# CLASS STRUGGLES IN THE USSR

## THIRD PERIOD: 1930-1941

### PART I : THE DOMINATED

CHARLES BETTELHEIM

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by

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# Contents

# Preface to the French Edition

STALINISM was one, systematic, whole.

Analysis of the class struggles in the USSR during the 1930s confronts a situation which was particularly complicated, and rapidly changing. It has required an order of research which cannot be reproduced in the order of exposition. The results of our analysis of Stalinism and its realities will therefore be presented in two volumes: the first volume is devoted to the *dominated* (peasants, workers, the repression and mass terror which struck them, capital accumulation and its particular crises which made them its victims); the second volume deals with the *dominators*, their ideology and its changes in the 1930s, the manifestations of the new class and the historical conditions of its formation, the role of the Party and of the USSR's foreign policy.

This order of exposition will enhance clarity but at the same time will not prevent certain repetitions necessary for an understanding of the step-by-step evolution of the different elements and factors which make up, from top to bottom, Stalinism. The reader is asked to tolerate a little inconsistency in this regard.

– C.B.

# Preface to the English Edition of the Third Volume (First Part) of Class Struggles in the USSR

THE appearance in English of the third volume of *Class Struggles in the USSR* comes ten years after its publication in French, ten years of economics, political and social upheavals of exceptional importance. These upheavals have directly touched those countries who claimed allegiance to socialism and have produced enduring effects on the international scene, one of which lies in viewing the current transformation as a testimony of the "failure of socialism".

### On the alleged "failure of socialism"

The present work stands opposed to this thesis since it reveals that the USSR and the other countries who had declared that they had "built socialism" had not actually accomplished any of the radical social transformations which could have permitted them to break away from this specific form of state capitalism which I have described as "party capitalism". In fact, it is the latter which has failed.

This failure was brought about in the USSR through the aggravation of a general crisis born from the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production and particular forms reclothed by these contradictions under conditions of party capitalism. All the so-called socialist countries have entered into a similar process. These have developed according to specific modalities determined by their own history.

These countries had a number of similar characteristics: they were all for example, subject to the leadership of a single party which upheld its legitimacy from Marx's works. Among other objectives, this book seeks to throw light on the usurped character of this "legitimacy".

Against this background, it seems to me useful to present some other remarks.

## On Marx's work

The analyses presented here bear upon the scientific content of the work inaugurated by Marx. This work is very much alive, open to newer fields of enquiry and therefore capable of being enrichened through rectifications and criticisms inspired by experience and social practices. Indeed, it is precisely this capacity which has allowed it to remain current and relevant.

These two qualities have been confirmed by the movement of contemporary history: by the unfolding of the crisis of international capitalism which entails a deepening of social and economic polarisation, increase in unemployment and underemployment, rise in criminality, corruption and the use of drugs, escalation of armed conflicts, etc., on the one hand, while on the other hand, these qualities are confirmed by the ability of Marx's works to take into account the contradictions of several allegedly socialist models and their consequences.

The scientific character of most of Marx's work concerns above everything else, his analysis of the capitalist mode of production, its structures and contradictions and illuminating the laws governing its movement. Marx showed how the working of these laws led to a growing domination of the market order, the extention of the domination of capital and its globalisation, accumulation of riches at one end of the "society" (now extending to the entire planet), and poverty at the other end. Social struggles led victoriously by the exploited are the only means by which the working of these laws can be breached and the social relations upon which they are founded be smashed.

That Marx's scientific work was able to anticipate the subsequent transformations of capitalism and its major consequences must not lead in a paradoxical manner to the illusion

that – contrary to other sciences, Marx's scientific work will be infallible and capable of formulating "eternal truths" touching upon a future that is situated beyond the scope of all social practice.

Marx had on many occasions guarded against those who believed they could predict the future. He had recalled that "men make their own history" and that the outcome of these struggles is not "guaranteed" so long as these have not been overcome. Also, even if his writings are far from being exempt of prophetic declarations, (the range and scope of which are well worth exploring), he had himself, rightly criticised those who sought – according to his expression – "to boil the pots of the future" and predesign the concrete forms of the transition to a "classless society" (see, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*). He knew that history had more imagination than us and that its "irony" could be bitter. Today, while the movement for the abolition of the existing order is going through an exceptional crisis, it is important as never before for those who claim to be fidel to Marx's work to show proof of their initiative and not condemn it to paralysis. For this purpose, they must in order to enrich it, treat this work – as is the case with all sciences – in a manner that does not hesitate to question its conclusions and its fundamentals when this is necessary since the only way of keeping a science alive is to take into account that which real history and practice never fail to teach us.

It is all the more necessary to bear these considerations in mind since ignoring them or occulting them has sereved to maintain the established "order" and has allowed adherents of the latter to speak of the "failure of Marxism". In this context, it is necessary to present a few other reflections by way of supporting what has been outlined above.

## On the alleged "failure of marxism"

The possible points of departure of the reflections that follow are several. I have chosen to begin by questioning Bukharin's affirmation according to which Marx's work constituted a "block of steel". It seems to me that this point of departure is justified since this affirmation had implicitly sustained "Soviet Marxism" (to which it served as a "title of legitimacy") and can

foster several other forms of dogmatism. Now, a serious examination of Marx's work reveals that this is indeed questionable.

Comparing Marx's work to a "block of steel" is to already betray it through a denial of its historical insertion, its continous development and its essential characteristics. Accepting this comparison provides the possibility of arbitrarily choosing any "quotation" taken from a complex work to unduly "justify" so-called "Marxist" analyses and conclusions but which are actually deprived of any sound basis.

Marx was highly conscious of the risk of distortion especially since this often occurred under his own eyes. He had denounced what he called "self-styled Marxism", declaring to Laffargue: "What is clear is that I myself am not a Marxist" (letter from Engels to Bernstein dated November 3, 1882).

Since these words were delivered, history has largely confirmed its bearer. It has shown that it is indispensable to recognise that Marx's work is rich, multiple and tirelessly creative; that – like all living reality – it includes contradictory aspects, and to arbitrarily abstract one of these at the expense of ignoring the context is tantamount to not respecting the integral nature of Marx's work.

It may also be recalled that concrete historical development and social struggles gave birth to not *one* but *several* Marxisms. Those who declared themselves the most "orthodox" were the most dogmatic; the worst deviations from the struggle for social emancipation were committed in their name. These Marxisms provided the weapons to fight the exploited and oppressed by calling upon them to respect an order which was none other than the established order even though it had been "smeared in red" as Lenin said of the Soviet state apparatus in 1921.

We cannot therefore speak of a failure of Marxism since the latter does not exist; what exists are several Marxisms which derive their origins from social struggles and from different aspects of Marx's work. Such a proposition might appear discouraging. In my view however it is not since it calls for the development of the only kind of Marxism that is defensible: critical Marxism.

## For a critical Marxism

"Critical Marxism" is the rational kernal of Marx's work and

also of the works of those who remain "fidel" to him. This does not however consist in simply repeating what he said but in retaining that which is in fact essential to forge ahead.

Remaining fidel to Marx's work in this sense has several important implications; above all, it involves not looking for answers in his work which either do not exist or which are not at any rate to be found there. Marx was – as anybody else – (to borrow an expression from Hegel), a "child of his time". Respecting this requirement is the only way of rendering Marx's work forever current and powerful by enrichening it through lessons – made possible by and which cannot be bypassed – from practice and history.

This then implies a need to continuously extend the movement of Marx's work, this movement that enabled him to develop a radical critique of the existing order, the crimes of which he not only denounced, but also showed that they could only get worse; something which the experience of the past century tragically illustrates.

It also implies the task of continuing the criticism of ideological forms under which this "order" comes to be viewed as "eternal" and the "best possible".

Further, it implies being alert to the new (i.e., innovation and change) in order to extract lessons and rectify what the old might have wrongly suggested. The emergence of newer social transformations is a result of developments in scientific thought, in class struggles and popular initiatives to which Marx attached considerable importance when he declared: "The emancipation of the working class cannot but be the act of the workers themselves" (this already condemned any kind of diktat derived from a text or imposed by a party which wished to view itself as the "guide of the revolution").

Finally, it implies an effort to keep "alive" the capacity of Marx's thought to criticise itself and to treat criticism as something that is welcome (see, Preface to the First Edition of *Capital*, 1867).

A critical Marxism of this kind stands opposed to all proclaimed "orthodoxies" which can only be conservative and consequently serve the existing order. Rejecting all assimilation into a "system", it firmly rejects the concept of monolithism by remaining open to the practice of free debate that is indispensible to the conquest of democracy.

The failure of pseudo-socialisms and dogmatic Marxisms that were linked to them heralds the beginning of a period during which the revolutionary character of critical Marxism can clearly develop and manifest itself. Among the scientific tasks that need to be urgently addressed include a balance sheet of pseudo socialisms and their ideologies, an exercise in critical reflection having a bearing upon the different Marxisms in a manner that retains their positive lessons and rejects the rest, analysis of the forms of domination of capitalist apparatuses and the modalities of their transformation into private capitalists and the new forms assumed by the class struggle while the domination of capital considered globally, is tending towards greater concentration to an extent that has no precedent hitherto.

The present work which attempts to show what "socialism" and Soviet "Marxism" had been can perhaps be considered as the beginning of a necessary renewal of critical and revolutionary Marxism.

**Charles Bettelheim**
Paris, June 1993

Translated by Ramnath Narayanswamy, Bangalore, July 1993

# Key to abbreviations and Russian words used in the text

| | |
|---|---|
| Artel | Traditional form of cooperative |
| CC | Central Committee of CPSU (B) |
| Sharaga | Research establishment of NKVD, staffed by detainees |
| CPSU (B) | Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) |
| Gosplan | State Planning Commission |
| GPU | State Political Administration (Security Service) |
| Gulag | Labor camp administration |
| Khozraschyot | Application of proper accounting procedures |
| Kolkhoztsentr | Central organization for managing the USSR's collective farms |
| Kolkhoz | Collective farm |
| Kolkhoznik | Collective farm peasant |
| Kontraktatsiya | Delivery contract system between state collecting organizations and the peasants or kolkhozes |
| Krai | Region |
| Mir | Traditional peasant commune |
| MTS | Machine and Tractor Station |
| NEP | New Economic Policy |
| NKVD | Commissariat of the Interior |
| OGPU | Successor organization of GPU, until its security functions taken over by the NKVD |
| Orgnabor | Organized recruitment |
| O truda | Local organizations of Labor Commissariat |
| Raion | District |
| RKK | Commission for settling labor disputes |
| Serednyak | Middle (average) peasant |
| Skhod | Traditional peasant assembly |
| Sovkhoz | State farm |
| Sovnarkom | Council of People's Commissars |
| Traktortsentr | Central organization for distributing and managing the tractor stock |
| Trudoden' | Accounting unit used on collective farms for calculating payments to peasants; literally "labor-day" (plural *trudodni*) |
| VSNKh | Supreme Economic Council |
| Zek | Detainee (from Russian abbreviation, ZK, for prisoner; plural *zeki*) |

# Key to abbreviations used in bibliographical notes

| | |
|---|---|
| *EG* | *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta* |
| *Ist.SSSR* | *Istoriya SSSR* |
| *KP* | *Komsomol'skaya pravda* |
| *KPSS* (1953) | *KPSS v rezolutsiyakh i resheniyakh* (1953 edition) |
| *KSKh* | *Kollektivizatsiya sel'skogo khozyaistva*, (Moscow, 1957 |
| *Lit. Gaz.* | *Literaturnaya gazeta* |
| *N.Kh...1961g* | *Narodnoye khozyaistvo v 1961g* (year may vary) |
| *PS* | *Partiinoye stroitel'stvo* |
| *Tsgaor* | Central state archives of the October Revolution |
| *VI* | *Voprosy istorii* |
| *Z'* | *Za industrializatsiyu* |

# Directions for use

VOLUMES 3 and 4 of *Class Struggles in the USSR* constitute the provisional terminus of a route for which Volumes 1 and 2 were important stages. This route, which here I shall not discuss from a personal aspect, led me to results and re-evaluations which raise questions about some of the suggestions put forward in the first two volumes of this study. In particular, I have felt it necessary to modify my earlier characterization of the October Revolution and its aftermath. The present text is largely devoted to this new characterization.

Before embarking on new formulations I should add that these are not the result simply of "research" (devoted in this case to Russia) and of a secluded contemplation. They have been impressed upon me not only by analysis of what has happened in the USSR but also by many recent events, especially those involving China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Poland. These events exemplify the attraction exerted by a process of transformation, one which tends to gradually break with the demands of a totalitarian system in which a single party claims the right to manage state and society and to reserve freedom of speech to itself alone. Moreover, perusal of books recently published about the Russian Revolution,[1] and a return to the analysis of Soviet history in the 1930s, have made clearer the *gap* separating the speeches and promises of October from revolutionary and postrevolutionary reality.[2] Consideration of

this gap, and revealing the reasons for it, was, right from the start, one of the aime of this study. I believe that I am now closer to this objective than I was when I prepared the first volume.

I would add that discussions I have had with those kind enough to read parts of the preliminary drafts of Volumes 3 and 4 of this study[3] (whether they agreed with me or not) have given me considerable help in evaluating, in a way I might otherwise not have done, the significance and the distinctive features of the October Revolution.

As is known, the October insurrection interrupted a *plural revolutionary* process which began in February 1917 with the fall of tsarism and the formation of a provisional government.

A first component of this process was a peasant revolutionary movement of exceptional strength, which in the countryside deeply shook the "established order". In effect, the peasant revolution led to the sharing out, progressively, of the land of the big landowners. This began before October and continued afterward.

A second component was that which inspired the hopes of social emancipation entertained by certain parts of the working class and intelligentsia. These hopes took concrete form in the development of the activity of the soviets, in the spread of factory committees and the very growth of their role; they were also manifested by the movement in favor of democratic freedoms, installation of a representative system and of a state founded on law. The struggle for the convocation of a Constitutent Assembly formed part of this movement.

A third component, finally, is that which a certain version of the Marxist "vulgate" sometimes tries to designate as the "democratic and anti-imperialist revolution" and sometimes as the "socialist revolution," but whose historical significance cannot be conveyed by those terms. The latter refer to a certain revolutionary mythology, to the conflict between the old (1789) and the "new" (1917) which is in the process of being born. This third component of the revolutionary process corresponds to the revolt of part of the people and of the Russian intelligentsia, who do not wish to see their country continuing to serve as an instrument for imperialist groups struggling for a new share-out of the world, and who also reject the subordinate place of Russia on the world economic and

political scene. The leaders of this component declared themselves ready to govern the country through the soviets, and they allotted an essential role to the state's takeover of the means of production in order to develop rapidly the productive forces.

On the political level, the revolutionary process which began in February 1917 was characterized by the multiplication, throughtout the country, of councils or soviets, composed of workers, peasants, and soldiers, or of their delegates. Between February and October 1917 the real political power, insofar as it still existed, was "divided into two" (hence the expression "dual leadership" used to describe the situation of this time, which is the situation of *revolutionary crisis*). These "two powers" (the provisional government on the one hand, the soviets on the other) were extremely weak and their authority, much reduced, did not extend throughout the entire country.

The February Revolution therefore marked the start of a series of complex transformations which were accompanied by a solid popular mobilization, a relative strenghtening of the authority of the soviets, and the development of the influence of the Bolsheviks over a section of the masses, whose aspirations for an immediate peace and certain urgent demands (like the appropriation of land by the peasants) they expressed.

The description which Lenin gave of the revolutionary crisis which developed after February 1917 (when he spoke of the entanglement of "bourgeois-democratic" and "proletarian" revolutions)[4] is, for the circumstances, inadequate, because it conveys a false representation of a reality which is infinitely more complex and, in order to maintain myths, it fails to take into consideration the great diversity of the participating movements. Today, I feel, this representation has seriously obscured an understanding of what was radically novel in the revolutionary process that was in full bloom after February 1917, a process moreover whose potential development can only be guessed at, since it was brutally cut short by the Bolsheviks' seizure of power. This seizure of power marks the beginning of the end of the plural revolutionary process which was born in February 1917 and whose last spasms would be at Kronstadt in March 1921. The soviets were, then, transformed into ratifying and executive organs for government and Bolshevik

Party decisions, whilst the participation of the masses was progressively broken in thousands of theatres of activity.[5] Instead, there was substituted just one such theatre, that of the Party (soon to be the sole party), which claimed to incarnate the people and to make history. The party presented itself as though it had made the revolution and, alone, knew how to make it work. And so it soon banned as subversive all discourse apart from its own. Any dissenting opinion was held to be "counter-revolutionary" ("whoever is not with us is against us", as it was said).

October made it possible for a managerial team, benefitting from the sympathy of part of the urban masses, to place itself at the head of an organized movement and of new organs of power in order to try to "guide" the country along a predetermined track; in this way a "revolution from above" was initiated, in which a decisive role was played by the directing organs of the Bolshevik Party.

The banning of other parties like the Socialist Revolutionaires (SRS) and the Menshevik Party (which included many workers), the subordination of the trade unions to the Bolshevik Party, and the way the latter functioned, all progressively closed the door to any possibility of organized expression on the part of workers, peasants, or intellectual workers.

Thus, the power installed in October 1917 by the Bolsheviks, power which proclaimed itself the "dictatorship of the proletariat," in reality was a dictatorship in the name of the proletariat, and it was finally exercised over the working class itself. Lenin implicity recognized this fact on many occasions. Thus, in 1919, he declared that the dictatorship of the proletariat in Soviet Russia corresponded to a "government for the working people," and not a "government by the working people." He even added that this power was not authentically proletarian.[6] Although Lenin refrained from drawing such a conclusion, such phrases meant that the "dictatorship of the proletarist" is only a *fiction*. The latter represents *in an inverted form* the real relationships, which are those of a dictatorship exercised *over* the proletariat.

Such an inverted presentation of the real relationships has enormous significance. On the one hand, it constituted the *founding myth* of Soviet Russia, presented as the country of

the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and of the "Great October Socialist Revolution." On the other hand it signified the subjection of the Bolshevik Party to an alienated ideology which had the Party whatever its real relationship with the actual proletariat, affirming that it was the "vanguard" of the latter. In this way the Bolshevik Party claimed a *"proletarian legitimacy"* which in some way was "consubstantial." This gave it a dispensation from giving an account of itself to the working class, which was judged "less advanced" than itself. Certainly, the Party had to pay attention to what the workers were thinking, but with the aim of "educating" and "guiding" them and, if necessary, of punishing those who did not recognize its authority. Thus, "working class power" could be rigorously used *against* that class. As Lenin told L.O. Frossard, "The dicatatorship of the proletariat is exercised not only over the bourgeoisie but also over the politically unaware or stubborn part of the proletariat and its partner, the reformers. The reformers are shot."[7]

"Proletarian legitimacy" allowed the ruling power to dispense with a true "Soviet legitimacy" while claiming the latter for itself whenever it considered it useful to do so. This Soviet legitimacy was, moreover, only an accessory; it was not a "founding legitimacy," as is remarkably emphasized in the analyses of Marc Ferro: the Bolshevik Party began at the time of the October insurrection by dispossessing of power the soviets and their Second Congress, at the very moment when the Bolsheviks, were supposed to have symbolically installed soviet power.[8] Simultaneously, in its discourse, the Bolshevik Party made October appear as the true image of what it itself regarded as a "socialist revolution."

But if one analyes the political and social consequence whose development has been encouraged by this representation of the revolution, one concludes that the October insurrection brought to power a radicalized fraction of the intelligentsia, was supported by part of the working class, and claimed to speak in the name of the proletariat; that which has entered history under the banner of socialist revolution is essentially a *"capitalist revolution"* leading in the end to an exproportion of the direct producers.

In Volumes 1 and 2 of this study I had yet to arrive at this conclusion. I believed then that it was only progressively, through a series of "slides" and "ruptures," that the Soviet Union got itself locked into what I called "state capitalism," and that these "slides" and "ruptures" were a result above all of "historical circumstances"—of the need to face up to difficulties which the Bolshevik Party could not have overcome in any different way. Today I think—following the repetition of the same type of development in all those countries in which a directing party has taken Bolshevism as a guide for its action—that one must ascribe a decisive historical role to certain concepts of Bolshevism.[9] That is, the "historical mission of the proletariat" and its party: a party functioning as the imaginary source of theoretical and political truth; a socialism which—according to Lenin—is only "State monopoly capitalism *which is made to serve the interests of the whole people.*[10]

Admittedly, the moulding of Bolshevik ideology is complex and contradictory, and one could quote other texts in opposition to those which assign to the revolution the goal of a "generalized state wage-earning class" but, in the final analysis, what remains is the assimilation of socialism to state capitalism.

From October 1917 such concepts helped to orientate economic and social transformation toward a "capitalist revolution." However, up to 1929, this "capitalist revolution" endeavored to leave a place for the peasant revolution, which seemed to promise an avenue for cooperatives. This prospect was abandoned at the end of the 1920s when new social and political conflicts were unleashed, leading to a "second revolution," the "Stalinist revolution" which pushed to extremes the expansion of exploitative relationships.

The concept of "capitalist revolution" formulated here should be distinguished from the traditional concept of "bourgeois revolution." It is used to characterize the process begun in October, and relaunched and overtaken in 1929-30, not simply in regard to the social forces which played a "directing role" in it, but taking into account the social relationships which this revolution consolidated and helped in spite (or with the help) of phrases about socialist revolution.

The capitalist revolution which developed in Russia tended to eliminate the precapitalist forms of production, in particular small-scale commercial production. But until 1929 most of the Bolshevik leaders envisaged a progressive and "peaceful" elimination of these types of production. The "Stalinist revolution" abandoned this prospect. Relying exclusively on one part of Bolshevism's complex and contradictory concepts, it strove for the development of the most undiluted forms of capitalist production, for the most radical separation of the direct producers from their means of production, and for the destruction of the forms of consciousness and organization which would allow these producers to resist exploitation.

In this way, through a complex and bruising process, the October insurrection cleared the way for two successive revolutions: one which was orientated towards a state capitalism which had a place for the peasantry, and then one which, after 1929, laid the foundations (in the name of socialism and under the direction of the Bolshevik Party) of an extreme form of capitalism. Finally, this second revoltuion, impelled by the Stalinist leadership, imposed on the Russian people exploitative relationships which enabled an exceptionally high rate of accumulation to be achieved over a certain period, at the cost of unprecedented oppression.

Neither the October Revolution nor the Stalinist revolution attacked capitalist exploitation: what they did was to boost the *specific political forms of domination* by means of a transformation of the *juricial* forms under which this capitalist exploitation operated. After October, real power was more and more exercized by the party leadership and *apparat*. The transformations which in course of time were impressed on the Party, as much for objective reasons as for its leadership's ideology, resulted in the Party *apparat* becoming increasingly autonomous in relation to its membership; it tended towards self-recruitment and the purging of those who did not sufficiently submit to it. In this way the "new type" Party really took shape during the 1930s.

For the Party leadership, the contradictions which put it in opposition to the workers, peasants, or cadres could be resolved "positively" only by the strengthening of its authority. In its

view, the "emancipation of the working class" required first of all the consolidation of its power. It considered that only highly centralized economic and political organization would permit a sufficiently high growth of production and of labor productivity. It believed, at least in 1917 and at the beginning of the 1920s, that the workers would thereby, in the end, gain the "free time" which they needed in order to participate actively in the management of public affairs — a consideration which disappeared during the 1930s.

Thus, review of the analysis of the October Revolution and its aftermath leads to recognition of the fact that the "socialist" aspect of this revolution is a matter of aspirations and talk at the level of image and ideology.

Nevertheless this "socialist" aspect of October has had (and still has) considerable historical effect. The myth of the USSR as "country of socialism" tends to survive in our own days, in spite of the fact that, that country has a particularly radical separation and extension of a wage-earning class, and a rigorous subordination of production to the limitations of capital accumulation and of surplus-value; all this corresponds to an extreme form of capitalism and leads to a policy which is militaristic and expansionist.

If this is far from being universally recognized, it is not only because of the strength of a foundational myth but also thanks to complex and contradictory causes. Thus a large number of militants "desire" socialism to be realized somewhere or other and therefore invest in the USSR an imaginary socialism. Conversely, for adherents of "western" capitalism, and adversaries of all social change, the identification of the USSR with "revolution" is highly convenient because it suggests that any attempt at a radical social emancipation would lead inevitably to the dictatorship of a single party and to an arbitrary and in practice repressive regime, which would preserve the privileges of an especially hidebound and arrogant minority. However, apart from the effect of the foundational myth of October, the ignorance of Soviet reality, and simple bad faith, the refusal to recognize the capitalist character of the USSR is also very often due to a simplistic and purely descriptive representation of capitalism.

For those who accept such a representation, capitalist development can only take place in accordance with a "normal path,"

the model of which is England and America. The Marxist "vulgate," moreover, holds this view, even though in Lenin's view the culmination of this development was represented by Germany and the so-called "directed capitalism" which that country experienced at the end of World War I. Concrete observation and historical analysis tend to produce a different view, which recognizes that there exist only *specific ways of development* both of production relationships and of productive forces under capitalism, and that there is not solely an Anglo-American way of capitalist development but also other ways which are French, Japanese, Russian and so on.

The "decomposition" of the "old social order" was especially spectacular in Russia from 1918 to 1920, and then from 1928 to 1931. Individuals who until then held a dominant place in the production and reproduction process, or on the political scene, were effectively eliminated in wholesale fashion. But the transformations which resulted from this only upset the social relationships of domination and exploitation, without making them disappear. This has been obscured by the elimination of the old holders of political and economic power and by the emplacement of a strongly centralized executive power whose representatives spoke a radical language; all this gave the illusion that there had been a *"total break with the past"* and that an entirely new social order was being built.[11] The October insurrection *was presented in the guise of a socialist revolution* whereas what it did was open the way for a *capitalist revolution* of a specific type. October is therefore the beginning of what one might call the *Grand Illusion of the 20th century.*[12]

## Notes

1. Among recent works, I would particularly mention four important studies by Marc Ferro: *The Russian Revolution of February 1917* (London 1972); *October 1917* (London 1976), especially pp. 268-280; *Des Soviets au communisme bureaucratique* (Paris, 1980), especially pp. 119-26, 141ff., 180-6, 232ff; *L'Occident devant la révolution soviétique* (Brussels, 1980). I would also mention Martin Malia's *Comprendre la Révolution Russe* (Paris, 1980), especially pp. 109ff and *Hélène Carrière d'Encausse's Le pouvoir confisqué* (Paris 1980). On a different plane, an important book by Bernard Chavance should be mentioned: *Le Capital Socialiste* (Paris, 1980, as well as *Claude Lefort's L'Invention démocratique* (Paris 1981).

2. Making the effort to measure this gap, one has to take seriously Marx's declaration in the foreword of his *Kritik des Hegelschen Staatsrecht*: "One does not evaluate a revolutionary epoch according to its own idea of itself."
3. I have in this way had the benefit of very useful comments by Renee Cellier, Bernard Chavance, Yves Duroux, Sigrid Grosskopf, K.S. Karol, Alain Lipietz, Thierry Paquot, Rossana Rossanda, Jacques Sapir, Patrick Tissier, Paulette Vanhecke, Eric Vigne, Francois Wahl, as well as many others too numerous to mention, including the participants in my seminars at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en sciences sociales.
4. For these terms, see the first volume of this study.
5. This description follows that of Claude Lefort in 'La question de la Révolution' (see *L'Invention démocratique*, p. 189).
6. On this point, see volume 1 of this study (p. 98), and Lenin's *Collected Works* (London, 1965), Vol 29, p. 183 and Vol. 32, pp. 20-21, 24 and 48.
7. See L.O. Frossard, "Mon journal de voyage en Russia," in *L'Internationale*, October 2 1921, quoted in F. Kupferman, *Au pays des Soviets* (Paris, 1979), pp. 40-41.
8. See Marco Ferro, *Des Soviets*, p. 186ff.
9. Here it has to be admitted that, contrary to what I thought in 1974, these conceptions have had considerable historical consequences.
10. Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, (Moscow, 1964), p. 362.
11. Vols. 1 and 2 of this study began to move away from this illusion, but were still affected by it.
12. These two volumes, devoted to the third period (1930-41), conclude our enquiry into the class struggles in the USSR. After 1941, in effect, the foundations of the Stalinist system were firmly laid; in the USSR today they are still in the process of deterioration. The Khrushchev period deserves to be treated as a specific phenomenon and should not be reduced to a mere episode or digression.

PART 1

# The peasantry expropriated

For most of the 1920s Soviet agriculture remained mainly "private." In 1927 "individual peasant farms" provided 92.4 percent of the marketed grain production, the sovkhozes (state farms) 5.7 percent, and the kolkhozes ("collective" farms) 1.9 percent. In 1928 these two latter types of farm had less than three percent of the sown land, and were worked by a still smaller proportion of the active population.[1] The concept, then dominant, of the NEP had led the Party and state to avoid giving real help to peasants wishing to adopt spontaneously the path of collective agriculture.[2]

Toward the end of the 1920s the poor supply of industrial products to the countryside tended to reduce the amount of agricultural produce on offer. The authorities reacted with a series of measures which led to the "general crisis of the NEP."[3]

The Party leadership reacted to the difficulties that then arose by conducting a frontal attack against the peasantry. The continuation of this attack resulted, during several years, in a radical upheaval of social relationships in the countryside, and swept in quite new class relationships that were historically unprecedented and in no way corresponded to what the Party leaders had forecast, at least overtly, at the end of the 1920s.

## Notes

1. See *Narodnoye khozyaistvo* p. 27 and p. 316. See also Vol. 2 of this work, p. 85.
2. See Vol. 2 of the present work, pp. 105ff.
3. See above pp. 101-126 and pp. 460-478.

# 1

# "The socialist transformation of agriculture" and the class struggles

To grasp the significance of what is officially termed the "socialist transformation of agriculture," it is first necessary to recall briefly some essential aspects of the agrarian structures toward the end of the 1920s, and the way in which these structures tended to develop.

