth century, to the workers and the semi-proletarians." He continues to state, "The Jacobins of the twentieth century would not set about guillotining the capitalists: following a good model is not the same as copying it. It would be enough to arrest them for a few weeks so as to uncover their dirty deals, so as to show to all the exploited people exactly 'who needs war'."[60] The key to Lenin's support of the use of Terror lies in his approval of short intervals as a means of rehabilitation. He believed that its use was acceptable as long as it only lasted short periods of time and did not cripple the state. The process of purging the Party to insure its security and purity of membership of true believers had been discussed since the beginning of the Soviet Union. Lenin's death in 1924 introduced a new leader to the Bolshevik Party. Joseph Stalin, a leading official in the Soviet government already, seized control by manipulating the system and removing his potential competition. After achieving his goals of power, he put to use the same system of Terror that had existed for years. The only difference was that he eventually manipulated it into a new extreme level. In 1933, some four hundred thousand people were removed from the Party due to accusations of careerism.[61] No one in the Party of the Soviet Union viewed the practice of purging memberships as outlandish or inappropriate. Richard Pipes articulates this best in his book *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* in which he argues "Stalin was a true Leninist in that he faithfully followed his patron's political philosophy and practices. Every ingredient of what has come to be known as Stalinism save one- murdering fellow Communists- he had learned from Lenin, and that includes the two actions for which he is most severely condemned: collectivization and mass terror."[62] The system existed already under Lenin without the use of murder and under the guidance of Stalin and his cohorts, its use became known as the Great Terror as he employed it for his political and personal advantages.

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[59] Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 296.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Barry McLoughlin and Kevin McDermott ed., *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 86.
[62] Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 262.

The most notorious part of the Soviet Terror lasted from 1936-1939 and consisted largely of three major trials held in Moscow that properly set the stage for Terror. This can be assumed as the first stage of the Purges under Joseph Stalin. With the mechanisms in place to control society and implement a totalitarian dictatorship, all Stalin required was an event large enough to ignite fear and allow the government to root out anyone opposed to Stalin and his ways. He required a justifiable reason to remove possible enemies of the state and dissenters from the Bolshevik Party ranks, as well as anyone who may surpass his leadership. Suspicions surrounding the details of this stage exist because of the corrupt nature of the NKVD and the mystery of Stalin's motives. However, the Moscow Show trials in themselves were extremely well publicized and several historians have extensively researched this area with the resources and records available. With the removal of oppositionists, Stalin's ideological thoughts and theories became the sole source of ideological thought for the Communists. To insure that this remained the way, it necessitated the removal of any others who held different views or who might challenge his ideological authority. Systematically, prior to the Purges, Stalin surrounded himself with those he considered to be reliable, if only because they had something in their past's to hide, or those with a dogged devotion to the man himself. They were often men of ability, if not brilliance.[63] They included devoted followers of Stalin, allies, and supporters. Originally this included Vyacheslov Molotov, Grigori "Sergo" Ordzhonikidze, Valerian Kuybyshev, Sergei Kirov, Lazar Kaganovich, Yan Rudzutak, Andrei Zhdanov, and Nikolai Yezhov.[64] These men came to signify those closest to Stalin and those whose futures proved vital to the Great Terror.

With his loyal following and alliances in place, Stalin still felt the pressure of possible enemies and those who may carry more favor among the Old Guard revolutionaries. On December 1, 1934, a shot was fired in Leningrad.[65] This shot alone would signal an end to the past and fearful beginning to the future. Its ricochets would kill the former party elite, commissars, judges, senior army officers, captains of industry,

[63] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 12.
[64] Ibid, 12-15.
[65] Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen: The Tyrant and Those Who Killed for Him* (New York: Random House, 2005), 247.

and millions more. The death of Leningrad Party boss Sergei Kirov was the first and last assassination of a Soviet Politburo member. Shot point blank in the head by Leonid Nikolaev, a former employee of the Leningrad party, Kirov was dead almost instantly while mysteriously found unprotected. This killing provided the impetus for years of reprisals and anti-terrorist actions to ensue. When the news initially reached Stalin, he ordered a special train to take him to Leningrad and immediately drafted a decree to ward of terrorism without consultation with the Politburo. This Charter of Terror stated three main components:

1. Investigative agencies are directed to speed up the cases of those accused of the preparation or execution of acts of terror.
2. Judicial organs are directed not to hold up the execution of death sentences pertaining to crimes of this category in order to consider the possibility of pardon, because the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR does not consider as possible the receiving of petitions of this sort.
3. The organs of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs are directed to execute the death sentence against criminals of the above-mentioned category immediately after the passage of sentences.[66]

This was the first successful exercise in Stalin's technique which would be utilized time and time again in which the state of emergency was used to justify seemingly unconstitutional actions. The death of Kirov allowed the dictator to install a system of punishment and purging which was unquestionable and in the supposed best interest of the people. Similar to Adolf Hitler's use of the appearance of legality to seize power of the German state, Stalin simply adopted a well used technique of using the advent of terror or war to circumvent civil liberties.

Historical sources continue to debate whether Stalin planned the murder or whether Nikolaev committed it as recorded in official records. Robert Conquest argues that the issuance of the decree against terrorism and civil liberties of Soviet citizens was preplanned as a means to justify the use of execution.[67] While Donald Rayfield leaves

[66] Conquest, 41.
[67] Ibid, 41-42.

the argument to the simple statement, "that Leonid Nikolaev was a demented, aggrieved killer acting on his own, aided only by luck in encountering Kirov when he was unguarded."[68] A more recent discovery in 2005 by Matthew Lenoe, who did a fellowship at the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University, suggests that Stalin did not plan the murder, but used it to his advantage based off of one man's words, an NKVD commissar who defected to Japan in June 1938 named Genrikh Samoilevich Liushkov.[69] According to Lenoe, Liushkov had been one of the head investigators of the Kirov murder arriving on the same train as Stalin. He was taken into custody by the Japanese while performing duties in the East. He provided information to the Japanese about NKVD politics, numbers of executions, and other matters which correspond to the KGB-FSB archival releases in the 1990s. Lenoe's work provides a buttress of support to the shaky belief system surrounding most of the Soviet documentation of this period. While not definitive or all encompassing, his work provides a contemporary view that it is unlikely that Stalin had a hand in ordering the assassination but that he did use it to fabricate murderous charges.[70] The debate continues today in large part because of unreliable information and the continuation of some Cold War politics. Regardless of the dictator's complicity with the murder, the fact remains that from this event on the Soviet system began to utilize an aggressive system of terror. After Kirov's death, Stalin worked through the NKVD to charge the ever growing group of oppositionists with Kirov's murder and other trumped up charges of treason, sabotage, and espionage.

It began with Stalin's personal interrogation of Nikolaev and Kirov's bodyguard. Molotov, with a certain aversion to honesty, later reminisced in his own dictations on the conversation that ensued. He seemingly reiterated the original official ruling that Nikolaev had committed the crime based on ideological reasons.[71] Eventually, Nikolaev incriminated two of Stalin's political opponents, Lev Kamenev and Grigori Zinoviev. The stage was now set for widespread arrests and purging which all revolved around one man's actions and testimony, Leonid Nikolaev."The negligence in protecting such a high

[68] Rayfield, 248.
[69] Matthew Lenoe, "Key to the Kirov Murder on the Shelves of Hokkaido University Library" (New York: University of Rochester, 2005-2006), Accessed October 2009, http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/eng/news/no13/enews13-essay3.html.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid, 251.

party official was without precedent in the Soviet Union."[72] Suspicion arose and an atmosphere to suppress dissention took place. Alexander Barmine, a Soviet defector and harsh criticizer, argues that the lack of security surrounding Kirov may have been intentional as have many others including Nikita Khrushchev. He represents several Soviet historian's and émigré beliefs on the guilt of Stalin and his company in the assassination. This example stands as just one of many historical questions left only partially resolved and serves as one of the most highly debated and discussed aspects of the inauguration of the Terror.

The aftermath that ensued was unprecedented. Immediately following the murder, Stalin boarded a train for Leningrad to personally investigate this heinous act of terrorism. Several NKVD officers from the Leningrad branch were convicted of carelessness and effectively demoted, without serving their convicted sentences. Instead they were placed in executive positions in Stalin's labor camps.[73] The punishment of those immediately surrounding the case was nothing in comparison to the next four years. As Kirov's body lay in state, Stalin appeared to express great grief over the fallen comrade and promised to avenge his death.[74] A subsequent witch hunt began for the accused Zinovievites and conspirators. The country saw a wave of arrests with little formality sweep away those listed as political suspects. Connections were even found linking the assassination with counterrevolutionary elements working in Ukraine. In a report titled "On the Preliminary Results of Investigations Related to the Inspection of Party Identification Papers" written on November 24, 1935.[75] One thousand eight hundred and three persons were arrested accused of being spies, Trotskyites, nationalists, individuals concealing a counterrevolutionary past, and being criminal elements. Within Russia, thousands who had been readmitted to the Party were again expelled. In December 1934, a secret letter from the Central Committee, entitled "Lessons of the Events Connected with the Heinous Murder of Comrade Kirov,"

[72] Alexander Barmine, *One Who Survived* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1945), 252.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Conquest, 45.
[75] V. Balitskii, "On the Preliminary Results of Investigation Related to the Inspection of Party Identification Papers", in *Revelations from the Russian Archives*, ed. Diane P. Koenker and Ronald D. Bachman (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 89-90.

was sent to the Party Committees for review and action.[76] A call to hunt, expel and arrest all oppositionists had now been made. There had been no real protests to these actions because there was almost no civil society left at the time. The Church had been reduced to near ruins as Bolshevik ideology took over. The legal and medical professions were brought under the Party line. The intelligentsia had been exiled, imprisoned, and terrorized. Stalin's insistence for death as punishment faced little to no opposition. His next move was to sketch out a plan to assign possible opponents in the "Leningrad center" and the "Moscow center".[77] Any type of connection to the assassination of Kirov allowed Stalin to quickly begin to collect long lists of names and suspects for arrest.

In 1934, Kamenev and Zinoviev were officially charged with Kirov's murder. Their slow exile from society was underway. The first step was to remove any loyal followers of Zinoviev or Kamenev from the secret police. To bring the Leningrad Party and its organizations under the Moscow leadership's rule, they replaced the NKVD officers with those they considered reliable from Moscow. From Nikolaev's confession, the purges geared themselves towards crushing the Zinovievites. An indictment followed that stated that the accused were wreaking vengeance for crimes committed previously against the followers of Zinoviev. Lists were made and individuals arrested. The first trial of 1934-1935 included those immediately connected to the assassination. The first fourteen accused were shot in a death cellar. The last man to be shot was Ivan Kotolynov. Prior to his execution a guard asked him to tell the truth because he was going to die. In response Kotolynov said, "The whole of this trial is nonsense. People have been shot. I'm going to be shot now. But none of us, except Nikolaev, is guilty of anything."[78] This may be one of the first accounts of a victim referring to the proceedings as ridiculous, but it certainly is not the last, and the terror system spread. Nikolaev's immediate family faced the barrel of a gun themselves soon after as did anyone accused of ever following Zinoviev or other factions. The subsequent trial of the left oppositionists was a farce. Kamenev and Zinoviev were given reduced sentences

[76] Conquest, 45.
[77] Robert W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia 1934-1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 23.
[78] Rayfield, 256.

that were later revoked. Leningrad's opposition had been effectively suppressed for awhile and the terror system was able to move onto former aristocrats, civil servants, and others who could have posed a threat. By 1935 the case was officially considered closed, but that was not to last.

The NKVD chief during all of these events was Genrikh Iagoda. Through these events, however, Stalin came to view him as soft on sentencing and suspects. On March 25, 1936, Iagoda in an effort to appear as a strong force against the terrorist elements of society proposed drastic measures be taken against Trotskyites in a memorandum to Stalin.[79] With this renewed vigor, the persecution intensified. Anyone convicted of participating in Terror was retried and executed.[80] On September 25, 1936 Stalin sent a telegram to Molotov and others of the Political Bureau deeming it necessary that Comrade Nikolai Yezhov be nominated to the position of People's Commissar for Internal Affairs. This was called for in the light that Iagoda appeared to be incapable of successfully unmasking the Trotskyite-Zinoviev centers.[81] Iagoda effectively handed over his office on September 29, 1936.[82] The stage was set for the first in a series of public trials of oppositionists and dangerous elements. The only thing that remained to be done was to create a public explanation for why this occurred so long after the Kirov trial had been officially closed. This came in the form of a secret letter from the central committee. In this letter Yezhov wrote that the true extent of the counterrevolutionary movement had not been uncovered originally and that newly uncovered information revealed threats present in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and several other cities.[83] This extensive report laid open the rationale for this new surge in repression and created a substantially viable set of documentation based on secret interrogations to support its assertions. With this document in place and sent to the Party organizations throughout the country, it appeared that yet again Stalin and his

[79] A. Vyshinsky, "Document 72: Letter from Vyshinsky to Stalin on Trotskyists", in *The Road to Terror: Stalin andThe Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, by J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 249.

[80] J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 249.

[81] Khrushchev, Secret Speech.

[82] Conquest, 139.

[83] N. Yezhov, "Document 73: Secret Letter from the Central Committee of the VKP(B)", in *The Road to Terror*, byJ. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 250-255.

cohorts succeeded in creating the feeling that enemies were everywhere and especially present in the opposition.

By August 1936, the first Moscow Show trial occurred including Zinoviev, Kamenev, I.N. Smirnov, and thirteen other former oppositionists. They were put on trial for treason. Two unique occurrences happened that would set a precedent for future trials; first, all of the accused confessed to having organized a terrorist center under Trotsky's guidance and to having plans for further assassinations, except Smirnov.[84] Secondly, unlike most court cases, the sentences had been prepared before the trials even began by non-judicial authorities.[85] This eventually included one hundred and sixty people whom were arrested with connections to terrorism during 1936 with ties to the trial.[86] This first show trial sent a powerful signal to Soviet society and the government. It also serves as one of the first major uses of Terror following Kirov's murder that was not directly attached to the murder's investigation. It showed those that had previously belonged to oppositionist groups that no amount of loyalty or change of mind could serve as protection by 1936. While some may have been guilty of crimes against the Soviet Union and their dictator, many simply did not follow Stalin's cult of personality or political beliefs. In a Totalitarian regime it is improbable to believe that a leader whose aims are to control all aspects of society and everyday life would allow any form of bipartisanship to exist. One way of insuring that these elements were not acquitted was the use of interrogation. The techniques and tools utilized during interrogation cause the documentation of these trials to be shrouded with fallacies and corruption. The use of "punishment cells" as outlined by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, tells of how those convicted were placed in specific cells and forced to suffer starvation and cold temperatures for unspecified amounts of time.[87] One eighteen year old girl is reported to have been placed in ice cold water up to her ankles for two hours at the Chernovtsy prison in order to force her confession.[88] Due to the measures taken by the NKVD during this time and in an effort to exhume confessions, Soviet society began to believe that there truly were enemies in the government that needed to be removed.

[84] J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, 256.
[85] Conquest, 92.
[86] Ibid, 257.
[87] Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 113.
[88] Ibid, 114.

The reality that resulted from this first public trial not only produced the deaths of former leading revolutionaries, but also created a mindset that it was justifiable execution.

The trial itself served as a highly choreographed event. Each accused played their part by admitting to cooperating with the German and Japanese intelligence services, conspiracies surrounding Lenin and Stalin, and interacting with Trotsky. According to record, Stalin had a direct hand in editing and rewriting the lists of those accused. He even made a few additions to the defendants' testimonies. He forced Kamenev to state that, "Stalin's leadership has become as solid as granite, and it would be foolish to hope that this granite will begin to crack. That means that we will have to shatter it."[89] The end resulted in Soviet citizens and the world believing that threats to their safety and leaders existed and must be removed. The first show trial had been successful in setting the precedent for the Great Terror that was on its way.

With the official face of the enemy redesigned by the summer of 1936, the Party had a foundation for eliminating political and personal enemies and created an environment where future opposition could easily be removed. The new evil in society proved to be a catchall for a variety of undesirable actions in the Soviet Union. If there was something wrong it was easy to place it in that category and to remove it. This began to include agricultural shortcomings, industrial failures, political malfunctions, and several other societal issues. The Party had found its scapegoat again in the shape of the left opposition. Society appeared to view this threat as a very real possibility. The revolutions, civil war, and struggles of the past had created a sense that conspiracy, espionage, and terrorism existed throughout the country. This mentality existed especially among the Bolsheviks. The insecurity of previous years now found a secure base among the threat of any type of opposition. It appeared that there was little to no verbal or written opposition to the executions of these individuals. Some may claim that fear served as a deterrent while others attribute it to the ethics of Party discipline. One thing can be assumed to be accurate; Stalin created an atmosphere of crisis similar to that which occurred in Germany with the burning of the Reichstag. While it provided the face for the enemy, it also became a very dangerous tool for the Party elite and society

[89] Alexander Orlov, *Tainaia istoriia stalinskikh prestuplenii*, p. 81; *Pravda*, 20 (August 1936)

as it could easily include any number of individuals regardless of loyalty, membership, etc.

The second trial of the "Parallel anti-Soviet Trotskyist Center" opened in January 1937.[90] It involved seventeen lesser figures which included Karl Radek, Yuri Piatakov, and Grigori Sokolnikov.[91] They stood accused of industrial wreckage and plotting with Trotsky and Nazi Germany.[92] As with the previous trial, all of those accused confessed to the charges. The trial resulted in thirteen of the defendants facing execution and the rest receiving sentences in the Gulag labor camps, which served as another form of a death sentence. This trial tends to be considered lesser in the grand scheme of the Moscow public trials. Often glossed over in history works, this second trial convicted seventeen low profile individuals and served as a means to further rid the Party of questionable persons. This trial sufficiently followed the model of well scripted confessions and prosecution texts. Staged in part for the Soviets and also for the foreign press coverage, it would be assumed that Stalin would have orchestrated this trial with mastery by this point. The truth was that the fabricated trial appeared as more of a farce than the original show trial. Karl Radek served as a variation by insisting that he would plead guilty if he was allowed to write his own part in the trial. Upon the closing of the trial, the West's response did not amount to very much due to extenuating circumstances including the Spanish Civil War. British journalists reported that the accused confessed in the face of insurmountable evidence and not because of other pressures. The fascists stood alone in calling it a fabricated trial, but of course no one listened to them. The victims themselves contributed to the Western impression of the events. Karl Radek denied being coerced: "If the question is raised whether we were tortured during interrogation, then I have to say that it wasn't me who was tortured, but the interrogators who were tortured by me, sine I caused them unnecessary work."[93] One of the main questions that arises from this trial in particular is why did the accused not retract their confessions once in court? This remains one of the many vague aspects of this history. The full documentation is still not released and the best

[90] Rayfield, 315.
[91] Conquest, 135.
[92] J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, 365.
[93] Rayfield, 316.

speculation is that perhaps they were threatened by the guards or held extreme motives for complying with the system. This lingers as one of the many unanswerable questions.

In 1937 Stalin and Yezhov went after the military command. This trial is also referred to as the "Tukhachevsky Affair" and it tried and convicted high military commanders. This trial differed from the previous ones because it was a secret trial. It featured the same setup as the others but was not broadcasted as widely. The Red Army had been reshaped during the Russian Civil War under none other than Leon Trotsky. It also was the last organization outside of Yezhov's NKVD with the capability of posing a major threat to Stalin. On June 11, 1937, eight leading military commanders were tried. This included Mikhail Tukhachevsky, Iona Iakir, Ieronim Uborevich, Avgust Kork, Robert Edeman, Boris Feldman, Viktali Primakov, and Vitovt Putna.[94] A ninth victim committed suicide before the NKVD arrested him. The defendants, excluding Feldman, were all tortured and strongly encouraged to incriminate their judges, which they did. After much torture the once powerful military commanders all confessed to the crimes they were accused. Through these means, they incriminated fellow Red Army comrades and followed the trial script as instructed. Immediately following the trial they were executed. The trial triggered a massive consequent purge of the Red Army. The purge of the army was advertised as a campaign which created a new army "cleansed of rotten gangrene down to healthy flesh."[95] Following this next wave of purges, the military's losses surmounted to those similar to war. They attacked the upper echelons of the army aggressively and with purpose. It is estimated that of the ninety generals dismissed only nine survived; close to forty thousand officers and commissars were dismissed, with nearly eleven thousand arrested and seven thousand condemned.[96] There are no conclusive facts about the rationale behind the forged trial in large part because it was a secret trial and also because it is not known whether it was simply a political strategy of Stalin's or if a coup truly had been planned by Tukhachevsky as is suggested by official documentation. This purge particularly puzzles researchers, because it was a decision by a commander-in-chief to virtually cripple his own military

[94] Conquest, 182.
[95] Rayfield, 324.
[96] Gellately, 275.

while the threat of Hitler loomed overhead. Vadim Rogovin's book *1937: Stalin's Year of Terror* even raises the question of why the accused confessed so quickly to these crimes.[97] It took only about two weeks for the Red Army defendants to confess. Rogovin proposes that perhaps they could not mentally oppose their leader due to the engrained mentality of serving in the military. One thing we do know is that the secret purge of the military allowed Stalin to effectively dismantle the strongest organization within the Soviet Union and because it was a secret trial the public did not largely object to a trial of war heroes.

The third public show trial occurred in 1938 and is the most famous. It is also referred to as the "Trial of the Twenty-One". This final show trial tied together all of the loose ends that had yet to be taken care of by the previous trials. It included twenty-one defendants alleged to belong to the "Bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites". Of those tried, the list consisted of Nikolai Bukharin, Alexei Rykov, Nikolai Krestinsky, Christian Rakovsky, Genrikh Iagoda, three Kremlin doctors, and thirteen others.[98] The charges against them dated back to 1917 for serial murder, sabotage, inducing famine, treason, espionage, and terrorism. This trial, as did the others, played on the fears that had existed since the Civil War of foreign espionage and terrorism. This purge consumed the remaining Old Bolsheviks and the public did not swallow these accusations as easily as they may have in the first two trials. Rather than necessarily obediently believing the confessed guilt, it seemed more plausible that the public and the government realized the dangers of rising too high within the Soviet system and learned to remain silent. This trial saw one sensational event that occurred on the first day of the trial. One man refused to play along and confess by the name of Nikolai Krestinsky.[99] A former member of the first Politburo and an old Bolshevik, Krestinsky refused to affirm the charges asked of him by the President of the Court. The exchange that ensued signified the NKVD and Stalin's worst fear:

> The President: Accused Krestinsky, do you plead guilty to the charges brought against you?
>
> Krestinsky: I plead not guilty. I am not a Trotskyite. I was never a

[97] Vadim Rogovin, *1937: Stalin's Year of Terror* (Mehring Books, Inc, 1998), 213.
[98] Conquest, 341-3.
[99] Ibid, 343.

member of the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, of whose existence I was not aware. Nor have I committed any of the crimes with which I personally am charged, in particular I plead not guilty to the charge of having had connections with the German intelligence service.
The President: Do you corroborate the confession you made at the preliminary investigation?
Krestinsky: Yes, at the preliminary investigation I confessed, but I have never been a Trotskyite.
The President: I repeat the question, do you plead guilty?
Krestinsky: Before my arrest I was a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and I remain one now.
The President**:** Do you plead guilty to the charge of participating in espionage activities and of participating in terrorist activities?
Krestinsky: I have never been a Trotskyite, I have never belonged to the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites and have not committed a single crime.[100]

The next day Krestinsky changed his plea and the trial continued on as planned. By the end of all of this, two thirds of the 1,200 delegates to the February-March plenum of the Central Committee were dead.[101] This trial also removed Iagoda from serving as a potential leak of earlier terror operations, such as the murder of Kirov. Effectively, Stalin now secured his seat of power as dictator and removed anyone who refused to follow his ways.

The trials set the stage for the Terror as it pertained to the Communist elite and high ranking military. While many details are still unclear to the many intricacies of these trials, historians do know a great deal about the subject. Due to its wide Western coverage and public nature, the trials have been documented by many different sources. Yet, the truth behind the confessions and what happened during the interrogations are marred by individual beliefs in the Soviet ideology stated by Stalin and the fact that the trials themselves were scripted. Unlike the events of the 1940s or other events of the Purges, the trials stand as one of the most detailed aspects of this

[100] *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Bolshevik Rights and Trotskyites* (Moscow, 1938), 36.
[101] Rayfield, 318-9.

time and researchers have explored the reasons behind Stalin's motives for dismantling and remaking the government, bureaucracy, and military. The years 1936-1938 are largely characterized by these Show Trials but in reality the Yezhov bloodshed extended much further into the depths of society and affected millions of people. Many Soviet citizens lulled themselves into believing that Stalin and the NKVD were only purging the Party and those at the top, but in fact the Purges stretched to include the intelligentsia, cultural figures, scientists, church officials, and thousands of others.

Hitler had to negotiate with the churches to instate euthanasia programs for the mentally ill, he had to appeal to the masses to rise to power, and he had to mediate the business community with the ethnic Germans all while appearing legal. Stalin did not face these negotiations. He crushed the Orthodox Church based on Communist theory, surpassed the military, and even got away with slaughtering civilians at times. From 1937-1938 it is estimated that every tenth adult male in each city or village would vanish from existence.[102] The Terror had been felt in the rural populations since the catastrophic attempts at collectivization. This transformation from private agriculture to socialist production occurred in the late 1920s and resulted in the arrests of countless kulaks, or wealthy peasants, and the deaths of millions of others. A system based on fear easily infiltrates the wider society as a whole. As the Bolsheviks purged among their own ranks, dissidents throughout the population were uncovered and arrested as well. The Terror took on an impressively wide scope during the 1930s and affected nearly all aspects of society but it hit the intelligentsia and cultural centers especially hard since they are the disseminators of society.

Among the intelligentsia the writers faced the deadliest attack during the Purges. Those who perished during this time included Osip Mandelstam, Isaac Babel, Boris Pilnyak, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Titsian Tabidze, Pavel Vasiliev, and thousands of others. Osip Mandelstam served as a great poet for most of his life but was arrested in 1934 for reciting an anti-Stalin poem and rearrested in 1938 for counterrevolutionary activities.[103] The writer Isaac Babel saw arrest in 1939 charged with Trotskyist ties and foreign espionage while Georgian poet Titsian Tabidze was arrested in 1937 and subsequently

[102] Ibid, 294.
[103] Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 248.

tortured. The list of writers and playwrights arrested and tortured is extensive. While their stories are not always the best documented, their arrests and sentences are clear. During the 1930s serving as a writer in the Soviet Union was just as dangerous as being a top member of the military or the Bolshevik Party. The Writer's Union served as the Party's controlling organization to insure that writers provided the population with nothing that opposed the current regime. According to the Writer's Union some two thousand literary figures were repressed during the 1930s and nearly fifteen hundred died in the Gulags.[104] A frontal attack on the cultural aspects of the Soviet Union existed throughout the Purges, but they were not limited to these areas. Demian Bedny's opera was banned by the NKVD and his reaction according to the NKVD bordered suicidal: "The oppression and terror in the USSR are such that neither literature nor science is possible…It seems I've been in a party, 99.9 percent of who were spies and provocateurs. Stalin is a horrible person and is often motivated by personal scores." He continues to state that Stalin has, "exterminated everybody, there's nobody, everyone's annihilated."[105]

As the previous quote denotes, the Terror also touched upon an unlikely area of Soviet society to be purged. In the wake of massive industrialization and the possibility of a war with Germany, it seemed improbable that the Terror would approach the scientific community. Despite its improbability, the scientists of the USSR faced a similar fate as the cultural society. The Meteorological Office was violently purged beginning in 1933 because it failed to predict the weather that greatly damaged that year's crops.[106] Astronomy in general suffered an extremely violent version of the Terror. Beginning in early 1936, astronomers faced arrest and quickly disappeared. Twenty-seven astronomers were removed and work in most labs halted.[107] Biology faced similar repercussions. The scientific community faced purges in large part due to its reliance on positive results. Despite the fact that science is often based on specific variables and not always favorable to a government's intended plans, Stalin punished those he deemed capable of wrecking and sabotage. Rather than believing that the

[104] Conquest, 297.
[105] Rayfield, 327.
[106] Ibid, 295.
[107] Ibid.

scientists could not have created any other result than what occurred, Stalin saw mistakes and terrorism. Scientists of all types found themselves facing execution and arrest, because the five year plans did not succeed or their findings did not toe the party line.

The purges claimed victims from every corner of society; the NKVD was willing to unmask spies, traitors, and oppositionists anywhere they may exist. Historians and professors faced high suspicion as well and the NKVD often charged them with terrorist activities. This area of the purging in particular seems to be quite hypocritical. Professors and lecturers presumably had easy access to malleable students, a tool that the Communists had utilized themselves prior to the Revolution. Many were considered to be the leading officials of terrorist centers. The intelligentsia that had once served as the base of power for the Bolsheviks themselves now faced the terror themselves. One of the side effects of being purged was the removal of the individual from the Soviet history books and the removal of all of their works from society. The purges of the sciences caused incredible setbacks for the Soviet Union and overall stunted the cultural growth of several generations. As with anyone arrested, the person ceased to exist after their arrest. Their arrival at the Gulag labor camps signaled their exit from the Soviet world. Upon entering these camps, many writers and members of the intelligentsia quickly perished due to poor conditions and mistreatment. By Soviet standards, the fate of the victims was considered classified and to this day the fate of many of those who disappeared remains unknown.

July 30, 1937 saw the issuance of the NKVD Order no. 00447 which classified kulaks and other anti-Soviet elements as belonging to the Gulag camps or to death.[108] Issued by Yezhov, it concerned groups considered to be former kulaks, socially dangerous elements, former Whites and Tsarist supporters, bureaucrats, and political opponents. The order set up a quota system to insure that any possible dissention was effectively removed from the country. For example, the Moscow region had five thousand individuals considered to be anti-Soviet elements and thirty thousand as socially dangerous.[109] The order provided a guidebook to the Terror. It set quotas for

[108] Gellately, 244.
[109] Ibid.

deaths in the camps and outlined exactly who was to be arrested. Order no. 00447 saw perpetual alterations as it was decided the Terror needed to be increased. On February 17, 1938, the Central Committee gave the NKVD permission to increase the arrests of kulaks and other oppositionist elements to be submitted to the troikas for consideration.[110] The Terror spread to every region of the country as regional directors aimed to outperform each other. It spread from politics to academia to individual citizens. No one was safe from the Terror and often confessions and sentences were delivered with false claims and little evidence.