The existing social relationships toward the end of the NEP in Soviet agriculture resulted from the peasant revolution of 1917, the policies followed afterward by the authorities, and the repetition of peasant practices which by and large were communal and stemmed from the traditions of the *mir* and of the *skhod*.[1]

The agriculture that had been "socialized" played only a minimal role, supplying only 3.3 percent of agricultural production.[2] "Private" agriculture therefore played a quite dominant role. Within the latter, it may be noted that the middle peasants were dominant in the countryside; they accounted for more than twothirds of the peasantry. Together with the poor peasants, they provided eight times more grain for the market than the rich peasants.[3] Moreover, the proportion of middle peasants tended to increase, especially through the entry into this category of part of the old poor peasantry.[4] The situation of the middle peasantry, and part of the poor peasantry, was also strengthened by the development of traditional mutual aid practices, and by voluntary association in tens of thousands of "simple" production cooperatives.[5] In these ways the

economic weight of these peasant capitalists tended to grow. Up to a certain point the same thing happened with their political weight, transmitted through the *skhod*, which in part had restored the role and procedures of the former *obshchina*.[6]

In fact, contrary to the official propaganda of the late 1920s (whose most important themes are repeated by present-day Soviet propaganda), it was not at all a question of a rise to power of the rich peasants, or the coming to a head of a threat that these *kulaks* could have brought to bear simultaneously on middle and poor peasants and on food supply for the towns. Nor was it a question of a genuine spontaneous aggravation of the social contradictions inside the village. Of course, these contradictions existed during NEP, but the possibility also existed, and the facts demonstrate this, that these contradictions could have manifested themselves in a strengthening of the situation of the great majority of the peasants and by their voluntary entry into the cooperative system. It could be added that this has generally been overlooked, because there has been confusion between the "division" of the peasantry according to external economic criteria and its division into classes, which depend on production and labor relationships.

These realities should be borne in mind when seeking to uncover the social forces which impelled "collectivization," and when seeking reasons for collectivization ending in the destruction of what had been gained from the peasant revolution, in the expropriation of the peasantry and an upsurge of new exploitative relationships. In fact, contrary to the official picture, "collectivization" did not result from the struggle by poor and middle peasants, more and more exploited and oppressed by the kulaks. It resulted from the intervention of social forces, external to the village, which exacerbated and made use of the internal contradictions within the village. These social forces were those of the Party, which had become all powerful in the state. They led to a *specific capitalist transformation of the Soviet countryside* (when the latter was in no way developing into a "peasant capitalism"). The triumph of this rural capitalist revolution required that the peasants should be reduced to servitude and their resistance shattered.

It is here that there lies the true meaning of the vicissitudes of collectivization. Without understanding this, one might believe that these tragic events resulted from an insane venture that brought long-term ruin to Soviet agriculture and which in an absurd way launched the USSR into a chain of events "full of noise and fury."

To trace accurately the history of these events we must go back to 1928-29.[7]

## I. The years 1928-29

In consequence of the policies adopted for agricultural prices and for deliveries of industrial products to the peasants (particularly of products which they needed to develop their production), 1927 ended in a fiasco over the procurement of cereals by the state (and also by the official cooperatives). The leadership of the Party decided at the beginning of 1928 to take "urgent measures," which were regarded as the only meausres that were practicable.[8] In accordance with these measures, the peasants had to deliver to the state the grain which they held and for this they received a very low official price. If the peasants responded with a refusal, the authorities had recourse to "exceptional measures,"[9] which, in particular, allowed them to act under Article 107 of the Penal Code (of the RSFSFR); that is, they could seize, the assets of the peasant and confiscate them. These confiscations were carried out with the help of numerous officials and of "worker brigades" sent from the towns. In principle, these measures of coercion were only applied to the *kulaks;* but in fact they were applied to all peasants, mainly to middle peasants, who held the most grain. These measures were carried out brutally, especially after the spring of 1928, when famine began to be seriously felt. From that time the poor peasants, who more or less had upheld the exceptional measures during the winter months, became hostile to such an extent that at the end of the spring almost all the peasants were clearly against the policy adopted for the villages. In the middle of June 1928, M.I. Frumkin wrote, in a letter addressed to the Central Committee: "The village, apart from a small section of the poor peasantry, is against us."[10]

Discontent was also felt in the towns. The Soviet Union at the time experienced the most serious social and political crisis since the Kronstadt uprising.[11] In July, the Central Committee decided to annul the "exceptional measures," which it emphasized were "temporary," and condemned those applications of them which had given rise to "violation of revolutionary legality," to illegal searches, and to administrative arbitrariness, etc.[12]

Nevertheless, some months later, because of the "insufficiency" of the tax-in-kind, "exceptional measures" were again taken, with the application of coercion against the peasantry. Delivery quotas were imposed on the peasants. If they did not fulfil these, the authorities levied heavy fines, which often even took the form of expropriation and expulsion from the village. In this way from the winter of 1928-29, there was a partial "dekulakization"; like the dekulakization which would follow, this affected not only the rich peasants but also the middle peasants, and these measures in effect implied the abandonment of NEP. They were felt to be an attack on the peasantry, and shattered the sympathetic feelings which the village still retained for the government.

## II. The reintroduction of compulsory deliveries and the first wave of collectivization (1929-30)

### *(a) The frontal attack against the peasantry after the harvest of 1929*

While fixing quite ambitious but apparently realizable targets for the development of kolkhozes and sovkhozes, the Seventeenth Party Conference (April 23-29, 1929) made concessions to the poor and middle peasants, who were still regarded as the dominant people in the countryside. The Conference reiterated its condemnation of "violations of socialist legality."[13]

However, just before the summer 1929 harvest, despite all the previous assurances, the government fixed compulsory deliveries similar to those of "war communism". Local authorities

themselves evaluated the "grain surpluses" of the village and fixed the "delivery norms" of each producer: it was a question of compelling the peasants to fulfil the "local delivery plans". Given the level at which the majority of these "norms" were fixed, this meant the confiscation from the majority of the peasants of the results of their work, in other words a brutal pillage of the peasantry. Special commissions "checked" the fulfilment of the delivery plans. The village soviets (in actual fact controlled by the Party) were given the right to inflict heavy fines and to change the apportionment of the compulsory deliveries. In order to reduce the insupportable burden that these deliveries imposed on them, the poor peasants managed to get the quotas increased for the rich and better-off peasants. These quotas reached such levels that they could not be fulfilled. Peasants taxed in this way had not only to sell their livestock and their equipment but also their domestic utensils, furniture and even residential and farm buildings in order to purchase (illegally) from the market the grain that they had to deliver to the state. Some peasants were driven to disappear, or had to reduce their sowings and liquidate part of their animal or mechanical assets. In 1929 alone the number of horses diminished by 2.6 million and of cows by 7.6 million. This expropriation of part of the peasantry required an enormous mobilization of the Party and state apparatus, recourse to military and police methods, and at the same time entailed a reduction in 1929 of the sown area and cattle.[14] The wish of the authorities to get hold of the largest possible quantity of agricultural products and to weaken the peasantry in this way triumphed over the desire to develop seriously (or even simply to maintain) the level of agricultural productive resources. The aims of the new exploitative urban class had more weight than economic considerations or the "alliance" with the peasantry.

### *(b) The escalating collectivization "aims" in the fall of 1929 and January 1930*

At the top level of the Party apparatus during the summer and fall of 1929 there was a strengthening of the positions of those who had decided to put an end to the NEP, and to destroy the

results of the peasant revolution by instituting new agrarian structures which would permit the maximum exploitation of rural society.

Although the Sixteenth Party Conference had adopted the "optimal" version of the Five-Year Plan and targets for collectivization which seemed to be realizable, seven months later things took quite a different turn. What happened was that at the Plenum which met November 10-17, the annual plan for 1929-30 was adopted.[15] The targets of this plan were very high and no longer corresponded at all with those of the Five Year Plan adopted several months earlier. Stalin had declared that the peasants were joining the kolkhozes as entire villages and even entire districts,[16] and a new upward revision of the "collectivization targets" was made in accordance with the "sowing plan for the countryside for spring 1930" (this plan was ratified December 23, 1929). This was not the end of the series of decisions of this nature, for a decision of the Central Committee of Jaunary 5, 1930 fixed "socialization" targets which were even higher. The table below shows the upward move of targets which was to turn upside down the agrarian structures of the USSR.

*Agricultural "socialization" targets*
*(socialized sown areas in millions of hectares)*

| | | *1930 targets* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1933 targets of the April 1929 resolution*[17] | *Annual Plan* | *Decree of December 23, 1929*[18] | *Resolution of January 5, 1930*[19] |
| Kolkhozes and sovkhozes | 26 | 18.3 | 33.7 | 30 minimum (by spring 1930) |
| of which kolkhozes | | 15.0 | 30.0 | |

It may be noted that in December 1929 the "targets" forecast for 1933 had already been exceeded by the targets for 1930, and that the forcasts of "collectivization" doubled between November and December 1929. The resolution of Jaunary 5, 1930 established "as a task the collectivization of the great

majority of peasant households" during the five-year period. Moreover it provided that by the fall of 1930 or, at the latest, spring 1931, "complete" (*sploshnaya*) collectivization would be largely achieved in the main grain regions of the lower and middle Volga and in the North Caucasus and, one year later, in the other grain regions.[20]

The resolution of January 5, 1930 established that in principle the artel would be the main form of collectivization,[21] and it favored the formation of large kolkhozes.

Fixing targets in such precise figures for "collectivization" contradicted the principle of "voluntary acceptance" of the kolkhoz by the peasants. The contradiction became especially obvious when the Central Committee, unblushingly, at the same time warned "Party organizations against any attempt to influence the collectivization movement by means of decrees from above."

As things turned out, the forced collectivization campaign was speeded up by repressive measures adopted under pretext of "liquidating the kulaks as a class,"[22] and by the application of various administrative measures.

### *(c) "Administrative measures" preparing and accompanying "collectivization from above"*

From summer 1929 various administrative measures were taken, *having the effect of putting pressure on the peasantry.* This pressure aimed not only to increase the quantity of grain processed by the state[23]; it served also to "induce" the peasants to enter the kolkhozes and to "accept" that the latter would be of the size desired by the authorities.

As early as June 27, 1929, the Central Committee instructed the administration of the cooperatives (purchase, sales, credit, etc.) to "adapt itself" to the demands of collectivization, particularly by encouraging the establishment of *big* kolkhozes and even of *"giant"* kolkhozes.[24] In practice this meant the *destruction* of the small and medium kolkhozes that the peasants had started and *themselves directed,*[25] and the imposition on the peasantry of the formation of large-scale kolkhozes to which it was usually hostile,[26] because it could not control their

management; this implied that the peasants were *completely separated from their means of production.*

In August 1929 the CC issued directives for the development of the system of contracts *(kontraktatsiya).* This system made *the supply of industrial products to the agricultural producers depend on the obligatory deliveries undertaken by the latter.* Thus the agricultural producers undertook in advance to deliver definite quantities of agricultural products to the procurement organizations. These undertakings resulted from decisions taken by the peasant associations of the villages, decisions which were followed by contracts signed between the state and the associations. In reality, the latter took no "decisions". They were placed in a situation where all they could do was to ratify "proposals" made by the procurement organizations. However, these "decisions," once they had been approved by the majority, *were imposed on every member* of the peasant association. The procurement organizations could quite easily get their proposals ratified because a refusal to accept them would entail various sanctions, beginning with the cessation of supply of industrial products. The same sanctions were used against members of an association that did not fulfil the "promises" that had been made.

From October 1929, the Council of Ministers stipulated that contracts should cover several years and the *signatories of the contracts should in principle form themselves into kolkhozes,*[27] thereby installing a new means of exerting pressure in favor of collectivization.

Parallel with the development of the contract system, centralized and complex administrative structures were reinforced. These had to facilitate the procurement of agricultrual products and accelerate collectivization. Moreover, they had to provide managerial staff for the kolkhozes. Thus for the management of the kolkhozes there was the district *(raion)* kolkhoz union *(kolkhozsoyuz)* at the bottom, and at the top there were equivalent organizations for the regions and the federated republics.

From October 1929, another element of the kolkhozes' managerial structure, the *kolkhoztsentr,* became a central soviet-style organ entrusted with the supply of equipment at credit to the kolkhozes, with which it agreed contracts and for whose

production it arranged the procurement; it also elaborated, in association with Gosplan, a plan for the development and the activities of the kolkhoz sector, and it also prepared the operating rules for the kolkhozes, etc.[28] This administrative structure left no place whatsoever for any initiatives of the kolkhozes and of the kolkhoz members, either in the realm of production and delivery plans or in the internal regulations of the kolkhozes.

During the summer of 1929, the existing system of machine and tractor stations (MTS) and tractor columns was unified within the framework of a new central administration, the *Traktortsentr*.[29]

In sum, the decisions adopted during the second half of 1929 ended with the development of a variegated agricultural administration. The latter included, apart from the organizations already mentioned, offices entrusted with the commercial side of the different products, and others charged with the making of certain cultivation contracts and, finally, the People's Commissariat for Agriculture (*Narkomzem*), whose competence extended over the entire Soviet Union. This administrative structure was burdensome and difficult to coordinate, and therefore the different organizations which it comprised were often in conflict with each other and gave contradictory directives to the kolkhozes and to the peasant "associations." The total result of these measures was nothing less than constant pressure exercised on the peasants so as to increase the total procurement of products and the area of collectivized land.

This pressure took all kinds of forms: financial, commercial, technical (the peasants who did not "cooperate" were deprived of supplies, credits, etc. which were promised to others); there were also administrative, political, judicial and penal pressures.

Administrative and political pressures were exercised through the Party organization and through the local bureaucracy. At first they were presented simply as an "activation" of cadres entrusted with propaganda in favor of collectivization and of the procurement of produce. Thus from summer 1929 the villages received an increasing number of visits from Party organizers and propagandists. These cadres, arrived from the town, collected

together the assemblies and called on them to vote for increases in delivery plans and for the formation of kolkhozes. They also made an effort to "animate" the rural soviets and to organize the poor peasants. In this way, the great excitement which then developed originated mainly from elements *external to the village* who were quite ignorant of agricultural and peasant problems.

Simultaneously, there was a reinforcement of other means of pressure. For example, those who seemed "indifferent" to the current campaigns were easily accused of "kulak activity". The penal sanctions which struck at such activities were intensified, and the same thing happened with the sanctions for the non-delivery of the amounts of agricultural production envisaged by the *kontraktatsiya*. The description "kulak activity" became more and more frequent. Often it amounted to the "paying off of accounts" between certain villagers, but it became one of the principle methods of advancing the procurement of products and accelerating collectivization.

At this stage the multiplication of penal measures played a decisive role. At the beginning of 1929, the peasants had to pay to the state a fine equal to five times the quantity of products which ought to have been delivered to the state and which had not been so delivered. From June 1929, the non-delivery of products which should have been supplied was punished by *prison sentences, by confiscation of property and even by deportation*. In principle, the most severe punishments were to be applied only to kulaks, but this principle was frequently violated and severe punishments were also applied to medium and even to poor peasants. Moreover, refusal to enter a kolkhoz was considered to be a "kulak" activity or "counter-revolutionary" and punished as such.

### *(d) The immediate results of these measures*

In the short term the measures taken from the fall of 1929 had a "positive" effect on the progress of collectivization. The table below shows this:

*Percentage of collectivized households*[30]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| June 1, 1928 | 2.1 | January 20, 1930 | 21.0 |
| June 1, 1929 | 3.9 | February 20, 1930 | 50 |
| October 1929 | 4.1 | March 1, 1930 | 59.3 |
| Jaunary 1, 1930 | 15.5 | | |

The "progress" thus achieved developed in a chaotic and contradictory way because, contrary to the official claims of that period, the majority of peasants adhered to the kolkhoz unwillingly, for fear of administrative, financial and commercial sanctions and above all by the fear (justified) of being classed as a kulak, of seeing their property confiscated or being deported or executed.[31]

Recourse to repressive measures, arrests, executions and deportations, grew to such a scale in January and February 1930 that it engendered violent discontent among the peasantry, and even early stages of revolt. At the end of February the situation had seriously deteriorated. Stalin then decided to *temporarily suspend the collectivization movement*. On March 2, 1930 (just as the procurement had achieved a record level,[32] he published the article titled "Giddy with success."[33]

### *(e) The truce of spring and summer 1930*

The publication of this article by Stalin marks a truce in the offensive for "collectivization." This truce was imposed by the necessity to restore conditions relatively favourable for the spring sowings, otherwise there would have been famine in the land.

Stalin's article denounced the methods used for some months which, he said, could only "discredit the idea of collectivization at one blow" and were worthy of "Sergeant Prichibeev."[34]

It is not clear whether the Central Committee or the Politburo had been consulted about this article. In any case, it disconcerted the local cadres because the latter had had every reason to believe that, in relying on the methods now condemned by Stalin, they were simply adhering to instructions from their superiors. Some cadres even believed that this article was false and tried to prevent its distribution, going as far as seizing it

from the peasants.[35] The latter, conversely, received the article as a "charter of freedom."[36]

The new direction indicated by Stalin in his article of March 2 was confirmed by a resolution of the CC of March 14, 1930.[37] The CC described the "collectivization methods" condemned by Stalin as "deviations from the Party line" and held the lower cadres responsible for these deviations. Investigations were then started with the aim of "correcting the mistakes that had been made." However, in spite of the condemnation of "mistaken methods," very few of the peasants who had been sentenced before March 1930 were "rehabilitated." In fact, deportations continued; the staying at home, or the return, of those who had been subject to unjust condemnations and cruel treatment would have been too dangerous for the local cadres who had been responsible for misdeeds, confiscations, and exactions. But these cadres, although "disavowed" by the Party leadership, usually retained their positions.

There was considerable discontent among the local cadres. This can be traced in the press and in the Smolensk Archives.[38] Present-day Soviet literature also draws attention to this discontent. For example, it is possible to read how the secretary of an important Party organization, named Khataevich, attacked (in a letter of April 6, 1930) accusations leveled at the local cadres alone. He wrote:

> We are receiving numerous complaints (from Party cadres) that they have been unjustifiably treated as idiots. Really, instructions should have been given to the central press so that while criticizing the deviations and the excesses which have been committed it criticized and ridiculed not solely the local officials.[39]

Stalin therefore found it necessary to review once again the "collectivization methods"; this took the form of an article published in *Pravda* of April 3, 1930, and entitled "A reply to the kolkhoz comrades". Here Stalin treats the "mistakes concerning the peasant question." He claims that what is at the root of these errors:

> is the mistaken way of treating the middle peasants. It is the violence used in the economic relationships with the middle peasant. It is forgetting the fact that the economic alliance with the mass of middle peasants must be based not on measures of coercion but on an understanding with the middle peasant, and on the alliance with him.[40]

Considerations like these characterize the directives issued during the first months of this year, and they all have an underlying motivation. The latter is the fear of *explosive discontent of the peasantry and the fear of seeing exasperated peasants neglect their work in the fields.* Hence the slogan, "Proper organization of sowing – that is the task".[41]

As soon as pressure was relaxed on the peasants their fundamentally hostile attitude to "collectivization" showed itself quite openly. For example, the proportion of household "collectivized" diminished, as can be seen from the following table:

*Percentage of collectivized households*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| March 1, 1930 | 59.3 | May 1930 | 28 |
| March 10, 1930 | 58 | June 1930 | 24 |
| April 1930 | 37 | October 1, 1930 | 21.7 |

In October 1930 the number of "collectivized" households reached its lowest level. Part of the peasants still remaining in the kolkhozes were there because they had no other means of surviving since, following the expropriation and the liquidation of the "kulaks," the major share of the means of production in the villages was concentrated in the kolkhozes. Other peasants stayed in the "collective" farms because they feared that there would be another "change of line." The latter did occur, when the 1930 harvest was almost finished and when at the top of the Party the last remnants of resistance to a resumption of "collectivization from above" had been shattered.[43] At this point collectivization resumed in a manner more systematic than in the preceding winter. This new collectivization continued steadily throughout the 1930s.

## III. The course of the "Socialist offensive" in the campaigns of the 1930s

There was a record harvest in 1930. In fact, in the spring of 1930, peasant discontent having been somewhat moderated thanks to decisions taken at the beginning of March, the sowing campaign had been successful. Moreover, the weather had been favorable. For the authorities this harvest was particularly encouraging because it enabled them to more than double the grain collection, compared to 1928. These two successes persuaded the authorities that the situation in the countryside was henceforth "under control," and that the collectivization campaign could be restarted.

Up to the end of 1930 the "pressure" put on the peasants increased only slightly; thus, on January 1, 1931 the percentage of households that had been collectivized was only 27.5 percent. The slowness of this growth was not in accord with the "objectives" of the authorities. The latter then decided to hurry things along. From the first months of 1931 there was a renewal of "pressure"; the percentage of collectivized households grew sharply. By July 1, 1931 it reached 57.1 percent.[44]

Henceforth it was "methods" which were in question; the decision to carry out collectivization was irrevocable, whatever might be the "cost" for the peasants and for immediate production. The authorities wanted to put the peasantry into a strictly subordinate position and to have available structures which would permit them to impose the highest possible grain delivery.

Toward the end of the 1930s the aims that the authorities pursued in this manner were to all intents and purposes achieved. Consequently, the official history of the Party could proclaim the "dazzling victory of socialism."[45]

The following official figures illustrate this "victory." In 1939, the "individual peasants" were only 3.1. percent of the rural population. At the same period there were 81.4 million kolkhozniks (compared to 2.3 millions in 1928); the number of people belonging to the families of state farm workers and MTS workers was around 8 million, or 7 percent of the rural population.[46]

Thus the millions of peasants (living in conditions of great inequality) and the tens of thousands of genuine cooperative members who were in existence at the end of the 1920s were replaced by kolkhozniks and by the wage earners of the state farms and MTS.

The official comment on these figures affirms that during the 1930s a "new world" had been born in the Soviet countryside. This is undeniable. But what was this "new world"? This question cannot be answered without examining more closely the conditions in which it was born, the social relationships on which it was built, and the economic conditions in which it functioned.

## IV. Collectivization and mass repression

The "collectivization campaign" of winter 1929-30 was used as a "model" for the later collectivization campaign, in spite of the "reprimand" and the "calls to order" addressed to the base and local cadres after the publication of Stalin's article and the decisions of the Central Committee of March and April 1930. The enquiries that were opened at this time gave a quite good picture of the "methods used for collectivization," but there is only partial knowledge of their findings. The latter are mostly accessible through certain statements made by the authorities and some articles which are besed on a small portion of archival documents.

Nevertheless, what is known is enough to reveal the scale of the anti-peasant repression and its mainly blind and arbitrary character. Numerous executions and expropriations were carried out under pretexts that were absurd and lacking any "legal" base. Quite a few operations had the effect of enriching local cadres or satisfying quarrels. The superior authorities usually let these things happen, or even encouraged them, because these operations (even when they caused violent local reactions) did meet the main demand: they fostered terror and paralysed the peasants.

The Ukraine was one of the republics where the anti-peasant repression connected with "collectivization" and with pseudo

"dekulakization" was most severe. In certain regions of this republic up to 50 percent of peasant households were "dekulakized" in 1930. This proportion is at least five times greater than the number of households which up to then had been officially considered as "kulak." This clearly means that the majority of those who were stricken in no way belonged to this social group. Moreover, numerous investigations show that any occurrence was likely to become a pretext for "dekulakization." For example, simple peasant brawls were described by the courts as "terroristic acts" *(terrakt)* and were categorized among "counter-revolutionary" activities which could entail the death penalty.[47]

Thus, in the *raion* of the giant kolkhoz which was called *Gigant*, it is known that of the 1,200 households "dekulakized" in 1930, 400 were later officially recognized as *serednyak* (middle peasant) households. In one Ukrainian village about 85 percent of the "dekulakized" households (mostly condemned to deportation) were later reclassed as *serednyaki*. In principle, such deportees, if they survived, were authorized to return to their village; in reality, this authorization often had no effect.

Investigations show that at the beginning of 1930, in many cases, *serednyaki* were "dekulakized" under futile pretexts, perhaps because they had sold a cow some months earlier, or even hay.[48]

At the beginning of 1930 the anti-peasant repression was so intense that the railways were overloaded with trains of deportees, of whom many died en route. The peasants called these trains "death trains." They carried away entire families and, quite often, women and children whose husbands and fathers had been executed as "counter-revolutionaries." The number of such trains was so great that it constituted, as was official admitted, "a burden which is beyond the resources of the State."[49] The Politburo then decided to allocate by quota to the different regions the means of transport for this purpose.[50]

The publication of Stalin's article of March 2, 1930 did not change the lot of hundreds of thousands of expropriated peasants: they remained attached to temporary camps where many perished. The expropriations and deportations which followed the resumption of "collectivization" of the winter of 1930-31

therefore followed without any real interruption the deportation of those expropriated in the winter of 1929-30. Hence the unending succession of "death trains," about which A.L. Strong wrote in 1930:

> Several times during the spring and summer I saw these echelons moving along the railroad: a doleful sight, men, women and children uprooted.[51]

Another witness of this repression, and its results, which continued well beyond 1930 and 1931, was V. Serge:

> Trainloads of deported peasants left for the icy north, the forests, the steppes, the deserts. These were whole populations, denuded of everything; the old folk starved to death in mid-journey, newborn babies were buried on the banks of the roadside, and each wilderness had its crop of little crosses of boughs and white wood. Other populations, dragging all their mean possessions on wagons, rushed towards the frontiers of Poland, Rumania and China and crossed them by no means intact, to be sure in spite of the machine guns.[52]

Becoming a kolkhoznik did not shelter a peasant from deportation as a "kulak." Not only could his "past" be at any time interpreted to give cause for sentencing but his current attitude could also be taken as a "sign" that he remained a *"prokulak."* He therefore lived under the constant threat of being condemned. Such condemnations were not rare, especially those which punished "lack of respect" for the "collective property."

In fact the growing demands of the state in the matter of grain deliveries, and the distrust felt by the majority of the Party cadres and by the Party leaders towards these peasants, led to the authorities "harassing" the kolkhozniks (*dergayut kolkhoznikov*), this term being used in July 1931 by Agricultural Commissar, Yakovlev. The latter protested against what he called "mass anti-kolkhoz actions," and declared that the members of kolkhozes had become "an object of unadulterated arbitrariness" *(polnyi proizvol).*[53]

Protests by several Party leaders (who would be "purged" later) did not help. The brutality and the arbitrariness continued. As for the kolkhozniks, they "cooperated" less and less as their feeling that the claimed "collectivization" was a "nationalization" or "expropriation" grew stronger.[54]

Sentences were pronounced also for what might be called "acts of negligence": the CC demanded such sentences "without any indulgence."[55] The concept of "negligence" was all-embracing; it included even what the authorities described as "irresponsible indifference," categorized as "sabotage." But part of this alleged "sabotage" was nothing but the refusal of kolkhozniks to obey irrational directives coming from authorities who overrode the kolkhozniks in deciding where and when to sow, and in issuing absurd orders like "sow on top of the snow" ("to save time"!).[56]

Thus the reasons for arresting and deporting peasants and carrying out mass repressions were numerous. Official figures minimized the scale of these measures. Thus the Party history, published in 1962, admits that there were a little more than 240,000 families deported,[57] or more than 1,200,000 people,[58] but this figure only covered the period from 1930 to the end of 1932 in the regions of "complete collectivization."

The measures introduced from the end of 1930 were partly analogous to those taken a little earlier (arrests, deportations, etc.), but they were applied with more vigor. In the name of "dekulakization," sentences and deportations recommenced not only of the genuine rich peasants but also of any peasant suspected or accused (often on a basis of unverified denunciations) of "pro-kulak" sympathy and described as a *"podkulachnik."*[59] The "mass collectivization" was thus imposed while any misgivings that were felt for it were severely punished. Deportation was the most common punishment, but when too many peasants protested, OGPU (which was authorized to execute without trial) shot some peasants on the spot "to encourage the militant collectivists."[60]

The Smolensk Archives contain numerous reports which give some idea of the scale and brutality of the repression, as well as the fear which it exerted not only in the countryside but also in the towns. Many workers still had their families in the villages.

. The fear was such that passivity developed: whereas previously two men of the militia were needed to escort one arrested man, in 1931 one militia man could escort a whole group of prisoners. For many, arrests seemed almost a relief, compared with the anguished waiting for it. Entire families were arrested, including children.[61] Some parents even preferred to "put an end" to their young children rather than see them die in this way.[62]

What developed was a veritable anti-peasant war. It culminated in 1932-34, when the combination of bad harvests, massive requisitions of cereals, and the reduction to a minimum of the amount of grain sent back to the hungry villagers condemned millions of peasants to death from famine or undernourishment. The continuance at any price of the massive requisitions of food products by the state organizations entrusted with the procurements, and the refusal to give help to the regions stricken by famine, can be partly explained by the wish to export grain (so as to permit the purchase of industrial equipment abroad) and by the priority promised for the towns' food supply.

The Webbs, great admirers of the "collectivization" achieved in such conditions, "justified" the "sentences of death by famine" in the following words:

> Collective farms which had wilfully neglected or refused to till their land were sternly refused relief when they found themselves without food, so as not to encourage further recusancy and, in some of the worst cases the inhabitants of whole villages, if only in order to save them from starvation, were summarily removed from the land they had neglected or refused to cultivate, and deported elsewhere, to find laboring work of any sort for their maintenance.[63]

The repression was supposed to teach the kolkhozniks "uprightness." Thus a member of the CC, Chaboldoev, declared to the Seventeenth Party Conference (Jaunary 30 to February 4 1932), that they "were not sufficiently honest in regard to state interests."[64]

In order to teach the kolkhozniks to be "upright," the CC called for punishment "without indulgence" for any refusal to

deliver grain.[65] The grain collection campaign became a test of strength or, as Kaganovich said, "the touchstone of our strength or weakness and of the strength and weakness of our enemies." Any "indulgence" of lower cadres towards the peasants (for example, "indulgence" which cadres might demonstrate by asking for a reduction of procurements imposed on peasants affected by famine) was considered as "aid given to the enemy," and was punished as such.

So as to permit the "punishment" of the peasants, there had to be further development of the repressive mechanism, promulgation of new laws, and the extended interpretation of those laws already in force.

Thus the law of August 7, 1932 (which the peasants called the law of 7/8) was promulgated to enlarge the repressive arsenal. It allowed, for example, sentences of six years of deportation for the gathering of ears of corn by the hungry. Tens of thousands of peasants, including children, were deported by virtue of this law. These sentences were in addition to arbitrary measures imposed on the spot by different commissions. They were also in addition to the increasingly numerous sentences pronounced by virtue of Article 58 of the Penal Code of the RSFSR. Interpreting this article in an all embracing way, tribunals attributed bad harvests, the pitiful state of agricultural equipment, etc. to "*wreckers*" who were arrested, imprisoned, deported or detained in camps. The duration of these sanctions could be ten years or more.[66]

The character of the *anti-peasant war* of the 1932-34 famine was also shown in an exchange of letters between Stalin and the Soviet writer Sholokhov. On April 16, 1933 the latter wrote to Stalin to protest against the revolting acts committed against peasants and which he believed (or pretended to believe) were the results of "local excesses," which had the result of depriving the peasants of grain and led to mass arrests including the arrest of Party members.[67] In his reply (only published thirty years later), Stalin admitted that "excesses" might have been perpetrated, but he claimed that they were only of minor importance, because, he said:[68]

> The honorable cultivators of your region, and not only of your region, indulged in sabotage and were

> determined to deprive the workers and the Red Army of grain. The fact that this sabotage was silent and apparently without violence (blood was not shed) does not obscure the fact that the honorable cultivators were carrying on a "silent" war against Soviet power.[69]

In a conversation between Stalin and Churchill (recounted by the latter in his memoirs), the General Secretary compared the struggle for "collectivization" with the most terrible experiences of the war against Nazi Germany.[70]

Toward the end of 1933, the "pressure" bearing on the peasantry seemed to moderate somewhat, but this did not entail the repeal of the deportation measures previously decided. In 1934 repression continued to destroy Soviet peasants, including kolkhozniks.