One final aspect of this Terror that bears mention is the existence of the Gulag concentration camps. The term Gulag is an acronym for the Glavnoe Upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovkh LAGerei.[111] Concentration camps were created after the 1917 revolution, but the system grew to tremendous proportions under Stalin's leadership. These camps were originally designed as rehabilitative centers for those who needed help finding their way to the Communist ideology. These camps existed throughout the Soviet Union, but the larger ones were located in the most extreme regions. By 1934 the camps held several millions of inmates. Prisoners included thieves, political and religious dissenters, kulaks, and others accused of being anti-Soviet or treasonous. Prisoners engaged in economic tasks, but their work was typically unskilled and manual. The camps are credited with making significant contributions to the Soviet economy, including the creation of the White Sea-Baltic Canal, the Baikal-Amur railroad line, and strategic road developments. Prisoners within the Gulag worked in a variety of industries providing a much needed labor supply to growing industry. The Gulag camps provided cheap and easily replenished workers and because they were prisoners they had no choice on whether to work or not and worked as strenuously as the guards instructed them. There is no doubt that the inmates contributed enormously to the economic growth of the 1930s. Surrounded by walls of barbed wire, the camps were secretive and conditions on the inside were hidden from the world. The conditions within the camps were often harsh. While they differed from camp to camp it is possible to make some generalizations in regards to the lifestyles that occurred within the

[110] Ibid, 245.
[111] Anne Applebaum, *The Gulag: A History* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), xv.

fences. Prisoners were effectively dehumanized as they entered the system. They rarely received adequate food rations, clothing, and worked extensive hours. The death rate from exhaustion and disease in the camps was high. The guards abused the inmates physically and mentally. The victims of the Great Terror who were not killed by execution following their trial or troika usually died in the camps as a result of starvation, hypothermia, or exhaustion. The numbers of the victims involved in the Gulag system has long been a part of historical debate. The figures relating to the Great Terror are even more difficult to determine. The annual totals fail to account for prisoner movement from year to year. Due to constant movement and deaths, the true number of inmates may well never be known.

The Great Terror from 1936-1939 is often referred to as Yezhovschina due to its notable leader Nikolai Yezhov. As the Terror began to subside for the time, Yezhov became the latest scapegoat to be consumed. It cannot be denied that Yezhov oversaw and conducted one of the bloodiest periods of Soviet history. He purged society so drastically that generations of Russians remained in fear, with Stalin often intervening directly in the management of the Terror. The attacks left the Soviet Union successfully in Stalin's hands, but they also heavily drained the citizens the country needed desperately to allow it to successfully move forward. By the autumn of 1938 the Terror seemed to stop. In order to end the purges without appearing to have made a mistake, Yezhov had to be held responsible. Thankfully for Stalin, records indicate that Yezhov succumbed to heavy drinking and by December 1937 the Politburo granted him leave.[112] On April 6, 1938, Yezhov was appointed People's Commissar for Water Transport signaling his slow downward spiral.[113] By August, Stalin appointed Lavrenti Beria head of the NKVD directorate for state security and Yezhov's deputy. In April, 1939, Yezhov's arrest went quietly unreported. During his trial he said:

> Shoot me peacefully without agonies. Neither the court nor the Central Committee will believe I am innocent. If my old mother is still alive, I ask for her old age to be provided for and for my

[112] Hagenloh, 281.
[113] Rayfield, 337.

> daughter to be brought up. Please do not repress my relatives, my nephews, since they are guilty of absolutely nothing…Please tell Stalin that everything has happened to me is just a coincidence of circumstances and it is quite possible that enemies whom I missed have had a hand in it. Tell Stalin that I shall be dying with his name on my lips.[114]

With those final words a new era of Terror arose under the guidance of Lavrenti Beria and the Great Terror, while accomplishing Stalin's goals, passed as a terrible period of Soviet history that to this day serves as highly debated historical topic. There are several aspects of these events that researchers may never know completely, but the years of 1936-1939 exist as the best known events of Stalin's reign

[114] Aleksei Polianskii, *Ezhov*, (Moscow, 2001), 304-05.

CHAPTER 3

TERRORIZING EVERYDAY LIFE FOR THE SOVIET CITIZEN

Terror served as a weapon to the Stalinist regime from its inception in the 1920s. Initially it regulated itself to the Communist Party in an effort to expunge possible enemies to the state and to Stalin's power. While job security in the Soviet Union became a joke to many, it appeared to the mass population that it was merely a Communist ordeal and that any one not associated with the Party would be safe. Yet, eventually the Party's seats were filled with reliable young Stalinists that toed the party line accordingly. This left a vacuum for the Terror and the system that created it found itself with two options: end the fear or continue it. As noted previously, Stalin's Terror continued policies of his predecessors with a new direction manufactured by Stalin and his closest confidantes. The Purges did not end with the cleansing of the Party, as a matter of fact, they lasted the entire span of Stalin's dictatorship only ending in 1953. Through a growing amount of primary resources including diaries, memoirs, oral histories, and personal testaments the true extent of the Terror emerges. It encompassed an entire society and infiltrated the everyday lives of millions of citizens without a word from the international community. While the 1930s saw a series of events that brought an unimaginable death toll outside of the actions of war, it was not secluded to any particular section of the population. To truly ignite a sense of emergency the fear must be experienced by the entire state. As with Adolf Hitler's successful implementation of fear against Communism within Germany, the use of fear helped him to obtain the trust of the German people resulting in his legal election to the government. Stalin's terror system needed to create a sense of emergency so that murder and extreme measures would seem necessary and not elicit further opposition. By creating a sense of panic among the entire population, he succeeded in scarring a generation of Russians into psychological paranoia, fear, and anxiety.

The 1930s saw a continuation of events within the Soviet Union that settled into a virtual battle of good versus evil. Historians often explore the truth behind the Great Terror to better understand its sweeping effects on a population that for years seemed

out of reach to academics. Official statistics as of 2007 state that the Soviet secret police, or the NKVD, arrested approximately 1, 575, 259 people; these arrests led to 1, 344, 923 convictions and 681,692 executions.[115] Statistics of this time period prove to be somewhat unreliable in nature due to the Soviet Union's historical tendencies for extreme censorship and secrecy. However, regardless of the accurate number, the magnitude of the total loss of human life is expressed in its grim reality. The terror has been linked with several high profile Soviet events including the Moscow Show Trials, the arrests and executions of Communist Party members and elites, and military leaders. Its expansive scope has resulted in several debates over accurate numbers, which can be a tenuous activity and can attract severe historical criticism. The Terror goes far beyond debates on numbers, however, and extends to the human cost that afflicted nearly every Soviet citizen in one way or another. The expansion of the Terror into efforts to inflate its reach resulted in a much larger movement against those termed 'enemies of the people' that resulted in the arrests of innumerable individuals. The question that arises beyond the political phase of the purges directs itself at answering how the terror affected life at the bottom levels of life among the everyday, ordinary people that history often neglects. How did they react to the pressure? How did they live their lives? What roles did they play in the events?

The human experience is difficult to discount upon closer examination of events. The purges touched not only those at the very top of the Party, but directly permeated the bottom echelons of society. News of arrests flooded the country daily, historians, teachers, doctors, artists, engineers, army officers, and even children joined the already long list of those affected. If one believes the previous statistics, the true extent of the Terror becomes almost suffocating. The Gulag camp system that had been in place for years prior, held a continual residence of four million lives total as of 1941, with an estimated extra two million incarcerated in corrective labor.[116] They were convicted of a variety of crimes largely between the years of 1930-1941 and were sent to these

[115] Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 160.
[116] Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 264.

corrective camps to undergo work rehabilitation to mend their ways.[117] While the true number of executions may never be precisely known, according to author and historian Robert Gellately the true ratio of the physical population and the numbers of those arrested configures to show that "one or more members of every second family suffered arrest, execution, or detention."[118] Numerically speaking it appears that the Stalinist Purges affected more lives at the bottom of society than at the top which makes the possible inclusion of their stories even more compelling.

The previous chapter covered the purges of the Communist Party officials, those close to Stalin personally and professionally, those involved in Communist Party politics and the Central Committee officials who perished. These individuals constituted a substantial portion of those arrested and executed at this time, but their stories tend to overshadow those considered to be 'ordinary' or 'everyday'. This chapter examines the teachers, guards, neighbors, family members, and those whose names may not be readily knowledgeable to the average historian or reader. Two words that require definition for historical use are 'ordinary' and 'everyday'. The word ordinary pertains to those who waited in seemingly endless lines for bread, the men who oversaw arrests, children who watched their families torn apart while desperately grasping onto their Communist ideology, and thousands of others; people whose stories only exist today because their memoirs, diaries, and words which express their anguish and lives during these horrific times. As the future marched on and the distance between the 1930s and the present expanded, the personal side of these horrific times emerged. The importance that they hold is the narrative of the way people simply lived their lives day in and day out. What materializes from a closer inspection of these resources is a series of interchangeable categories and roles including the perpetrators, collaborators, victims, families, and social life. As people went about living their lives in the 1930s and 1940s, they often found themselves fulfilling one of these roles, if not more. These ways of life and terms became transposable as time continued and the Terror transformed; perpetrators became victims and so on.

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[117] Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 328-9.
[118] Gellately, 265.

"No one at the top had the strength to face up to Stalin's use of murder for his own ends…"[119] Pavel Anatolievich Sudoplatov wrote in his memoirs his belief that Stalin was untouchable and the fear was too thick for most to permeate. The system of Terror that emerged under Joseph Stalin could not have succeeded without those who chose to work as its agents and perpetrators. They are the people who daily obeyed orders, fulfilled quotas, arrested, and executed people. They constituted the NKVD officials, guards, and others who fed the terror organization. They composed, compiled, and completed the lists and quotas. Officials such as Nikolai Yezhov have become recognizable names in the study of Soviet history due to their part played during this time. As the leader of the NKVD in the 1930s, his hands are greatly stained by the blood of thousands that met their fate by his signature and supervision. He is by chance the most notable transposable figure from the Great Terror. Once at the top standing directly beside Stalin and working to conspire with him, he soon became a scapegoat for the dictator and found himself at the receiving end of an execution by February 4, 1940.[120] Beyond Yezhov, however, were hundreds of names associated with the mass arrests and deaths that occurred daily. Collectively they are regularly portrayed as the willing foot soldiers and conspirators that readily performed whatever tasks set forth by Stalin in order to please his terror system. Yet what becomes of those who went along with the system for different reasons? What happens when one dissects the story further than the cult theory? They still played a major role in the system and are no less significant than those who signed the death warrants. One unexpected differentiation within the category of perpetrators divides this group into two sections: that of the unwilling, reluctant participant and those who contentedly participated in the daily tasks and orders. At times, these categories can be difficult to differentiate between or they are quite distinct and obvious.

The unwilling participants create a paradox amongst the stories of the perpetrators. On the one hand they continued to obey orders, arrest people, and follow the organization as the Terror grew. Yet on the other, and often in their own words,

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[119] Pavel Sudoplatov and Anatoli Sudoplatov, *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness-A Soviet Spymaster* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), 55.

[120] Jonathan Brent, *Inside the Stalin Archives: Discovering the New Russia*, (New York: Atlas & Co., 2008), 2.

they describe their situation as being between obedience and death. This concept is encapsulated best in the concept of "if I did not kill them, would I have not been killed myself?" or the 'us' versus 'them' notion.[121] One personal account by a former Chekist and guard-marksman, Arkadi Ivanovich Mylitsyn, describes the emotions involved with the Great Terror's functions and how difficult it was for him to personally carry out his orders. "I was forced to participate in the most terrible things-the execution of unarmed people who had been condemned to death. I had to act as a part…, hanging over Russia…"[122] Mylistyn shows how some guards were reluctant to commit atrocities and that they occasionally tried to avoid being assigned such tasks. "I could never forget this horror, no matter how hard I try. That day I was assigned to Sekirnaia as a guard. Until then, I had managed to get other assignments, but that time it did not work out. I had to go."[123] Describing how the guards given the assignment of lifting the bodies of those executed onto carts he states that they were nervous and ghastly. "From my post at the door I could see it all. About eight guards loaded the still warm and convulsing bodies onto carts and drove them away. If only you could have seen those guards' faces-they looked ghastly. With their wandering eyes and confused movements, you could tell these people were in a bad way."[124] Mylitsyn describes this event from the late 1930s with an eye for compassion and unwillingness on the part of the guards to perform these unfavorable commands. Stepan Marton, an Austro-Hungarian whom willingly lived within Russia, explained his actions during this time to his daughter by stating, "I was just following orders."[125] For many perpetrators recounting their stories later this line of answering became their standard defense for their actions. Where physical resistance was not always a possibility, some claimed later that mentally they did not follow the Communist line closely enough to believe that what they were doing was just.

The cases presented above do not necessarily represent the majority of perpetrators of the Great Terror; in fact there was another side of those who agreed with the orders and found a sense of perverse accomplishment in their work. As citizens of

[121] Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda, and Dissent, 1934-1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 124-6.
[122] Veronica Shapovalov ed., *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 60.
[123] Ibid, 61.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Adam Hochschild, *The Unquiet Ghost: Russians Remember Stalin* (New York: Viking, 1994), 219.

the world today, there is a desire to believe that heroic resistance to evil is always possible and/or attempted. Many Soviets in the thirties experienced the revelation that resistance was a noble concept, but having a chance of surviving such resistance presented a major obstacle that many could not overcome. The task of the NKVD and its officials was, "to destroy in the most merciless way possible all of this band of anti-Soviet elements."[126] Especially notable within this subcategory of perpetrators are the interrogators; those that questioned the arrested and sealed their fate. "The interrogators were violent. [The] main aim was to make a prisoner sign his interrogation record. Those who refused had their fingers squeezed between the door and the wall until their fingers were broken."[127] Some can even be cited for claiming that they had become so good at their job that they could, "make Karl Marx confess to being an agent…"[128] The interrogators were just a fraction however of those involved. After those arrested confessed to any number of crimes, they then entered the system. Along the path for convicts included many who seem to truly enjoy their work. Camp commander Comrade Uspenskii is a great example of those. In one incident cited by a guard witnessing the event, Uspenskii showed absolutely no mercy for the wife of a man who had just been executed. Inside the walls of a church, he seemed to gain happiness for putting a group of religious dissenters to their death, including this woman. The woman, Iaroslavskaia, rushed over to Uspenskii, as she approached, he cursed her with foul words saying, "What? Now you will follow your husband! With this very gun I put a bullet in Iaroslavskii's stupid head!"[129] He then went on to viciously kick her while she was on the ground, laughing the entire time.

Many accounts of sinister perpetrators cite laughter as a disturbing part of their character. One especially disturbing case on a larger scale is of a friendly competition between towns to see which could out do the other in the number of executions performed. The town of Tomsk won the competition citing that it shot one out of every six citizens living within its limits.[130] This over enthusiastic behavior was not limited in

[126] Viola, 163.
[127] Ibid, 224.
[128] Robert Conquest, *Inside Stalin's Secret Police: NKVD Politics, 1936-39* (London: The MacMillan Press LTD, 1985), 57.
[129] Shapovalov, 62.
[130] Hochschild, 226.

its scope. Some accounts even state a sick perversion to executions, especially when alcohol was involved (which was often the case). In Kuybyshev, two young school teachers had fallen in love. When it was their time to be executed, the executioners, clearly inebriated, told the male teacher that if he completed intercourse with the woman while his hands were tied, they would be saved. They then inserted him into the woman and as he began, they threw a rope around them both and strangled them.[131] The accounts of perverted executions are plenty and the reasoning and justification are usually lacking. The stories of the perpetrators who appeared to enjoy their work are often cited by witnesses not the people themselves, which inevitably allows for doubt. While this does not completely discredit these accounts, it does bear important to remember that sometimes human perceptions play their role in memories. As with the portrayal of the unwilling perpetrators, it is difficult to always perceive the seemingly willing perpetrator as the enduring antagonist. Their role shifts between a sense of duty and a raw and honest belief in the propaganda and ideology that swept Soviet society. As well, many perpetrators found their roles switched as the Terror continued and they themselves became victims.

The second category that arises is that of the collaborator, which at times can be quite similar to that of the perpetrators. Collaborators can be viewed as those who cooperate with a system that they may not be a direct member of at the time. In the case of the Great Terror of the 1930s, collaboration took the form of those who assisted Stalin's system and often performed actions such as denunciation of fellow citizens and worked closely with the NKVD. The act of denouncing became vital to the effort of those rooting out the 'enemies of the people'. They eavesdropped on conversations, spied on neighbors, and even turned in family members. The reasons varied by the person. Some did it because they honestly believed the propaganda and the ideology of the Communist Party. Others did it to advance their own societal and occupational standings. Yet still other collaborators simply saw it as the only opportunity to save their own lives and those who they loved. Despite the reasoning, the collaborators became a vital cog on the terror assembly line. Living situations became dangerous grounds in which to express personal opinions due to their communal nature. These spaces not

[131] Ibid, 228-9.

only served to promote communism but also as grounds for the government to perform checks on public opinion and its people's daily actions and words. Neighbors watched neighbors, and the terror system flourished. The NKVD recruited family members to denounce their own, classmates to report on teachers and colleagues, and factory workers to condemn managers or coworkers. The NKVD saw everyone as a possible conspirator. Those with checkered pasts or negative marks on their biography especially appealed to them because they had something to gain from vigilance. Their allegiance was easier to obtain. Some received a paycheck from the secret police and found special favors allotted to them. Often times, however, the payment received simply entitled the bearer to their lives, which was a substantial payment for that time. In this atmosphere of fear, people began to mistrust each other and found it nearly impossible to communicate even through jokes. In response to these societal pressures, Soviet citizens began to self-censure themselves and whisper as Orlando Figes explores in his book *The Whisperers*.[132] Inna Sukhanova, the daughter of a perpetrator, describes this phenomenon best when she stated, "The way the Great Purge made everyone an accomplice, was like a snowball, rolling downhill, picking up more and more snow in its inevitable course."[133]

Stalinists utilized propaganda rampantly throughout the U.S.S.R. as a way to indoctrinate its citizens into the plans it set forth to cleanse society. One of the most famous uses of propaganda exploited to stimulate public participation was the story of Pavlik Morozov. The narrative tells that there were two brothers cruelly murdered in a rural Russian town. The accused killers were wealthy peasant, otherwise known as kulaks that were retaliating against Pavlik's denunciations of supposed wrong-doers, including his own father, for crimes against their Motherland. In 1932, the Soviet press celebrated how Pavlik had stood up in court and demanded the highest punishment for his father.[134] This propaganda story became popular within the U.S.S.R. and was used both to motivate and inspire the youth to become active participants in the plan to purify the population. Groups, such as the Pioneer organization in the 1930s, were employed

[132] Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Picador, 2007), 40.
[133] Hochschild, 218.
[134] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 669.

to develop the Soviet youth with the Communist ideology, to push a series of propaganda efforts on children encouraging them to support the process of denouncing, and to do what was best for their country. In 1931, Pioneer magazine published the following list of instructions for its young readers titled "What You Must Do":

> Agitate with your father, brothers, relations and friends and urge them to stick with their job to the end of the Five-Year plan. Fight for cultured daily life, for hygiene (air rooms, take care to keep things clean, etc.) Stamp out the drug of religion, expose priests' fairy tales for what they are. Explain the decisive significance of the third Five-Year plan to your relations. Make contracts of [socialist] competition with your father or with any of your brothers who are in employment.[135]

Such propaganda pressured ordinary people to spy on each other, to inform on their neighbors, and to root out enemies anywhere possible. Frequently, Soviets took these messages to heart and believed that their leadership was leading them into a future utopian civilization, and so they became willing participants of the Great Terror.

Not all collaborators did so due to ideology or a sense of decency; rather some were more devious individuals who informed on people in order to advance their own careers or living conditions. To enhance their own standing in society, people played into the propaganda and searched for 'enemies of the people'. Factory workers blamed managers and coworkers when expensive machinery broke in order to receive a promotion or to better their standing within the factory. Some students turned in professors and other students to strengthen their position in the academies. While others followed their beliefs in an infallible Soviet system that must be correct because it was all they knew. People seized the opportunity to monopolize on the times and manipulated the terror for their own personal gains. While to some this may seem like a sickening idea, it is important to remember that in the all encompassing atmosphere of terror, there may have been little to no other options.

[135] Catriona Kelly, "The Legend of Pavlik Morozov" (Forum for Levande Historia, May 10, 2008), www.levandhistoria.se/node/1886.

The agents found unique ways to casually obtain information on the population. They collected it by "standing in a queue outside a store, frequenting the kolkhoz market, listening to workers' complaints in the factory cafeteria, relaxing in a sauna or bathhouse, or talking to academics at the university."[136] Thousands of lower level workers managed to receive promotions by denouncing those above them as 'enemies of the people'. For example, Ivan Miachin managed to promote his personal career by denouncing no less than fourteen Party members and others in the Azerbaijan region between February and November of 1937.[137] To succeed in the Soviet Union, people were often faced with the choice of compromising their morals and while some abstained, many let their morals take a back seat and managed to exceed the Soviet standards of the day. This group is known as the denouncers in general terms and they appeared at all societal levels, but largely took shape near the bottom. Nazi Germany also had a similar pattern of denunciation under Hitler's rule. German citizens turned in Jewish neighbors and those considered different from the categorized Aryan ethnic description of race.

Denouncers, however, can be difficult to always portray in a negative light because sometimes those who informed on others truly viewed it as their only option. To save their own lives or the lives of those they loved, many saw no alternative than to comply with the NKVD's requests. They assisted in the arrests of another rather than be arrested themselves. For example, a young woman named Spragovsky remembers her father and how he willingly collaborated with officials in order to save himself and his family's lives. "The NKVD composed its lists of people to be arrested through the rural councils. My father was among those who helped pick these people. If he hadn't he would have been jailed himself. That's how he saved his skin. He also had five brothers, and he managed to keep all his brothers alive by collaborating with the NKVD."[138] This can be seen through many personal accounts of events in the era of the Purges. Many believed that it was easier to participate within the system than to find oneself on the outside and arrested. The collaborators took many shapes and forms. Claiming that

[136] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 164-5.
[137] Figes, 265.
[138] Hochschild, 226.

they did not know what they were doing would have been almost always a complete lie, and the majority of personal tales do not even attempt to proclaim that as the truth. Many however do state that it was due to necessity, not choice. People found themselves in a difficult position and self-preservation often took over.

The category that immediately follows the perpetrators and collaborators is that of the victims. Those arrested due to denouncements and varying other reasons under the organization of terror suffered a brutal and often cruel fate. They were treated poorly and with little to no respect. As seen with the case of the two teachers in love in the discussion on the perpetrators, the arrested were placed in degrading positions and were executed in demeaning and inhumane methods. Consistently they were not even told about the reasoning behind their arrests, just that they had been found guilty of being an enemy to the state. The accusations against them typically were nothing more than inflated charges to help fill the quotas set forth by the bureaucratic system of the Stalinist government, regardless of if the reasoning was that they were a kulak, a Trotskyite, or simply an enemy of the state.[139] An interview with a young Soviet woman named Dudareva describing her mother and father's arrests in 1937 reveals that whether they were guilty or not did not concern the NKVD. It was not the point of the arrests themselves that mattered but rather the perceived belief that they were guilty and appeasing the terror system.[140]

While several accounts exist today as accounts of the victim's plight none is more notable than Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's multivolume works. He is famous for describing the troubles of those arrested, especially those that ended up in the Gulag concentration camp system. he describes the atrocities and gruesome details of the people unfortunate enough to be arrested in the 1930s; including himself. According to Solzhenitsyn, during the years of 1937-38, the extraordinary amount of prisoners flowing in and out of the system led to the situation where, "interrogators were allowed to use violence and torture on an unlimited basis, at their own discretion, and in accordance with the demands of their work quotas and the amount of time they were

[139] Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 223-4.
[140] Irina Flige, Galina Vasilevna Dudareva Interview, April 2004, www.orlandofiges.com/interviews/Dudareva.php.

given."[141] This evidence shows that prisoners had a minute chance of maintaining their freedom or being treated with any sense of dignity. In the late 1930s, Michael, a colonel in the Red Army was arrested and interrogated for twelve days with uninterrupted questioning. While undergoing this extreme pressure, Michael retells that he refused to sign a confession for treason and also declined implicating others, even those that may have denounced him. He states, "I told them, what do you want of me? You say you have the evidence against me, so why don't you just go ahead and shoot me. But they wanted me to name others. I told them I wanted to die with a clear conscience."[142] Victims suffered greatly at the hands of the interrogators. Examiners not only attempted to root out others while questioning those arrested but also toyed with emotional distress of those across the table. Michael also states, "One of them who knew me well started talking very warmly about my wife and daughter and I was convulsed with crying."[143]

Interrogation was just the first step in the journey of the victim. They then either faced immediate execution, torture, or concentration camp sentences in Gulag camps. Those that were sent to their immediate executions often met their fate at the bottom of a mass grave. "There were no public trials. Nobody could appeal. Those arrested were executed at the spot…"[144] In interrogation centers, there was occasionally a pit dug, and when a prisoner approached it, they were unknowingly shot and conveniently fell into the pit in front of them.[145] Others found their fate at the hands of a process called "soap and rope", which involved throwing a rope with a bar of soap on the end which was then used to strangle the victim.[146] Those executed on the spot were spared the fate of enduring the tortures within the camps. Ivanov-Razumnik describes one other alternative, suicide. Upon his arrest, Razumnik illustrates how he was ordered to strip off his clothes and they, "cut out the metal fastening at the back" of his trousers because prisoners were not allowed to have sharp objects. Then he says, "A prisoner could always lay his hands on something sharp if so minded. …It was easy for him to get bits

[141] Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 99.
[142] Helen Beier and Eugenia Hanfmann, *Six Russian Men: Lives in Turmoil* (North Quincy, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1976), 41.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Hochschild, 228.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

of glass by breaking a window…and he could do so silently enough in a crowded cell!"[147] If those arrested were not immediately executed, sometimes they took their fate into their own hands. Unfortunately, many of these victims' stories are lost to researchers because they were not recorded or are still locked in Soviet archives.

The production of terror that existed within the Soviet system created victims out of nearly everyone that lived and breathed at this time. In this case, the title victim does not always just pertain to those arrested; in fact at times it was worse for those left behind. Thousands waited, searching and holding onto the memories of their loved ones and their lives before the Terror. A mother of a son arrested, Anna Akhmatova, wrote a poem that encapsulates the feelings of those who waited:

> Nor in the park by the hallowed tree, where an inconsolable shade seeks me.But here where three hundred hours and more, I stood and no one unlocked the door. Because even in blessed death I am afraid, I'll forget the noise Black Marias made. And the ugly way the door slammed shut, And the old woman's howl like a beast that was hurt. And from my motionless bronze lids, May the thawing snow stream down like tears. And the prison dove coo from afar, And the boats go quietly down the Neva.[148]

Amidst the activities of daily life, people survived in a heavy air of fear and worry. One of the most widely mentioned, and integral parts of creating this sense of fear is often referred to as the "knock on the door" concept, or as Vladimir Besleaga, a prominent Moldovan writer, describes it "awaiting the black crow". He recalls the terror that hung over his village from night to day every day. "During this period, people in the village were being arrested on a massive scale. Every morning, the neighbors would ask: 'So, who's been taken away last night?' The words 'black crow' were on everyone's lips. That referred to the car that came in the depth of night to arrest people."[149] Several accounts written by people who lived during this time express the fear that hung in the

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[147] Ivanov-Razumnik, *The Memoirs of Ivanov-Razumnik*. Trans. P.S. Squire. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 69.

[148] Paul R. Gregory, *Lenin's Brain, and Other Tales from the Soviet Secret Archives* (California: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), 77.

[149] Claire Bigg, "The Great Terror: A Fear That Spared No One", (Radio Free Europe: August 13, 2007), www.rferl.org/content/article/1078131.html.

air awaiting the arrival of the NKVD agents. People would pre-pack bags and leave them by the door preparing for their eventual arrest. Entire families waited daily for what might be the last time they saw a loved one or friend. Children recalled hearing the knock years later and watching as their parents or family members were taken away by the NKVD. One woman recalls years later that one night in September of 1937 a knock came on the door and her father opened it. She explains how she was only fourteen years old, but how she understood everything a little too well.[150] The knock was not the only horrifying aspect of this event. The police also confiscated photos, personal items, and books of those arrested. Taking such personal belongings left an indescribable impression that the person had also been erased from the face of the planet. The same young girl mentioned previously recalled how the NKVD agents combed the house for evidence, confiscating her father's notebooks which contained lists of operas he had seen in Leningrad and pictures, "as if his image had to be arrested too."[151] Workers, such as Pavel Sudoplatov, describe being nervous about even simply appearing at work, stating, "Each day I appeared in my office expecting to be arrested."[152]

A main aspect of everyday, ordinary people's lives was their family. It made up the basic foundation of socialization and human culture. With a cloud of fear continuously looming over people's heads, family structures were tested time and time again. The Soviet Union once again implemented a propaganda drive to separate the family and to replace it with the Communist Party. Children were encouraged to turn on their parents and families were thus torn apart through incessant arrests and executions. Through groups such as the Pioneers, children found ways to denounce their parents and report anti-communist statements to eager ears. Trust was lost and ties were irreconcilably destroyed within this social organism. As families began to disintegrate, youth began to move to the cities as industrialization and the Five-Year plans continued. Often children of those arrested were sent to orphanages or were simply abandoned. Worst of all, the Great Terror undermined the very fabric of trust that held families together. Parents found it impossible to trust children and spouses turned on each other. Some parents even encouraged their children to denounce them

[150] Hochschild, 210.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Sudoplatov and Sudoplatov, 64.

as ‘enemies of the people’ once they were taken into captivity, so that they might have a chance at succeeding, which forever broke the familial bonds. Children and siblings found it necessary to distance themselves to succeed, such as the case of a Communist named Zlatkin. He worked for state insurance and the only mark on him was his brother-in-law’s deportation for being accused of being a Trotskyite. In 1937, an investigator came to Zlatkin with allegations that his father had been an elder of a synagogue as well as a police agent for the tsarist regime. Finding no words with which to return to the investigator, he quickly admitted his brother-in-law’s arrest and how he had urged his sister to get a divorce, and as for his father, when he had been expelled from the party, Zlatkin had not even offered to assist with an appeal. “I thought that I had gone a long way away from the family, I thought I would be clean.”[153] The reasoning behind the break stands significant, but the effect that it had on the family itself shows the true terror of this time.

Some chose to follow their loved ones to exile or imprisonment if they knew where they were going to be sent, such as in the case of Nadezhda Mandelstam, while others were arrested after their family member and followed their path involuntarily. In her memoir, Mandelstam recounts following her husband Osip, a famous poet, to the work camps each time he was arrested.[154] Her work *Hope Against Hope* was published many years after the ordeal was over, but it follows the path or her husband’s poem which led to his imprisonment. The poem followed the beliefs of both husband and wife who were deeply critical of Stalin’s regime. The poem composed in November of 1933 that led to Osip Mandelstam’s arrest read:

> We live, deaf to the land beneath us, Ten steps away no one hears
> our speeches. But where there’s so much as half a conversation,
> The Kremlin’s mountaineer will get his mention. His fingers are
> fat as grubs, And the words, like lead weights, fall from his lips.
> His cockroach whiskers leer, And his boot tops gleam.
> Around him a rabble of thin-necked leaders-
> Fawning half-men for him to play with.