The number of peasant victims of this repression is impossible to calculate precisely. But some idea of the scale can be obtained. Thus, the Soviet demographer Urlanis, utilizing the official statistics of the Second Five-Year Plan, was led to the admission that several million people died in 1933.[71]

The savage increase of mortality in 1932-34 was due to both famine among peasants who stayed in their original region and to the excess mortality which struck populations deported to the camps or to inhospitable regions (populations which were then mainly rural). In general, it is estimated (for the period covering the end of the First Five-Year Plan and the beginning of the Second) that about ten million peasants were deported.[72] These figures cannot be added to those preceding because part of those who died in deportation were doubtless included in the number of victims implicitly suggested by Urlanis, at least up to 1933. After 1932 a considerable number impossible to calculate—of deported peasants died from privation.

The profound "logic" of the historical process which has just been described in broad outline is a *class logic*, a logic of capitalist revolution. The latter destroyed right down to the roots the gains of the peasant revolution of 1917. Its agents were the cadres of the Party and of the state apparatus. The triumph of the capitalist revolution demanded the extinction of peasants working as small independant producers. It relates

to what Marx had already written about "primitive accumulation" (which simply was repeated here, just as it was repeated in colonial countries when the bourgeois imperialists proceeded to the expropriation of the villagers in favor of "the development of capitalism"):

> Its annihilation, the transformation of the individualized and scattered means of production into socially concentrated ones, of the pigmy property of the many into the huge property of the few, the expropriation of the great mass of the people from the soil, from the means of subsistence, and from the means of labour, this fearful and painful expropriation of the mass of the people forms the prelude to the history of capital. It comprises a series of forcible methods...[73]

The expropriation of the peasants which took place in the USSR through the 1930s had obviously nothing in common, despite all the talk about "socialist construction," with what Marx called "the negation of private capitalist property" which, according to him, was to reestablish not private property but *individual property*, based on the acquisitions of the capitalist era: *cooperation, and the communal possession of land and the means of production* produced by work itself.[74]

## Notes

1. The *mir* was the village commune, collectively owning the land. The *skhod* was the peasant assembly.
2. See *Konyunkturnyi byuleten' zhurnala mirovoye khozyaistvo i mirovaya politika*, No. 10, 1937.
3. See Vol. 2 of the present work, pp. 88-89.
4. See above, p. 87
5. See above, p. 99
6. Interestingly enough, this happened just as Lenin had envisaged it in 1907, a time when he defined the *obshchina* as a local organization of self-management [see *The Agrarian Question in the Russian Revolution*, and the quotation from this piece in S. Grosskopf, *L'Alliance ouvrière et paysanne en URSS (1921-1928)*, (Paris, 1976).] This "woried" the Soviet leaders.

7. A quite detailed analysis of what happened at this time in the Soviet countryside has been given in Vol. 2 of this work (pp. 85-126). The reader may refer to this. Here we are looking at only those aspects which illuminate the way in which social forces external to the village (forces present in the leading Party) made use of the peasantry's internal contradictions in order to subordinate it to new exploitative relationships.
8. *Pravda*, March 11, 1928.
9. See Vol. 2 of this work, p. 107
10. Quoted in R. Lorenz, *Sozialgeschichte der Sowjetunion (1917-1945)*, (Frankfurt, 1976), p. 173.
11. See above, p. 174.
12. See *KPSS* (1953), Vol. 2, pp. 391FF; especially p. 395
13. See above, pp. 455FF.
14. Yu. A. Moshkov, *Zernovaya problema v gody sploshnoi kollektivizatsii* (1929-1932 gg.), (Moscow, 1961), pp. 61FF; R. Beermann, "The Grain Problem and Anti-Speculation Laws", *Soviet Studies*, No. 19, 1967-68, pp. 126-28; R. Lorenz, *Sozialgeschichte* pp. 175-76.
15. *KPSS* (1953), Vol. 2, pp. 500FF.
16. *Pravda*, November 7, 1929.
17. *KPSS* (1953), Vol. 2, p. 451.
18. See above p. 507. According to these targets, the sown area of the sovkhozes was to double *in one year* (they had been 1.8 million hectares in 1929). From 1930 socialist agriculture was to provide 50 percent of the grain distributed outside the villages!
19. See above, p. 545.
20. See *KPSS* (1953), Vol. 2, pp. 544FF.
21. For the types of collectivization, see Vol. 2 of this work, p. 494, note 184.
22. On this point see Vol. 2 of this work, pp. 464-68. Also, J. Stalin, *Leninism*, London 1940, pp. 328-32. We return to the repression connected with collectivization in the last section of this chapter.
23. See above
24. *KSKH*, p. 183 and p. 184.
25. A Nove also notes this destruction of what was authentically cooperative; see A Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR*, (London, 1976), p. 172.
26. While up to 1929 the kolkhozes formed spontaneously by peasants were small, embracing 10 to 15 families and covering 50-80 hectares, in 1937 they comprised on average 75 families. The government later went in for giant kolkhozes covering thousands of hectares and grouping hundreds of families. On this point see: the documents in *Materialy po istorii SSSR*, Vols. 1 to 7, (Moscow, 1955 and 1957); *Postroeniye Fundamenta sotsialisticheskoi ekonomiki v SSSR 1926-1932*, (Moscow, 1960), especially pp. 29FF; *KSKh*; M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, (London, 1963-1968), PP. 426-39, which also quotes V.P. Danilov, *Ocherki istorii kollektivi zatsii sel' Skogo khozyaistva, v Sovuznykh respublikakh*, (Moscow, 1963; new edition), pp. 28-31, 175-76.
27. Same sources as in preceding note, especially *KSKh*, documents nos. 52 and 57.
28. M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, p. 274 and p. 409.

29. See above, p. 410.
30. See M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, pp. 428 and 514; E. Zaleski, *Planification de la croissance et fluctuations économiques en URSS*, (Paris, 1962), p. 100; C. Bettelheim, *La Planification soviétique*, (Paris, 1945), p. 33. References to the various Soviet sources used can be found in these books. The percentages quoted here correspond to *orders of size* and not to an absolute measure. The fact that the Figures include a First decimal digit should not be taken as evidence of precision. Calculations later made with archival material show that the statistics of the period are apparently acceptable, with the qualification that different regions whose figures make up these documents did not stick always to a rigid definition of "households collectivized."
31. See Vol. 2 of this work, pp. 461ff.
32. State procurements for grain rose to 16.1 and 22.1 million tons in 1929 and 1930, against 10.8 million in 1928. See Yu. A. Moshkov, "Zernovaya problema v gody kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khozyaistva" in *Istoriya sovietskogo krestyanstva i kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva v SSSR*, (Moscow, 1963), p. 271.
33. *Pravda*, March 2, 1930, and J. Stalin, *Leninism*, pp. 333-38.
34. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 336. Prishibeyev is an old dictatorial sergeant in one of Chekhov's stories.
35. *Tsgaor*, File 374, ref. 9, dos 418/7 and 12, quoted by V. Yakovtsevskii, "Rapports agraires et collectivisation" in *Recherches internationales a la lumière du marxisme*, No. 4, 1975, p. 87.
36. This term was used by A.L. Strong in *The Stalin Era*, (New York, 1959), p. 39.
37. *KPSS* (1953), pp. 548ff.
38. These archives, seized by the German army when it occupied the city of Smolensk, were later captured by the US Army and can be consulted in the USA. Merle Fainsod made a partial scan of them which he published in his book *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*, (New York, 1958). On this point see also Vol. 2 of this present work.
39. VI, No. 3, 1965, p. 25.
40. Stalin, *Leninism*, p. 339.
41. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 12, 234.
42. See note 30 above.
43. The "right" of the Party suffered new defeats in 1930. Following the Sixteenth Party Congress [June 26, July 13], Tomsky was excluded from the Politburo. However the same Congress again re-elected Bukharin to the CC. On November 19, 1930 Bukharin "capitulated" [see his declaration in *Pravda* of November 20]. Although this "capitulation" was considered "minimal" it gave the signal for the suspension of all attempts at criticism of "collectivization from above." Those who continued to make such criticisms were then hit hard. [See. S. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, (New York, 1974), p. 350].
44. See note 30 above.
45. *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ([Bolsheviks]*, (Moscow, 1939), p. 319.

46. The figures given for 1939 are those of A. Arutyunyan, *Sotsial'naya struktura sel'skogo naseleniya SSSR*, (Moscow, 1971), p. 39, note 4. For 1928, see S. Grosskopf, *L'Alliance*, p. 407. For the various changes in the Soviet countryside, see also B. Kerblay, *La Société soviétique contemporaine*, (Paris, 1977), p. 80.
47. See M. Lewin, "L'Etat et les classes sociales en URSS 1929-1933," in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Février 1976, which quotes, in particular, *Sudebnaya praktika*, No. 7, 1931.
48. See the article by A. Angarov, "Rural soviets and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class," in *Bolshevik*, No. 6, 1930.
49. See Syrtsov in *Bolshevik*, No. 5, 1930, p. 54.
50. See M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, p. 506.
51. See A.L. Strong, *The Soviets Conquer Wheat*, (New York, 1931), p. 88.
52. Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901-1941*, (London, 1963), p. 247.
53. A. Ya. Yakovlev, *Voprosy organizatsii sotsialisticheskogo khozyaistva* (Moscow, 1933), quoted by M. Lewin in "L'Etat et les classes sociales," p. 12, n. 18.
54. The expression "*okazionivaniye krestyan*" was even used by a peasant delegate to the Sixteenth Congress of Soviets; he explained that it meant depriving the peasants of the results of their labor.
55. *PS*, No. 5, 1933, p. 62.
56. Stalin in effect had said that the kolkhozniks lacked experience and it was necessary to make decisions without them, or even against their advice. That is how Kirov came to give the order to "sow on top of the snow," and then to arrest those who refused. [See S. Krasikov, *Sergei Mironovich Kirov*, (Moscow, 1964), pp. 146-47, 176].
57. *Istoriya KPSS*, (Moscow, 2nd Edition, 1962), p. 143.
58. Estimate by M. Lewin in *Russian Peasnts*, p. 507.
59. *Literally*, "sub-kulak"; see Vol. 2 of this work, p. 121.
60. See A. Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, (London, 1979), p. 99.
61. See the documents registered under VKP 159 in the Smolensk Archives, quoted by M. Fainsod in *Smolensk*, p. 250.
62. See especially on this subject A. Ciliga, The Russian Enigma, p. 221.
63. S. and B. Webb, *Soviet Communism, A New Civlisation?* (London, 1935), Vol. 1, p. 270.
64. *Semnadtsataya konferentsiya VKP* [b], (Moscow, 1932), p. 208, quoted by M. Lewin in "Society and the Stalinist State in the Period of the Five Year Plans," *Social History*, May 1976, p. 163.
65. *PS*, No. 5, 1933, p. 62, quoted after M. Lewin, "Society and the Stalinist State," p. 164.
66. The text of this Article 58 figures in the Penal Code of the RSFSR, promulgated in 1926. It is drawn in so vague a fashion that it allows a very wide intepretation, as became evident in the 1930s. The text of Article 58 can be found in R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, (London, 1968), p. 557. The first volume of A. solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* gives some examples of how widely this Article could be stretched, making particular use of A. Vyshinsky's *Ot tyurem k vospitatel'nym uchrezhdenyam*, (Moscow, 1934).

67. Extracts from the letter are in V.P. Danilov, *Ocherki istorii kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khozyaistva v SSSR*, p. 55.
68. *Pravda*, March 10, 1963 and also Denilov, Octerki p. 56.
69. There are traces of other protests apart from Sholokhov's. For example there was a protest by R. Terekhov, Secretary of the Ukrainian Party's CC, which describes the dramatic rural situation in that republic. In *Pravda* of May 26, 1946 the addressee of this letter, Stalin, describes its author as a storyteller. Writers and eyewitnesses have described the situation of deserted villages, with houses having their windows boarded up and material abandoned in the Fields [See the unpublished memoirs of A.E. Kosterin, quoted by R. Medvedev in his *Let History Judge*, (London, 1972), p. 95.
70. W.S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. 4, London, 1951, p. 447. The conversation went as follows:

> "... have the stresses of this war been as bed to you personally as carrying through the policy of the Collective Farms?"
> "Oh, no," he said, "the Collective Farm policy was a terrible struggle."
> "... you were not dealing with a Few score thousands of aristocrats or big landowners, but with millions of small men."
> "Ten millions," he said, holding up his hands, "it was Fearful. Four years it lasted..."

71. B.C. Urlanis, *Voiny i narodonaseleniye Evropy*, (Moscow, 1960). Also the same author's contribution to the Journal *Naseleniye i narodnoye blagosostoyaniye*, (Moscow, 1968), quoted by Maksudov, "Portes subies par la population de l'URSS, 1918-1958," *in Cabiers, du mende russe et soviétique*, July-September, 1977, p. 250.
72. See M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, p. 508.
73. K. Marx, *Capital* (1891, Swan Sonnenschein edition, London), pp. 787-88, Marx's italics.
74. K. Marx, *Das Kapital* [1933, Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute edition, Vienna), p. 803, Marx's italics.

2

# "Socialist" agriculture in the 1930s

According to the official description, Soviet agriculture in the late 1930s comprised essentially three types of "socialist" production units:[1] sovkhozes (or state farms), MTS (machine and tractor stations), and kolkhozes (or "collective farms"). The first two forms of agricultural activity were supposed to have a "superior" character compared with the kolkhozes, because they were directly tied with the state.[2]

This categorization does not tell us much about the real social relationships in which the direct producers were placed. Nevertheless, it permits a distinction between the *wage-earners* of the sovkhozes and the MTS who were in a situation similar to that of industrial workers (see Part Two of this volume) and the *kolkhozniks*. The situation of these latter requires a specific analysis, which brings into discussion a kolkhoz system whose reality may be contrasted with the fiction of official announcements. This contrast needs to be clarified before proceeding to an analysis in greater detail of the economic effects of the "socialization" of agriculture and of its consequences for class relationships.

## I. The kolkhoz as fiction and as reality

Official discussion repeated endlessly the image of a certain "fictitious kolkhoz," and this fiction developed in the areas of

politics, law, and economics, to say nothing of art (with films and novels conforming to the standards, of "socialist realism").

In this fiction, the kolkhoz was the result of a policy of "voluntary membership" on the part of the peasants who, with the "help" of the state, spontaneously and *en masse* entered the path of collective agriculture. From this there resulted the birth of "socialist cooperatives" which had the juridical form of the "artel" (one of the traditional Russian forms of production cooperation). The latter had at its collective disposition "agricultural equipment, livestock, seedstocks, forage for the collective livestock, and the working premises needed for the proper operation of the collective husbandry."[3] Its management was entrusted to the general assembly of the kolkhozniks while the central administration was entrusted to an elected chairman and controlled by the same general assembly. For the principle cropping operations, the kolkhozes benefitted from the cooperation of the MTS, in which was concentrated the main agricultural equipment. The incomes collected by the kolkhozniks by virtue of "collective exploitation" depended solely on their labor.[4]

From 1937 the Party, press, Soviet films, etc. proclaimed the "brilliant victory of Socialism" in agriculture, the increase of the harvest gathered from land generously provided with tractors and agricultural machines,[5] and with the field workers enjoying an unprecedented prosperity.

The reality was quite different and much more complicated. We already know what "voluntary" adhesion of the peasants to the collective farms really means, and we know about the repression which battered the peasants during the course of collectivization and afterward, aiming to subject the peasants to the "discipline" that the system required. However, to grasp the reality of "socialist" agriculture something must be said about the economic effects of the "socialist transformation" of the countryside, and of its impact on the living conditions of the rural masses, and also something about the internal social relationships of the kolkhoz and its subordination to the demands of accumulation by the state. It is only after doing all this that one can attempt to describe the "kolkhoz system" and the role which it filled in the total picture of economic and social relationships that developed during the 1930s.

## II. The economic effects of the "socialization" of agriculture

The economic effects of the "socialization" of agriculture can be studied at different levels. Here, we shall mainly limit ourselves to data relating to production, the quotas placed on agriculture (for the latter were made possible by the new agrarian structures), and figures relating to the living conditions of the kolkhozniks, who henceforth represented the great mass of rural workers.

### *(a) The crisis in agricultural production and stock breeding*

The transformation of agrarian structures did not bring about the vast increase of harvests and livestock which the Party had expected. On the contrary, it was accompanied universally by a crisis in agricultural production. This crisis which ended not in the 1930s but continued rather longer did not affect different types of agricultural production in the same way (certain branches, particularly lucky, were even untouched), but it struck the essential branches and especially the all-important grain production. Given the decisive role of the latter, we must give some indications of its development during the 1930s;[6] these figures cover all forms of agriculture, both "socialized" and non-socialized.[7]

In 1930 (the year when sowing took place after the "pressure" for collectivization was relaxed), the gross grain harvest rose to 77.1 million tons.[8] After that date, the harvest collapsed in an almost continuous curve up to the middle of the 1930s. The worst harvest was that of 1936. The following table can be composed:

*Grain Production*
(millions of tons)[9]

| | |
|---|---|
| 1930 | 77.1 |
| 1936 | 56.1 |
| 1937 | 87.0 |
| 1938 | 67.1 |
| 1939 | 67.3 |

The "collectivization from above," which was intended to achieve a "leap forward" in the grain production of the USSR, therefore did nothing to enable the hoped-for results to be obtained; quite the contrary. For other food crops the development of the situation was a little less bad but was far from compensating for the grain crisis.

Livestock production also went into deep decline. The index for this production (100 in 1913) had reached 137 in 1928 and 129 in 1929; it fell to 65 in 1933 and recovered only to 120 and 114 in 1938 and 1940 respectively.[10]

The drop in annual production was at first a result of the mass slaughter of livestock, in which almost all the peasants indulged between 1928 and 1930, procurements and "collectivization from above" being regarded as virtual expropriation. The destruction of livestock continued upto 1933. Taking just the figures for the bovine population, the latter fell from 70.5 million in 1928 to 52.5 million in 1930. It reached a trough in 1933 (38.4. million) and then recovered slightly in 1934 (42.4 millions.)[11]. In 1938 this figure was still only 50.9 million,[12] very much below that of 1928. The latter figure would only be regained well after the war.

The situation was no better for other livestock raising. The reduction of the number of cows implied a reduction in the available tractive force, which was all the more serious because the number of horses fell equally, dropping from 38.4 million head in 1928 to 17 or 18 million at the end of the 1930s.[13] The reduction of livestock had unfavorable repercussions on the amount of natural fertilizer available for agriculture.

The fall in livestock was quite rapidly compensated by the investment effort made in means of production originating from industry, means which replaced what had been destroyed. For example, for 1935 the tractive power available to agriculture slightly exceeded, thanks to mechanization, that of 1928,[14] and this improvement continued after 1935. In the same way the production of mineral fertilizers rose quite considerably in the second half of the 1930s. This increase in the material factors of production put at the disposition of the countryside was not enough to prevent the agricultural crisis continuing in the second half of the 1930s.

Essentially, the decisive factor in this crisis was the human factor: the peasant resistance to "collectivization" and to compulsory procurement, the revolt against production relationships and impositions which the peasant masses did not accept. This revolt manifested itself, in particular, by the tendency to work relatively little on the "collective" land and to carry out negligently the required tasks.[15]

This resistance, at first active and then, above all, passive, was accompanied by a reduction of the standard of living in the countryside. The effects of the resistance were aggravated by the physical enfeeblement of the peasantry, which was undernourished, abandoned to famine, and from which were "commandeered" millions of men in their prime, either to go to work "voluntarily" in industry, hoping to increase their incomes, or to be deported into inhospitable regions where most often they were used in the timber industry, the mines, and on big construction sites.

In March 1931, at the Eleventh Congress of Soviets, Yakovlev described the behavior of the kolkhozniks in the light of frequent observations; according to him, the kolkhozniks got up late, 8 o'clock in the morning, even in peak periods, then chatted with their neighbors without hurrying; just when they were ready to leave for fields the time came for the peasant "breakfast." During working hours, work was done negligently, ploughing was done hurriedly and left the soil in a bad state; sowing also took place hastily; at harvest time the grain was so badly loaded that it fell from the carts and stayed mixed up in the straw.[16] The resistance deeply disturbed the working of "collective" agriculture. It explains why the investment made by the state to increase agricultural production led to such derisory results.

The seriousness of the agricultural crisis following "collectivization from above" does not justify the conclusion that the latter was "mistaken," for such a conclusion would evade the *class logic* which had inspired collectivization. In fact, from the authorities' point of view, the "socialization" of agriculture was the one way leading to the consolidation of their grip on society, by reducing to a minimum (by the use of violence, by famine, and by the disorganization of the peasantry) the capacity for organized resistance by the peasants to the demands

of accumulation. It made it possible to very much increase the appropriations made from agriculture.

### *(b) Appropriations made from agriculture*

Numerous attempts have been made to "measure" the growth of the appropriations made from agriculture during the 1930s, and even to "make a balance sheet," by putting a value to the net effect, positive or negative, of these exactions on the resources of state and industry. These evaluations have provoked many controversies.[17] However interesting they may be, these discussions do not seem capable of resulting in global quantitative conclusions.

In fact, collectivization and mass repression led above all to qualitative changes, to an upheaval in social relationships which subjected the countryside to the requirements of the authorities. Henceforth, the countryside was open to extortion; and the exactions made from the peasants' production and income and from the peasant population itself were various: an increase of procurement, the imposition of taxes-in-kind to pay for the use of agricultural machinery concentrated in the MTS, taxes, the development of "scissors" between industrial and agricultural prices which went against the peasants, the compulsory contribution by kolkhozniks to the establishment of the "productive funds" of the kolkhozes, etc. These exactions revealed only certain aspects of the *pillage* of the countryside. Another aspect, more important, would appear later, namely the *drawing off of part of the peasant labor force* toward industry and the mines, either as "free" workers, or as forced labor. In the one case, this drawing off took the form of an urbanization and industrialization process; in the other, it took the form of deportations whose scale is not, as we have seen, easily translated into figures.

For the moment, we will look at some of the forms of exaction which are relatively better known.

#### (i) The increase in the quantity of agricultural products appropriated in the countryside

The appropriations that the state made from agricultural production moved through several channels: "purchases" of

products,[18] "obligatory deliveries" (for which the price was even less than for "purchased" products and lacking any pretence of "sales contracts"), requisitions, confiscations, taxes-in-kind, payment-in-kind for "services rendered" by the MTS, etc. It would be tedious and useless to list all these forms of exactions and their respective importance (which in any case were very variable and often little known). We will therefore generalize all these exactions under the term *"procurements,"* and then give some indications about the actual conditions in which the procurements were achieved. We will concentrate our attention on the procurement of grain, which had decisive economic and social importance.

The official figures covering the harvest and the procurement of grain do not always agree. We regard as particularly significant those quoted by M. Levin in his contribution to *Essays in Honor of E.H. Carr.* For several key years the figures are as follows:[19]

| | *Grain harvest* (million tons) | *Procurement* | *Balance* (gross) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1928 | 73.3 | 10.7 | 62.6 |
| 1930 | 77.1 | 22.1 | 55.0 |
| 1931 | 69.4 | 22.8 | 46.6 |
| 1935 | 62.4 | 28.3 | 34.1 |
| 1939 | 67.3 | 32.1* | 35.2 |

* Average of 1938-40

The figures quoted (which are confirmed by numerous other sources) indicate that the reduction of the gross balance remaining is an almost continuous curve until the mid-1930s. At that period, the gross balance left in the countryside was no more than 54 percent of that in 1928.

Between 1935 and 1939, the balance rose only by 0.9 million tons while production increased by 4.9 million. This increase therefore was hardly a "paying proposition" for the peasantry.

The quantities of grain which the villages had at their *effective* disposition did not fall quite at the same speed. In fact, grain was resold by the state to the villagers, either in the "traditionally" deficit regions or in certain cases of famine.

These sales were generally made at a price greater than the buying price of these same cereals by the state in the form of procurements. In any case, in the years 1932-34, the amounts resold to the countryside were very much less than needs, which exacerbated the famine from which the peasantry was at that time suffering.

When one takes into account the resales (which is not always possible), the *"net balance available to the village"* may be obtained. During the First Five-Year Plan, the latter fell drastically from approximately 65 million tons to 50.6 million between 1928-29, and 1931-32.[20] This meant famine conditions, given the need for grain used for sowing and for livestock feed, even if the massive reduction of livestock tended to somewhat reduce the need for grain in the countryside, a circumstance which "helped" to increase the grain procurements.

During the 1930s, the state also very much increased the exactions which it made on agricultural products other than grain. The overall result of the policy which was followed was a *substantial fall of consumption of most agricultural foodstuffs in the countryside.*

This fall was not in reality compensated by an increase in the supplies and payments which came to the peasants. On the contrary, there was a *serious deterioration in the terms of exchange* between the state and countryside. Hence the overall negative effect for the peasantry of the increased exactions made on agricultural production.

The shortcomings of the available statistics allow us to grasp only some aspects of the development of the terms of exchange between the state and peasants, and notably the monetary and financial aspects.

### (2) The terms of exchange between state and peasantry

The state–peasantry terms of exchange varied considerably during the 1930s. The following points involve above all the kolkhoz peasantry, which soon represented the majority of peasants.

During the First Five-Year Plan, exchanges between the peasants and "towns" (which essentially means the *state procurement*

*organizations*) were, in principle, always regulated by the *kontraktatsiya*, by virtue of which the peasants "promised" (in fact, the "promise" was made by administrative cadres who spoke in the peasant's name) to deliver predetermined quantities of products to the state; in return the latter was to provide predetermined amounts of industrial products. In reality the system did not operate as it should have done. On the one hand, the state organizations were not capable of meeting the supply obligations for the benefit of the peasants. On the other hand, the procurement organizations often demanded deliveries larger than those laid down in the *kontraktatsiya*. This situation resulted from a *policy* which itself was a *consequence* of the *class offensive conducted against the peasantry* with a view to *maximizing accumulation* by the state.

The statistics allow an evaluation (very approximate) of the "balance by value" of these exchanges. Thus between 1929 and 1931 (when the amounts of agricultural products procured by the state *increased* massively), the volume of deliveries of industrial products for consumption by the agricultural population fell by 10 percent; it fell by about another 25 percent between 1930 and 1932.[21] These figures *underestimate*, moreover, the *drop in the supply to* the *peasants of industrial consumer goods*, for they take no account of the disappearance of the rural artisans who, up to the end of NEP, provided a substantial part of the products needed by the peasants.

Although the peasantry delivered more and more products and received less and less, its monetary resources diminished because the "prices" which the state organs paid it remained more or less stationary (they even fell in 1932, and increased only slightly afterwards), while the prices at which peasants bought industrial products from the state increased substantially.[22]

In 1931, measures were taken to increase the monetary resources of the peasantry. They consisted mainly in authorizing peasants and kolkhozniks to sell directly a part of their production (which for the kolkhozniks came from their plots and from their "individual" livestock) to consumers, and at "free" prices which were clearly higher than those paid by the state. In October 1931 the kolkhozes and the sovkhozes were similarly authorized to make such sales,[23] so long as they had fulfilled

animal products. But the prices at which peasants bought industrial products increased substantially; for example, the price of cotton goods incresed by eight times between 1928 and 1937.[31]

In sum, after the beginning of the 1930s there was a serious exacerbation of the living conditions of the peasants, thanks to the direct exploitation of forced labor on the "collective" land and to *indirect* exploitation exercised through exchange and price movements.

The intensified exploitation of the peasantry entailed a series of consequences. It kept at a very low level the incomes that the members of agricultural artels drew from their labor within the latter.[32] Closely related to this, it had the effect of allocating a decisive role to the *economic activities of the family in* production. Such family activities in no way had an "auxiliary" nature (as kolkhoz fiction claims) because it was *indispensable* for the existence of the kolkhoz system.

### (4) Observations about the financial contribution of agriculture to accumulation by the state

The indirect forms of exploitation of the peasants allowed the state to draw from agriculture a "financial contribution" and accumulate much more than would appear at first sight. This emerges not only from the relative development of prices for agricultural and industrial products, but also from an examination of the *fiscal mechanisms* which underlay this development during the 1930s. Agriculture therefore played a considerable role in the *indirect "financing"* of state accumulation.[33] In fact, in the state budget—through which passed the main monetary flows which "financed" state accumulation–first place was occupied in the receipts column by the *turnover tax*. In 1937, for example, this tax produced about 75 percent of the budget receipts; and it affected essentially *agricultural products, including those of the food industry*. The rate at which these products were taxed was particularly high( 33 to 65 percent of the selling price for vegetable oils, from 37 to 87 percent of the selling price for meat. But the largest part of the fiscal receipts coming from agricultural products (66 percent of these receipts) related to taxes on bread and bakery products.[34]

Finally, bearing in mind the fall in essential agricultural production, the new relationships of domination and exploitation to which the peasants were subjected, and the concrete and indirect forms in which this exploitation was clothed, it can be seen that collectivization had catastrophic effects for the great mass of the peasantry. The low standard of life of the kolkhozniks is a consequence of the course followed by agricultural production and the exactions to which it was subject. Nevertheless, this low standard of living also resulted from the very working of the kolkhoz system.