[153] Fitzpatrick, 205.
[154] Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope: A Memoir*, trans by Max Hayward, (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1970), 38.

> They whinny, purr or whine, As he prates and points a finger,
> One by one forging his laws, to be flung like horseshoes at the head, the eye or the groin. And every killing is a treat for the broad chested Ossete.[155]

She writes of the nature of the regime that corrupted and terrorized every aspect of Russian society.[156] The Mandelstam's represent only one side of the family struggle. A Belarusian poet Todar Klyashtorny lost his life to the Great Terror but his daughter, Maya Klyashtornaya, tells her family's story. "I was born in 1937. My father was already in prison, my mother was in detention. Once, through the intervention of an acquaintance who was a lawyer, my parents were granted a meeting. Both were so shocked at each other's disheveled appearance that my father lost consciousness."[157] Klyashtornaya's father was executed a few months after this reunion, but only much later did her mother learn of this fact. "She hoped that he would be released since she'd just had a baby. She hoped up to the very end, until they told her he was sentenced to ten years in jail without right of correspondence."[158] In reality, 'without rights of correspondence' often meant that the person had been executed: sentenced to ten years, in an unspecified destination, without the right to correspond with anyone. Families found themselves lacking information and separated from those they loved the most in the world. Whispering became a daily event, or people just stopped talking altogether. At some points, there was simply nothing to talk about since the reality of their situation was too painful or too unbelievable to comprehend.

As parents were shipped off to Gulag camps, children found themselves alone; wandering through the country searching for a place to live and call home. Some found refuge with their relatives, while others woke up and discovered that home was now a sub-par orphanage. The orphanages were notoriously poor in quality and served as a repository of children that had no home, no family, or simply nowhere else to go. With the need to keep children off the street, as witnessed by Stalin's decree of 7 April 1935 which extended all penalties, including death to the minimum age of twelve, the Soviet

[155] Coetzee, J.M. "Osip Mandelstam and the Stalin Ode," *Representations*, No. 35, *Special Issue: Monumental Histories*. (Summer, 1991), pp. 72–83.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Bigg, 1.
[158] Ibid.

government did not want children running free.[159] Once children entered the orphanages they often did not leave until they were legally adults, unless a relative such as a grandmother came and took them out. In the case of Nataliia Konstantinova, interviewed through the Orlando Figes project, she entered the orphanage in September of 1937, and then later was permitted to reside with her grandmother who came to get her.[160] However, often children were lost in the system once they entered and this fact further destroyed the bond of the family structure beyond the hope of reunion.

Outside of the daily pressures and fears within the Soviet Union existed a semblance of society and culture. Social life during the Great Terror is not a subject that is often discussed; seemingly it did not appear to be important to many who recounted their stories years later. Orlando Figes presents a case in which fear is rampant and social life of the Great Terror seems to be almost nonexistent, whereas people appeared to prefer to stay in and away from the peering eyes and listening ears of others who may be informers. Yet, that is not always the case as sources reveal. In the 1930s, there was reportedly a revival of the Moscow restaurant life by new elites which often patronized the establishments. Sound films emerged in the thirties as well and became a hit with mass culture; films such as Volga-Volga in 1938 and films by director Eisenstein were well known throughout the Soviet Union.[161] According to one woman, dancing came back into fashion, and along with taking literacy lessons she and her husband also learned to dance through lessons.[162] Eventually New Year's was celebrated again, and according to some accounts, it was conducted quite extravagantly. One festival was held in the Kauchuk Factory, and according to the newspaper Izvestiya, in 1937, the people danced to jazz, pianos, and celebrated throughout the night.[163] One other large aspect of social activities in the thirties surrounds reading literature. Authors such as Pushkin, Dickens, and Hugo captured the imaginations of Soviet citizens, such as the peasant Andrei Stepanovich Arzhilovsky,

[159] Conquest, *The Great Terror (1990),* 129.
[160] Flige, Nataliia Aleksandrovna Konstantinova Interview, May, 2004 and January, 2005, www.orlandofiges.com/families/Konstantinova.php.
[161] Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (New York: Picador, 2002), 447.
[162] Shapovalov, 321-22.
[163] Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 12.

looking for a literary escape. He recalls how he and his children enjoyed getting lost in the classics to escape the day to day worries and drabness, Arzhilovsky shows how some aspects of social life in the thirties were also low key.[164] Social groups constituted another part of society especially for the youth. These were largely comprised of the Pioneers and the Komsomol. These government sponsored youth organizations were designed to spread the ideas of socialism and communism beginning at a young age. Throughout diary entries and memoirs these communist organizations are often mentioned as either a highly existent or a non-existent aspect of their lives, but remained present.

Life during Stalin's Purges held uncertainties, fear, and worst of all saw the implementation of suspicion and fear among all levels of society. The Soviet Union saw an upheaval that directed them to accept mass arrests and execution as a part of everyday life. The reality of turmoil and devastation seemed familiar to many Soviet citizens. From the time of the Tsar's fall in 1917, Russia and its people experienced a series of events which introduced a new concept to everyone's daily lives. They all knew someone who disappeared or had been arrested. The categories of perpetrator, collaborator, victim, family, and other labels became uniquely interchangeable. Unlike the Nazi system of terror, the Stalinist way introduced a new way to commit mass murder. It was all encompassing. No one was safe from the heavy arm of the secret police and the stiff pen of Joseph Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov. One day a Soviet citizen may be responsible for their neighbor's arrest and the next they might find themselves in the victim role and on their way to their own interrogation. This is what made this time period so unique; nothing was stable or written in stone. A new wave of social mobility meant those on top could quickly become those at the bottom. Despite the interchangeable quality of the Terror, it was not always perceived as an all encompassing dark period. Some, such as Alexei, a skilled worker in Russia, deny a record of repression within the U.S.S.R. and were surprisingly favorable towards the regime. He credits the Soviet Union with providing him valuable technical training, the space to use his talent, and the ability to improve his condition in life.[165]

[164] Ibid, 132.
[165] Beier and Hanfmann, 80.

The situation within the Soviet Union presented the unique inopportunity for people to experience the Great Terror in their own way, depending on the circumstances that led to their lot in life. The Great Terror is difficult to define as a whole. One may choose to examine Terror at the top echelons and see how Stalin quickly turned on his former allies to secure his own seat of power. Others attempt to give a voice to the people who did not actively play the Communist game with Stalin and other leading officials. Either way one looks at this subject it becomes clear that it is nearly impossible to easily define. It attacked all of society. The people who look back with fear and horror on these events feel an immense sense of loss. Yet, those that gained expertise and professionally by their own means look back and see a Soviet Union that provided items and experiences previously unreachable. The Terror was distinctive and somewhat matchless. The Holocaust held clear victims and perpetrators. There were guidelines that formed the base of their fear system. Elements of society deemed racially inferior found themselves in similar situations as the Soviets. The Nazi system was systematic, bureaucratic, persecution of approximately six million Jewish lives alone. Aryan's were largely safe from its reaches.

In the Soviet's version of Terror everyone had a legitimate reason to fear for their lives. People recognized the need in society to blend in and avoid positions of responsibility. Many were reluctant to even accept promotions if it meant they would take higher positions that might lead to them being noticed or targeted. Valentina Bogdan provides an excellent example of this situation in her memoirs. The chief engineers in her mill in Rostov quit their positions to become doormen with the goal "to not occupy responsible positions anymore."[166] The Terror not only allowed Stalin to fulfill his mission of securing his power but it also created a society riddled with fear that experienced its cold realities on a daily basis. While the majority of evidence presented paints this time period in a dark light, there are positive stories and people that honestly believed in the system, programs, and ideology that came from its leadership. Their story is no less significant and should not be discounted. The human experience presented shows how daily living was a struggle and a maneuverable situation that

[166] Robert W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 147.

people had to learn to thrive within or likely die. People were silenced, censored, and stripped of their pride to appease a system that for whatever reason chose to erase millions of its everyday, ordinary population. The Great Terror in history is a series of layers that once uncovered not only makes the topic more complicated but also shows its unique position in mass murders of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 4

UNSPOKEN TERROR: THE SOVIET PURGES FROM 1939-1953

Winston Churchill has been quoted referring to the Soviet Union as, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."[167] Never has this quote been truer than for Soviet historians who have struggled with generations of speculations, censorship, and official lies. Even with the fall of Communism in the 1990s historians have been plagued with constant doubt in regards to their work. Thankfully, this has never stopped historians from adventuring into this field and attempting to make sense of the archival resources, materials, and documents. As the field experienced an archival revolution, historians were not only shocked but satiated as their many theories on the mystery that was the Soviet Union were confirmed or officially proven erroneous. Despite the opening, it would still take several generations and cycles of leaders to reach a point where those who experienced Soviet terror felt safe enough to share their stories. One area of debate specifically has been the Stalinist mass murders, Great Terror, or Purges. Historians have covered several different aspects of this dramatic period including overviews, politics, social aspects, and many more. While the topic has been explored by many historians, the majority of the historiography has ignored the period from 1939-1953; which is a great disservice to the history.

Soviet historians tend to have a zeal for the dramatic when it comes to the Great Terror of Joseph Stalin. The years 1936-1939 make for an interesting and striking narrative of life, death, and fear; however they do not complete the story or share the full extent of these events. Historian Robert Conquest is known as a landmark historian in the field of Stalin's Purges. His book *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* provides one of the most acclaimed and successful overviews on the Terror.[168] Conquest argues that the Terror was an all encompassing force within the Soviet Union. He refused to accept Nikita Khrushchev's assertions that Stalinism was a drastic variation from Leninism, and

[167] Ashton Applewhite, Tripp Evans, and Andrew Frothingham, *And I Quote: The Definitive Collection* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 440.
[168] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

he claimed that the show trials and executions of Communist leaders; the major focal point of the Western historians for years; was not the only main stage of the Terror.[169] He estimates that the combined impact of the famine and purges had grown to include nearly twenty million people.[170] His arguments call for a widened study of the Purges and for Western minds to open themselves to the realities of this page of history. Conquest's work is a landmark which has influenced generations of Sovietologists and specialists; he is often cited as a source in works on this subject. Yet, still historians in this area prefer to look at the big events, names, and years rather than delve into the second half and explore the continuations, transformations, and changes of the Terror. His book is an excellent springboard for further research and will remain a classic, however, it is time to take the plunge and move beyond an overview with an anti-Marxist approach.

In the wake of the archival revolution, historians had the ability to probe and investigate deeper into the obscurities of the Soviet Union than ever before. As discussed in the introduction, there is a wide historiography available but most of it focuses on the Great Terror period. A brief overview of the materials available on this lesser terror period illuminates the inadequacies of the historiography. With historians like Conquest beginning to pave the way, more professionals found the tools and aspiration to research the full story of these mass murders. Edwin Bacon and J. Otto Pohl advocated for the correct use of these archives as an imperative component for history. Bacon employs the use of these archives to enter into the numbers debate of those devoured by the Terror system. By focusing on the years of World War II in his work *The Gulag at War: Stalin's Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives*, Bacon argues that the opening of the archives drastically changed the way historians viewed these events.[171] J. Otto Pohl makes similar conjectures by providing one of the first works to use the newly opened archives with his book *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953*.[172] Pohl offers one of

[169] Ibid, 91-3.
[170] Ibid, 338.
[171] Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin's Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 9.
[172] J. Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953 (*Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1992).

the most extensive examinations of the numbers argument, but still focuses the majority of his writing on the 1930s. The numerical debate in the historiography has proven to be undeniably important to the general discussion but excludes the stories of the people and their experiences. Still an essential element of the history and narrative remains missing.

The late 1990s and early 2000s have seen an influx of books and historical works on the Purges. They vary from those that choose to focus directly on the social and cultural aspects to those who chose the political ones. Historians like Wendy Z. Goldman, J. Arch Getty, Oleg Khlevniuk, and William J. Chase adopted a perspective that looked at how the terror system was used to destroy political unity and undermine its own societal structures. Goldman explores how social democracy infiltrated the industrial workshops specifically. *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* argues that the political decisions and policies infiltrated the labor unions and created a self-destructive environment with a mission to expose 'enemies of the state'.[173] Getty and Khlevniuk argue that the Bolsheviks destroyed themselves from 1932-1939 by eliminating hefty percentages of its members. *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* obviously centers on the high point of the Terror, as can be seen from the title, but it also concludes that they ended with the removal of the NKVD chief Nikolai Yezhov.[174] William J. Chase agrees with Getty and Khlevniuk and looks at how in the 1930s the Party systematically devastated itself by perceiving enemies in every nook and cranny of the political sphere. While these works were landmarks in their own right, they failed to complete the picture by leaving out over a decade of events and experiences.

Culturally and socially, historians Orlando Figes, Anne Applebaum, and Michael Parrish come the closest to starting to fill this hole in the historiography. *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* by Figes attempts to look at the entirety of the Purges from 1934-1953, and beyond.[175] Through a series of documents and interviews Figes uncovers and exposes the stories of several individual Soviet citizens.

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[173] Wendy Z. Goldman, *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 124.

[174] J. Arch Getty and Oleg Khlevniuk, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, trans. Benjamin Sher, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 571.

[175] Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Picador, 2008).

Each suffered their own fate and lived to talk about it, even if their family members or friends did not. Figes succeeds in expressing the trauma and adversities of the 1930s almost flawlessly, but his argument in regard to the 1940s and later falls painfully short of victorious. He trips into the same past follies of historiography by avoiding a thorough exploration. It appears that this area is not his academic specialty and therefore falls short of comprehensive. Anne Applebaum researched the existence of the Soviet Gulag concentration camps in her book *Gulag: A History*.[176] Avoiding the majority of historian's tendencies to examine Stalin and the politics of terror, she collected narratives, memoirs, diaries, interviews, and other resources to illustrate how people came to be within the camps and what life was like on the inside. Her narrative spans the entirety of the camp's lifespan. Her argument is of pivotal importance to the concept and theory of expanding the historiography. It provides much needed historical filler not only for the time span but also for what happened after the arrest and how people lived in the camps. Michael Parrish instigates an in-depth exploration of what he refers to as the lesser terror.[177] Rather than include the height of the Purges, Parrish jumps to the second half from the end of Yezhovschina in 1939 to Stalin's death in 1953 and examines the Second World War. He argues, as his title *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security, 1939-1953* suggests, that this time period actually saw a growth in Gulag camp enrollees.[178] He introduces the possibility that the war and fears of Nazi infiltration continued to ignite the Terror and saw the introduction of stricter and heightened state security in the name of national security.[179] He inspects the cultural impact during this second phase and allows agency to society in perpetuating this continuation by giving Stalin and the Bolshevik government freedom to act accordingly. Parrish best represents a modern attempt at incorporating this ignored time period into the pages of history. While others such as Conquest and Figes have included an overview of the Purges as a whole, few historians have attempted to examine this lesser terror with the same expediency as that of the 1930s.

[176] Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).
[177] Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security, 1939-1953* (London: Praeger, 1996), 3.
[178] Ibid, 34.
[179] Ibid, 112.

Joseph Stalin, often portrayed as the omnipresent, all-powerful dictator, found a place in the history books as a contractor of evil. Nikita Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders found it easier in the post-Stalin years to place the blame squarely on Stalin's shoulders. This absolved them from their own actions and decisions. Far too often historians have grasped onto the dichotomy of another ubiquitous dictator like Hitler existing in the world. The writing and rewriting of Soviet history has suffered and gained at the hands of politics and changing leaderships. For far too long, a constant menagerie of official documents playing to the Communist Party agenda served as the only source of information both during and after the time of the Soviet Union. Speculation was the name of the game. By the 1990s historians began incorporating social historical approaches and revisionist concepts. Moving beyond the totalitarian model that believed Stalin flawlessly orchestrated and led the Purges, the world and its scholars began to conceive a much darker image of the U.S.S.R. As if in the post-Cold War world that was possible, the death of Stalin and the rise of others attempting to surpass his cult of personality brought with it policies of glasnost and openness. Agency began to find a home in the history books for others in society and the voices began to diversify. The question that arises then is why the history books still choose to cling to the idea that the Stalinist purges, or Great Terror, subsided with the assassination of Yezhov. As argued above, the historiography has largely chosen to gloss over the period from 1939-1953 or ignored it completely. The truth is that the Purges continued to flourish until the end of Stalin's life. As a matter of fact, prior to his death in March of 1953, Stalin had been planning another wave of Party purges.[180]

By the time Adolf Hitler turned his attention to obtaining his lebensraum in the east, Joseph Stalin had already been waging a war against the lives and minds of his own people since the 1930s. The Soviet Union was notorious for using terror against its populations as an effort to achieve security. Driven with a motive to eliminate a possible fifth element, measures were enacted to abolish any potential threats. Formidable resources were wielded to gather intelligence and crush dissent domestically relying on vast networks of collaborators and perpetrators. With the advent of World War II, Stalin

[180] Donna Urschel, "The Death of Stalin", Library of Congress (April 2003), http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0304/post-stalin.html (accessed October 2009).

and his followers became increasingly watchful and vigilant in their effort to prevent anything from destroying the Revolution. The terror of the late 1930s persisted on and Soviet society maintained a level of caution as the Gulags were kept functioning and full into the early 1950s. As previously covered, the 1930s saw an unimaginable death toll and attack on society by its own leaders. No one was safe from its reaches and prior to entering the war, society had been turned upside down by its own leader and police system.

Stalin's associates and Communist ideology convinced him that only the most extreme measures would save the state from utter devastation.[181] Their goal had been to turn the Soviet Union into an industrial and military force comparable to the great powers. They wrestled to alter Soviet society from the top down throughout the Soviet Union's existence. With an ultimate goal of a cultural revolution, Stalin foresaw a unified society in mind and action.[182] Anyone viewed as opposing the Bolshevik Party ideology or policies met brutal force. Stalin's mission was to eradicate tradition and replace it with the Communist revolution of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. Every aspect of life was expected to follow the Party line and to use its resources and power to espouse the Party's ideas. Writers were considered the "engineers of human souls" and their work was subject to strict censorship.[183] Anyone perceived as working against the state was arrested, executed, exiled, or imprisoned. The initial Great Terror, which was overseen by Nikolai Yezhov, sought to repress scholarship, intelligentsia, artists, and intellectuals into cooperation with the state.[184] Osip Mandelstam, a popular Russian poet, was arrested for a poem he recited in front of fellow writers in 1934. An informer was amongst the crowd. "The Kremlin man of the mountains will be mentioned. His fingers as fat as grubs, and the words, final as lead weights, fall from his lips…"[185] Mandelstam was arrested for these words about Stalin and died in 1938 in the camps.[186] This type of story is more common than it is uncommon for this time. Cultural components of society

[181] Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2004), 347.
[182] Ibid, 299.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Figes, 255.
[185] R.C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1929-41* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), *205-206.*
[186] Service, 306.

were brought under the Communist Party line and this trend continued till the end of the Terror.

With the assassination of the Secretary of the Leningrad Party organization, Sergei Kirov, in 1934, Stalin ignited an existing system of secret police, arrests, interrogations, and concentration camps. Initially the attacks came to those within the Communist Party. Later though, the attacks found their way into everyday Soviet lives. Perhaps these individuals were not guilty of any crimes, but they still found their names on conviction letters. Simply uttering a careless criticism or word now became a fatal occurrence. Hundreds of thousands of Bolshevik Party members and regular citizens had been arrested. The base of Soviet life was being rattled. By 1937, the focus turned from the Party and focused on the entire country. Neighbors turned in neighbors, workers turned on each other. Day and night arrest vans coursed through the streets taking their victims from work places, schools, and homes. All levels of society were included. No social status created exemption. Even scientists, long regarded as the favorites within Soviet society, found themselves arrested.[187] With the system already working and suspicions aroused there was no foreseeable end for the Terror. Its beginning foreshadowed not only its continuation but its long term future.

In the initial phases of the Purges from 1936-1938, one man led and controlled the purges alongside Stalin. Nikolai Yezhov served as the NKVD chief for the most well known era of the Great Terror. Under his direction the Purges reached their height of productivity with roughly half of the Soviet political and military establishment being imprisoned or shot, as well as hundreds of thousands of others.[188] By December 20, 1937, Yezhov had reached the pinnacle of his career with his portrait displayed alongside Stalin's at the twentieth anniversary of the NKVD.[189] "Learn the Stalin way to work," Anastas Mikoyan said, "from Comrade Yezhov, just as he learned and will continue to learn from Comrade Stalin himself."[190] August 22, 1938 however, marks the

[187] Alexander Weissberg, *The Accused*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), 9.
[188] Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009), 52.
[189] State University Press, "Nikolai Yezhov-Biography", http://encyclopedia.stateuniversity.com/pages/16002/Nikolai-Yezhov.html (accessed October 11, 2009).
[190] Ibid.

date that Yezhov's role began to decline as popular support for the purging of society diminished.[191] This date also signifies when Lavrenty Beria, Yezhov's later successor, became the deputy directly under Yezhov within the NKVD.

As society felt the wear and tear of Stalin's fears and security motives, Soviet citizens began to grow fatigued of living in constant fear. They had watched neighbors disappear, lost family and friends to a system that erased all memory of those it consumed, and felt the weight of collectivization and industrial plans for far too long. A scapegoat was needed; Stalin and his followers believed it was their job to protect the revolution at any cost and with hundreds of thousands of lives lost it was time to locate a target. Stalin began to criticize Yezhov openly for the methods and mistakes of the NKVD. This can be seen in the November 11, 1938 writing by Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov in which they not only criticize him but display openly the blame that was planned to fall squarely on his shoulders.[192] Possibly predicting his own fate, Yezhov asked to be relieved of his position in the NKVD on November 25, 1938. [193] By December 8, he was removed from his post, and a few months later arrested by his successor.[194] At the same time another unique occurrence took place in the Moldavian Republic. The leader of the local secret police and four of his examiners were arrested and tried for arresting innocent people. They were forced to make false confessions in the typical terror process and were executed.[195] Together these executions appeared to signal an end to the Terror and the state emerged as an opponent to corrupt local police organizations. Stalin and his staff now appeared as a force working against abuses and mistakes caused by the secret police and overzealous individuals. The hands of the dictator remained clean and his role intact.

Quite often in the story of the Great Terror historians choose to close the narrative of the Purges with these two events. The state made examples of two sets of people and removed them from the leadership positions they appeared to have abused. The perpetrators had become the victims. Upon interrogation by his successor Laurent

[191] Hagenloh, 56.
[192] Conquest, 431-432.
[193] Ibid, 432.
[194] R. J. Rummel, *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder since 1917* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 110.
[195] Weissberg, *The Accused*, 12.

Beria, Yezhov was accused of devising a plot to assassinate Stalin. In response, Yezhov replied "it is better to leave this earth as an honorable man" rather than confess.[196] The story of the Purges often comes to a conclusion here because they never again rose to the same extreme level of terror that characterized this stage. However, choosing this point as a conclusion causes a historical disservice to occur to the history of the Soviet Union, memory of those who were arrested afterwards, and men, women, and children who continued to suffer in the Gulag camp system. The state continued to maintain the Gulags throughout World War II and the post-war years. They also arrested, murdered, and imprisoned several thousand more people continuously until the year 1953. With war came a sense of security from the Terror as the state's resources and attention turned to repelling Hitler's military from Soviet territory. The fear, however, that had been woven into Soviet society continued to flourish and prosper. Just because society had grown weary of the destruction did not mean that Stalin had plans to halt the process of rooting out enemies of the state, in fact it only meant that there was time to refine the system and provided a renewed reason for vigilance.

The beginning of World War II marked a change for the Soviet Union. As the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 dissolved and Operation Barbarossa began, the secret police and its functionaries continued to implement security polices to remove 'enemies of the state'.[197] The vast system of guards, police, and officials that were created in the initial stages of the Purges remained willing to arrest, interrogate, and execute the Soviet population, without them they never would have been able to function. The lessons of the 1930s created efficiency. They taught the NKVD how to avoid mistakes and manipulate the system properly. After the mass round ups of 1936-1939, NKVD officers mastered the 'knock on the door' technique and the ability to make people disappear from society. Techniques and tools such as these became some of the most notorious methods of instilling fear into Soviet citizens. By the time the initial stage of Terror had come to a brief pause, society had been so infiltrated with fear that

[196] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 288.
[197] Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2004), 128-129.

even its humor provided insights. One of the more popular jokes was known as the 4 a.m. joke.

> At four o' clock in the morning there was a knock on the door of a Moscow house…Finally one of the tenants, Abram Abramovich, took his courage in both hands and opened the front door. He was heard whispering for a few moments with a man standing outside. Then he came back to his terrified fellow tenants with a bright smile on his face: "Nothing to worry about, comrades- the house is on fire, that's all!"[198]

This use of humor reveals a deep fear of arrest and a sense that everything was inevitable in one way or another. Many Soviets accepted the Terror as a justifiable system that occasionally committed mistakes. Fear was also often met with a general sense of confidence in the regime's message and goals. People feared being mistaken for an enemy of the state more than the government. These fears became part of everyday understandings of life and continued to permeate society until the end of the Soviet Union.

During World War II, soldiers and partisans fought the brave battle on the war front for their motherland. If they happened to survive the vicious battles and aggressive war maneuvers by both Hitler and Stalin, they returned to their homeland to an unexpected cold welcome. The typical procedure initiated by Stalin was immediate internment for those suspected of working with the Nazis and prisoners of war. For example, on July 14, 1945 agents of the NKVD arrested a man by the name of Adam Galinski in Vilnius, Lithuania.[199] During WWII, Galinski had worked as a partisan against the Nazi invasion of Poland alongside the Soviets. After Lithuania and Eastern Poland were liberated, he and other Polish partisans were disarmed by the NKVD, arrested, and deported to camps throughout the Soviet Union. They were charged with treason and conspiracy with the Nazis and found themselves facing the death penalty. However, Galinski was spared execution and sentenced to ten years in the forced labor camps

[198] Wolfgang Leonhard, *Child of the Revolution*, trans by C.M. Woodhouse, (Chicago: H. Regney Co., 1967), 50-1.
[199] Bradley Bauer, "The Gulag: Life Inside", Hoover Institution, http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3002001.html (accessed September 2009).

within Russia. He experienced horrendous conditions and remained in the prisons until 1956.[200] Stories such as Galinski's are common. Those who had served in the military or partisan efforts found their welcome home had been replaced with internment by the NKVD into labor camps. These camps varied from the typical concentration camps to special camps designed to soften the transition of soldiers back into Soviet life after the war.[201] Leonid Sitko, a Red Army soldier, wrote in 1949 a poem to capture the confusion and anguish of many in response to their fate. "I was a soldier, now I'm a convict, my soul is frozen, my tongue is silent. What poet, what artist will depict my terrible captivity? And the evil crows didn't know, what sort of sentence they gave us, when they tortured us, when they chased us, from prison to exile to camp."[202] The NKVD found it necessary to become extra creative when concocting reasons for their arrests. Factual fabrication became the accepted procedure for the secret police. Often times there were not actual legitimate reasons for arrest, so they simply created them. Stalin encouraged this habit and is often cited as being paranoid and suspicious of anyone who might try to overthrow his seat of power. In the 1940s, unlike in other times during his reign, this may actually ring a note of truth. Believing in the possibility of a fifth element or a Revolution like that of World War I, Stalin fought to stamp out any traces or possibilities of treason, defeatist talk, or revolutionary ideas.[203] Ironically, Stalin appeared to be afraid of the very methods and techniques employed by the Bolsheviks to seize power from Tsar Nicholas II in 1917.

During the war, the battle against society continued to wage on. In a policy change from pre-war times, the state officially declared war on what it termed panic-mongerers.[204] Thousands were arrested for speaking out against the war, Soviet Union, or its leaders. Many were shot on the spot for "defeatist attitudes, words, or actions".[205] A revival of the Purges against society occurred as a response to the embarrassment and fear of Hitler's successful implementation of Blitzkrieg. NKVD officials arrested anyone they could under this policy, including women. Roza Vetkhnovskaia was

[200] Ibid.
[201] Rummel, 166.
[202] Leonid Sitko, "I was a soldier…", 1949.
[203] Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, 355.
[204] Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers*, 385.
[205] Ibid.

arrested on the third day of the war and was charged with treason along with various other women.[206] They were accused of making statements such as that the German forces were stronger or the agricultural crops were weak; for words such as these many died. Irina Shcherbov-Nefedovich was denounced and arrested on July 30, 1941 for "panic-mongering and spreading rumors" by a Party worker for supposedly being critical of Stalin.[207] This policy of arresting anyone with a 'defeatist' attitude allowed the NKVD, perpetrators and collaborators to concoct a variety of accusations. It was nearly impossible to contest claims of this nature, and by this point Soviet society had already turned against itself. In an effort to protect the Soviet Union, the state and its closest followers deemed it appropriate to rid the country of anyone with doubts or criticisms. This continued the pattern of purging any opportunities for opposition as Stalin had originally done in the 1930s by purging his possible opponents in the Party.

During the war, Robert Conquest notes that even on the most difficult days of battle, Stalin would expend considerable resources to carry out operations against entire nationalities.[208] He also argues that the outbreak of WWII made an excellent occasion for Stalin to increase the power and activity of the police.[209] Historians often choose to end the discussion of the Purges with the advent of World War II because Stalin's decimation of the military in 1938 provides a perspective on why the Soviet Union took so long to respond to Hitler's attack. The Purges become part of a bigger story; a cause and effect pattern. Yet, in Conquest's reassessment of his 1968 book *The Great Terror*, rewritten in 1990, he allows only eight pages to discuss the continuation during the war. Too often it appears the voices of the 1940s are silenced. Valentin Vladimirovich Bekker was born in 1932.[210]His interview provides insight into those who survived the lesser terror. With his mother, Bekker fled the advance of the German army. By 1949 he went to Leningrad, having seen the realities of World War II first hand, he joined the navy. Unfortunately, the truth about his past and his family history had come to light. Soon after joining the navy he was forced into exile in Siberia

[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid, 386-7.
[208] Conquest, 456.
[209] Ibid.
[210] "Valentin Vladimirovich Bekker Interview", (November 2004), http://www.orlandofiges.com/families/Bekker.php (accessed November 2009).

until 1951.[211] Similar fates awaited those who survived the war; whether from the front lines or the home front. Service, valor, survival, and loyalty did not matter as much as national security. Instead, individuals who managed to survive the war often found themselves occupied in yet another struggle.