## Notes

1. Academy of Sciences of the USSR, *Political Economy*, (London, 1957), pp. 464-65.
2. The division of the rural population between these different forms of agricultural activity has been dealt with above.
3. Academy of Sciences, *Political Economy*, p. 469.
4. See above, p. 471.
5. See, for example, the description of the Soviet agricultural situation in 1937 in *History of the Communist Party of the USSR* (B), p. 335-36.
6. In the following pages reference will be made primarily to physical-unit statistics, which are more "reliable" than those based on prices. Special use will be made of recent statistics. In fact, the latter show that some of the pre-war statistics partly obscure the depth of the catastrophe that "collectivization" from above heaped on agricultural production. However, even recent statistics, when they are in terms of "value" (that is, of allegedly constant "prices"), continue to hide the scale of this disaster.
7. As time passed, the agricultural crisis became more fully that of "socialized" agriculture, properly described. Thus in 1940 the kolkhozes and sovkhozes disposed respectively of 81.3 and 8.8 percent of the sown area, which had grown to 150.4 million hectares compared to 113 million in 1928. (See *N.Kh., 1958g.*, pp. 386-87 and p. 396; also *Sotsialisticheskoye stroitel'stvo SSSR*, (Moscow 1936), p. 278.
8. This figure is given by M. Lewin in "Taking Gain: Soviet Policies of *Agricultural* Procurements before the War," a contribution to S. Abransky, ed., *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr*, (London, 1974), p. 307. This is a minimal estimate; the most often-quoted figure is in fact 83.5 million tons.
9. These figures are from the following sources; for 1930 and 1939, see preceding note; for 1936 the Soviet statistics covering the grain harvest are extremely confused. They hide a catastrophic situation. The figure of 56.1 million tons is an optimistic estimate. It has been calculated from the different between the average productions officially announced for 1933

and 1937, 72.9 million tons. See *Sel-skoye khozyaistvo SSSR*, (Moscow, 1960), p. 196 and for the productions of 1933, 1934, 1935 and 1937 see A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 239. For 1937 to 1939, see M.A. Vyltsan, "Kolkhoznyi stroi nakanuniye Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny" in *Istoriya* SSSR, Jan-Feb., 1962, p. 43. According to this same source, the 1940 harvest (76.2 million tons) had still not regained the 1930 level (77.1 million tons).

10. *N.Kh....1958g.*, p. 350.
11. See *Sotsialisticheskoye stroitel'stvo SSSR*, pp. 342-43. Other sources give 33.5 million head in 1933 (See *Ukrepleniye material'no-tekhnicheskoi bazy kolkhoznogo stroya vo Vtoroi Pyatiletke* 1933-1937 gg (Mascow, 1959), p. 26).
12. *Sel'skoye khozyaistvo SSSR*, pp. 263-64.
13. See C. Bettelheim, *L'Economie sovietique* (Paris, 1950), p. 87, where Soviet pre-war sources are indicated.
14. I. E. Zelenyi, in an article titled "Kolkhozv i sel'skoye khozyaistvo SSSR v 1933-35gg," *in Istoriya* SSSR, No. 5, 1964, p. 6, note 9, estimates that Soviet agriculture possessed tractive power rising to 11.68 million H.P. in 1928 and 12.56 million in 1935 (counting only work-horses and taking one tractor to equal two horses).
15. It was to combat this type of resistance that complex forms of "work remuneration" in kolkhozes were put into effect during the 1930s (See below).
16. *See Sotsialisticheskoye zemledeliye*, Jan, 16 1931, *quoted by R.W.* Davies in *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia (Vol.2): The Soviet Collective Farm (1929-1930)* (London, 1979, pp. 154-55.
17. Here are the sources of some of these estimates and some writings which enter into the controversies aroused by these estimates: A. A. Barsov, *Balans stoimostnykh obmenov mezhdu gorodami i derevnei* (Moscow, 1969), and this author's article devoted to the sources of "socialist accumulation) during the five-year plan, in *Istoriya* SSSR, no. 3, 1968, pp. 64-84; *Isaac Deutscher, Stalin*, (London, 1968), pp. 331ff; J.F. Karcz, "From Stalin to Brezhnev; Soviet Agricultural Policy in Historical Perspective," in J.R. Millar, the *Soviet Rural Community* (U.of Illinois 1971), pp. 36ff; A. Nove, *An Economic History* pp.148-86; A. ERLICH, *the Soviet Industrialization Debate*, 1924-1928 (Cambridge, Mass., 1960) pp. 119-121; the article by J.R. Millar, "Mass Collectivization and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five Year Plan; a Review Article" in *Slavic Review*, Dec. 1974, pp. 750ff.
18. These "purchases" most often were only the form by which the peasants and *kolkhozes* were obliged to transfer part of their production to state organs at a "price" fixed by the latter and which could be derisory to the point where it could not even cover production costs.
19. See M. Lewin, "Taking Grain," p. 307.
20. These Figures are calculated by combining the data for harvests figuring in the preceding table with estimates of the "Village net sales" given by J.F. Karcz in his contribution to *the Soviet Rural Community*, p. 44.

21. These percentages are calculated from Barsov's data, taking into account the alternations made by J.F. Karcz in The *Soviet Rural Communes*, p. 50.
22. Between 1928 and 1931 the prices that the state paid for agricultural products delivered as the planned procurement passed from an index of 100 to 118.6, before falling back to 109.3 in 1932. Meantime, the index of prices at which the state sold industrial consumer products moved from 100 to 180.1 in 1931 and to 284.5 in 1932. See J.F. Karcz, *Soviet Rural Commune*, p. 50.
23. *KPSS* (1953), Vol. 2 pp. 674FF.
24. B. Kerblay, *Les Marchés paysans en URSS* (Paris, 1968), p. 123.
25. See above, p. 127, and *Pravda*, May 7 and 11, 1932.
26. Except for Industrial crops like, for example, sugar beets and cotton.
27. In 1932 the index of prices for agricultural products sold on the "Free market" reached 3,005.7 (1928 = 100). See J.F. Karcz's contribution to The *Soviet Rural Community*, p. 50.
28. On these various points, see B. Kerblay, *Les Marchés*, p. 131.
29. See J. Millar, ed., The *Soviet Rural Community* p. 50.
30. On average, a quintal of rye brought 6.03 rubles in 1930 and 6.10 in 1939 (See Kerblay, *Les Marchés*, p. 133, and also A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 243).
31. A. Nove see above p. 243. See also the table on p. 85 of the Nov./Dec. issue of *Economie et Politique*, 1957. In addition, it will be noted that the prces at which peasants and kolkhozes sold their produce on the Free market, which had been multiplied by 30 between 1928 and 1932 (the amount offered being then minimal) fell by more than a half between 1933 and 1937. From 1937 to 1940 the evolution of prices of sale and purchase did not improve the lot of the kolkhoz peasantry; quite the contrary in fact (See J. Millar, ed., The *Soviet Rural Community* p. 50.)
32. This question will be dealt with later.
33. This would not be apparent if only *direct* taxation of agriculture was examined; that is, the product of the *agricultural tax*. For example, in 1937 this tax (then fixed by the net income of farms) provided only one percent of budgetary receipts. This percentage is calculated from Soviet sources in C. Bettelheim, *La Planification soviétque*, *pp.* 175 and 271.
34. The size of the commercial receipts and fiscal receipts obtained by the state through the products *extorted* for practically nothing from the peasantry was considerable. Thus in 1933–34 the price at which the state bought wheat from the grain areas was from 8.2 to 9.4 kopeks per kilo, while wheat flour was sold in state shops for 35 to 60 kopeks against ration coupons and for from 4 to 5 rubles off-ration. For potatoes, the prices were as follows: Purchase at 3 to 4 kopeks sold as rations at 20 to 30 kopeks, sold off-ration at 1.2 to 2 rubles (See R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 92).

# 3

# The kolkhoz system

THE new social relationships which developed during the period of "collectivization" were much more complex than official accounts suggest. To grasp this complexity it is necessary to examine not only the working of simply the isolated kolkhoz (which is a false abstraction) but rather that of the *kolkhoz system*.

True, this system included the kolkhoz (the "collective farm"), but it also included the Party and state organs which managed the kolkhozes, and the so-called "individual holdings" of the kolkhozniks, from which the latter drew a great part, and sometimes the essential part, of their subsistence.

At the end of the 1930s, the kolkhoz on average disposed of more than 600 hectares of cultivated land (against 72 in 1928), on which worked about 80 kolkhoznik families. The work was organized in an "industrial" way, following capitalist forms of the organization of labor, in teams and in specialized brigades put under the authority of supervisory personnel. The *work* was *collective* and was carried out with the help of a certain number of machines. However, in 1940 the level of mechanization in agriculture was still quite low; scarcely more than two tractors, on average, per kolkhoz.[1] Additionally, these tractors, like the other major equipment, did not belong to the kolkhozes but to an external organization, the MTS, which operated them according to directives coming from the managing economic and political organizations. Consequently the

immediate producers were reduced to the role of simple executants placed in the production process organized by those who had effective possession of the means of production: that is, the cadres of the kolkhoz and, even more, the cadres of the bodies directing the kolkhoz system.

## I. The "individual auxiliary economy"

The term "individual auxiliary economy" is misleading. It suggests that the latter was only a simple appendage of the "collective economy." But it was much more than that. It was an essential part of the kolkhoz system, without which the latter could not survive. Also, the term "individual" obscured another reality, namely the *familial* nature of the plot and the livestock which kolkhoz households could have at their disposal. So it is better to talk about the "individual holdings" of the kolkhozniks.

At the level of the work process, this type of agriculture depended on a *division of labor* limited to the family, and essentially to the nuclear family constituted by a couple and their young children. In certain cases, and in certain regions (for example, in Central Asia), members of the wider family could participate in this division of labor. The size that this familial agriculture could attain was reduced by regulatory measures. The latter also fixed the conditions under which the products of the individual holding could be sold on the free market (called the "kolkhoz market").

The history of this regulation is complicated. Only some features, which illuminate the conditions under which the kolkhoz system was developed, will be reviewed here. At the beginning of collectivization from above, in 1929, some attempts at "integral collectivization" were made which would not have left any "auxiliary" economy. However, from 1930 it was officially acknowledged that, given the way in which kolkhozes operated, and the obligations to which they were subjected, the "auxiliary economy" was a vital necessity; it was to help supply the kolkhozniks and also the towns.

### (a) *The plot, family livestock, and the kolkhoz market*

On March 2, 1930 *Pravda* published an obligatory draft statute for kolkhozes. This statute attributed the land of the kolkhozniks to the kolkhoz (which was required to take the form of an "artel"; in other words, of the traditional Russian cooperative), but it left to the kolkhozniks the personal possession of their house, "individual plot," a few fowl and several head of livestock.[2]

On October 30, 1931 a decision of the Plenum of the CC, devoted "to Soviet trade and the improvement of the workers' food supply," allowed—under certain conditions—kolkhozniks to sell their production directly to consumers.[3] The attempt to give the state a complete hold on town–country exchanges (which had been intended in 1930-31) was abandoned at this time,[4] for the authorities acknowledged that if they wanted to take at a low price a large part of the products provided by the kolkhozes, they had not only to authorize the auxiliary economy but allow the kolkhozniks to sell some products on the "free market," from which they would draw that minimum of monetary receipts that the "collective economy" was then incapable of assuring them.

In relation to the initial intentions (of "integral collectivization" and the ban on all direct sales by kolkhozniks of part of their production), the real change of direction was made in 1932, when the "kolkhoz market" was officially re-established. The receipts drawn by the peasants and by the kolkhozes from sales on the "kolkhoz market" grew rapidly, and even more so after a decree of May 30, 1932 abolished the very heavy turnover tax which had been applied to these sales in 1931.[5]

Nevertheless is must be noted that right up to the beginning of the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-37), the right of kolkhozniks to have their own individual livestock was far from being respected by local authorities, who were still prepared to completely expropriate peasants, which led the latter to slaughter their livestock. Thus, on February 19, 1933, Stalin had to put in a few words at the congress of kolkhoz "shock workers." His contribution had a tone of false irony. Thus he declared:

> It was not so long ago that there existed a small misunderstanding between the Soviet government and the kolkhozniks.[6] It concerned the cow. But now the business has been settled and the misunderstanding has been put right. We have achieved a situation in which the majority of kolkhoz households already have one cow. Another year or two, and there will not be a single kolkhoznik without his own cow.[7]

In reality, what the kolkhozniks obtained through a series of decrees[8] was not only the right to possess "one cow" but of having an individual livestock establishment—one cow, two calves, a sow and piglets, ten sheep (maximum), an unlimited number of fowl, and twenty beehives (at most)—and in addition a certain area of cultivable land which could be as much as a quarter or half hectare, and sometimes even more.[9]

In spite of the limitations placed on their size, "individual" livestock and plots tended to play an important part, while being the source of deep contradictions within the "kolkhoz system."

On several occasions these contradictions and the attempt of the authorities to "control" the totality of agricultural production gave rise to "offensives" against "private activities"[10] Generally, such "offensives" had the effect of temporarily lowering agricultural production, making the food supply of the towns more precarious.

These "offensives" reveal the desire of the authorities, and of the exploiting class whose interests they defended, to subdue as far as possible the kolkhozniks, and to put their hand on the greater part of the products of their labor. The "offensives" may also be explained by the circumstance that the "non-collective" activities of the kolkhozniks (and, to a lesser extent, the sovkhoz workers who also had obtained the right to cultivate a little land and raise some animals)[11] tended to take up a large part of the labor which they performed, and were the origin of a quite large part of their income.

In sum, just before the war, the plots of the kolkhozniks were in general smaller than authorized. In 1938, each peasant family on average disposed only of 0.49 hectares; 10.4 percent of kolkhoz households exceeded the authorized size. Individual

holdings at this period accounted for only 3.9 percent of the sown area, and not all of them had the number of animals to which they had a right.[12]

### *(b) Income received by the kolkhozniks as producers in possession of an "individual holding"*

The very circumscribed size of individual holding operations, and the "archaic" character of the production tools utilized in them (swing ploughs, hoes, sickles, etc.) were partly compensated by intensive and careful labor, which was above all provided by women.[13]

The small amount of published information as well as its omissions and contradictions make it very difficult to estimate in money terms the receipts drawn by the kolkhozniks from their plots and from their individual livestock raising. However, this information is sufficient to suggest that at the end of the 1930s, the tiny "familial agricultural operations" of the kolkhozniks provided them with an income equivalent or greater than that which they obtained from the enormously extensive "collectivized" land.[14]

This result was all the more remarkable in that the "individual" land was cultivated, it was said, with archaic implements and that they covered only 3.9 percent of the kolkhozes' sown area. Despite this, in 1937 the individual holdings provided about 21.5 percent of agricultural production in 1926-27 prices; in 1938 they provided the greater part of the monetary receipts of an average kolkhoz family and the greater part of its animal feed, potatoes, fruits, and vegetables. With grain, the kolkhozniks were for the most part supplied by the kolkhoz.[15]

In 1937 individual livestock operations provided 71.4 percent of the milk, 70.9 percent of the meat, 70.4 percent of hides and skins, and 43 percent of the wool.[16] At that time animals belonging to kolkhozniks formed the major part of the total livestock.[17]

In order to evaluate the economic role of individual agriculture on the part of the kolkhozniks, it should also be noted that the *monetary receipts* of these latter during the 1930s consisted largely (75-85 percent) of receipts from sales on the "free market,"

for the prices there were several times higher than those paid by the state.[18] Most of the products sold there came from individual agriculture, with only a small fraction coming from distributions in kind made by the kolkhozes. However, from 1937 the production from plots and from family livestock was subjected to increased state exactions, which tended to reduce the share of monetary receipts coming from sales on the "free" market of products from individual holdings, even though the reduction in amounts sold was partly compensated by a rise of the prices at which agricultural products could be sold.

Generally speaking, the "familial micro-agriculture" of the kolkhozniks played a decisive role, simultaneously in the supplying of citizens, the daily subsistence of families belonging to "collective farms," and the obtaining by these families of a monetary income. True, the products of collective activities were indispensible for the provisioning of kolkhozniks, but the resources that they drew from these activities seem to have been not much more than a mere complement to the incomes coming from familial agriculture.

The output of familial agriculture partly entered the channels of trade through the kolkhoz market, or through transactions made with state commercial organizations and cooperatives. In addition, familial agriculture bore the weight of *compulsory deliveries* or *various taxes.* Despite the pressure thus exercised by the state to extract a "surplus" from familial agriculture, the latter above all covered the needs of the peasant family; this considerably reduced the expense of the reproduction of its labor force borne by the kolkhoz and enabled the latter to be subordinated, to the maximum extent, to the demands of the state and to accumulation.

## II. The kolkhoz

### *(a) Relationships of production and domination within the kolkhoz*

The kolkhoz which emerged from "collectivization from above" was characterized by the existence within it of a marked

*hierarchical structure:* a small number of managers allocated the direct workers and means of work to definite tasks (and the latter in principle corresponded to orders coming from organizations placed "above" the kolkhoz). The direct producers were thus reduced to the role of *simple executants* put at the lower level of a structure in which certain features of *the capitalist organization of labor* were combined with *military command forms;* this encouraged the reproduction of a particular type of *agrarian despotism.* In the given ideological and political conditions, this structure was adequate for the *extraction of a surplus* which was especially high.

The great majority of the lower kolkhozniks were entrusted mainly with work that was manual and unskilled, and among them women were the majoriy.[19] They had particularly small incomes, being at the lowest income level (excluding labor camp workers).

In addition, kolkhozniks did not have the same rights as other Soviet citizens. One might say that the kolkhoz population "had only duties" towards the managing organs of the kolkhoz and towards the state which, so far as the kolkhoz population was concerned, "had only rights." Various authorities took upon themselve the power to take back from the lower kolkhoznik one or another material advantage which had been originally officially recognized as his in writing, and in practice he could not protest; if he did it would bring him more trouble than it was worth. To justify their behavior the authorities did not hesistate to claim that "what is good for the state (or the kolkhoz) is good for the kolkhoznik."[20] For example, the novelist Stadnyuk could put the following words in the mouth of the Party official:

> With us, there is no difference between the interests of the kolkhozniks and the interests of the state in general. If the state takes grain to satisfy some need or other, the satisfying of this need is equally in the interest of the peasants.[21]

In fact—by reason of the very over-exploitation that they endured, the kolkhozniks were *"sub-citizens"* to whom part of the *rights "recognized by the Constitution"*—and which were

hardly respected for other citizens—*were quite simply denied.* Thus, the kolkhozniks were economically and juridically discriminated against, although Article 123 of the Constitution forbade any discrimination between different citizens.

### (1) Working conditions of the kolkhozniks

At the center of the discrimination which affected ordinary kolkhozniks were, obviously, their working conditions. These conditions were fixed in a mainly arbitrary way by the administrative organs of the kolkhoz. By decision of these organs each kolkhoznik offering himself for manual labor was placed under the authority of a *brigadier.* The latter assigned his daily tasks and fixed the time limit in which they had to be done. Part of these tasks corresponded to "norms" fixed in advance by the "technical services." Ordinary kolkhozniks had control neither of the way in which these norms were fixed nor of the way the authorities evaluated the "success rate" with which they had accomplished the imposed norms. However, it was on the basis of such norms and such evaluations that the remuneration of each kolkhoznik was fixed.

From 1933 the central authorities multiplied the norms. For example, a law of February 28, 1933 fixed 35 norms for field work. In 1934 new tasks were "normed." In 1940, 254 tasks had norms."[22] These norms were established by "research institutes." Their application on the land required the participation of a growing number of brigadiers and supervisors. It also required an enlargement of the accounting establishment of the kolkhozes. The norms applied in the different kolkhozes were theoretically "adapted to local conditions"; in practice this was far from being the case, for pressures of all kinds were exercized on the way in which the norms were "adapted" and "applied."[23]

The extension of this system did not give the kolkhoznik the advantage of a fixed wage. All the same, it did impose a "discipline of work" analogous to that which stemmed from the "wage per piece" which, according to Marx, is "the form of wage most suited to the capitalist mode of production"[24]; that is, the most adequate for capitalist control of the labour force and surplus value. The discrimination suffered by the kolkhozniks

(and the contradictions of the kolkhoz system) manifested themselves here in the circumstance that the system tended to impose on them a form of exploitation which was capitalist even though they were not wage-earners.

The discrimination which affected kolkhozniks also manifested itself in the circumstance that they were excluded from labor legislation, on the pretext that they were classed as "cooperative workers." Theoretically, the decisions taken by the kolkhoz administration could be revoked by the general assembly of kolkhozniks; in reality, they could not be. The courts did not interfere in the internal affairs of the kolkhoz; the latter's management functioned like a "court of first instance." It even took decisions that frequently violated the ordinary laws, including decisions having a penal character, for it was not subordinated to any "judicial control."[25] Therefore, so far as the kolkhozniks were concerned, it was both judge and interested party, just as the feudal lord had been.

The workers of the "collective" farm could not contest in the courts the evaluation by kolkhoz management organs of the way in which they had fulfilled the work norm; the courts could only intervene to require the kolkhoz management to pay a kolkhoznik a sum which was *due to him by virtue of a decision already taken by the kolkhoz.*[26]

The discriminatory situation in which the kolkhozniks found themselves placed included numerous other aspects: they could not be unionized (because they were not wage-earners); they had no rights to social security (for the same reason); they received no state aid for housing; they were liable for various obligatory works (for the upkeep of roads, for example) which did not burden other citizens; the price of merchandise sold in the kolkhozes was higher than in the towns; finally and above all, *they had no right to a fixed wage,* because the income which was distributed to them by the kolkhoz was a "balance," *what "remained for distribution" after the kolkhoz had allocated its resources to all kinds of uses imposed by the state, beginning with the procurements and the compulsory deliveries which went to the state and had absolute priority.*

In addition (without being able to appeal to the courts), the kolkhozniks could be subjected to *fines* by the kolkhoz

management and have to pay *"indemnities"* for damage that they might have caused; the amount of these damage payments was, moreover, calculated by the kolkhoz management.[27]

In sum, the derisory "remuneration" which came to the kolkhoznik for his work in the "collective economy," and the uncertain nature of this "remuneration" had as a consequence the fact that this work constituted *forced labor* analogous to the corvee, the *barshchina*, once owed to the feudal seigneur. Moreover, it is significant that it became necessary to fix for kolkhozniks a definite number of compulsory work-days to be contributed to the "collective" economy, because the majority did their work in the kolkhoz with great reluctance, and preferred to devote themselves to their "individual holdings," a circumstance about which the Soviet leaders often complained.[28]

In January 1934, at the Seventeenth Congress of the Party, Andreyev (entrusted with agricultural problems in the CC) acknowledged that some kolkhozniks refused to work regularly on the "collective" land. At first, these refusals led to sanctions imposed by the kolkhoz chairman. In May and November 1939 regulatory action was taken by the government to impose rather more strictly an "obligation to work" on the kolkhozniks. The annual minimum number of obligatory work-days was then fixed between 60 and 100 days per year.[29] In 1942 this minimum number was fixed at 100-150 days per year (order of April 17, 1942).

(2) Quasi-state serfdom.

In total, the mass of immediate producers who had been placed in the "collective economy" were in a situation resembling that of *state serfs* subject to obligatory labor, to arbitrary decisions by those who managed the kolkhozes, and were only exceptionally able to appeal to the judicial organs. Moreover, they were forbidden in practice to *quit their kolkhoz*. They were really attached to the kolkhoz like the Middle-Age peasant had been attached to the soil, or the serf to the lord's land.

The ban on a kolkhoznik leaving the kolkhoz, unless he had permission from the authorities (which was also the case for

serfs) took the Russian peasant back not only to before October, but even to before the Stolypin reform (which had abolished the exceptional status of peasants)[30] and, still worse, to before the law of February 19 (March 3) 1861 which—with many delays and limitations—freed the peasants from serfdom, made them "free," and removed them from the law of the police and the justice of the landlord.

This backward step resulted from no law but from the *kolkhoz statutes*, which did not allow the kolkhoznik to *leave permanently his residence and his place of work* except after obtaining the *permission* of the "kolkhoz," which meant, in reality, of the *kolkhoz management*.

Admittedly, the kolkhoz statutes indicated that the kolkhoznik "could leave the kolkhoz," but as they did not specify in what conditions he could make use of this "right," the latter depended in practice on the "goodwill" of the kolkhoz authorities, on the judgement that they made about the effects of a departure, on the sympathy or antipathy that the managers of the kolkhoz felt toward the applicant, the "strings" he could pull among these "superior" authorities, and local custom (which could always be revoked).

The need to obtain this permission in order to quit the kolkhoz was retained up to the 1970s. In the words of the Soviet peasant, this permission (which from 1932 enabled an internal passport to be obtained) was commonly described by the term "letter of emancipation" which, at the time of serfdom, was the name of the document given to the peasants by the landlord who freed them.

It is typical that the project statue of the kolkhoz gave heavy treatment to the *formalities of exclusion* from the kolkhoz but specified nothing — and for good reason — about the "right of departure."[31] Soviet authors who have studied these questions show that even when a kolkhoz woman married a town-dweller she had to "obtain the right to leave"[32] from the kolkhoz management. Similarly, a kolkhoznik whose daughter married in the town could not in his turn go and live with her without being so authorized. In general, permission to leave was not granted (and this was not a "right") except when the kolkhoznik had obtained a contract with another enterprise, and accommodation.[33]

A kolkhoznik might possibly abandon the kolkhoz. He was then *expelled*. He lost his house, and his expulsion was written in to documents, which put him in a precarious and dangerous situation. People then said that he had obtained his *"vol' chii bilet"* (a personal identification document of tsarist times which carried details of the bearer's political unreliability): he was no longer a kolkhoznik or worker or employee, being regarded as an "individual peasant" and liable to high taxes. He was in fact directly threatened by various repressive measures. During the 1930s this did not prevent many kolkhozniks leaving in this way. At first they worked occasionally, sleeping in railway stations or in huts, and they moved around without being "registered" at the police station. Some were eventually arrested for "vagrancy," while others ended up finding a regular job and accommodation.[34]

The difficulties of those who left without being officially "freed" were all the greater because they possessed neither the "internal passport" which was usually required, nor the "work-book." These two "documents" were distributed to city-dwellers during the 1930s, but were not given to the peasants. The introduction of the "internal passport" also restored a feature of tsarism abolished by the October Revolution: the tsarist regime likewise had denied peasants an internal passport.

It should be emphasized that it was not only the active kolkhoznik who was attached to the soil. This attachment extended *in reality* to the members of his family, although in principle "membership" of the kolkhoz was "individual" and "voluntary." In practice, at the end of the 1930s, members of a kolkhoznik family were "automatically" entered on the list of kolkhozniks. This practice continued after the war despite the protests of certain kolkhozniks who wanted their children to be attached to the kolkhoz only at their personal request. These protests by kolkhozniks were usually rejected, in spite of the legal texts, by the collective farm chairman, who kept a register of kolkhoznik households analogous to the "register of souls" which was kept before the abolition of serfdom in 1861.[35]

The attachment of the kolkhozniks to the soil put them in a situation of total subordination to the organs of the kolkhoz

management and it had an effect on the conditions under which the kolkhozniks worked and were remunerated.

Although the management of the kolkhoz could act at its own discretion in relations with its kolkhozniks, the same could not be said about its relations with superior bodies. For example, industrial enterprises which wanted to recruit manpower in the countryside could be authorized,by the appropriate central offices, to make agreement with kolkhoz managers.[36] These managers usually did not wish to be deprived of labor power but it was difficult for them to escape from "organized recruitment" when the industrial enterprises were "supported" by the higher authorities. It sometimes happened that the collective farm managers demanded that "their" kolkhoz be compensated for the "loss of manpower" which was imposed on them in this way. This "compensation" was levied on the wages of the kolkhozniks sent to work in industry. Popularly this levy was described by the term *obrok*, which evoked the dues that the serf had to pay to his landowner when the latter allowed him to leave for the town.[37]

In sum, during the 1930s millions of peasants nevertheless left the countryside, because they took advantage of the disorganization in the early days, or they had been excluded or ejected from the kolkhoz, or they had taken their *"vol'chii bilet,"* or they had been recruited in the framework of the *orgnabor*. For the tens of millions who remained "attached" to their kolkhoz, this obviously did not change the situation of quasi-state serfdom in which they found themselves.

### (3) Some remarks about the return to forms of quasi-serfdom during the 1930s

Marx observed that:

> The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living...A whole people, that imagines it has imparted to itself accelerated powers of motion through a revolution, suddenly finds itself transferred back to a dead epoch and [then] there turn up again the old calendars, the old names, the old edicts...[38]

In a certain way this is what happened to the Soviet peasants during the 1930s. Their new masters rediscovered the old instruments of coercion; true they dressed them in new words, but the peasants were not deceived and gave them their old names.

But it should be emphazised that the return to relationships of dependence and exploitation, reminiscent of the relationships appropriate to serfdom, in no way indicates that this return was purely and simply to the old social relationships and the old class relationships. In particular, three points must be kept in view:

(1) The kolkhoz was neither a "lord's domain" nor a large landed property. what it produced and the use made of what it produced were determined by the requirements of *accumulation at the scale of society,* requirements which were mediated by the Party and by the state.

Also, the existence of relationships, like those of serfdom, which typified the kolkhoz does not mean that the kolkhozniks escaped capitalist exploitation: these relationships indicate that such exploitation bore on them in a "specific form." Such a situation is not exceptional. The "independent peasants" of "western" capitalist countries are likewise subject, under specific forms, to the exploitation of capital. It was the same in the 19th century for the slaves on the plantations in the American southern states or in Cuba and still today, for example, for the Haitian immigrants to the Dominican Republic, where they are "attached" to their exploiters by debts that they are unable to repay.

(2) The work process within the kolkhoz was mainly a repetition (even a caricature) of the capitalist work process, with its forms of division and hierarchies. It tended to concentrate at one pole what Marx called "the intellectual forces of production" (even though the latter were extremely weak), and to deprive the ordinary worker of any initiative. It even tended to expropriate from the old peasants their knowledge and experience. Aided by the general indifference to work, it succeeded here quite well: the peasants' rich experience, already dilapidated, was replaced only by the unrelaible knowledge of "experts." The results are still visible today.

(3) In the social structure as a whole the kolkhoz managers in no way occupied the same place as the old landowners

or feudal lords. They were appointed and dismissed by political chiefs placed above them, and they were responsible to the latter for the achievement of a certain number of tasks. In fact, they were subordinate agents of society-scale tasks connected with the extraction of surplus labor and the accumulation of surplus value.

## III. The kolkhoz managerial stratum and its placement in the general social structure

According to the kolkhoz statutes, the supreme directing organ was the general assembly of kolkhozniks. In theory, this assembly could annul unjustified decisions by the chairman, vote for obligatory resolutions, adopt or modify the kolkhoz budget, and remove the chairman. In practice, the kolkhozniks could not exercise any of these rights, except in very exceptional cases (in particular, when they were impelled to do so by the authorities at a higher level). Apart from such cases, kolkhozniks who took the risk of opposing the will of the "chairman" would appear to be "suspect" and "rotten elements," and would be exposed to severe troubles and even sanctions.

In actuality the kolkhoz chairmen were, therefore, not subject to *any control from below*. They were appointed from above; they were "simple administrators" who often did not call the general assemblies and the "control organs," or if so only so as to have their decisions "ratified." In popular language they were often referred to as the "kolkhoz directors." Their power was much more than that of the local soviets, which usually went along with the measures they took. Their authority over the kolkhozniks, moreover, much exceeded that of the director of an enterprise over "his" workers, since the kolkhozniks depended on their managers not only during work, but during their daily life; for example, for the upkeep of their houses, the preservation or reduction of their individual plots, and even problems of food supply.[39]

However, management of the kolkhoz was not carried out by its chairman alone but by a *managing stratum*, whose career depended on Party and state decisions. The existence of this

stratum limited the claims of the chairman to exercise the powers of a "sole director," because its members could review the "decisions" of the chairman, invoking *"superior state interests."* In this way the *state administrative nature of the kolkhoz* was reinforced.

The existence of a *kolkhoz managerial stratum* met other needs besides that of ensuring the "supervision" of the kolkhoz chairman, for there were other means of "supervising" him.

One of the functions of the kolkhoz was to transform agricultural work into an *"enterprise of industrial character"* developing a new division of labor and new styles of cultivation, increasing the use of mechanical and chemical techniques, "rationalizing" its operations, and "improving its administration" with proper bookkeeping. This function of the kolkhoz required the presence of a variegated body of "specialists." The latter performed quasi-managerial tasks and watched over the transformation of the conditions of production, so as to allow an increase of production and of *"profitability."* Insofar as the cadres charged with these tasks succeeded in actually tackling them, their activity tended to transform the kolkhoz into a "state enterprise" (a form declared to be "superior" to the kolkhoz form).

The second essential function performed by the "collective farm" (a function which predominated throughout the 1930s) was to *ensure at any price the satisfaction of the state's immediate needs for agricultural products, the latter to be obtained at the lowest possible monetary cost.* Above all, it was a question of maximizing the *procurement* of grain and, to that end, of introducing in the "collective farm" a *"factory despotism"* at a time when the material basis and the ideological conditions necessary for a relatively "flexible" exercise of this despotism were lacking. Hence the role played by naked repression in the operation of the kolkhoz and the multiplication of *supervisory and control tasks assumed by the kolkhoz managerial stratum* and by the "little bosses" placed under its orders.

The increase of supervisory tasks thereby expressed the subordination of the kolkhoz cadres to the general demand for *capital accumulation*, which the departments of state were striving for. To cope with its many tasks, the kolkhoz managerial

stratum took the form of a group that was complex and hierarchical. It included elements that were genuinely *dominant*, the nucleus of a new agricultural and rural bourgeoisie, and elements that were relatively *dominated*, forming an agricultural *petite bourgeoisie*. The lower ranks of the latter included kolkhozniks occupying more or less privileged positions.

A detailed analysis of the personnel of the kolkhoz managerial stratum and of its characteristics would require an excessively long treatment. The discussion will therefore be limited to certain general points.

For a start it should be noted that toward the end of the 1930s the kolkhoz managerial stratum was still relatively small. At that time there were about 240,000 kolkhozes.[40] The latter (according to figures quoted in 1939 referring to 1937) had 582,000 kolkhoz chairmen, assistant chairmen, and managers of animal breeding farms. To these agricultural cadres must be added 80,000 agronomists and 96,000 other agricultural technical staff (but by no means all of these worked entirely within a kolkhoz), making a total of 758,000 in these categories, which is a small figure for a kolkhoz population of more than 80,000,000.[41] To these cadres, who constituted the hierarchical summit of the kolkhoz strata, were added the intermediate cadres, mainly brigade and team leaders.[42]

Most of these intermediate cadres had no particular technical knowledge. As A. Arutyunyan remarked, in its training "the kolkhoz intelligentsia" was hardly distinguished from the mass of kolkhozniks,[43] of which in 1939 almost a quarter was completely illiterate and only 3.7 percent had finished the seven-year school.[44] The cadres therefore fulfilled *essentially command, supervisory and control functions*, while there was a shortage of "specialists", (for example, of tractor drivers and agronomists) bearing in mind the requirements of the large-scale mechanization that had been forecast for the kolkhozes. To the cadres entrusted with command and supervisory functions should be added those entrusted with administrative functions, mainly bookkeepers. However, the command functions went to the kolkhoz chairmen, their deputies, and the brigade and team leaders, some of whom were in the kolkhoz council of administration. These command functions were combined—as we shall see—with those exercised by Party and

state organizations, for these organizations constantly intervened in kolkhoz activity.

The totality of the operating conditions of the kolkhozes, their manner of administration and the exactions that the state imposed on them determined the low level of kolkhozniks incomes and the inequalities which influenced their distribution.

## III. The incomes of kolkhozniks and kolkhoz cadres

Before examining what incomes were received by the kolkhozniks from the "collective farm," it is necessary to give an indication of how these revenues were fixed. To do this, certain "rules" of the kolkhoz system should be recalled.

### *(a) The composition of incomes distributed by the kolkhozes, and how they were divided*

Incomes of the kolkhozniks depended on the incomes of their kolkhoz. The latter, in their turn, depended on a multiplicity of elements over which the management of each kolkhoz (and, even more so, the kolkhozniks) had usually little influence: the scale of the different types of production, mainly determined by the production plans and the means put at the disposition of the kolkhoz; the exactions that the state levied on this production; the prices which might be paid for part of the output taken by the state. All this determined for a given year the *gross annual receipts of each kolkhoz*.

However, what would be distributed to the kolkhozniks did not directly depend on the annual gross receipts of their kolkhozes, but rather from what was left after other exactions had been levied, leaving the *balance of receipts payable to the kolkhozniks*.

#### (1) The balance payable to the kolkhozniks

This balance was obtained by deducting from the gross receipts various "external" or "internal" charges. The "external"

charges were the payments that the kolkhoz had to make to the treasury or to various state organs (for example, to the MTS). The "internal" charges were intended to finance the internal accumulation of the kolkhoz and its administrative expenses, notably the *wages* of its cadres. The amount of all these charges depended principally on decisions made by authorities external to the kolkhozes. After the kolkhoz had dealt with all these charges (at a time when gross receipts were low because of the agricultural crisis, the deliveries made to the state, and the low prices that were paid to the producers for agricultural products), the balance remaining for distribution to its members was pathetic. It was offered either in kind, or in money.[45] It was delivered on the basis of the "labor-day" unit of account.

### (2) Bookkeeping in "labor-days" or trudodni, and production norms

Throughout the year, the work of each kolkhoznik was recorded in *units of account* known as *"labor-days" (or trudodni).* This unit of account *corresponded to the achievement of a certain task.* However, according to the nature of the achieved task, a *work-day* entitled the attribution of a smaller or greater number of *trudodni.* For a piece of work which was regarded as "easy," a work-day could only represent 0.75 *trudodnei,* but for work described as "difficult" it represented 1.5 *trudodnei.* This principle assumed that the *different items of work were classed according to category.* In June 1930, a circular sanctioned such a classification. In January 1931, on the basis of recommendations from various institutes, a kolkhoz conference classed work into four groups in which the equivalent in *trudodni* of a work-day varied between .75 and 1.5. In 1933, within the framework of the "struggle against egalitarianism," work was divided into seven groups in which the equivalent of a work-day varied from .5 to 2.0 *trudodni* (that is, a ratio of 1 to 4).[46]

For a kolkhoznik to be considered as having provided one *trudoden',* it was necessary not only that he should have spent a certain time to achieve a certain piece of work, but also quite often that he satisfied certain *production* norms. The latter proliferated from 1933, at least for manual work.

### (3) Calculating the value of a "trudoden" and individual income

The income which corresponded to a *"trudoden"* was not fixed in advance: it was calculated by *dividing the balance available for distribution in a kolkhoz by the total number of trudodni provided by all the kolkhozniks of that kolkhoz* during the course of the year. This division gave the "effective value" of a *trudoden'* for the year in a given kolkhoz. As for the individual income allocated to each kolkhoznik by virtue of his "collective work," this was obtained by multiplying the "effective value" of the *trudoden'* by the number of *trudodni* which he had provided, adding in some cases a basic wage (largely for the cadres) and bonuses. The income distributed in this way was partly composed of a sum of money and partly by products of the kolkhoz.

This system of distribution was both burdensome and complicated. It subjected the direct producers to a series of rules and norms that were fixed externally. Their effective receipts did not depend—contrary to what was officially declared—on the "quantity and quality of their work," but on the way the work of each was "evaluated," computed, and "checked." In addition, what each kolkhoznik received also depended on the work to which he had been allocated and the "results" achieved by the collective farm, "results" on which personal work and the "decisions" of the kolkhozniks had only minimal influence. Finally, each person received what was due to him only a long time after the work had been done: for work done in the fall, "remuneration" would be received only about a year later; that is, after the harvest had been taken in and all the accounting had been done.

### *(b) The size of income paid by the kolkhoz to the kolkhozniks*

The circumstances in which the kolkhozes "remunerated" the kolkhozniks meant that there was a great differentiation of incomes. Such a differentiation limits the usefulness of figures relating to the "average income" received by kolkhozniks by

virtue of their "collective work." However, this average income is not entirely devoid of interest because it allows a certain number of comparisons to be made. We will therefore begin by giving some facts about this income.

(1) The average income received by kolkhozniks from the kolkhoz

Statistics relating to the income of kolkhozniks are especially lacking and contradictory. The figures used here are those quoted by A. Arutyunyan.[47] From these it emerges that in 1940 the average income received by a kolkhoznik from the kolkhoz rose to 12 rubles per month. This figure may be compared with an average income of 22 rubles for a worker in a sovkhoz and of 34 rubles for a wage-earner in industry.[48]

Even if it were accepted that the income derived from their individual plots and livestock doubled the total income received by the kolkhozniks, this income remained very much lower than the income of an industrial wage-earner. It is quite close to that of a sovkhoz wage-earner, the latter usually having at his disposal not an individual plot but a garden, which increased his income by several rubles per month.[49]

These figures confirm that in 1940 the *collective economy of the kolkhozes was incapable of assuring a living wage for their* members. The distributed "remuneration" *did not ensure the reproduction of the work energy of the kolkhozniks and their families,* hence the *absolute necessity* for the cultivation of *"individual plots,"* for *familial livestock raising,* and for recourse to sales on the "free" market. All this is connected with the causes and effects of the peasant resistance to "collectivization" in the form in which it was carried out.

It may be said that the majority of the kolkhozniks in 1940 could buy practically nothing, not even industrial products that could be regarded as "everyday." This may be confirmed by quoting retail prices of certain consumer goods produced by industry, (prices are of 1939 with, in parentheses, the 1928 prices when available): a meter of cotton cloth was from 2.07 to 2.73 rubles (0.34); a meter of woolen cloth about 150 rubles (11.35); a pair of mens' leather boots was from 42 - 90 rubles (10.8).[50]

To summarize, "collectivazation" therefore entailed a considerable reduction in main agricultural production and a *collapse of the standard of life of the workers in the countryside*. From this it should not be concluded that "collectivization" was a total failure, because its real objective was not to improve the living conditions of the peasant masses but to create the conditions for their maximal exploitation, so as to assure a rapid expansion of state industry, and in general this objective was achieved.

However, this "tree" of average income should not hide the "forest" of income inequalities. The inequalities can be seen as much between kolkhozes as inside each kolkhoz.

### (2) Income inequalities between kolkhozes

A detailed analysis of income inequalities between kolkhozes would require much time and, moreover, would be difficult to carry out well with the present availability of documentation. We shall therefore limit ourselves to pointing out that the circumstances of several tens of thousands of kolkhozes were such that at the end of the 1930s either they could not pay any monetary remuneration to their members for *trudodni* or the remuneration which they could pay was very inferior to the average payment. Thus in 1939 *15,700 kolkhozes had been subjected to such burdens that they were unable to pay any monetary remuneration to their members*, and 46,000 others could only pay, at the most, 0.20 rubles per "work-day."[51]

### (3) Internal inequalities in the kolkhoz

To the inequalities between kolkhozes should be added inequalities internal to each kolkhoz. The latter were the *result of a policy* whose principal elements were the following:

(a) The distinction made between work of execution and work of direction. The former was "remunerated" exclusively on the basis of accounting in *trudodni*. The second was remunerated, *in addition*, by fixed wages and various bonuses.

(b) The fixing of norms that were more or less easy to achieve. Any overfulfilment of the norm created the right to a proportional increase of remuneration. Conversely, in the case of

non-fulfilment of the norm, the remuneration of the kolkhoznik was reduced. This brought about differences of effective remuneration in a range of 6 to 1 between the best-paid manual worker and the worst-paid. For example the first could earn more than 28 rubles monthly (in an average kolkhoz of 1940) and the second only 4.8 rubles.

(c) In 1940 income inequalities between kolkhozniks of the same kolkhoz were made even greater by the establishment of a system of bonuses that were to be added to what was paid by virtue of the *trudodni*.[52] These bonuses were paid to members of brigades (or teams) who "exceeded" their production plan or their productivity plan. As a general rule they were fixed in the form of a payment of a percentage of what was produced above the brigade plan; the distribution of these bonuses was itself subjected to various regulations.[53]

(d) To the inequalities in the remuneration of *manual workers* connected with the classification of tasks, to the fixing of norms more or less easy to fulfil, to the nature of the tasks allocated to the lower kolkhozniks by the chiefs of brigade and teams or by the managers of livestock farms, and to inequalities due to the bonuses, must be added the inequalities resulting from the higher rates of remuneration allowed to the *managing personnel* of the kolkhozes and the "skilled" cadres of the latter. Moreover, part of this remuneration was fixed directly in money terms (which was not the case for the ordinary kolkhoznik).

On the eve of World War II the chairman of a kolkhoze received a fixed salary varying from 25-400 rubles monthly (the average being 150 rubles).[54] This salary may be compared with the average total "remuneration" of a kolkhoznik, which as quoted above was 12 rubles. In addition to this salary the chairman received an attribution which varied from 45-90 *trudodni* monthly (however on "ordinary" kolkhoznik—who received no wage—was usually credited with about 15 *trudodni* monthly, and often less). This "remuneration" of kolkhoz chairmen depended on the extent of the cultivated area of "his" kolkhoz during the year. In addition to this salary and this attribution of *trudodni*, the kolkhoz chairman received a bonus equaling 15-40 percent of his total salary, by virtue of plan over-fulfilment. Finally, after three years of service, he

received a supplementary bonus of 5-15 percent for each year of service.

Agronomists, skilled livestock workers, plant and livestock specialists (usually members of the council of administration) received high contractual credit in *trudodni* and, for the overfulfilment of "their plan", a bonus equal to 70 percent of that received by the chairman. The brigadiers and other cadres were automatically credited with 1.5 times the number of *trudodni* achieved by the average kolkhoznik, plus various bonuses.[55] Thus an *important part of the available resources of the kolkhozes was absorbed by the managing cadres, the "specialists," the brigadiers and administrative cadres*[56] which correspondingly reduced the incomes of the "ordinary" kolkhozniks. Without sufficiently detailed and meaningful statistics, it is very difficult to make a true comparison between the income inequalities in the countryside at the end of NEP and the end of the 1930s. However, nothing suggests that these inequalities had diminished. What changed were those who benefitted from the privileged incomes and the conditions which allowed them to thus benefit. It should be noted that to the inequalities in the incomes distributed by the kolkhozes should be added other inequalities which increased still more the differentiation of standards of life within the kolkhozes.

One of these sources of inequality involved housing. Thus, A. Arutyunyan, using an investigation made in 1935 in the village of Terpeniye (situated in the Ukraine in Zaporozhe Region) states that there were considerable differences in the comfort of accommodation, depending on whether it was used by skilled or unskilled workers. All the accommodation of non-manual skilled workers had proper floors whereas 30 percent of the kolkhozniks' dwellings had earthen floors.[57] Comfortless dwellings, usually situated in small villages or hamlets, belonged essentially to unskilled manual workers.[58]

Another element in the differentiation of living conditions was the scale of familial agriculture. Thus in 1940 one third of kolkhoz families did not have a cow[59]; however, the *non-possession of a cow was typical (in 1928) of a poor peasant household*, because this animal was essential for providing the peasant household with milk products. The latter were necessary for nourishment and were a source of monetary income;

moreover, stable manure was an important factor for the fertility of the plot.

The available information shows that the households of the manual workers were the least favored in questions of livestock raising and plots. Thus at Terpeniye, in 1935, in the kolkhoz sector, 100 percent of "skilled non-manual workers" grew their own crops and had an orchard whereas these percentages fell respectively to 31 and 79 percent for unskilled manual workers.[60]

To summarize, the *"collective" farm was characterized by a very much polarized social structure, by deep economic inequalities, and by relationships of domination that a minority of cadres exercised on the mass of kolkhozniks, who were overexploited and literally reduced to short rations.* However, these facts should not hide the circumstance that, in the overall social structure, *the cadres and managers of the kolkhozes were themselves at the bottom of a complex hierarchical system,* whose pressures forced them to push to a maximum the exploitation of the "ordinary" kolkhozniks. The inferior situation of the cadres of the "collective" farms can be clearly seen when analysing the subordination of the kolkhozes to the requirements of accumulation and state procurement.

## V. The subordination of the kolkhozes to the requirements of state accummulation

As is known, the kolkhoz system comprised three elements: familial agriculture, the kolkhoz and the collection of administrative structures which dominated the kolkhoz and allowed the state to obtain from agriculture a *"tribute"* which was regular and as high as possible. The principle function of the system was to contribute to the growth of accummulation in the *state sector.*

The subordination of the "collective farms" to a collection of administrative structures placed "above" them was made necessary by the heavy and contradictory obligations which weighed on the kolkhozes. For example, the latter had to assure the state sector of the *material means required by the process*

*of accummulation;* at the same time, they had to "satisfy the needs for extra labor power" which the industrialization process engendered. These two requirements came into contradiction when an excessively intense "drainage" of labor-power from agriculture to industry disorganized agricultural production and threatened the supply to the state of the material means necessary for accummulation.

These contradictions and the organizational forms through which they were "treated" during the 1930s are highly significant. They should therefore be examined in order to grasp what exactly was the overall *kolkhoz system.*

### (a) The contradictions affecting the size and form of the "tribute" and the place of the kolkhozes in the system of state structures

From the beginning of "collectivization" there could be seen the development of a sharp contradiction between the effort of the state apparatus, seeking to maximize the material supplies *currently* delivered to the state by the kolkhozes and, on the other side, the effort aiming to increase this supply for subsequent years. This contradiction manifested itself in concrete terms during the first half of the 1930s, when the "tribute" reached such a size that the standard of living of the kolkhozniks drastically fell, which had a negative effect on their labor productivity and even on their numbers, and hence resulted in poorer harvests.[61]

At the beginning of the 1930s, the Party *gave priority to the maximization of supplies currently extorted* from the kolkhozes, regardless of living conditions and output in the "collective" farms. To ensure respect for this priority, the kolkhoz system was subordinated as much as possible to the *directives and plans of the state,* and hence there was an extension of "planning from above", which was extended to the production and deliveries of the kolkhozes. In this matter the latter were placed practically on the same footing as the state farms: the Party organization and the state fixed for the kolkhozes, just as for the sovkhozes, sowing plans for different products, and they installed a control system which aimed to force the kolkhozes

to achieve their plans for productions and deliveries. The fictitious character of "autonomy" that the "collective farms" were said to enjoy thereby became clear from the First Five-Year Plan and was confirmed during the Second Plan. What happened during the 1930s clearly reveals, moreover, that the kolkhozes were *subordinated to the Party*, but the form of this subordination varied over time.

At the beginning of "collectivization", the responsibility of directing and controlling the kolkhozes lay prinicipally, at least formally, on the machine and tractor stations (MTS),[62] although the local Party authorities (at district level) were supposed to supervise the operations of the MTS.

There was here a sort of confusion of responsibility, and the January 1933 Plenum of the CC sought to eliminate this by the creation of *functional political departments attached to the MTS*.[63] The political department *(politotdel)* was a Party organization directly subordinated to the CC and not to the secretary of the district committee. Thus the kolkhozes were under the direction of the superior Party offices. The head of the *politotdel* was deputy director of the MTS and each *politotdel* included a respresentative of the GPU, who therefore also participated in the "management" of "collectivized" agriculture.

The "cooperative" character of the kolkhoz that Stalin emphasized in 1932[64] then became especially fictitious, and in January 1933 Stalin said something quite different. He then stated that the Party"... must now take over the direction of the collective farms, assume responsibility for their work... it must enter into all the details of collective-farm life."[65]

This "taking in hand" took the form of constant interference in kolkhoz activity, very numerous arrests of kolkhoz cadres, and mediocre material results. This led not to a change in the "style" of kolkhoz managements but rather to a strengthening of their subordination. At the beginning of 1934 a decree of March 4 ordered the administrative organs of agriculture, the MTS, and the kolkhozes to carry out their operations according to a plan. The government additionally promulgated a model plan for the collective farms and it was stated that this plan should be "followed without any deviation". The key element of this plan were the obligatory deliveries to the state (from 1932 these deliveries replaced the old *kontraktasiya)*.

However, the *politotdel* system was not long in showing its "faults". It was stated, in particular, that certain heads of *political* departments had a tendency to "protect" the kolkhozes for which they had responsibility against the excessive demands of the delivery plans. Certain high leaders of the Party even began to talk of "anti-state tendencies."[66] Thus, the Plenum of November 1934 abolished the *politotdel* system;[67] true, the MTS retained a deputy director with explicity political responsibilities but the latter did not have his own administrative apparatus and had no longer any particular power in relation to the local Party organization.

However, the kolkhozes continued to occupy a subordinate position in the system of administrative structures entrusted with the management of agriculture and the requisitioning for the state of those agricultural products subject to such delivery. The cadres of the kolkhozes were in an inferior situation within the "triangle" that was supposed to manage kolkhoz affairs. This "triangle" consisted of Party officials, government officials, and the kolkhoz cadres representing the kolkhozes.

The list of governmental organizations to which the cadres of the kolkhozes were in practice subordinated was long: the MTS on which each kolkhoz depended for the major field works, the executive committee of the district soviet *(raiispolkom)*, the village soviet, and the local organizations of the Agricultural Commissariat. These organizations participated in the preparation of plans and the checking of their execution; for agricultural operations the surveillance tasks were entrusted to the MTS and the Agricultural Commissariat. From 1935 the *executive committee of the district soviet* prepared, at the end of each year, an annual economic development program which included a *plan for the kolkhozes*. This plan was transmitted to the latter through the intermediary of the MTS and the local organizations of the Agricultural Commissariat. The plan fixed the kolkhoz tasks in the matter of production, specialization, rotation of crops, livestock, mechanization, expenses, the scheduling of various operations and, naturally, deliveries to the state. The kolkhoz could not make any modifications to the tasks assigned by the government, even if they were in contradiction with the crop rotation plan adopted previously or with requirements of agricultural technique. At most, the

kolkhoz could "submit objections to the Party district committee or to the regional administration of the locality."[68] But the kolkhoz could elaborate a plan-project for "supplementary harvests", specifying the material means, human and financial, that its achievement required. This project had to conform to official directives. It was submitted to the local organizations of the Agricultural Commissariat, which could modify it. After modification, the Commissariat organizations integrated it into the kolkhoz plan and it became obligatory. The regulations fixed in this way reduced to a minimum the freedom of action of the kolkhozes and their managements.

Despite the apparently important role that state organizations, particularly the Agricultural Commissariat, played, it was the Party organizations which occupied the dominant position in the management and control of kolkhoz activity, even though in priniciple they were not supposed to intervene in production problems. In fact, they constantly meddled in kolkhoz affairs, even in the periods when such interference was not encouraged by the central leadership of the Party, as was the case in 1935 when Stalin emphasized, in a speech of February 15, that the kolkhozes should be left with the solution of their own problems and the administrative decisions should not be imposed upon them.

The intervention of the party in kolkhoz affairs was connected with the burdens that weighed upon the kolkhoz economy. To ensure that the latter did not shrink its obligations, the party committee intervened at any moment in "collective farm" affairs. At the beginning of 1940 the situation was such that *Pravda* was deploring that "district Party committees *(raikom)* had been transformed into a kind of district agricultural office."[69]

The cadres of local Party organizations intervened all the more in the life of the kolhozes because they were in practice held responsible for the conduct of agriculture in their district. Finally, at the beginning of the 1940s, this responsibility was officially placed on them. Firstly, a decree of March 18, 1940 charged the *raikom* with organizing crop rotation; then, at the beginning of 1941, the *raikom* was charged with organizing the management of kolkhozes and directly supervising the application of Party and government directives in the villages.[70]

Thus there developed an extremely heavy agricultural administration. It was so extensive that on the eve of WWII there were more cadres not belonging to kolkhozes but occupied in the management of the latter than there were kolkhoz chairmen.[71]

In these circumstances the kolkhoz was reduced to the role of a simple organ of implementation. It was not only the kolkhoznik who "was left aside from all control and organization of production"[72] but also the chairman of the kolkhoz himself, who was only the executant of the decisions made by the *raikom* and the *raiispolkom*.[73]

### *(b) The real scope of the kolkhoz cooperative statute*

Ultimately, the kolkhoz cooperative statute was based on a fiction, because the fundamental principles that this statute implied were not respected. In fact, all the decisions important for the life of the kolkhoz were decided externally and in advance by the Party and government organizations. Such was the case for the deductions made from kolkhoz funds, for the forms of work decentralization, for the form of remuneration, etc. All these questions gave rise to decisions taken outside the kolkhoz and which had to be accepted by this latter, including, when appropriate, the general assembly of kolkhozniks.[74] The latter then functioned as a means of *fictitiously transforming a decision taken outside the kolkhoz into a decision "unanimously adopted" by the kolkhozniks*, thereby conferring a "legitimacy" which otherwise it would not have had. This form of "legitimation" is typical of "Soviet democracy" of the 1930s. The authorities could bring this about as soon as they disposed of means of pressure (like the expulsion or even arrest of recalcitrants) that was sufficient to allow the *constraint on the consensus* to bring about *constraint "by the consensus."*

Naturally, the constant violation of the kolkhoz statutes did not solve any deep problem. It could only make their management more bureaucratic, more remote from production realities, and more conflict-ridden. Hence the so-frequent reminders

from the Party leadership that the "cooperative character of the kolkhoz" should be respected. But these reminders were in contradiction with other declarations demanding that local authorities should intervene even in the details of kolkhoz life. These contradictions between two official declarations only reflect objective contradictions. The latter were born from the need to extract a maximum tribute from the kolkhozes to support the current policy of accummulation and industrialization. However, this need entered into conflict with the will of the peasantry, which tried to keep for itself the biggest share of the product of its labor. At every moment it even came into contradiction with another necessity: that of maintaining, or possibly increasing, the productive capacity of the kolkhozes.

The kolkhoz chairman found himself at the center of these contradictions. On the one hand, his task was to respond positively to the requirements of the central authorities of whom he was, in effect, *one of the executive agents*, (although juridically he was said to be "elected" by the kolkhozinks). On the other hand, he had to deal with economic requirements of "his" kolkhoz and the discontent of the kolkhozniks. Up to a certain point he had to satisfy the demar 's of the latter, because failure to do so could make it impossible to obtain productive labor. These contradictions made the position of kolkhoz chairmen all the more delicate because the *principal obligation* that was imposed on them was to guarantee that the kolkhoz functioned above all a provider of as much surplus labor as was possible.

The fictitious nature of the kolkhoz cooperative statute and the contradictions in which their chairmen were trapped was demonstrated throughout the 1930s and on the eve of the war by the "waltz of the kolkhoz chairmen". This phenomenon was caused by the the attempt made by several of them to resist "execessive demands" by the Party and by the wish of this latter to shatter such resistance. Some figures show the scale of this phenomenon. In 1933 an investigation carried out over a larger part of the territory of the USSR showed that in the course of the single year 36 percent of kolkhoz chairmen were changed. In 1937, 46 percent of these chairmen had been in office for less than 1 year[75]. Figures of the same order could be cited for 1939 and 1940[76].

These figures adequately confirm the contradictions in the kolkhoz system and the fictitious character of the cooperative statute of the "collective farms".

## VI The Consequences for the Authorities of the "Socialization" of Agriculture

For the authorities the "socialization" of agriculture emerged by way of two failures and four victories, but the scope of the latter was much greater than that of the failures.

The first failure involved the main agricultural products, which achieved none of the "objectives" that the Soviet leaders had hoped to see realized. In numerous sectors,"socialized" agriculture was subjected to a near-permanent crisis. In the key sector, production—after having sharply diminished at the beginning of the 1930s—only increased thereafter slightly and with difficulty. The essential harvest, that of grain, did not regain its 1930 level before World War II. Thus agriculture, far from lending its support to general economic development, became a burden which hindered that development.

The second failure involved the relationship of the authorities with the pasantry. In effect, the expropriation of the peasant masses, their incorporation into the system that reduced them to starvation rations and which imposed on them forced labor which was hardly remunerated, aroused and renewed deep and long-term peasant discontent. Discontent was all the greater because kolkhozniks were constantly suspected of "laziness" and of "deceit". In addition, they felt themselves scorned and put by the authorities at the very bottom of the social ladder, both in terms of the income that they received and of the degree of "respect" that the authorities accorded them. Taken as a whole, the peasantry was discriminated against: in relation to the state it had duties but no rights. Bolshevik ideology was already the vehicle of such discrimination but, toward the end of the 1930s, it tended to more and more reproduce the old Russian and Tsarist tradition. Like many other aspects of this epoch it became part of the resurgence of conservative and even reactionary attitudes that had characterized Imperial Russia.[77]

The peasantry made its discontent felt by developing enormous passive resistance. The authorities replied to this with repression and by creating at all points a bureaucracy that enclosed the peasants and the kolkhozes, carefully watched them, and took part in their exploitation. This new privileged stratum also administered (actually quite badly, as the agricultural statistics testify) the state farms and the MTS. These organs absorbed considerable investment whose economic effects were derisory.

Thus, "collectivization," far from integrating the rural world into national economic life, only cut off further the authorities from the peasantry. More than ever, the country was divided into "two nations", the "new serfs" and the other social classes and strata. This would not prevent, when the country was in danger during World War II, these "serfs" defending it as they had done under the old regime.[78]

However, the crisis of agriculture and the profound discontent of the peasants were the "price" that the authorities and the new dominant class had to pay in order to win *four victories.*

The *first* victory was *political:* "collectivization" certainly cut off the authorities from the peasantry but above all—and this is what counted—it shattered this latter economically and politically. "Collectivization" put an end to all possibilities of economic independence for the peasants. It shattered all the traditional peasant institutions and the types of solidarity that the latter permitted. In effect, "collectivization" brought into being a peasantry infinitely more "atomized" and fragmented by capitalist forms of the division of labor than the old individualized peasantry had been.

For the authorities and for the new dominant class, the elimination of "private" peasant holdings (whether those of poor or average peasants, comfortably-off or rich) was a very great victory. Henceforth (the NEP men having also been eliminated ), the new class alone had at its disposition significant means of production.