One of the hallmarks of Soviet society can be found in its own gospel. They believed ideologically that the only cure for crime was for the individual to work.[212] Work in Soviet and Marxist mentality was the key to correcting behavior. To accommodate this need for rehabilitation, the Soviet Union created what they termed Gulag concentration camps. The camp system was in place well before Stalin took the reins of control from Vladimir Lenin in 1924. During his tenure however, Stalin greatly expanded the use of these camps and the numbers involved. According to reliable estimates, between 1929 and 1953 there were four hundred and seventy six camp complexes inside the Soviet Union.[213] Some of these camps were enormous in their stature and scale and included several smaller camps. To avoid scrutiny and foreign interference, the numbers of Soviet prisoners were kept under strict censorship for the majority of their existence. This has created today an impossible situation for accuracy; especially when considering what historian Robert Gellately calls the "in-out migration."[214] This migration pattern means that there was a constant flow of people entering and leaving the Gulag camps. So while the statistics may read that there were only four hundred thousand imprisoned at any one time, the numbers exclude those who left or died and were replaced. The camp system was a business to the Soviets. During war time, they used the camps as a means of cheap war production and labor. They passed off the reasoning as being good for the country and good for the individual's rehabilitation.[215] After the war, the Gulags began to grow again. Their atrocities and numbers remained active well into the 1950s. The Gulags were responsible for many of the major projects within the Soviet Union, such as the White Sea Canal in the 1930s, and the cheap

[211] Ibid.
[212] Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 264.
[213] Applebaum, 183.
[214] Ibid, 261.
[215] Peter S. Deriabin and Joseph Culver Evans, *Inside Stalin's Kremlin: An Eyewitness Account of Brutality, Duplicity, and Intrigue* (Washington: Brassey's, Inc, 1998), xv.

prisoner labor allowed the Soviet Union to man their factories, maintain their armaments, and supply the Soviet Union during WWII.

As World War II began, the Gulag's numbers declined initially. This was not due to a halt by the state to the repressions but rather the rise in mortality in the camps grew sharply. In 1941 a quarter of the Gulag populations died of starvation.[216] From 1941-1943, an estimated 516,841 prisoners died due to conditions and starvation in the camps.[217] Despite the death tolls, the war's outbreak on June 22, 1941 saw a return of overly strict rules on the camps. 'Enemies of the People' were now viewed with stronger suspicion and thousands were executed on the spot.[218] Regardless of official sentences for prisoners, their time served was often ignored, superseded, or bypassed by guards and officials. The threat of releasing possible opponents of the state during a delicate time of war and losing prisoner labor caused the relinquishing of rights of release. The same day as Hitler's army struck the Soviet Union, an order was issued forbidding all prisoners from leaving the camps who were convicted of betrayal, spying, terror, diversion, Trotskyism, rightist tendencies, or banditry.[219] Suddenly people who had been counting down their sentences in the camps found out they were now imprisoned for an indefinite amount of time.

During the 1940s, prisoner's sentences were prolonged for the foreseeable future; this was controlled by censorship so as to not upset the Soviet population or incur large amounts of attention. The camps became a way of segregating anyone perceived as an enemy of the state. They were not always necessarily the easiest way to secure this fifth element however. The Gulags of WWII fought off constant starvation as food supplies and transportation lines became difficult to maintain. After all they were not all designed as death camps; many were truly intended to rehabilitate citizens. Therefore, the prisoners needed to be fed. By 1943, the situation had become so desperate that the Soviet government had to create a special fund to accommodate maintaining the work production of the Gulags.[220] In spite of efforts to curtail the

[216] Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, 413.
[217] "ГУЛАГ: общие сведения", http://soviet-history.com/doc/prison/gulag_info1.php (accessed September 2009).
[218] Applebaum, 412.
[219] Ibid, 413.
[220] Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War*, 148.

massive death toll, Galina Ivanovna estimates that over two million died in the labor camps and colonies during the war, and this does not even include those who died in exile.[221] While the conditions of the Gulag concentration camps were never admirable, they became even worse as resources became scarce and split between a war front and the battle at home with society. 1942-1943 were the toughest war years as most of the Soviet Union was under German occupation. "Real famine set in at the mine," recalls Vladimir Petrov, "Five thousand men did not have a piece of bread."[222]

The camps not only maintained their vigilance during World War II but also afterwards. As people died in the camps, they were constantly being replaced with newcomers at an astounding rate.[223] This did not only include Soviet citizens but was also opened up to foreign elements captured during WWII. One of the most gripping accounts of this upsurge comes in the form of a decree that began in 1943; the NKVD formulated a new official reason to arrest people. They declared that the Red Army had encountered beastly and cruel violence carried out by German, Romanian, Italian, Hungarian, and Finnish fascists.[224] They labeled those accused of committing such atrocities as spies and traitors. The implementation of this decree meant that any foreigners apprehended by the Red Army or NKVD were immediately placed on trial, imprisoned, or executed. These prisoners were designated by a special Russian term known as *kartoga*. The use of this term dates back to Tsarist times, but it delineated prisoners from others in the camps and *kartoga* prisoners were held separately from the others.[225] The NKVD exploited fear and anxieties about the war to arrest foreigners and place them in camps. These *kartoga* prisoners worked longer hours than normal prisoners, were separated by fences, and forced to wear distinct uniforms.[226] The Soviets expanded the labor camps by arresting and putting to work their prisoners of war alongside the enemies of the state.

The Gulag camps are a major aspect of Soviet repression throughout the life of the Soviet Union. The camps were sustained from the beginning to the end of Stalin's

[221] Galina M. Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, trans by Carol Flath, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), introduction.
[222] Applebaum, 209.
[223] Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler,* 263.
[224] Applebaum, 438.
[225] Ibid, 439.
[226] Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror*, 147.

life in 1953. Often their story is told in relation to other major Soviet events, but this causes their history and the memory of those who died and survived them to be tarnished. People were sentenced to long terms of forced labor in the central Asiatic desert districts, occupied Soviet areas, and in others throughout the Soviet Union.[227] The foundations of Soviet life continued to be shaky and riddled with fear. The camps expanded after World War II and grew to include foreign prisoners of war, defeatists, guilty, and innocent persons. All walks of life were consumed by the Purges from 1936-1953. Workmen, peasants, officials, professional men and women, officers, artists, and writers found themselves bunking together in prison cells, sharing bread, and suffering collectively.[228] The camps experienced a distinctive amount of events that set them apart from the rest of society. Within their gates, people were able to experience a true socialist lifestyle. They were forced to view each other as equals as they lived, died, and survived next to each other daily. The camps persisted through the Soviet Union's ups and downs. Most families and survivors to this day do not know where their families are or where they are buried as a result of this system.

Due to the years of repression and secrecy, the Soviet Union destroyed familial ties and kinships. By separating members of families, people lost track of relatives as the NKVD and the Terror system ripped them from their homes and their loved ones' arms. As the state arrested suspected 'enemies of the state' people disappeared into a censored system. One account of the Purges tells of a woman in a desperate situation because her husband had been arrested and her family and friends were too terrified to take her in off the streets.[229] Without knowledge of the fate of their loved ones and the rampant fear that existed in society, Soviets regularly found themselves on the streets or in exile themselves. Background checks and suspicions brought terror. Neighbors, friends, and loved ones began shunning anyone who was arrested or related to those accused because the stain was often transferable. Associating with an 'enemy of the people' was sufficient grounds for arrest for anyone. Young wives were abandoned,

[227] Weissberg, *The Accused*, 1.
[228] Ibid, 7.
[229] Markoosha Fischer, *My Lives in Russia* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 186.

children placed in orphanages, and elderly were left without care. This created a new often unmentioned level to the terror that exists even today.

Stalinist ideology appears to have aimed at the family unit as a target. The family was a stronghold for traditions and strength. Religion, culture, and beliefs are often passed down generationally by mothers, fathers, and grandparents. To a totalitarian regime attempting to control and revolutionize Soviet society, the family was a dangerous obstruction if it did not follow the Party guidelines. It was treacherous to have even one parent with an undesirable record. One arrest anywhere in your family line could remove the chance of ever living well, or sometimes living at all. A process known as renouncing came to play a very significant role.[230] If one's family members were arrested it became common practice for children to renounce them. By doing so, they showed loyalty to the state above their familial lines and often, in the eyes of the state, could find rehabilitation. Unfortunately, reports of renunciations in the period of the 'lesser terror' are difficult to ascertain. While speculation would indicate that the use of renunciation would have continued past 1939, it proves difficult to locate anyone openly admitting it. It is known factually that children in orphanages often renounced their parents due to pressure by the officials. This was done to absolve the child of the parent's wrong doings, yet by the 1940s social origin carried a stigma similar to a racial gene.[231] Comparable to the anti-Semitic racial laws of the Nazis, the Soviets despised and feared anyone with a spoiled biography. The practice of rooting out enemies of the state had transferred itself into the Soviet consciousness as a racially impure biographical trait.

Not all citizens of the Soviet Union suffered at the hands of the Terror. In fact many chose to manipulate the system themselves and learned to profit from it much as conspirators did earlier. Tatiana Elagina's family had been exiled in 1935 following the murder of Sergei Kirov.[232] In 1945 however, Tatiana applied to Moscow State University to study mathematics. With the stain of her family's record hanging over her head,

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[230] Igor Gouzenko, *This was my Choice* (London: Eyre & Spottis Woode, LTD., 1948), 32.
[231] Andreev-Khomiakov Gennady, *Bitter Waters: Life and Work in Stalin's Russia: A Memoir* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 47.
[232] Figes, *The Whisperers*, 478.

Tatiana was viewed as an 'undesirable'.[233] To counteract her past, she agreed to spy and report on her classmates to the secret police. "They told me there was nothing shameful about this, and somehow I managed to convince myself that they were right."[234] She continues to explain how she tried to report as little as possible. Tatiana was able to continue her studies in engineering by informing the police of negative comments said by her classmates. By doing this, she was able to succeed in a system that normally would have shunned her, and even managed to obtain a top position after graduation. She is not the only one to have bypassed her spoiled biography. Usually the NKVD targeted the younger generations as collaborators because they were easier to convince that spying and reporting was good for their country. Valentina Kropotina made a career of informing and tearing other families apart. She saw nothing wrong with her actions. In an interview she states that she was a child of poverty and that the only way out was to inform on others. She also recalls that she was not sorry for the people that she helped send to the Gulags.[235] There are several cases and stories of people who collaborated and worked with the police in order to further their careers, save their own lives, or their families. It can also be said that there were several people who informed because they believed in the state and in the Stalinist mindset. Elena Grigorievna Ponomarenko was a journalist in the U.S.S.R. and proudly recalled that she helped to safeguard the Soviet Union from kulak enemies by exposing them on her journalist broadcasts in the 1930s and 1940s.[236] Either way, neighbors, friends, relatives, coworkers, etc., found themselves participating and collaborating with the Terror system through the 1940s and 1950s. They created a complex web of fear, association, and selfishness. While some went to the party offices daily searching for answers, others were asking questions to send more to the camps or to their deaths.

The struggle for families, neighbors, and friends often ended with nothing. When someone was arrested, whether in the 1930s, 1940s, or 1950s, their pasts and their futures were arrested as well. Relatives were not permitted to know where their loved

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[233] Ibid, 479.
[234] Ibid.
[235] "Valentina Kropotina Interview", (November, 2004), http://www.orlandofiges.com/families/Kropotina.php (accessed September 2008).
[236] Anastasia Posadskaya-Vanderbeck, "From Peasant to Journalist: Elena Grigorovich Ponomarenko Interview", In *A Revolution of Their Own: Voices of Women in Soviet History*, trans. Sona Hoisington, (Colorado:Westview Press, 1998), 135.

ones had been sent, if they were still alive, or when they would be released. After the height of the Purges in the late 1930s, Soviets continued to suffer as they lost touch with loved ones. The Terror continued as people struggled to accept that they may never see their loved ones again. Through efforts at concealment of their crimes, the Soviet Union continued the panic by holding hostage information as well as people. It was nearly impossible to establish where prisoners were held or if they were even still alive. It became a fight to overcome the stigma of a person's arrest and even more difficult to try and move on without knowing their fate. Based on this fact alone, the history of this time period clearly suffers from a lack of honesty and officially accurate reports.

Upon release from the camps, prisoners in the 1940s and 1950s also found themselves struggling to survive the Terror that clung to their names. Esfir Slavina was released from a women's labor camp in 1943 but forbidden to return to her hometown of Leningrad or other major cities.[237] Additional former prisoners were given the same restrictions on their movements. This served as almost a second jail sentence. They were not allowed to return to major areas of the Soviet Union and even if they did their prison record kept family and friends from reconnecting with them far too often. Long after the Great Terror, people endured fear, terror, arrest, imprisonment, struggles, and political repression.[238] Even when their time had ended they were not rehabilitated or invited back into society as they once had lived. They were considered enemies and regarded with suspicion. The terror did not end with the resignation and execution of Nikolai Yezhov, it continued well into the 1950s. Only after the death of Stalin in 1953 did some obtain release from the eighteen years of fear and terror. Even then, most people did not learn the fate of their loved ones until well after the Soviet Union fell.

After World War II, a strain of anti-Semitism reappeared in Soviet society which led to a final push against the population. Always one to be suspicious of others, Stalin began to wage a new type of terror against Jewish doctors, professionals, and citizens within the Soviet Union. A show trial was planned to initiate a scheme to transfer nearly two million Jews to the Gulag camps in the East. In 1952, Stalin committed his last

[237] Figes, *The Whisperers*, 555.
[238] Nanci Adler, *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 13.

official use of terror to remove undesirable Soviet elements from society. Nine top Soviet doctors were arrested and accused of plotting to poison and kill the Soviet leadership.[239] This was the last official wave of the Terror to hit the Soviet Union during Stalin's life. His head of the NKVD, Lavrenti Beria, was assigned the job of arresting and interrogating these doctors. By this point in Stalin's life, many believe his paranoia or suspicion of a possible fifth element had clouded his judgment. The arrests of the nine doctors produced a wave of anti-Semitism to occur. People began to turn their attention to the possible threat of the Jewish population. Thankfully for the doctors, and possibly the Jewish population, Stalin died just a year later in 1953, and the surviving doctors were released and avoided another possible Holocaust situation.

The continuation of the Purges is extensive and under researched. From the evidence provided, it is clear that the tremors begun by the Great Terror in the 1930s began a rippling effect that existed until Stalin's death. World War II saw the arrests of hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war, citizens with defeatist attitudes and critical comments. The NKVD had the right to arrest anyone for almost any reason, and they did. Imagine the possibility that a stray comment regarding your country's poor crop season could result in an arrest and sentence to five or more years serving in a forced labor camp. Then consider the growth and extension of the Gulag concentration camps. These camps began long before Stalin took control in the mid-1920s, but under his watchful, micromanaging eye, they grew to include foreigners, veterans, children, mothers, fathers, husbands, and wives. Families, friends, and neighbors continued to struggle in a society where informers existed everywhere and no one could be trusted. People that had been close their entire lives suddenly and often unexpectedly lost each other. Censorship and secrecy created fear and pain in the hearts of millions as they were forced to speculate over the fate of those arrested. The pain was compounded by the reality that many believed those arrested had been mistakenly identified as enemies of the state while simultaneously believing that enemies of the state truly did exist. The Terror did not end with the Moldavian arrests or the execution of Yezhov. Lavrenti Beria

[239] Louis Rappaport, *Stalin's War Against the Jews: The Doctor's Plot and the Soviet Solution* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 23.

did not stop the Terror. It all continued. The remnants of lives lost, struggles survived, and thousands dead existed within society well beyond Stalin's death.