For the Bolshevik Party, thanks to its ideology (in which had also taken root a "Leninist tradition"), this radical upheaval in the balance of forces was regarded in terms of a "victory over capitalism" in the name of a "genetic theory of capitalism" directly and inevitably engendered by small-scale production[79].

The *second* victory won by the authorities and the new dominant class was their success in *submitting the peasantry to an unprecendented over-expolitation*, which permitted the realization of a gigantic effort of accummulation, most of which went to industry. True,this was obtained at the price of a very substantial lowering of the living standard of the peasant massess, but this consequence was regarded as negligible (it was even officially ignored), for what counted for the Party leadership and for the class whose interests it served was putting the maximum means of production under its own control..

The *third* victory, which made the others long-lasting, was the creation of a new economic form: the *kolkhoz system* which allowed simultaneously the *expropriation* of the peasantry and the tranformation of its "individual and sparse means of production into socially concentrated means of production", following the methods belonging to the "prehistory of capital".

As has been seen, the kolkhoz system included familial agriculture, the kolkhozes, and the collection of administrative structures which directed and controlled the latter. It constituted a system *sui generis* for the exploitation of the great mass of agricultural workers. It combined characteristics which were those of a kind of "state serfdom" (obligatory work on the "collective" land and the attachment of the peasant to the soil) with capitalist social relationships. These latter were evident in the form of the work process and in the extraction of surplus labor destined essentially for the accummulation of capital in the state sector. The existence of individual plots and livestock, far from being in contradiction with the demand of such accummulation, on the contrary allowed it to intensify, as is the case in different types of agrarian capitalism (for example, in the capitalist plantations of Latin Amercia).

The kolkhoz system was established on the ruins of the 1920s kolkhozes and on those of the old communal relationships . It constituted a relatively stable form, as witness the fact that it still exists half a century after its beginnings. The capitalist social relationship whose reproduction this system assured allowed the kolkhozes to dress themselves in clothes closer and closer to those of an ordinary capitalist enterprise:

this is what happened from 1958, when the kolkhoz could purchase its own means of production (ceasing then to depend on the MTS), and then later, when the kolkhoz could pay a wage to the kolkhozniks. But these later transformations did not in any way make the kolkhoz "independent" in regard to the Party and the state. They only modified the forms of its dependence.

Finally, the *fourth* victory won by the authorities during the 1930s took the form of its transformation of the Soviet rural population into an immense *"reserve industrial army"* which provided millions of workers who could be integrated (voluntarily or not ) into the development of industry and the town. The development took place in the course of other struggles, which will now be examined.

## Notes

1. For the scale of kolkhozes in 1940, and their equipment , see *N.Kh...1958g.*, pp. 494,495,505.
2. It may be recalled that in November 1929 a special commission appointed by the CC had already recommended that there should be maintained individual plots and livestook for each kolkhoznik but this *recommendation* had then been rejected (See V. P. Danilov, ed., *Ocherki po istorii kollektivizatsii sel' skogo khozyaistva v soyuznykh respublikakh* (Moscow, 1963), p. 19, and B.A. Abramov, in VI,1964, P. 40.) Certain provisions of the new statute were badly received by many kolkhozinks (See, for example, a letter sent to Stalin in N. Werth, *Etre communiste en URSS sous Staline* (Paris, 1981), pp. 176-77.
3. See above, Chepter 2, note 23.
4. In fact the reality fo town – country relationship was never bound to the "decisions" of the authorities. Even in 1931, when the "private" free market for food products was practically illegal it represented a turnover of 6.5 billion rubles (an increase of more than 60 percent over 1930). This figure equalled about 40 percent of the turnover achieved for the same products by the cooperatives and urban state shops See Malafayev, *Istoriya tesenoobrazovaniys v SSSR* (1917 - 1963) (Moscow, 1964,) and also *itogi razvitiya sovietskoi torgovli* (Moscow, 1935, p. 42.
5. See J. Whitman, "The Kolkhoz Market", in *Soviet Studies*, April 1956, pp. 384-409. The abolished tax was replaced by a 3 percent duty (See B. Kerblay, *les Marches*, p. 127).
6. In fact these were the kolkhozniks who were involved in cattle raising and wanted the latter to be "individual", hoping to thereby ensure that

their households would have some of the resulting food products. The resistance of women kolkhozks to the collectivization of livestock led to numerous acts of *"violence"* and even uprisings.

7. J. Stalin, Works vol. 13, p. 259.
8. Mainly by the decree of june 15, 1933 (See *le Statut type del' artel agricole)* (Paris, 1934.) See also Mikolendko and Nikitin, *kolkhoznoye pravo,* (Moscow, 2nd edition, 1964,) pp. 163-170.
9. These "rights of the kolkhozniks were included in the kolkhoz statutes which took form legally in Fabruary of 1935. These statutes were adopted by a Congress of kolkhozniks (See *vtoroi vsesoyuznyi s' ezd kolkhiznikov-udarnikov.* 11-17 Fevraliya 1935 g. (moscow, 1935). On these points see also K.E. Wadekin, *The Private Sector in Soviet Agriculture,* (Berkeley, 1973), and H. Wronski, *Remuneration et niveau de vie dans les kolkhozes.* Paris, 1957, p. 194.
10. On the eve of the war, in 1939, a law was promulgated *(see Sobraniye uzakoneniie,* No. 34, 1939, para. 235) to limit the "encroachment" of "non-collectivized" activities. Other measures were taken to limit individual livestock and income not originating from "collective work." Thus new taxes and compulsory deliveries were imposed on products from "non-collective" activities. (See *Sbornik materialov po kolkhoznomu storitel'stvu* (Moscow, 1948), pp. 165-167; also H. Wronski, *Remuneration,* pp. 197-98).
11. In fact workers and employees often had a plot and a little livestock. These activities supplemented low wages, but such a supplement did not play the decisive role in the "non-collective" activities of the kolkhozniks.
12. See the article by A. Arutyunyan in *Voprosy filosofii,* No. 5, pp. 51-61; V.B. *Ostrovskii, Kolkhoznoye Krestyanstvo SSSR* (Saratov, 1966), p. 69; *Kolkhozy vo Vtoroi Stalinskoi piatiletke* (a statistical collection) (Moscow, 1939), pp. 11-12; A. Arutyunyan, *Opyt Sotsiologicheskogo izucheniya sela* (Moscow, 1968), extracts from which have been published in French by me. Kerblay under the title "Essai d'etude sociologique du village," in Archives *internationales de sociologie de la cooperation et du developpement,* July-December 1972, pp. 120ff.
13. Post-war investigations show that a man on average worked 36 days per year on the individual holding out of a total 268 days worked on the farm. For a women the corresponding figures were 108 and 292 (See B. Kerblay, *La Societe sovietique,* p. 91).
14. D. Lurie admitted in *Bolshevik,* No. 22, 1934, pp. 36-37 that the kolkhozniks drew from their plots an income greater than that coming from the kolkhoz. In 1937 and 1938 the kolkhozniks spent more than 20 percent of their working time in their "familial agriculture" and less than 80 percent in the "collective agriculture." (figures valid for the Ukraine, from on article by N. *Stetsenko in Sotsiaslisticheskoye sel'skoye khozyaistvo,* No. 7, 1940, pp. 31-33, which also gives figures for 1939; quoted from H. Wronski, *Remuneration,* p. 196). Even in 1964, although the prices paid to the kolkhozes had been considerably increased, one hour of work spent in the private holding was "worth" two or three times more than on hour spent on the "collective" land. (See V. A. Morozov, *Trudoden', dengi, i torgovlya na sele* (Moscow, 1965).

15. H. Wronski, *Remuneration*, p. 196, note 17; M. Lewin, "The kolkhoz and the Russian Muzhik," in *Peasants in History; Essays in Honour of Danial Thorner (Calcutta*, 1978), pp. 55-68; E. G. Wadekin, *The Private Sector*, p. 57; and VI, No. 9, which quotes archival documents.
16. See M. A. Vyltsan in VI, No. 9, 1963, pp. 17 and 19.
17. See V. B. Ostrovskii, *Kolkhoznoye Krestyanstvo SSSR*, p. 69, and *Kolkhozy vo Vtoroi Stalinskoi pyatiletke*, pp. 11-12, both quoted by M. Lewin in "The Kolkhoz–In 1938 the entire private economy (Familial livestook of kolkhozniks, individual peasants, and wage-earners) kept 32.9 million head of cattle, while the state farms and kolkhozes held 18 million (See Sel' skoye *khozyaistvo* SSSR, 1960, p. 264.
18. See J. F. Karcz The Soviet Rural Community, p. 55.
19. The unbalanced sex ratio in the active kolkhoz population was largely due to the substantial *rural emigration:* to the benefit of industrialization, many men left for the towns in search of higher pay. It was also partly due to the deportations, which affected more men than women.
20. See V.N.Demyanen'Ko, "Sovershestvovaniye pravovogo regulirovaniya vzaimootnoshenii Kolkhozov" in *Sovietskoye gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 5, 1966, p. 35: and I. I. Dmitrashko, *Vnutrikolkhoznye ekonomicheskiye otnosheniya*, (Moscow, 1966), p. 15.
21. Stadnyuk, lyudi ne angeli, quoted after K.E. Wadekin in *Fuhrungskrafte im Sowjetischen Dorf* (Berlin, 1969), p. 42.
22. See the article by Sofroshkin and Chuvikov,"O normakh vyrabotki v kolkhozakh". in *Sotslistcheskoye khozyaistvo*, No. 4, 1940.
23. H. Wronski, Remuneration, pp. 28ff and 32ff.
24. K. Marx, *Le Capital* (Paris Editions Scoiales edition, 1967-1969) Vol.2, p. 227.
25. From the 1960s the "exceptional" situation that the kolkhozniks occupied since the 1930s gave rise to critical, more or less official, discussion. In fact it was a cause of conflicts and harmful to production. Thus in the publications of these years there were many articles devoted to this exceptional situation (for example, Antipov's article "*Kolkhoznoye prozivodstvo i demokratiya*"in *Sov. gos. i pravo*, No. 3, 1967: an article in the same journal, No. 2, 1966 by I. V. Pavlov, and other references in K.E.Wadekin, fuhrungskrafte , pp. 58-59). These critical commentaries about the past prepared and accompanied the partial reform of the kolkhoz system undertaken by Khrushev and continued by Brezhnev.
26. *Spravochnik bukhgaltera kolkhoza* Moscow, 2nd edition. 1964, p. 719.
27. See K. E. Wadekin, *Führungskrafte*, pp. 60-61.
28. For example, see the reports on agriculture at the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Congresses of the Party.
29. *Pravda*, May 28, 1939; *Izvestiya*, Nov. 15, 1939; *Informations sociales*, ILO, Vol. 71, p. 128.
30. This was the ukaz of October 5/18, 1906. This should not be confused with the ukaz of November 9/22, 1906, which aimed at tranforming collective peasant property into individual peasant property. This *ukaz* attacked the *mir* and relied on the "strong peasants" whom it aimed to make into a class of kulaks while turning their attention away from the nobility's land.

31. On these different points, which were current problems for most of the 1960s, see for example, G. Chubukov, EG August 4, 1965, p. 30, and various remarks and references in K.E. Wadekin, *Fuhungskrafte*, pp. 46-47.
32. The verb often used in popular talk, *otpustit'* (to set at liberty) was that used in feudal law. (See Z.I. Vlasova and A.A. Gorelov, *Chastuski v zapiyakh sovetskogo vremeni*, (Moscow, 1965), and S. Krutikin, *Iz zapisok sel' skogo uchitelya* (Moscow, 1966), p. 489.
33. See various references in K.E. Wadekin, *Fuhrungskrafte*, p. 47, notes 33 and 34.
34. During most of the First Five Year Plan the management of the kolkhozes was so defective and the need of industry for workers so great that millions of peasants and kolkhozniks left for the towns without any control being put on them. Things changed after 1932-33. Henceforth, the possibility of a kolkhoznik leaving his village was much more restricted. The kolkhoz statutes were applied more rigorously: otherwise, the over expolitation of the kolkhozniks would have led to a mass exodus and a worsening of the agricultural situation.
35. On this point see the article by G. Shinakova and A. Yanov in Lit. gaz., July 26, 1976, p. 2; that of V. Duvakin in *Sel'skaya zhizn'*, July 22, 1966, p. 3, and other text quoted in K. Wadekin, *Führungskrafte*, p. 57.
36. This recruiting procedure with *orgnabor* (organized recruitment) was viewed with favor by the Party and government leadership.
37. V. Poltoratskii, "Krasili," in *Nash sovremennik*, No. 3, 1963, p. 152.
38. See K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Chicago, 1914), pp. 9-10.
39. See "Nekotorye ekonomicheskiye problemy kolkhoznoi derevni," in *Kommunist*, No. 8, 1961, pp. 111-20, and K. Wädekin, *Führungskräfte*, pp. 188-89.
40. *N. Kh... 1958g.*, p. 349.
41. See the report by Molotov to the Eighteenth Party Congress.
42. Until 1932 work was divided between kolkhozniks by the kolkhoz chairman, and workers were sent constantly from one job to another. A decree of February 4, 1932 (*Izvestiya*, February 5, 1932) ordered a decentralization of management and the formation pf permanent brigades. This organizational principle was reaffirmed in the statutes of the agricultural *artel* of 1935. A brigade consisted of 30-60 people, and could be divided into teams. The brigadiers were appointed by the kolkhoz management and had to make regular reports. They were appointed for two or three years and, in principle, could be removed only with the agreement of the local representatives of the Agriculture Commissariat. (On these points, see C. Bienstock, M. Schwarz and A. Yugow, *Management in Russian Industry and Agriculture* (London, 1944), pp. 149-50.
43. A. Arutyunyan, *Sotsial'naya struktura*, p. 57. This author refers to his work *Opyt sotsiologicheskog izucheniya sela*, p. 50, and to Yu. S. Borisov, *Podgotovka proizvodstvennykh kadrov sel'skogo khozyaistva SSSR* (Moscow, 1960), p. 141.
44. Yu. S. Borisov, above, p. 271, and *Itogi vsesoyuznoi perepisi naseleniya 1959g* (Moscow, 1962), p. 81.

45. It would be tedious to analyse the receipts in kind and in money of the kolkhozes. In fact, we have already given some indications on the evolution of agricultural production, and on the prices paid by the state for this production. Also, we shall see later what were the incomes paid to the kolkhozniks. Those wishing to study for 1935-39 the way in which developed the distribution of receipts in kind and in money of the kolkhozes may refer to H. Wronski, *Rémunération*, p. 92; see also M.A. Vyltsan, "Material'noye polozheniye kolkhoznogo krestyanstva v dovoennye gody," in *VI* No. 9, 1963, p. 16, which quotes archival documents, and *Kolkhozi vo Vtoroi Stalinskoi pyatiletke*.
46. On these various points, see *Organizatsiya truda v kolkhozakh* (Moscow, 1931); the speech of Ya Kovlev on March 14, 1931 in *VI s'ezd sovetov soyuza* (Moscow, 1931); M.A. Kraev, *Pobieda kolkhoznogo stroya* (Moscow, 1954) ; H. Wronski, *Remuneration*, pp. 22-32; C. Bienstock *et al*, *Management*, pp. 127ff.
47. In *Sotsial' naya struktura*, p. 114, table 22. A. Arutyunyan is among the Soviet researchers who have published the most detailed studies on the problems of the peasantry and agriculture (See the article by Yves Perret-Gentil, "L, Evolution de la sociologie rurale en URSS" in Mondes en developpement, No. 22, 1978, pp. 424ff.
48. A. Arutyunyan, above
49. It will be noted that 1940 is less favorable to the peasants than 1937, during which, according to official statistics, a *kolkhoz household* received 376 rubles per year, plus 17 quintals of grain (see *Sotsialisticheskoye narodnoye khozyaistvo v 1933-1940gg. Moscow,1963)*, p. 388, and I. Zelinin, *Istoricheskiye zapiski*, No . 76, p. 59 quoted by A. Nove in *An Economic History*, p. 244-245.
50. A.N. Malafeyev, *Istoriya tsenoobrazovaniya v SSSR*, p. 403, table 16.
51. See A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 246. Note that in 1935 and 1937 the average money payment per *trudoden'* was respectively 0.65 and 0.85 rubles (See above, p. 244)
52. Decree of December 31, 1940.
53. See C. Bienstock *et al*, *Management*, pp. 165ff.
54. See above, p. 167.
55. See above, pp. 167-168
56. In 1932, before the introduction of the bonus system described above, auditing organs reckoned that administrative services (employing only a small part of the personnel) absorbed 20-25 percent of the kolkhoz incomes (See above, p.168); a decree of September 10, 1933 then tried to limit this item of expense.
57. A. Arutyunyan, a work translated in *Archives internationales de sociologie*, p. 143.
58. K.E. Wadekin, *Fuhrungskrafte*, p. 38.
59. See M. Lewin, *The Kolkhoz*
60. A. Arutyunyan, in *Archives internaionales de sociologie*, p. 162.
61. In an article titled "Some thoughts on Soviet Agricultural Administration" in *Studies on the Soviet Union*, 1964, New Series, Vol.III, No. 4, p. 5, A. Nove observes, "The Party and state interest was divided between

three main objectives, which were sometimes inconsistent with one another: to get resources out of agriculture (procurement, accumulation), to control and change the peasants and, lastly, to increase output and efficiency".

62. This responsibility was confirmed by a decree of February 1, 1930. See A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 182.
63. *KPSS* (1953), p. 730 ff.
64. See, for example, Stalin's speeches of March 26 and June 25, 1932.
65. Stalin's speech of January 11, 1933 (See his *Works*, Vol. 13, pp. 228-29.
66. On this point see the remarks of leaders such as S. Kossior, P. Postyshev, and I. Vareikis, quoted by Zelinin in *Ist. Zapiski*, No. 76, p. 52, and A. Nove, *An Economic History*.
67. *KPSS* (1953), pp. 803 ff.
68. See C. Bienstock *et al*, *Management*, pp. 159-60.
69. *Pravda*, March 22, 1940.
70. *Partiinoye stroitel'stvo*, No. 10, 1941, p. 4.
71. See C. Bienstock *et al*, *Management*, p. 153.
72. As *Pravda* described it from 1930 (*Pravda*, April 8, 1930).
73. See *Sotsialisticheskoye sel'skoye khozyaistvo*, May 6, 1937.
74. On this point see G. Bienstock *et al*, *Management*, p. 145.
75. See M. A. Vyltsan in *VI*, No. 9, 1958, p. 6, and I. E. Zelinin in *Ist. SSSR*, No. 5, 1964, p. 6, and J. F. Karcz in *The Soviet Rural Community*, p. 104.
76. See *PS*, No. 1, 1941, p. 37; No. 8, p. 45; No. 10, p. 9.
77. These various points are well illuminated in M. Lewin, *The Kolkhoz*.
78. On this point see the comments of M. Lewin in R. C. Tucker, *Stalinism* (New York, 1977), particularly pp. 120-26.
79. This theory was insistently invoked by the leading group of the Party as soon as it was decided to liquidate NEP, and it was useful for enunciating the formulations that were repeated throughout the 1930s. From October 1930 Stalin took good care to ensure that this theory was seen as emanating from Lenin. In his speech "Against the Rightist Threat," Stalin drew attention to two texts. He first recalled that according to Lenin the strength of capitalism resided in the strength of small-scale production, which gives birth, continuously, day after day, hour after hour, spontaneously and on a massive scale, to capitalism and the bourgeoisie (See Lenin's "The Infantile Disease of Communism," of April 1920, in his *Sochineniya*, Vol. 25, (Moscow, 1937), p. 173.) Stalin then recalled another of Lenin's texts:

> As long as we live in a small-peasant country, there is a surer economic basis for capitalism in Russia than for communism... "The strength of *small production... engenders* capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale". (*Works*, Vol. II, pp. 236-37, quoting Lenin's December 1920 report to the Eighth Party Congress).

PART 2

# The militarized working class

As has been shown, the 1930s were marked by a major upheaval in the conditions of life in the countryside. social relationships that had been characteristic of peasant life were destroyed and replaced by new exploitative relationships of domination. Millions of workers had to leave the places where they had been born in order to go elsewhere, often without hope of return.

The migrations took many and confused forms, making it impossible to examine them all separately. In practice, they can be divided into two big categories, non-penal and penal migrations (the latter imposed by courts or by the GPU or NKVD). The former could be more or less "voluntary": that is those who migrated did so by "spontaneous" decision for economic reasons or for fear of repression. All the same, the non-penal migrations could also be imposed on certain workers; for example, on those who became a target for the "organized recruitments" within the framework of *orgnabor*[1].

Above all, the non-penal migrations helped the *process of urbanization* and the creation of a *salariat*, which was not usually the case with penal migrations since the latter led the migrants to prisons, camps, and regions that were often thinly populated, where they were made to live, and they were usually allocated to work which might or might not be of a penal type. Nevertheless, even penal migrations which took migrants to a camp did not necessarily exclude the payment of a wage, and they could therefore also result in an apparent "urbanization," especially when enormous camps were formed;[2] so much so that one cannot attribute the progress of urbanization to non-penal migrations alone.

## Notes

1. See below, the first part of the following chapter.
2. It is almost certain that part of the "urban" population of the late 1930s belonged in fact to the labor camp population. "Urban" population was defined according to quantitative criteria (agglomerations of 5,000 people or more, or even 3,000 or more if there were industrial activities present). Many of the camps fell into these categories. For example, it is known that in 1938 the Vorkuta camp (*Vorkutpechlag*) comprised 16,508 people, of whom 15,141 were prisoners. These figures, and others, were established by P. I. Negretov, who worked in a Vorkuta mine from 1945 to 1960 and who had access to the camp archives, whose documents he quotes with precision. Negretov is a historian still living a Vorkuta. His work has circulated in the form of *Samizdat* in the journal *XXyi vek*. His article "How Vorkuta Began" was translated and published (with the help of Zh. Medvedev, who sent it) in *Soviet Studies*, No. 4, Vol XXIX, pp. 565–75. The question of whether part of the prison camp population was enumerated as "urban population" in the census is controversial. The main lines of this controversy can be seen by referring to S. Rosefielde, "An Assessment of the Sources and Uses of Gulag Forced Labour," in *Soviet Studies*, No. 1, Vol. XXXIII, Jan. 1981, pp. 51ff, and S.G. Wheatcroft, "On Assessing the Size of Forced Concentration Camp Labour in the Soviet Union 1929-1956," in *Soviet Studies*, April 1981, pp. 265ff.

1

# The urbanization process

DURING the 1930s the Soviet Union experienced an accelerated growth of towns, conforming to the capitalist laws of urbanization. In spite of numerous declarations, no serious effort was made to halt the development of big towns to which immigrants from the rural areas came and heaped themselves up, without anything coherent being done to find housing for them. Thus millions of workers were obliged to live in barracks, sheds, and enormous dormitories lacking any kind of comfort, while others increased the density of occupation of older places of residence, already crowded, or found a place in corridors, kitchens, cellars and basements[1].

Some figures give an indication of the scale of the urbanization process. According to official statistics, between 1926 and 1939 (census year) the urban population grew from 26.3 million to 56.1 million a growth of 112 percent in twelve years, while the total population grew from 147.0 to 170.6 million[2]. During the same years, the population of Moscow grew from 2.1 to 4.1 million and of Leningrad from 1.7 to 3.2 million. The population of the Moscow periphery grew by more than three times. The twelve cities which in 1926 exceeded 200,000 inhabitants witnessed a population growth of around 90 percent, while several towns of 150,000 or more (like Karaganda and Magnitogorsk) surged during this period.[3].

## I. Urbanization and population movement

The extremely rapid growth of the urban population was above all the consequence of a great migration. According to Lorimier's estimates, the "natural growth" of the urban population should have allowed the latter to reach, at a maximum, the figure of 32.4 million. At a minimum, therefore, those who had migrated to the towns would have numbered 23 million.[4]

Two remarks might be made at this point:

a) *Migrations from countryside to towns were only a part* of the total migratory flow. To calculate the latter there would need to be added (something which the statistics do not allow) migrations between towns as well as migrations between rural regions.[5] To obtain the total of migrants, several million would need to be added to the 23 million which, according to Lorimer, is the net balance of country-town migrations.

b) The figure of 23 million undoubtedly underestimates these latter migrations, because several indices suggest that the "natural increase" of the urban population was less than Lorimer's estimation. In fact, after 1927 this increase fell rapidly (it was even apparently negative, notably in 1930 and 1931).[6] This was, among other things, one of the consequences of the departure, at the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan, of a part of the urban workers, who went to the countryside with the intention of defending their families against the threat of "Dekulakization."[7] But above all, during much of the 1930s, it was a result of the decline of urban living standards, of the food-supply crisis, and of the housing situation at a time when abortion was unrestricted; the consequent fall in the birthrate led the Soviet government to end freedom of abortion in 1936.[8]

In any case, whatever the figures that are looked at, one thing is certain: during these years, millions of workers were uprooted. They had to "establish themselves," willy-nilly, hundreds of thousands of kilometers away from their places of origin. Among these workers were millions who were forced to migrate to particularly inhospitable regions like the Far North and Eastern Siberia. However, much of the migration to these latter regions had a penal nature and in no way contributed to urbanization; it was a consequence above all of the deportations discussed in Chapter 3 of this Part 2.

To return to the non-penal migrations, their extraordinary scale was due, mainly, to the brutal destruction of old social relationships in the countryside and to the decline of village living conditions. This is what drew millions of men away from their conditions of existence and impelled them to go to seek work far from their places of birth, to "put themselves at the service" of an industrialization process which in fact was not under the control of those who seemed to be its managers.

Realistically speaking, these migrations were due above all to the way in which "collectivization" took place. It has been seen how, at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s collectivization was accompanied by repressive measures applied on a large scale. Very many peasants at this time fled from their villages to escape the risk of repression and its consequences (in particular, deportation). The flow of peasants leaving their villages for fear of being regarded as kulaks, or classed with kulaks (under the term *podkulachnik*), was enlarged still further by the circumstance that those so "labelled" were usually refused membership of kolkhozes, in which case even if they were not deported they were deprived of some or all of their implements and obliged to live on land far from the village and often infertile to boot. In this situtation, a large proportion of these peasants preferred to migrate to the towns.

The migratory flow was also due to numerous "economic causes." For example, the famine at the end of the First Five-Year Plan which struck all strata of the peasantry, and the decline in village living conditions, made many peasants migrate to the towns. In the latter they hoped to find a less intolerable life, but this was not always the case at all.

During the Second Five-Year Plan the fear of repressive measures and the yearning for an escape from living conditions which were especially uninviting in the countryside continued to feed a migratory flow from village to town. In reality, these "voluntary migrations" often deprived the country areas of the labor force needed to ensure adequate harvests; hence the measures taken to "attach" the peasants to the kolkhoz,[9] and reintroduction of the *internal passport* on December 27, 1932.[10]

Despite their scale, the "voluntary" migrations did not always suffice to provide the required numbers of urban workers. The

authorities took various measures to cope with the 'shortage" of labor which then arose. One of the most significant developed from 1930, when the scale of migration, although substantial,[11] was not enough to provide the needs of industrialization. This measure was known as "organized recruitment," *or orgnabor* (*organizovannyi nabor rabochikh*).

The first references to the *orghabor* appeared in the soviet press at the beginning of 1930. Thus, a directive of this period sought to regulate this type of recruitment (which was at that time basically directed toward seasonal labor requirements)[12] The regulations established by this directive were in fact followed later.

According to these regulations, the kolkhozes were obliged to provide the number of workers fixed by the plan. To look after the details of the operations, recruiting agents were sent into the countryside. Kolkhoz managers designated those kolkhozniks who would have to leave and go into industry. A refusal of a kolkhoznik to obey the order received was punished as an act of insubordination and as an infraction of work regulations. From a perusal of the press it would appear that the recruiting operations did nct always proceed smoothly, thanks to the resistance of a section of the peasants and also of the kolkhoz managers. Sometimes the latter demanded that 35 to 50 percent of the wages due to kolkhozniks employed in industry should be sent to the kolkhoz. This practice was expressly condemned by the regulations promulgated at this time,[13] which nevertheless authorized an advance to the kolkhoz of 10 percent of a migrant's wage.

In March 1931 the *orgnabor* was reorganized and put under the authority of the economic administrations (placed over the industrial enterprises), which negotiated directly with the kolkhozes. The Labor Commissariat divided the recruiting zones among the administrations so as to avoid competition.[14].

The recourse to *orgnabor* resulted from a combination of several circumstances:

On the one hand, from the unprecedented size of the labor demand by the towns, mines, and new construction sites; before 1931-32 the countryside had never had to provide so many millions of workers for non-agricultural tasks. On the other hand, different causes (varying according to the period)

tended to hold back the rural exodus. For example, some kolkhoz managers—who faced heavy compulsory delivery demands—refused to part with kolkhozniks whose work was indispensible for the meeting of those burdernsome obligations. Certain kolkhoz managers then imposed sanctions on those who left to work in the towns. Such sanctions took varying and sometimes "illegal" forms, and included fines, confiscation of property and/or the immediate expulsion of the families of departed peasants.

In a speech to industrial managers on June 23, 1931, Stalin drew attention to the importance of *orgnabor*. He said that industry could no longer rely on a "spontaneous inflow" from the countryside to provide sufficient labor power, and he emphasized that it was "necessary to move to a policy of *organized recruitment*." He issued to the industrial managers the order to "recruit manpower in an organized way by means of contracts with the collective farms...."[15].

In his June 23 speech Stalin explained the exhaustion of "spontaneous" rural emigration in terms of improvement in the peasantry's situation.[16] Analysis of the decline of the situation experienced at that time in the Soviet countryside shows that this explanation was completely false.[17].

Shortly after the speech of Stalin that has just been quoted, there appeared a decree "*On emigration*," which regulated *orgnabor* with more precision.[18] The kolkhozes which provided the workers had the right to compensation in the form of materials and credits. Deductions from the emigrants' wages were totally forbidden (although in reality this did not prevent such deductions continuing). The rights as kolkhoz members of emigrants' families were not to be reduced. Henceforth, in principle, each kolkhoznik had to sign personally a labor contract. However, provision was made that if there was not a sufficient number of volunteers, the kolkhoz management could take coercive measures.

It should be noted that the contracts signed by the recruiting organs included undertakings that often could not be observed. The trade union paper went so far as to state that these contracts could be nothing more than a "scrap of paper".[19] Workers were nevertheless required to respect them. If they infringed them they were considered guilty of an "economic offense"

(Article 31 of the Penal Code) and could be tried in accordance with a summary procedure.[20].

After 1934, and especially after 1935, when the right of kolkhozniks to a private plot and private livestock was confirmed, peasants were less inclined to emigrate to the towns than they had been in the early 1930s; in the towns housing conditions and food supply were difficult, while real wages had fallen considerably. So "organised recruitment" continued.

The difficulties which this recruitment came up against led to various measures. Some envisaged putting pressure on the kolkhozes and the kolkhozniks by reducing their incomes, still indirectly.[21] Others reorganized the recruitment of workers in the villages. For example, on July 21, 1938 a Sovnarkom decree changed the organized recruitment. This decree created a central commission of *orgnabor*, with similar commissions at republican and regional levels. These commissions established quotas for workers to be supplied by regions and districts and divided them among the commissariats, the latter dividing their quotas between their enterprises.[22] Apparently this new organization permitted a more regular arrival of the labor thus recruited. The wage earner henceforth benefited from an advance of wages and from paid travel expenses. Nevertheless the system amounted to a form of forced labor.[23]

In spite of the measures taken, some of which granted certain "advantages" to the workers recruited by *orgnabor*, and others of which imposed penalities on those who did not observe the contracts made by the representatives of recruiting organizations, the resistance of workers to what was a form of forced recruitment often took the form of a refusal to turn up at the assigned place of work, or by a change of enterprise despite the regulations. Moreover, the activity of the *orgnabor* involved so many workers that it was in fact impossible to fully gurantee the recruitment envisaged by the plan. Thus in 1938 2.8 million kolkhozniks were to have been recruited in the RSFSR, but only 1.7 million actually were, and of the latter 1.5 million showed up at their place of work.[24]

In sum, the urbanization process was a combination, not under control, of "voluntary" migration and "organized recruitment"; hence the anarchical nature of this process.

## II. The anarchic character of the urbanization process

The rural emigration and urbanization process was in accord with a policy which destroyed the old peasantry and atomized the working class. This policy gave pride of place to a strongly concentrated industry. It sought to achieve maximum accumulation and to create conditions for a rigorous submission of the workers to exploitative requirements. In its actual course, the urbanization process was for the most part uncontrolled. It suffered the effects of economic and social contradictions that had their own dynamic. Also, urbanization did not develop according to the "forecasts" of the economic plans, nor according to the "needs of economic growth," for the latter grew faster than the plans had "forecast," especially as industrial labor productivity did not increase as the plans had specified.

The "overfulfillment of targets" of the first two Five-Year Plans as regards country-to-town migration is extremely indicative of the lack of control over the urbanization process. For example, the First Plan envisaged that the urban population in 1933 would be 34.7 million, whereas it reached 38.4 million at the end of 1932 (official date of the end of the first plan). Similarly, the Second Plan foresaw an urban population of 46.1 million at the end of 1937, but in fact it was 53.2 million.[25]

From time to time the Soviet authorities worried about this development that was beyond their control. For example, at the beginning of 1933 *Izvestiya* wrote:

> The towns have grown too much. Food supply of urban agglomerations, supplying of construction sites and the provision of necessary products for the big centers pose problems which are complex and difficult to solve... Migrations of large masses of population seriously hinder the country's food-supply, cause urban over-population, and provoke an insurmountable housing crisis.[26]

Such a situation reflected the uncontrolled nature of the migratory processes. It was to this lack of control that were

addressed the many administrative and cocercive measures like the *orgnabor*, forced labor, reintroductions of the internal passport, etc.

This did not prevent the anarchical development of the towns and a population influx that had considerable economic, social and political consequences.

The enormous growth of the towns, thanks to the arrival of a mass of peasants, brought with it a kind of "ruralization" of urban life. Entire towns, or very large parts of the population of certain towns, were toward the end of the 1930s filled by inhabitants of rural origin. The latter were preoccupied by concerns very different from those of the original citizenry. They had different aspirations and a different way of life. Moreover, having been uprooted, they were usually isolated from one another. Often they came from different villages and regions. They got to know each other only with difficulty. Hence there was a virtual atomization of the urban population, exacerbated by the extreme material difficulties of daily life.

The one-time rural folk who had just arrived in the towns usually had little sympathy for the government's and party's policies. In their eyes, these policies were responsible for the dramatic overthrow of their previous way of life. They had had to abandon their land, leave their villages, and try to insert themselves in an unfamiliar world which they felt was hostile and imposed many constraints for which they were not prepared. Thus the relations between the Party and the urban masses deteriorated badly.

In general, the deterioration of living standards in the towns and of working conditions in industry led to confusion for the urban masses, "instability of the workforce," increasing alcoholism, and a tendency toward indiscipline. The authorities reacted to this situation by severe measures that sought to shatter every sign of individual or collective resistance to decisions. These measures were not limited simply to police and penal repression, but also included deep changes in the constraints that burdened industrial workers. Consequently, it may be said that the urbanization process had as its corollary not only the development of a wage-earning class but also a rigidifying of factory despotism.

## Notes

1. At the same time the country was covered with expensive and grandiose administrative buildings, built in monumental style. (See A. Kopp, *L'Architecture de la periode stalinienne* (Paris, 1978). The accounts of foreign workers who had worked in the USSR and of several soviet workers who emigrated after World War II testify to the serious decline in housing conditions in the 1930s. I was myself able to see these conditions during a stay in the USSR in 1936.
2. See *N.Kh....1958g.*, p. 9.
3. See F. Lorimer, *The population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects* (Geneva, 1946), pp. 145ff.
4. See above, p. 150.
5. However the statistics give some indication of the scale of these movements. For example, it is known that during the years under study the Ukraine lost 16 percent of its agricultural population, the Central Volga region 17 percent, the Lower Volga and Don about 20 percent. The *most important agricultural regions in 1926 had therefore lost more than 20 million people* by 1939 (see Lorimer, p. 159). However, *not all these were in towns:* some were dead, especially as a result of the 1932-33 famine (of which we have already written), others were deported to Siberia, whose population officially increased by 23 percent (about 2 million) between 1926 and 1939 (see above, p. 47). In fact, the official statistics do not enable a direct assessment of the forced migrations to be made, migrations connected with deportations that struck millions of people. We shall return to this when we discuss forced labor.
6. See on this point the estimates of S. N. Prokopvicz, *Histoire economique de l' URSS* (Paris, 1952), pp. 50 -60.
7. It is known that at the beginning of collectivization many workers left the factories and mines (see, for example, *Trud* April 15, 1930) for fear of seeing their families treated as "kulaks" and deprived of all their belongings, house, common plot of land, and even the smallest items of personal property, all confiscated as "kulak property."
8. From 1935 the press engaged in a campagin against abortion. At that time, without the law being changed, Soviet hospitals stopped doing abortions simply on the demand of a pregnant woman. The law of June 27, 1936 prohibited abortion except when the pregnancy put the life or health of the woman in danger or if there was a possibility of transmitting a hereditary disease. Allowances became payable to mothers of 6 or more (see N. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat* (New York, 1946), pp. 200ff). The abandonment of free abortion was one aspect of the abrogation of laws passed soon after the Revolution. It was part of a combined social and political movement aimed at "strengthening the family"; in the short-term, this abandonment was motivated by the *demographic catastrophe* which accompanied the industrialization of the 1930s, a catastrophe of which there will be further mention.
9. See Part 1 of this volume on this point.
10. *Pravda*, December 28, 1932.

11. According to Lorimer's estimates, the migratory flow involved 1.4 million people in 1929, 2.6 in 1930, and 4.1 in 1931 (*Population*) p. 150).
12. See *ZI* March 4, 1930.
13. For more on these points, see *Izvestiya* March 17, 1930; *Trud* March 24 1930; and *Pravda*, April 6, 1930.
14. See *Voprosy truda*, Aug.-Sept. 1932, p. 51, quoted by S.M. Schwarz, *Labor in the Soviet Union* (London, 1953), p. 58.
15. J. Stalin, Works, Vol. 13, p. 57.
16. See above p. 55.
17. See Part 1 of this volume.
18. Decree of June 30 (*Izvestiya*, July 1 1931).
19. *Trud*, March 3 1934.
20. *Sovietskaya yustitsiya*, No. 17, 1933, p. 21, quoted by S. Schwarz, p. 60.
21. Among these measures was the prohibition of activities of an industrial nature in the countryside. This prohibition was at first applied in the local plan but was later made general by a decree of October 1938 (*Izvestiya*, Oct. 23 1938); just a few small activities escaped this prohibition. The latter helped to lower the standard of life in the countryside, since rural industry was relatively prosperous during NEP. Such a measure denied an equal distribution of industry across the country. It exacerbated the town/country inequalities and the dependence of the country. It tended to enhance the pay-off of state investments.
22. See *Trudovoye zakonodatel' stvo SSSR* (Moscow, 1941), article 5, quoted by R. Conquest, *Industrial Workers in the USSR* (London, 1967), p. 27; also C. Bienstock, et al, *Management*, p. 39.
23. These different arrangements were maintained after the war. Khrushchev referred to them in 1956 (*See KP*, June 7, 1956). The post-war five-year plans also specified that this kind of recruitment would be applied to demobilized soliders and workers "liberated" from certain branches of the economy. (See V.S. Andreyev and P.A. Guriev, *Organizovannyi nabor rabochikh SSSR* (Moscow, 1956) pp. 14 and 73.
24. *Pravda*, April 5, 1939.
25. This is an estimate; see S.N. Prokopovich, *Histoire économique de l'URSS*, p. 62.
26. *Izvestiya*, Feb. 2, 1933.

2

# Extension of the wage-earning class and the rigidifying of factory despotism

THE combination of a vast rural exodus with highly centralized accumulation led to the rapid development of wage relationships.

For example, between 1928 and 1940 the number of wage-earners employed in the Soviet economy grew almost threefold, from 11.4 to 33.9 million.[1] In 1940 these wage-earners were more than 40 percent of the economically active population.[2] This extension of wage-earning was above all connected with urbanization,[3] and was an integral part of the process of accumulation. Like the latter, the extension of wage-earning was not really under control. For example, at the end of the First Five-Year Plan the number of wage-earners enumerated by the Central Statistical Bureau was 22.9 million, although the Plan had envisaged only 15.8 million.[4]

As is generally known, the growth of the wage-earning population was due to the reduction in the number of peasants and kolkhozinks, but it was also due to the transformation into wage-earners of numerous artisans and NEPmen.

The enormous growth of the wage-earning population is presented by official Soviet ideologists as testimony to the henceforth socialist nature of USSR and to the strengthening of the working class. Neither of these interpretations can be accepted. In the first place, the development of a wage-earning class cannot be regarded as identical with the development of "socialism." The wage relationship is the basic capitalist relationship;

therefore the increased number of wage-earners only demonstrates the victory of the capitalist revolution, which progressed faster at the end of the 1920s. As for the working class, it is not possible to talk of its "strengthening." True, among the new wage-earners there were numerous workers but the number of workers among the wage-earners decreased between 1928 and 1940. The proportion fell from 74.6 to 67.3 percent.[5] What really happened was that there was a very rapid increase in the number of state employees and cadres, in other words a pronounced "bureaucratization" of economy and society.

All the same, when it is a question of the strengthening or the weakening of workers, industrial labor, or, more generally of direct producers, during the 1930s the numerical trends have only a secondary importance. What is important is the change in living and working conditions that affected the mass of the wage-earners, especially the workers. Significantly, from the beginning of the 1930s (or even from the end of the 1920s)[6] there was a virtual anti-worker offensive which corresponded with a deepening of capitalist relationships.

## I. The immediate subordination of the workers to the utilization requirements of the means of production

The anti-worker offensive at first took the form of a pronounced increase of the powers that administrators in the economic and state structure could bring to bear on the workers. At the end of the NEP, the immediate justification for this increase of power were the problems created by relatively weak labor discipline (manifested by "under-utilization" of the working day), and the tendency of workers to frequently quit the enterprise where they worked in the hope of finding better working conditions elsewhere.[7]

Problems posed by a pronounced labor "turnover" became especially difficult after 1929, following the influx to the factories of workers lacking any experience of industrial work, who had been uprooted and subjected to many material difficulties (of housing, food-supply, etc.) and hence were lacking stability. However, instead of dealing with these difficulties, the authorities

enhanced the disciplinary powers of managers, while the enterprises directed by the latter found themselves alloted very difficult targets. They had to achieve a rapid increase of production and productivity with a pronounced reduction of costs. It was in order to meet these objectives that managers of enterprises were invested with ever-increasing authority, especially in matters of hiring and firing.

During NEP the recruitment and dismissal of workers was not the business solely of the enterprises' managements and personnel services. At that period, the trade unions still enjoyed relative independence in their relations with the economic apparatus, and they did not have to put productivity and profitability in pride of place. At that time they effectively intervened in questions of recruitment and dismissal, notably by opposing decisions that would seriously harm the workers' interests.

Things changed drastically at the beginning of the 1930s. In the name of industrialization and economic planning, all obstacles to the real and complete domination of recruitment and dismissal by the leaders of industry were eliminated by a series of measures whose aims and methods were basically defined by the decisions of the RSFSR Sovnarkom of September 6, 1930, of the Central Executive Committee and USSR Sovnarkom of December 15, 1930 and of the USSR Labor Commissariat of December 28, 1930.[8]

The officially envisaged aims included the most "efficient" possible utilization of the means of production, planned allocation of the labor force, the "optimal distribution of the available workers between industrial enterprises, branches of industry and regions," and "control over the rational utilization of the work-force in enterprises of the socialised sector."

Clearly it was not so much question of assuring a certain "stability" in the work-force as to "direct" the latter in accordance with the "needs" of the state enterprises and of economic growth and accumulation.

The decisions adopted in this way expressed a political will, but their application in practice encountered many obstacles; the existence of labor legislation passed in the early 1920s that acknowledged a series of workers' rights (only bit-by-bit could this legislation be abrogated or systematically infringed); the

resistance of workers who as, the years passed, found ways of evading the regulations; the non-cooperation of enterprise managers, each trying to recruit a large number of workers in order to reach the production plans for which he was responsible; the ignorance of the real "needs" for manpower of the various industries, and so on.

In fact, the 1930 measures failed. The same fate befell the attempts made by enterprise managers to try to reduce labor turnover by getting workers to sign an undertaking not to leave the factory before a certain period had elapsed. Acknowledging these failures, the authorities (with the cooperation of the trade unions), adopted ever stricter measures to limit, and finally prevent, workers leaving their employment.

### *(a) The progressive disappearance of the workers' freedom to make and break work contracts*

At the beginning of 1931, the Central Committee of Trade Unions changed the rules for social security so as to make sick benefits and other benefits vary in amount according to a worker's period of service at his enterprise. In later years this ruling became more and more severe.[9]

These measures having proved insufficient in relation to the aims envisaged by the Soviet government, the latter decided on September 27, 1932 to reintroduce the internal passport. Henceforward each wage-earner had to hand in his passport to the enterprise which employed him. The passport was to carry a mention of previous jobs held by the holder. In this way a check was made on the conditions under which a worker had left his previous job. With this decree, the authorities also envisaged that they could reduce the growth of the urban population in a period of food-supply and housing crisis, and anchor the kolkhozniks in their villages since, as everyone realized, only in exceptional cases would kolkhozniks get passports. In general, the kolkhozniks and peasants could only obtain a temporary certificate to allow them to carry out seasonal work. This certificate was valid for a maximum of three months, and could be extended only by request of the employer.[10]

Figures show that from 1933 labor turnover slackened in industry. In 1935 the average period of employment in an enterprise reached almost fourteen months,[11] although this was still short.

A new measure was therefore taken in December 1938. This was the general introduction for all wage-earners of the workbook.[12] This booklet was originated by the enterprise that took on a worker for his first job. During the currency of the work contract the enterprise retained this booklet and noted in it all the points laid down by the law, and in particular the punishments imposed on the worker. The booklet was returned to its holder only if the enterprise employing him agreed to dispense with him. To get himself employed elsewhere, the worker had to hand his booklet to the new employer, who otherwise could not take him on. In this way each worker was bound to an enterprise, and his successive employers knew all about his working career. At least, that was the intention, although it seems that infact that quite a number of workers changed their jobs without observing the regulations.

Therefore, so as to tie the worker even more firmly to the enterprise, other measures were taken that reinforced the arrangements made in the decree of December 20, 1938. This involved mainly the decree of December 28 of the same year which was adopted, according to the official explanation, in order to "strengthen labor discipline, improve the administration of social insurance, and struggle against abuses in all fields."[13]

This decree imposed on a worker wishing to leave his job a one-month notice, in place of six days. Even if this requirement was observed, a worker who left his job without the agreement of his management lost any right to social insurance benefits for the first six months of his new job. Agreement of the original management was not enough to preserve the rights of the workers; such rights were reduced, in effect, for in order to receive full benefits it was necessary to belong to the same enterprise and be unionized for at least six years. The shorter the employment at an enterprise, the more were sickness benefits reduced.[14]

As it was concluded that the effects of these different decisions were not enough, a decree of June 26, 1940 remodelled labor legislation and strengthened disciplinary measures.

It reintroduced the eight-hour day and the seven-day week,[15] and explicitly forbade "workers and employees to leave their enterprise of their own volition."[16] In this way the right was abolished for any worker to break the work contract which tied him to an enterprise, provided due notice was given.[17]

Article 4 of the decree of June 26, 1940 provided that a worker could not quit an enterprise except in exceptional circumstances (illness, invalidity, retirement). Article 5 stipulated *penal sanctions* (two to four months in prison) to fall on workers leaving their job without permission. Job-quitting could be penalized in particular by "corrective labor carried out at the factory without deprivation of freedom" (Article 20 of the Penal Code). *This labor was paid at a lower rate than normal work* and was *subject to stricter discipline (with infringements of this discipline entailing the imposition of a penitentiary regime).*[18] In reality this "corrective labor" was a form of *penal labor* carried out at the usual place of work.

In September 1940 it was decided that the time spent at "correctional labor" would be regarded as an *interruption* of employment that invalidated the worker's right to social insurance. This right would be restored only after six months of normal work. In the meantime, all right to sickness benefits disappeared. The journal of the Soviet Procuracy published several articles encouraging the severest interpretations of these decisions.[19]

The reluctance of judges to enforce these various measures appeared so great that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet published an order on the "disciplinary responsibility of judges," enabling action to be taken against those who applied them with less than the required severity. Another order, dated August 10, 1940, provided that in matters of penal labor legislation judgements would be passed by a single judge, not by the judicial collegium of one judge and two assessors.[20] These two orders were actually contrary to Article 112 of the 1936 Constitution, which provided for the "independence of judges" and the collegial structure of all tribunals concerned with penal cases. Obviously, these were far from the first violations of the Constitution, but it is noteworthy that they were published in legal texts.

These various measures, as well as others—which brought a severe intensification of labor discipline—were taken in peace

time, at a time when the government and the press claimed that, thanks to the Russo-German Pact, the danger of war had receded.[21] Moreover they remained in force for several years after the war, although they were then to some extent falling into decay.[22]

As for the true wartime measures (that is, those concerning labor mobilization), these did not appear until 1941 and 1942,[23] and in principle did not remain in force after the war.

On the whole, during the 1930s and early 1940s there was a continuing reduction of the freedom enjoyed by workers to conclude or break work contracts. At the same time, labor legislation tended towards transformation into *penal legislation*. Thus efforts developed to "plan" employment directly. Among these efforts, a special place belonged to the measures permitting compulsory transfers of labor and the "organized recruitment" of workers. The fact is that, while the authorities refused workers the right to change their jobs, they provided enterprises with the possibility of transferring workers from one job to another.

### (b) *Dismissal and obligatory transfers from one enterprise to another*

The already-mentioned decision of the Central Executive Committee of Sovnarkom, dated December 15, 1930, gave ample powers to the labor commissariats of the USSR and the different republics to "systematically redistribute the labor force within the framework of production plans fixed by the competent authorities." The text of the decision was really intended to apply essentially to skilled workers and technicians.[24] In 1930, in fact, unskilled labor was still abundantly available.

The text of December 15, 1930, and those which followed soon after,[25] aimed above all at reducing the "excesses" of labor that some enterprises strove to preserve in order to cope better with their production targets–that is, they aimed to remove the "spare fat" of these enterprises or, as was said at the time, to "scrape off" the excess of workers.[26]

In 1932 the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Court established a distinction between workers, on the one hand, and

specialists and technicians on the other. The former could refuse a transfer , in which case they were dismissed; the latter had to accept a transfer or face eventual penal prosecution. After the abolition, by a decree of June 23, 1933, of the Commissariat of Labor,[27] the right of carrying out the measures described in the provisions already mentioned fell to enterprise managements and to the main managements of the industrial commissariats or commissariats to which they had been subordinated. It was the measures for "removing the fat" which, above all, continued to be taken at this period.

On the other hand, certain provisions of the decrees of June 26, 1940 and October 20, 1940[28] put greater emphasis on the compulsory movement of workers from one place of work to another. These provisions allowed "the forced transfer of engineers, technicians, foremen, employees and skilled workers of an enterprise, administration or institution to another." They were later extended to numerous categories of workers.[29] The latter could not refuse a transfer except in special cases; save in such cases, refusal brought penal sanctions.[30] The same kind of thing happened with the creation of "manpower reserves."

### (c) *The creation of "manpower reserves"*

From the First Five-Year Plan, efforts were made with a view to installing a system of *obligatory allocation* of young workers to *jobs decided by the state administrations*. Thus, a decision of the Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh) of November 27, 1929 compelled young people graduating from enterprise vocational schools (essentially workers' sons) to spend three years in a job to which they were posted by the economic department that had financed their vocational training schools. On September 15, 1933 this decision was confirmed by the Central Executive Committee and Sovnarkom.[31] Numerous indications had suggested that compulsory postings were encountering difficulties, hence the need for the 1933 confirmation.

This regulation was confirmed by a decree of October 2, 1940 which created a new organ, the "General Directorate of Labor Reserves."[32] Supervising all the vocational schools, this

General Directorate was to recruit each year 800,000 to 1,00,000 young people to 14-15 years, who would spend two years in these schools. Those who were 16-17 spent only six months (and therefore did not receive a true trade education, but were simply trained for a specialized job). At their graduation, the former students were directed by the Directorate of Labor Reserves to an industrial or transport enterprise, where they had to stay for four years.

The decree of October 2 specified that if there was an inadequate number of volunteers for these schools, the annual contingent would be topped up by compulsory direction. In the countryside, it was kolkhoz chairmen who carried out the selection process (limited to two percent of each age group). In the towns, the town soviets did this.

At first, these arrangements applied only to young men. When the USSR entered the war, they were extended to young women. The establishment of a system of labor reserves was undoubtedly accelerated by the war but it was nevertheless maintained after the war, with the creation of a Labor Reserves Ministry.

This system had an obvious class significance: *it was not universal*. For example, secondary students (eigth year and upwards) and higher education students were exempt. On the other hand, another decree of the same date of October 2, 1940 abolished (contrary to the 1936 Constitution) the secondary education (8th-10th year) and higher education grants. In consequence, young people exempt from recruitment by the labor reserves services were essentially the children of parents, whose salaries were high enough to pay for secondary and higher education.[33]

These measures were part of a virtual anti-worker offensive. But they represent only one aspect of a process which increasingly prevented the immediate producers from exercizing direct influence on their conditions of work. Another aspect was the transformation—to be examined shortly—of the methods by which wages and work norms were determined. Such an offensive, moreover, could not be set in motion without the subjection of the workers to a systematic and severe repression. The latter, as is well known, expressed itself in the development of police organs inside enterprises and in the extension

of forced labor. All the changes which affected in these ways the situtation of the workers expressed the intensifying grip on the latter put by the demands of capital and of accumulation. Marx had already observed that one of the characteristics of capital is that the worker in fact belongs to the capitalist class before he sells himself to an individual capitalist.[34] During the 1930s the authorities reduced to a minimum the visible freedom of the worker to take opportunities to sell his working capacity, and this helped to atomize the working class.

## II. The authoritarian determination of working conditions and the development of factory despotism

In their effort directed toward the greatest possible exploitation of the worker, so as to gain the maximum accumulation, the authorities increasingly were led to subject wages and working conditions to unilateral decisions by the economic organs, and they tended to subordinate trade union activity to their preoccupations with production and profitability. In these conditions the tendency predominated of "fixing" by administrative decision the volume of the wage, its distribution, and the levels of different categories of wage. As the volume presenting the First Five-Year Plan put it: "The wages question occupies a central place in the Five-Year Plan. It is here that the fundamental categories of the Plan meet: the working-class living standard, the development of labor productivity, production costs, the rhythm of accumulation, elements of the demand and supply equation. For the Soviet state the wage question constitutes, deep down, the foundation of the plan.[35].

Throughout the 1930s measures multiplied for "subjecting wages to the plan targets (especially those of the annual plans, which were themselves incorporated on enterprise plans) and for fixing work norms that each producer had to fulfil in order to receive a predetermined wage. It will be seen that the carrying out of these measures did not permit effective coordination between the plan targets and the evolution of wages and labor productivity. Nominal wages, real wages and worker productivity all developed according to rhythms and even orders that were

very widely removed from the "forecasts" of the plans. The scale and the permanence of these diverging tendencies show that it was not simply a question of "mistakes" in planning but of the absence—despite the plans—of a genuinely "planned" economy.

In fact, the real evolution of the economy was affected by class struggles, and by contradictions in accumulation, which had their repercussions on the movements of prices and wages.

Although the measures taken to try to assure the achievement of plans relating to wages and work norms appeared to be ineffecitive, they nevertheless produced important qualitative effects on production relationships and working conditions. They had the result, in particular, of replacing collective labor agreements and negotiations with regulatory measures, and they imposed new features on wage relationships.

### (a) *The decay of collective agreements and the development of unilateral regulaion of working conditions*

According to the Labor Code of November 9, 1922, the wages paid in different industries resulted from collective agreements made between the trade unions and the managements of industry. The same thing happened with working conditions not regulated by law. Individual contracts had to conform with the clauses of the collective agreements. Violation of the latter by industrial managements was cause for penal action, as was infraction of laws protecting the labor force[36]. At the same time there exised general agreements (for branches of the economy) and local agreements[37]. The Labor Code provided that agreements would only come into force after being registered by the *Narkomtrud*. Originally, this arrangement was to ensure that the labor protection laws were not violated by collective agreements. However, after government decisions were taken to limit wage increases (from 1926), the registration of agreements was used, among other methods, to keep wage increases within the limits fixed by the government, limits which in principle had to be respected in the course of negotiations[38].

In fact, up to 1929 the trade union organizations were able to use the collective agreements to obtain working conditions that sometimes were more advantageous for workers than had been aimed at by the government's decisions and by the plans. At the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan this attitude of the unions was violently denounced. For example, *Pravda* of October 22, 1929 published a "letter from workers" which stated:

> When collective agreements come up for renewal, backward groups of workers, stirred up by counter revolutionary Trotskyites, rightist opportunists, kulakophiles... will start pressing their non-proletarian and greedy demands ... We appeal to all workers of the Soviet Union to put up the most active resistance to the attacks of grabbers.[39]

Between 1931 and 1933, several government decisions limited the substance of collective agreements to matters which conformed with the plan targets and the state regulation of wages[40]. Collective agreements then became less and less useful and in fact were no longer signed. However, after Stalin had reproached the unions (in May 1935) for lacking interest in the workers' material and cultural needs,[41] union organizations tried, in 1937, to conclude new collective agreements: but this effort had no results, or at least no results of practical significance.[42]

During the 1930s the Soviet leaders reaffirmed that fixing wages was solely a matter for industrial managers (naturally, within the framework of the tasks which were imposed on them). For example, in 1934, at a conference of industrial cadres, the then Commissar for Industry, Ordzhonikidze, declared:

> As managers, responsible administrators,and foremen, you must personally occupy yourselves with wages, in all their current details, and not let other people handle this important question. Wages are the most powerful weapon you have.[43]

And in 1935 Andreev, a politburo member, reaffirmed that:

> Wage scales must be left entirely in the hands of industry managers. They must fix the norms.[44]

The policy followed from the First Five-Year Plan resulted formally in a total concentration of Wage-fixing power in the hands of enterprise mangers, charged with executing the measures concerning wages and norms ordered by the Party and government in cooperation with the planning organs. In these conditions, the fact that the wages actually paid[45] diverged constantly from those "forecast" by the plans testifies to the scale of the economic and social contradictions, and of the failure to cope with the latter. The same might be said of the disappearance of collective agreements, since the procedures allowing workers to protest in a set form against the abuses of authority by enterprise managers and cadres ended with the development of arbitrariness and the decline of industrial working conditions. In this connection, the anasthetizing of the Commission for Settling Labor Disputes (RKK) in the 1930s is especially significant.

### (b) *The withering away of the RKK and the growth of the power of enterprise managers and industrial cadres over the workers*

The RKK *ratsenochno-Konfliktnyiye komissii*[46] first saw the light of day in 1918. At that time, they were purely trade union organs that decided wage policy. In 1922 their existence was recongized by the Labor Code but they assumed a balanced structure, with an equal number of seats for representatives of the enterprise management and representatives of the union committee. They fulfilled two functions. On the one hand they fixed production norms, made decisions on the classification of posts, qualification scales, and other questions relating to working conditions. On the other hand, they had competence in settling any conflict resulting from a collective agreement and in examining any complaint by a worker about his work contract and the application of labor legislation. If not settled in this way, the complaint of a worker or group of workers could be passed to arbitration or to the jurisdiction of local organs of the Labor Commissariat *(O Truda)*[47].

These different functions of the RKK disappeared in the course of the 1930s. Fixing norms and the classifications of posts,

qualifications and wages were removed from their functions, at the same time as collective agreements were decaying. At the level of each enterprise, wages and norms were fixed by a special department of the management, the wage and norm bureau. In 1933 the Central Council of Trade Unions confirmed this situation[48]. One of the trade union leaders of the time, Veinberg, explained that this decision "was dictated by the necessity of ensuring within the enterprise the principle of one-man management and economic planning". He declared that to question this decision would imply "a leftist opportunist deviation" which would be intolerable[49].

The role of the RKK as organs of arbitration and jurisdiction also came to an end with the transformation of trade union organizations into mechanisms closely tied to enterprise managements and subordinated to a *production* political line. The last year for which statistics were published pertaining to union versus management disputes submitted to the RKK is 1929-30. In that year, the number of workers involved in disputes initiated by union committees in enterprises was about one million, a decrease of about 47 percent compared to 1927-28[50]. Subsequently, the statistics made no mention of such disputes. Up to 1933 the disputes could still be examined by the *O Truda*, but the Labor Commissariat disappeared in 1933. Apparently at this time the tasks of *O Truda* were handed to the regional trade union councils. These organs disappeared in 1937. When the unions were reorganzied their judicial functions also disappeared; they had previously in any case become ineffective[51].