The Memorial organization states in its mission statement that "however horrible the past may have been, forgetting it would make the future even worse."[240] So why have the pages of history largely ignored the Terror and Purges that existed after 1939? Perhaps it is a lack of source material or historians have decided that it fits better as a brief conclusion to a dramatic prelude. The existing historiography commits a disservice with its overview mentality to the 1940-1950s which is portrayed by many historians of this subject. Historians like Anne Applebaum and Orlando Figes are attempting to include these years as important and crucial pages of Soviet history to the memory of the Purges. Their works however are tainted by the same lack of information that many may accuse other works as doing. Unfortunately for the victims of this time, the majority of attention historically is placed on the events of World War II and the front lines. Perchance with organizations such as Memorial and historians with an interest in searching through interviews, memoirs, diaries, and official documents the historiography may soon see a book dedicated to this time period that gives it the justice it deserves, as Michael Parrish has done in his work *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security, 1939-1953*. Parrish's work provides tremendous insight and information on this time, but it does not provide a full account because it focuses on the politics of national security and Soviet state policies.

[240] Gennadii Kuzovkin, "The Historical-Enlightenment Work of Memorial", http://memo.ru/eng/history/intro.htm (accessed November 2, 2009).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Soviet Union underwent drastic and largely unimaginable changes following their exit from World War I in 1917. A new political party preached ideological doctrines that called for an end to capitalism and a beginning for socialism and communism. After a bloody Civil War ravaged the country's resources and citizens, a man by the name of Vladimir Lenin espoused statements that promised a future utopia that would free the working class and alleviate the troubles of the people; the people who had long been suppressed by the Tsarist Empire. Little did many know that the road to this utopia was paved with the blood, sweat, and fears of the Soviet people. Joseph Stalin continued a long held tradition of utilizing terror against one's own population to rehabilitate those who strayed from the Communist path and to remove potential threats to the Revolutions of 1917. For most of the Bolshevik leaders and followers, the battle did not end with industrialization and the liberation of the Soviet people. The true battle fought was to keep the Revolution alive at any cost; to insure the continuation of the revolution a virtual rollercoaster of purges was necessary by the leadership. The cost took shape in the lives of Communist Party members, high military commanders, mothers, fathers, children, academics, and millions of Soviet lives. These crimes committed against the Soviet's own populations and neighbors are widely acknowledged today. The term "gulag" is used by politicians to describe current circumstances of supposed tyranny and as a punch line for some who see it as a humorous set of events in post Cold War world. The crimes of this time do not fit clearly within the definition of genocide. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, genocide is the systematic intent to destroy the existence of a group of people through the use of violent crimes.[241] The Soviet leaders' intention to exterminate the class of kulak peasants and bourgeoisie appears to fit into this category but genocide refers to the extermination of an ethnic group, but the majority of the actions fall under the title of sovereignty. The

[241] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "What is Genocide?", http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007043 (accessed April, 2007).

rest of the Terror inflicted upon the Soviet Union took aim at a loosely described profile of anti-Soviet elements present within society; a political purge more than an ethnic. It easily could have been anyone and therefore affected nearly all individuals of the time. The crimes of Stalin's Soviet Union have gone almost completely without punishment or reprimand by the international community. Upon Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev and others simply worked to exonerate themselves from the stain of the Terror rather than correcting the years of wrong doing. The world which witnessed the first three Moscow show trials considered to be part of the Great Terror from 1936-1939 ignored the obvious use of fabricated evidence and choreographed trials to report back to their respective countries that the cases were justified and appropriate. The question becomes why are these crimes left unpunished by the West even to this day and why has the historical profession not investigated the mysteries and conspiracies closer? The Terror of this era has seen the deaths of millions covered by censorship and fear. The crimes, however, are not only unpunished by international doctrine and action but also by their place in the history books. The Terror that ensued following the rise of Joseph Stalin within the Soviet Union is marred by inadequacies, false confessions, Soviet ideology, the Cult of Personality that surrounded Stalin, doctored records, censorship, and dissident hatred which creates a crime for the victims, historians, and the history of the time itself.

Following the conclusion of World War II, the world became privy to a barrage of information exposing the atrocities committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Suddenly their transgressions and crimes were laid bare for the world to examine and researchers and historians alike began to study these events. After May 8, 1945 victory had been achieved in Europe, crowds gathered to celebrate the end of the Nazi totalitarian regime in Moscow's Red Square and around the world. The celebrations were short lived as the sobering task of tallying the total losses started. More than sixty million people had perished, with tens of millions torn from their homes, and hundreds of millions wounded emotionally and physically.[242] The Nuremberg Trials took place between November 1945 and October 1946 and tried cases against twenty two major

[242]David M. Kennedy ed., *World War II Companion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 912.

Nazis.[243] While these trials faced similar accusations as some raised against the show trials of the USSR, they allowed the truth to be laid out for the world to see with little doubt to the honesty of the information. Critics accuse the trials of rejecting objectivity by choosing judges from the Allied side and because the definition for the crimes was created after they had already been committed. Despite criticisms, the concentration camps and the strategy of blitzkrieg showed the world and its historians the raw magnetism with which the Nazis attempted to take over the world based on their image and principles. One criticism that stands to question today is the apparent immunity that the Soviets experienced in regards to not only their war crimes during WWII but also their previous transgressions against populations within their borders. Crimes against humanity appeared to only apply to those who had lost the war.

The Terror the Soviet people endured under Stalin consisted of several levels and stages that created a virtual life long campaign for him against potential threats to his power and national security. The initial purges existed as a bloodless removal of individuals deemed unworthy of membership in the elite Bolshevik Party, which ironically was a Party for the people. With the death of Sergei Kirov, Stalin and his secret police force, the NKVD, were able to bring the option of execution into the purges. Previously this would have been unheard of without the justification of protecting the safety of the citizenry and revolution. With the option of execution available, Stalin began searching for any conspirators or possible enemies who contributed to the assassination. This led to the initial execution of several and the removal of many Leningrad NKVD officers to the East. Questions still exist in regard to Stalin's possible part in the murder of Kirov and many historians attempt to place it in the realm of possibility. They continued to follow up on the murder trial through two further trials which followed similar fabricated confessions and choreographed prosecution. Finally this level of Terror subsided with the execution of Nikolai Bukharin and the Trial of the Twenty-One in 1938. This final trial worked as a means for Stalin to tie up any loose ends and also ended up being the end of two NKVD chiefs. Genrikh Iagoda, the previous NKVD chief, became part of the trial while this marked his successor, Nikolai Yezhov's inauguration to the end. Also during this stage, the military

[243] Ibid, 924.

faced a secret trial which decimated the military command and completely restructured its internal system rendering it unable to produce a threat to Stalin's dictatorship.

The second level of the Terror constituted a much wider purge including the repression of the intelligentsia, scientific and cultural community, and other elements of civil society. This repression hit writers, historians, professors, and others especially hard due to their presumably easy access to students who may rise up against the regime. Accused of terrorism, countless amounts of the USSR's best and brightest were transported to the Gulag concentration camps to work towards rehabilitation, or rather disappear from society. This level of the Terror, while not as widely studied, still constitutes a large amount of what we now know about the Purges. Due to émigré and dissident reports, the crimes against the Soviet Union's intelligentsia are well known. Confessions of terrorism and brutal interrogations left the defendants with little choice but to comply with the system and succumb to arrest. Upon arrest, these former voices of society were stricken from the public records and their works and lives were erased. Many of these arrests are documented by the extensive lists that the government maintained known as quotas in the process of purging.

While the majority of attention is focused on the high profile arrests and executions, the Terror affected nearly every member of Soviet society. The official documentation on these arrests and crimes are often reduced to the quota lists compiled by the Soviets to remove anti-Soviet elements from all aspects of their country. This included the perpetrators, conspirators, victims, families, and the pain of waiting for news of loved ones lost. Children were often faced with the reality of having to denounce their parents and resulting in their introduction to the orphanage system. The perpetrators and conspirators often became victims themselves as the time the Purges developed further. As well, they varied between those who did it to protect their lives and their families and those who reveled in the chance to fulfill Soviet ideology. Without the stories of the families and the pain of separation, the story of the Terror stands as a series of events that seem to only have executed political opponents to Stalin. As well, the stories of those who profited from the terror add to the history creating a fuller picture of what happened. Too long this time was portrayed as a series of elite purges that removed potentially harmful elements of society. The need in the

historiography lies with the inclusion of the story of the everyday citizen's way of life. It is imperative to include the story of the lesser known elements to obtain the truth that the Terror could not be contained and actually spread to infiltrate people's communal homes and daily lives. Reports provided by victims and dissidents are considered to be inherently flawed by biases, as are oral history accounts.

The most ignored section of the Terror is what Michael Parrish refers to as the lesser terror. In response to Robert Conquest's use of the Great Terror to denote the purges, Parrish argues that the Terror continued and thrived in the name of state security until Stalin's death in 1953.[244] With the advent of World War II, the majority of the history books end the Terror with the fall of Nikolai Yezhov in 1939. Those that continue on and include events such as the Doctor's Plot of the 1950s tend to gloss over several aspects and connect the ties back to the Great Terror rather than portraying it as a second stage. The truth is that the Purges continued well on through the war and into the post war society. The unspoken terror had connections to the possibility of a fifth column during the battles against Hitler's Nazi Germany. The lesser terror is characterized by the Soviet paranoia to foreign espionage and intrusion. To avoid a repeat of the uprising that occurred during World War I, Stalin continued to incarcerate anyone deemed treasonous, whether through actual proof, fabricated facts, or denouncements by fellow citizens. This lesser terror not only included direct repression but the social stigma that arose in conjunction with the ideology that taught that those with spoiled biographies were traitors. The 1940s saw the unfortunate spread of fear and a further cemented belief that enemies existed within society even if mistakes occasionally happened. Less violent than the purges of the 1930s, the 1940s to 1950s saw the continuation and manipulation of the Terror to new ends.

Historians have struggled to reveal the truths behind this dictator's years of Terror since they began. One of the greatest unpunished crimes of these events is the crime of falsification of information and historical record. The Soviet Union's ideology feared the interference of foreign, capitalist, and fascist intervention. Refusing to be judged by the world or face retribution for their actions, they created a vast system of classified documents and censored records. Basically it served as an archivist's worst

[244] Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security, 1939-1953* (London: Praeger, 1996), 3.

nightmare. It was a strictly enforced policy that included state secrets, fiction, poetry, cinema, radio, and sensitive material. The state controlled every type of media and took severe precautions to not allow state secrets to be leaked. The result of these actions left the world's historians with little more than the ability to play detective while piecing together the few pieces of information available and to report speculations on figures and events. Researchers before the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union found it incredibly difficult to even ascertain the numbers of victims. After its collapse however, the world experienced an archival revolution. For example, based on official documents now available, historians discovered that under Stalin from 1921 to 1953 the number of political sentences was around four million, with eight hundred thousand facing the death penalty.[245] These numbers, while representative, still do not include a full honest depiction of the amount of people consumed by the system, and this serves as one of the major errors that plague this historiography. Even with the introduction of previously censored documentation, the full story is still hidden by lies, false confessions, and possibly biased accounts.

The information utilized by the researchers and historians of the Terror is always accompanied by warnings of biases, lies, and a forewarning to always remember the in-depth level that Soviet ideology infiltrated some people's minds. For example, the Moscow show trials of the late 1930s and the Terror that followed them were stained by forced confessions, scripted trials, Soviet ideology, and secret trials, such as that of the military elite. Confessions made in court were scripted and rewritten, sometimes even by Stalin himself. People were often too scared to write down events accurately if at all. Any sign of anti-Soviet sentiment resulted in the person's arrest and exile. Today the historical profession has access to more records than it had previously ever seen during the Soviet Union's existence. It is vital to remember the use of censorship and secrecy when investigating this area. The Soviet political system created an environment hostile to anyone attempting to uncover its secrets. Early Soviet historical works are largely considered to be inaccurate as the Russian Federation opens archives and researchers have a better opportunity to delve into the archival files. Even with the introduction of

[245] Stephen G. Wheatcroft, "Victims of Stalinism and the Soviet Secret Police: The Comparability and Reliability of the Archival Data. Not the Last Word", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (March, 1999), 315-345.

new materials and contemporary historical works, mysteries still exist in relation to large quantities of events during the Terror. Stalin's possible call for Kirov's murder is still highly debated among historians, his paranoia or incredible insight into enemies of the state within all aspects of society is highly contested, and the probability of Mikhail Tukhachevsky and the military elite's production of a coup remain unclear. Ambiguity remains a crime in the historical field and prevents the victims of Stalin's Terror to achieve resolution or the event's proper place in the field.

The Purges extended well beyond the year 1939. To some extent they continue to exist today as people still do not know the fate of some of their relatives. As the years continue to pass and the history is still unclear, the story will be lost. Stalin's network of deceit and secrets has resulted in the overall inadequacies that exist within the historiography. The larger issues arise in connection with the harm that these events and the myriad of mysteries surrounding them has done to the generations of people who have survived them. The purges defined the rule of one of the most notorious dictators of the century. The events of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s left an unmistakable mark on the history of the Soviet Union. There is little doubt that the events themselves occurred; there is plenty of reliable evidence and documentation to support that. The issue arises when one begins to peel back the layers of the events as well as the actors involved and uncover the wide scope that they truly encompassed over such a long time span.

Due to the secrecy and censorship of the USSR, historical references to the Terror under Joseph Stalin's dictatorship are still today largely based on speculation, conspiracy theories, and guided by primary source material that carries a heavy burden of bias and uncertainty. Historical researchers today have dissected what is considered to be the Great Terror of the 1930s quite sufficiently, but the areas of terror in the everyday lives of Soviet citizens, the lesser terror of the 1940s and 1950s, and others have gone largely ignored. This serves as a grand disservice and crime to the historical field and to the victims and generations themselves who endured it. While historians and researchers cannot be blamed completely for these shortcomings, this is an area that requires diligent work to uncover new findings to the large mysteries that still exist. It appears that in this age of genocidal studies and in the ever expanding technological

information age students and researchers have left this field somewhat behind. While works concerning the Gulag camps are published every few years and works to expose Stalin in a new light arrive on the bookshelves periodically, it seems that we, as researchers, have become complacent to battle the old arguments that have existed since the field was merely based on speculation and defector accounts. This is not to condemn the historical profession as a whole. This thesis serves as a call for a reevaluation of the Terror under Stalin's rule to remove the weight of speculation and conspiracy and to give this subject in history the strength of reliable facts that the history of the Holocaust and other atrocities hold. A contribution to the historiography separated from the other dictatorships of the twentieth century and an in-depth investigation into the Soviet crimes that influenced a generation at home and abroad encompassing the true scope.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The author, Amanda Colleen Rooney, was born and raised in Pennsylvania. Amanda completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in History with a minor in Sociology from Thiel College in Greenville, PA in May of 2007. She then entered Florida State University for graduate work with the Russian and East European Studies program. In 2008, she enrolled in a dual Master of Arts degree program with History as her second Master of Arts. She focused her studies on dictators of the twentieth century and the history of the Soviet Union while completing her coursework. She added Public History as her History Master of Arts minor to incorporate another field of historical approach into her work. In the summer of 2008, Amanda attended Moscow State University through Florida State University's International Programs and successfully completed coursework in Russian culture and language.

Upon her graduation in summer of 2010, she plans to move to Virginia to pursue a career with the government and volunteer with genocide awareness programs. Amanda currently resides in Tallahassee, FL and enjoys traveling the world.