Finally, the functions of the RKK and *O Truda* in the matter of the claims of individual workers or groups of workers decayed , even though no change in the printed regulations marked this. In fact, the increase in the powers of the enterprise managements paralyzed the activity of the RKK. Moreover, the massive flow of new workers of peasant origin resulted, in the absence of information provided by the unions, in sheer ignorance on the part of the majority of workers and employees that there existed organs, other than those of the enterprise administrative service, to which they might address their complaints. In the old enterprises, the RKK functioned for a little longer in the early 1930s, but as the workforce increased their functions ceased. In general, they do not seem to have been even established

at construction sites or in new enterprises. An enquiry instituted in 1932 covering fifty enterprises showed that by that time the Rkk were almost ignored by the workers and were not even informed about complaints. Those RKK which still existed functioned badly and a large proportion of their decisions was annulled by the *O Truda*[52].

From 1935, workers who had complaints to lodge, notably about underpayment for overtime, non-payment of bonuses or violations of labor legislation, addressed themselves only to the management. Very exceptionally, appeals were made to the courts. But usually no claim was formulated (even in cases of wrongful dismissal and of wages lower than they should have been), because the circumstances were not right; those who disputed a decision could easily be accused of "anti-soviet" activity. As well, the tribunals almost systematically decided in favour of enterprise managements, so much so that the Justice Commissariat was obliged to call them to order when certain abuses became too blatant. Even the frequency of these calls to order demonstrates their ineffectiveness[53].

In general, official ideology and practice made it very difficult for workers openly to draw up a compliant. It was admitted that decisions had to be taken by enterprise managements, and the questioning of these decisions—apart from "obvious" violations of generally accepted regulations—was most often regarded as an attempt to attack the principle of one-man management and as indicative of a lack of discipline on the part of those making the complaint.

Strikes were not forbidden explicitly. But workers were severely punished when they tried to undertake collective action in protest against decisions involving wages, norms, and any other aspect of working conditions. The police soon intervened and the courts applied Paragraph XIV of Article 58 of the RSFSR Criminal Code (or the corresponding articles of the codes of the other republics), which provided that:

> The deliberate non-fulfilment by a worker of his obligations, or their willfully negligent execution..... entails deprivation of liberty for a period of not less than one year, with total or partial confiscation of property; in the case of especially serious

> circumstances the punishment may be the supreme measure of social defense—death by shooting and confiscation of all property[54].

The growing and clear-cut support given by the unions in the enterprise managements' struggle for higher production and lower costs, the decay of the RKK and other organs in a position to examine workers' complaints, the ignorance in which workers were left about their rights, the pressures and threats against workers in the name of the "necessity of fulfilling the plans at any price", all entailed consequences that led to the development of a *factory despotism* that was particularly brutal. A statement fo M. M. Kaganovich in 1934 illustrates the conception held by party leaders at that time, of the powers and functions of the enterprise manager:

> In the factory.....the manager is king. Everyone must be subordinated to him. If the manager does not accept this, if he wants to play the liberal and at "little brother", if he wants to spend time in persuasion, then he is not a manager and he must not be in charge of a factory. Everything must be subordinated to the managers. The earth must tremble when the manager goes around the factory[55].

Those words crudely summarize the way in which enterprise managers were required to exercise their functions. This was far removed from Lenin's evocation of the role of an "orchestra conductor". It was a case of an absolute authority which tolerated no opposition within the factory, while being in principle subordinated to the targets fixed for each enterprise by the Party and government, targets enshrined in the plans. It was a whole ideology for the role of "boss" and "director" which took form at this time and was cultivated in the engineers' and cadres' schools.

This despotism of the factory (the term used by Marx to describe the discipline of a capitalist factory)[56] led to the development of arbitrariness in the matter of workers' wages. Not only these, but production norms also, were fixed unilaterally, and the workers lost all control over the way in which their wages

were calculated and the deductions made from them. The latter became especially numerous from 1932, when the principle of "material responsibility" of workers was applied in the case of defective production. Defects could entail significant reductions and even total loss of wages. Such wage reductions occurred even "when defects have not been caused by the fault of the worker"[57] for example, when the raw material was defective.

Other deductions were provided for. In cases of work stoppage, even "when the cause has nothing to do with the worker", the latter's wage was reduced (in principle by one half the basic wage in the appropriate category). It was vital that he informed the management immediately about the cause of the stoppage, for if he failed to do so he would receive no wage at all and disciplinary punishment might be visited on him.[58]

The consequences of the hardening of factory despotism made themselves felt also as violations of labor legislation.

### (c) *Violations of labor legislation*

Labor legislation adopted during the early years of the Soviet revolution, codified in 1922, was at the time highly favorable to workers and undoubtedly one of the world's most favorable. During NEP it was in the main applied in practice; both the trade unions and the Labor Inspectorate kept an eye on things. The situation began to change as the industrialization plan took form. Violations of the legislation were at first felt in the question of working hours and rest-days, a field regulated by Articles 60 (rest-days), 104-106 (working hours and overtime) and 131 (working hours for pregnant or nursing women)[59].

From the beginning of the 1930s, enterprise managers began to disregard the rules for overtime. Often, managers imposed on workers working hours that exceeded, sometimes considerably, the limits fixed by law, and without observing the prescribed procedures (agreement of a parity commission and of the Labor Inspectorate). Similarly, the rules for rest-days were increasingly violated. When things went too far some protests did appear in the press, notably in the Komsomol newspaper, but this same also praised factories and mines in which holidays

had been all but abolished and in which overtime stretched a working day to 12 or even 16 hours[60].

Most often, violation of rules about working hours and rest-days were presented as decisions of the workers in the name of "socialist competition"

There can be no doubt that the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan there was a certain enthusiasm for production, especially on the part of youth, but it would not have been enough to cause such long and frequent increases of working hours. Moreover, the protests that the press from time to time published imply that long extensions of working hours were *imposed* by enterprise managements with the support of Party organizations even though, usually, the external forms of union democracy were "respected"; for example, when a workers' meeting was required to vote "for" or "against" the enterprise's plan and to accept working hours that would allow tho plan to be "fulfilled". "Socialist competition" imposed by enterprise managements became a means of violating labor legislation without anybody daring to oppose the move.

The following example, presented as "positive" by the trade union newspaper, shows how far the extension of working hours could be taken:

> Competition between the different gangs has taken an extraordinary form. As soon as the first gang has finished work and the second has started, the first strives to help the second. Shattered by fatigue, young men who have finished their first shift lie down even at the place of work, on the bricks, and get up after two or three hours of sleep to continue working[61].

Repetition of such practices damaged the workers' health and were an important cause of work accidents.

At the start of the Second Five-Year Plan, indifference to the workers' health was on such a scale that workers' discontent made itself felt and compelled the union organizations, in spite of their orientation toward production, to make protests. For example, *Trud* condemned the most blatant abuses, and cited the case of the Moscow region foundries where "a group

of foundrymen worked an average of 15 hours daily for three months; the workers became so tired that they left work while metal was still being poured". It also published an investigation by the metalworkers' union revealing that in the enterprieses of a Ukraine trust "workers labor often for 14-16 hours or more and sometimes as much as 20 and even 23 hours ." And it reported that in certain mines of the Donets Basin a basic nightshift of 9-10 hours had been imposed[62].

Against those who refused to work the extra hours the enterprise management applied punishments established for unjustified absence, or used the techniques of allocating the most arduous work to them. The articles from time to time published by the press to "denounce" these practices did nothing fundamental to change the situation. In the factories, the union organizations continued to collaborate with enterprise managements in the name of "fulfilling" the plans and of "socialist competition".

The constant violation of rules concerning working hours also had negative consequences on the quality of production (even more so as it was added to the increase of production norms). It led to a substantial deterioration of work relationship which would cause Stalin in 1935 to condemn the indifference of the unions to this situation. The latter then responded, but only superficially, by means of simple protests which did nothing to hinder the course of these practices. The same sequence occurred in 1927, when the head of the Trade Unions Central Council, Shvernik, stated that:

> The abuse of overtime and of rest-days is the area where most violations are committed against labor legislation.[63]

This declaration changed nothing. Violations of the legislation continued, notably in the matter of working conditions for youths under 18 and pregnant women.[64]

Full statistics about work accidents stopped appearing at the beginning of the 1930s, but occasionally newspaper articles made evident the scale of the problem.

Moreover, the regulations for safety and accident prevention at work were likewise not respected by enterprise managements;

for their part the party and trade union organizations accepted this situation. The union press reported the extreme cases, but such formal protests had no effect on common practices.

Among the case described by the union press may be mentioned the presence of noxious gases in numerous workshops, sometimes reaching ten times the authorized maximum limits, lack of sufficient air supply in factories and mines, very poor visibility, unprotected machines, lack of insulation for high-tension cables, and so on.[65]

After 1936 the negative consequences (from the point of view of the authorities themselves) of disregard for labor regulations were such that many enterprise managers and engineers were condemned for having allowed the situation to develop in these ways. They were then accused of being "enemies of the people" and "saboteurs" (even though the output and profitability plans imposed on the factories could only be more or less "fulfilled" by violating safety regulations). The "great Moscow trials" indicated, up to a point, the scale of damage, and even of catastrophes (notably on the rail roads and mines) that had been entailed by the poilcy of output growth at any price. The accused in the trials "confessed" that it was on "instructions" given by themselves that serious "sabotage" was perpetrated (they declared that they had acted as "agents" of imperialist powers, Nazi Germany, Japan, etc.).[66] The absurdity of these "confessions" has often been shown.[67] It is clear that this aspect of the trials was aimed at the deep discontent of the workers, the deterioration of working and living conditions being blamed on the officials "responsible".

It would appear that the sentences pronounced at the conclusions of the various trials were not enough to put an end to the multiplication of work accidents and catastrophes, for the accidents and catastrophes were due to the way in which the struggle for production was conceived. Nevertheless, the authorities continued to strive for the fulfilment at any price of the industrial and financial plans, despite the negative effects that this, in the end, had on the situation of production and finance because of the enormous wastage of human and material resources entailed by this way of doing things.

Practices which developed in these ways cannot be explained simply by the blind pursuit of output. They have also a

class character. They were the affirmation, carried to extremes, of the authority of the power-holders, managers, and cadres, who wished to break the resistance (including even passive resistance) of the workers, and impose on them factory "despotism" of a most pronounced type. These practices demonstrate a terrible scorn for the workers, which took the form of denouncing the "Petty bourgeois" outlook of workers who did not accept the orders of enterprise managers and who were often treated as "class enemies"; as such, they could be sentenced to deportation, and to penal or penitentiary labor.

The contradictions fostered by these practices were, however, so deep that the Party—while not attacking them at their roots—was occasionally obliged to have enterprise managers punished. The end of the 1930s was marked by penal sentences against directors and engineers accused of "sabotage", notably when accidents of excessive severity had occurred. But repression bore also on workers who denounced "prematurely" (that is, before rather than after an accident) violations of work safety regulations[68].

Violation of labor legislation and the multiplication of accidents at factories, mines and construcion sites, stemmed from a violent anti-worker offensive and from an unrestrained struggle for increased growth and immediate profitability of enterprises. The judgement that Marx made about the functioning of capitalism can be unreservedly applied here, notably where he writes that it is, more than any other system of production, a waster of men, of living work, a squanderer of flesh and blood and also of nerves and brains.[69]

These characteristics of capitalism developed during the 1930s in factories employing "free" workers.[70] It will be seen that in conditions of forced labor they assumed gigantic proportions.

### (d) *The toughening of labor discipline*

The severity of labor regulations intensified throughout the 1930s. The evolution of punishments inflicted on workers for "unjustified absence", and the definition of such an absence, demonstrate the toughening of labor discipline.

· By virtue of Article 47 of the labor Code, as it was revised in August 1927, the fact of having been absent for a total of three days in one month, without such absence being properly authorized or justified for medical reasons, was punished by dismissal without notice or compensation. On November 15,1932 Article 47 was revised by a decision of the Central Executive Committee and of Sovnarkom. Henceforth, a single day of absence was cause for dismissal without notice or compensation. The enterprise management was not only authorized to apply this punishment, but was required to do so.

Punishments for unjusified absence became more severe by virtue of this decree, as well as by a directive of November 26, 1932 and another decree of December 4.[71] Among new punishments applicable to cases of unjustified absence, the expulsion of a "guility person" from his lodgings, if the latter were provided by the enterprise, should be mentioned. The rules specified that this sanction was to be applied equally to the family, and was to take no account of the unavailbility of alternative accommodation nor of the season (which means that this punishment was especially serious in winter) nor of the absence of means of transport. This dismissal was additionally accompanied by the withdrawal of ration cards. At that time this was a measure of extreme gravity, for without a ration card recourse could only be made to the "free market", where prices were exorbitant.

A subsequent decree (dated June 27, 1933) specified that the expulsion from accommodation would take place even if the latter did not belong to the enterprise but had been put at the disposal of its personnel by a housing or house-building cooperative.[72]

Following the adoption of the measure the average annual number of working days lost by unjustified absence per worker fell from 5.95 in 1932 to 0.93 in 1933 and 0.67 in 1934[73].

In spite of this change—which was maintained in the following years—a campaign was begun during the fall of 1938 against the "shirker" *(progulshchik)*, "idlers", and other "greedy individuals". On December 28, 1938 this campaign culminated in the adoption of a new decree "for strengthening labor discipline, improving the application of social insurance and combatting abuses in these fields".[74]

This text was an important step toward the *"penalization"* of labor law. Henceforward, any late arrival at work, any early departure at midday or in the evening, any "loafing" *had* to be punished. The punishments were warning, reprimand, severe reprimand with threat of subsequent punishment, transfer to less well-paid work for up to three months, and dismissal. Any wage-earner who was the object of three disciplinary measures in one month, or of four in two consecutive months, was considered guilty of unjustified absence and had to be punished for the latter offence.

On January 8, 1939 a new decision of the government, the Party and the Central Council of Trade Unions once more hardened the regulation of labor[75]. By virtue of this text any lateness of more than 20 minutes was regarded as "unjustified absence" and punished as such. At the end of 1938 prison sentences were pronounced against managements or enterprise cadres who had failed to punish workers liable to punishment under Articles 109 and 111 of the Penal code.[76] In the following weeks thousands of dismissals were pronounced for "unjustified absence".[77]

Fear of disciplinary sanctions then became a constant worry of many workers. Some of them gave up their midday meal so as not to risk a late arrival after the break. Visits to medical services and dispensaries became less frequent, because the workers feared punishment after not being "recognized" as ill. Pressure was put at the same time on the doctors, so that the number of sick notes issued at the beginning of 1939 fell by 50 per cent, which the press regarded as a victory over "malingerers"[78].

Thus the measures taken at the end of 1938 and beginning of 1939 had above all a repressive nature: it was a matter of putting workers in a situation of strict subordination. A supplementary step was taken toward the virtual penalization of "labor law" with the adoption of the law of June 26, 1940, whose Article 5 provided that an "unjustified absence" would give rise to judicial Prosecution and would be punished by *"correctional labor"* carried out at the place of work for a maximum of six months and with a deduction from wages that could go as high as 25 percent[79]. It has already been seen that from September 1940 "correctional labor" was regarded as an

interruption of employment and could result in the worker losing a great part of his previously won social security rights.

The Justice Commissariat and the procuracy required the courts to stretch to a maximum the definition of "unjustified absence"; "loafing" during working hours thereby qualified as unjustified absence. Also to be obligatorily considered as guilty of unjustified absence were those who did not observe their management's decisions about work to be done in overtime or on holidays, even if the overtime was ordered illegally, because it was not the workers' place to "judge whether the conditions required for working overtime are present". Also punished for unjustified absence were workers absent from work with the permission of the management "if it later transpired that the requested authorization, granted in good faith, was objectively illegal", that is, did not correspond to a case where absence could be authorized.[80]

Fearing that certain courts were hesitating to apply the law of June 26, 1940 in all its rigor, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet adopted, on August 15, 1940, a decision that required judges to consider only the fact of "unjustified absence"; it was thereby forbidden to take account of favorable testimony about an accused, showing that he was an exemplary worker, a stakhanovite, etc., because, it was stated, those who absented themselves from work "could not possibly be Stakhanovites or exemplary workers..".[81]

As a result of such directives, even sick or injured workers were sentenced for "unjustified absence"; so much so that in December 1940 new directives were issued that sought to avoid the most shocking sentences. All the same, at this time judges were reminded that they should not display any "liberalism" and that the provisions of the Penal Code concerning reductions and suspensions of sentences did not apply to cases of "unjustified absence" (and it might be recalled that these cases even involved workers accused of 20 minutes of "loafing").

The provisions of the law of June 26, 1940—which provided for prison sentences in case of "recidivism"—remained in force until April 1956[82].

The ideological relationships that were predominant within the privileged strata at the beginning of the 1940s are demonstrated in a meaningful way by readers' letters to *Izvestiya*, demanding that domestic servants be made liable to the law of June 26, 1940. The editors of *Izvestiya* did not think that such an appliacation was practicable but did not seem to be surprised at receiving such a demand.[83]

Thus it may be said that in the 1930s there took place a radcial change in working conditions. Measures concerning hiring and firing, compulsory transfers of jobs, organized recruitment, and instituting a very severe factory despotism, gave unprecedented powers to those who controlled access to means of production and the utilization of the resultant products. The anti-worker offensive also affected (as will be seen later) wage and norm fixing and the development of norms and wages. It tightly bound the workers to the requirements of accumulation and the utilization of the means of production.

While affirming that this situation was that of "achieved" socialism, the leading Party condemned all questioning of the existing order as "counter revolutionary". The defeat suffered by the workers was both social and political.

## III. The transformation of the conditions of the workers' struggle and the veritable "nationalization" of the trade unions

For a proper understanding of the way in which the conditions of the workers' struggle changed in the 1930s, a breif recapitulation is necessary.

As is well-known, in the period of "war communism" there was a strong tendency towards "nationalization" of the trade unions; that is, their complete subordination to the state apparatus so that they could participate to the fullest extent in the struggle for output.[84] At the end of 1920 Lenin condemned this tendency. He affirmed the dual nature of the Soviet state and indicated that this required that the unions were sufficiently independent to enable the workers to "protect themselves" against their state" [85] A little later he opposed Trotsky and

Bukharin who—in the name of a "production take-off"—had reproached him for preoccupying himself with "formal democracy." Replying to these criticisms, Lenin recalled that it was necessary to allow the unions to defend the workers so that the latter could fulfil their production tasks.[86] In March 1921 the Tenth Congress of the Party adopted, by a substantial majority, resolutions in line with this position. The latter was confirmed in January 1922, when the CC voted for a resolution formulated by Lenin that emphasized that there existed necessarily "a certain conflict of interests in matters concerning labor conditions between the masses of workers and the directors and managers of the state enterprises or the government departments in charge of them"; hence, even in state enterprises, it was "undoubtedly the duty of the trade unions to protect the interests of the working people".[87]

In reality, this position and the consequences that flowed from it were only partially accepted by some party cadres and enterprise managers. Realizing the social tension that this situation engendered, the Fourteenth Congress in December 1925 reaffirmed that the main task of the unions was the defense of the economic interests of the masses. Simultaneously, there was condemnaion of the tendency to form an "unnatural bloc" between the economic and union organs. It was emphasized that this tendency weakened trade union discipline.[88]

Nevertheless, this tendency remained at work despite the positions of principle that had been adopted.

At the time the industrialization policy was launched, these positions of Principle were themselves abandoned, which was not without practical consequences. The change of direction at that time explicitly obliged unions to give priority to output and compelled them to get rid of most of the old union leaders, notably Tomsky (replaced by Shvernik).[89] This riddance was entirely carried out "from above" by decisions that the Party imposed on the unions.

The decisions taken then tolled the bell for the NEP attempt to leave a certain initiative to the union cadres. Henceforth the latter had above all to obey the central organs of the Party. They had to conform with the orders that they received from the Party , in particular those involving production tasks, productivity increases and labor discipline.

### (a) *The Sixteenth Congress (June-July 1930), the role of the trade unions and the struggle for industrialization*

The Sixteenth Congress confirmed the large-scale elimination, carried out from above, of the great majority of the old union leaders. In uncompromising language typical of the man, L. Kaganovich declared to the Congress that:

> The great majority of the leadership of the Central Council of the Trade Unions, and of the separate unions, have been replaced. Some might say that this is a violation of proletarian democracy, but, comrades, it has long been known that for us, Bolsheviks, democracy is not a fetish.[90]

This formulation by Kaganovich is explained by the fact that the "purge" of the unions was not carried out by the unions themselves, but entrusted to the Party Control Commission and to the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (RKI), "at the request of the Central Council of Trade Unions" as it was expressed in the "Union Resolution" passed by the Sixteenth Congress.[91]

This resolution accused the old leadership of having followed an "opportunist and trade-unionist" orientation that was incompatible with the requirements of the "reconstruction period". It affirmed the need to continue the struggle against such an orientation. It called on Party organizations to ensure a "concrete direction" for trade union activity.[92]

This last formulation broke with the position expressed in the previous principle, which demanded that the Party should exercise a " general direction", avoiding what Lenin termed "paltry bureaucratism" and "troublemaking interference in the unions".[93]

In sum, the "Union Resolution" aimed at making the unions into instruments for carrying out the plans. The central paragraph of the text is titled "Getting down to production".[94] It detailed the unions' task in this field. It insisted on the organization of socialist competition and on the role of shock brigade workers *(udarniki)*. Paragraphs devoted to improvement of

workers' material living conditions and to "cultural and political work" occupied only a secondary place. It was clear that union activity in these fields was regarded as simply a means of raising production. All this was in accordance with the demands emanating from industry and the economic administrations.

At the beginning of 1931, the VSNKh newspaper suggested that the unions should be split up so that they would be in "harmony" with the organization of the main industries, and so that the unions would "really have their eyes fixed on output" and could succceed in establishing counter-norms (norms higher than those in force).[95] On January 17, the newspaper of the Central Council of Trade Unions *(Trud)* declared that a special committee of the Central Council had arrived at the conclusion that it was necessary to split up the unions. At the end of January 1931, after a report presented by Shvernik, the Central Council adopted a decision which increased the number of union federations from 22 to 44, without even having consulted them. After this reorganization, the powers of the plenary assembly of the Central Council were reduced in favor of the Presidium of this Council. The Presidium was itself put under the direct control of the Party Politburo. The whole trade union reorganization was carried out from above. It also led to a financial centralization. Henceforth all the union funds were in the hands of the Central Council, which was required to distribute them between the different union organizations.[96]

In fact, after the end of 1929 and again after the Sixteenth Congress, the unions concentrated their attention on production growth, on "socialist competition" and on the raising of norms. They went as far as denouncing workers who tried to oppose these increases. The trade union presses commonly described such workers as "self-seekers" and sometimes published their names with a recommendation to enterprise not to hire them.[97]

The desire to achieve, at any price, production plans that were extremely ambitious (and partly unfulfillable), and to increase the profits of state enterprises so as to provide finance for a very heavy investment program, led the Party—especially in spring 1931—to demand that the unions conduct a campaign for an increase of work norms and for wage limitation. In taking this path the unions were led to denounce workers as well as

factory managers opposed to increased work norms,[98] and this increase usually led to a wage reduction, to the deterioration of working conditions and even to a decline of output quality.

Such practices, and the total indifference of the unions to the living conditions of the workers, ruined their prestige and authority among workers. If the latter remained unionized, it was essentially because of the pressure put upon them and also so as to benefit from the material advantages obtained by possession of a union card. Finally, these union practices damaged production itself, so that in June 1931 Stalin had to give a reminder that the improvement of working and living conditions of workers was essential for the growth of output.[99]

This reminder gave rise to numerous union "self-criticisms" For example, in a declaration made at the time of the August meeting of the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions, *Trud* wrote:

> The trade union leaders had come to regard it as bad taste and perhaps even opportunistic to concern themselves with the vital needs of the workers. In the tractor plants the union organizations have become malignant growths of the managements and have their trade union character.

The next day the same newspaper returned to the same question (italic added):

> Many union organizations misunderstand the political importance of the struggle for the systematic improvement of the workers' living conditions, *insofar as it influences the success of socialist construction.* This misunderstanding is at the bottom of the characteristic attitude that many worker organizations adopt, showing lack of interest in many horrifying *facts that have so disastrous a repercussion on the execution of the industrial and financial plan.*[100]

These "self-criticisms", although inspired by anxieties about output, had few effects. The immediate primacy of output led the unions to worry more about that than about working conditions.

They accepted their subordination to the central economic organs. They changed themselves into appendages of these and even condemned factory managers who granted "unjustified" wage increases. At the beginning of 1932, *Trud* stigmatized local unions which behaved differently, writing of their "complicity" with enterprise managements who "have taken the road of unjustified wage increases."[101]

In February 1932 the Federation of Engineering Construcion Workers attacked factory managers who allowed wage increases when the production plan had not been fulfilled. It went as far as requesting the Procuracy to bring criminal proceedings against these managers.[102]

The "vigilance" of the unions with regard to "excessiveness of wages" was all the greater since they themselves were also held responsible for these excesses. They thereby became a state organ with the "policing of wages".[103]

In 1932, as the end of the First Five-Year Plan approached, the race for output growth accelerated and led more than ever to unions being regarded as organs charged above all with the fulfilment of the plan, including the financial plan. They were very frequently opposing wage increases, which would have reduced enterprises' profit margins. As will be seen, this contributed to a *reduction of real wages* whilst the Five-Year Plan had provided for an increase.

### (b) *The Ninth Trade Union Congress (April 1932) and the "takeover" of the unions by the state*

The Ninth Congress of Trade Unions met in April 1932, in a fully "productivist" atmosphere.

Here Kaganovich once more condemned the former union leadership , eliminated three years previously, criticizing its "Menshevik-Trotskyist" attitude that "put the workers' interests against those of socialist industry". Shvernik insisted on the tasks that the unions had to carry out resolutely, notably the greatest possible extension of piecework with wage rates based on technical norms.

In total, the reports presented to the Congress emphasized that the unions were to "devote themselves to the mobilization

of all working class strength for the expansion of socialist construction at an accelerated rhythm" and that they were not to sacrifice this activity for the sake of "protective" tasks, according to the formulation used to condemn the activity of Tomsky and other former union leaders.[104]

The union line fixed by the Ninth Congress—a line which carried further previous practices—confirmed that Soviet workers were by this time deprived of any organization that could help them to struggle at the workplace for their interests and their working conditions. This was a great historical repression which helped to *destroy the working class as a self-conscious class.* This led to serious consequences for the workers and even for output itself, so much so that it inevitably produced a crisis that took the form of a "trade union crisis". This crisis was such that sixteen years were to elapse before the Tenth Trade Union Congress met (in 1949);[105] this Congress, moreover, did not change anything fundamental in the role of the unions as auxilliaries of enterprise managements and of the government.[106]

However, at the beginning of the 1930s the pressure put on the unions by the Party and the government, and the purges which struck trade unionists considered as "opportunists", did not succeed in preventing militant unionists, especially those of them who were close to the worker grassroots, from trying to resist the application of the "productivist line". An echo of this resistance may be found in various statements by the leaders of the Central union *apparat.* For example, in 1933 Gavril Veinberg stated:

> We must fight the bad trade unionists who distort the Party line with the same severity as the Party itself brings to bear against its opportunists ... In the union ranks one sometimes hears remarks like this: "Is it right for unions to oppose improvements of wages granted by industrial managers? If we do, how will we look to the workers?" This is to seriously misunderstand the duties of the unions, this is pure trade-unionism.. This kind of "defense of the workers' interests" must be fought mercilessly.[107]

Sanctions "against bad trade unionists" were not without effect. Enterprise managers, summoned by the central departments

to increase work norms, increased them substantially. The discontent of the working class then often made itself felt, a circumstance that the central organ of the unions vigorously condemned, writing, for example:

> The revision of norms has collided with a substantial resistance from elements of the hostile classes, self-seekers, and idlers. [It is workers whose living standards have substantially declined who are described in these terms:—C.B.] Numerous reports have had to be made about attacks by class enemies having the aim of preventing the execution of the labor producitivity plan. These attacks are various. Sometimes they are threats against employees of the norm-fixing offices, sometimes a skilful depression of productivity, sabotage of time-checking, agitation against norm revision or attempts to organize the resistance of certain groups of workers.[108]

There could hardly be a better admission of the existence of a movement outside the union organizations, of a struggle by workers against the degradation of their living and working conditions.

The conterstroke to this struggle was the literal "nationalization" of the unions. This state takeover took the form of its opposite, the dissolution of the Labor Commissariat and the attribution of its functions to the unions, which became a virtual state administration. For example, the management of social security, and the checking of the observation of safety measures at work, were transferred to the Central Council of Trade Unions. In 1934, the unions were in addition entrusted with the functions of the workers' and peasants' Inspection at the factory level, and they had to verify the application of Party and government directives concerning production and wages.[109]

The unions became an enormous apparatus entrusted with many functions. In fact they were transformed into an administration directly subject to the instructions of the Politburo and Sovnarkom. This tranformation, however, conferred on them a new "authority" in relation to the workers, especially insofar as they managed social security and the application of labor legislation.

The scale of the union apparatus was then such that a reorganization became necessary. A decision taken in September 1934 by the Party CC, then ratified by the Central Council of Trade Unions, led to a new burst of union federations. At the end of this reorganization there were 154 union federations (in place of 44 in 1931). Later this total would reach 170.[110]

Clearly, this reorganization did not change the effects of the "producitivist"line. The latter went so far that it worried even the industrial managers, because lack of attention to working conditions and the resulting discontent had negative repercussions on production. Thus, at the time of a conference of managers of heavy industry, there was a new reproach leveled at the unions for not paying enough attention to the workers' living conditions.[111] In this way, what would be called the "union crisis" signalled its approach.

### (c) *The "trade union crisis" and its aftermath*

At the beginning of 1935, the disaffection and discontent of workers in regard to "their" trade unions became increasingly evident. The elections to the enterprise union committees took place in an atmosphere of deep indifference, with a very low turn-out. This situation worried the Party leadership. It made it appear that there was a growing rift between the workers and the state apparatus. In addition, this situation meant that the unions were not capable of coping with tasks that had to be correctly performed in order to prevent the existing contradictions in industrial enterprises deepening to the point where they could seriously hamper production.

On May 26 Stalin called a meeting of the Central Council leaders. He placed before them several questions about the confusion in which the elections to enterprise committees had been carried out, the ignorance of these elections which the masses had shown, the lack of "real democracy" which characterized them, and the "bad work" of the unions. He suggested breaking off the elections, and preparing new ones to take place in different conditions after the unions had ordered a new program containing "new tasks." He declared that

"the average worker sometimes asks: 'do we really need trade unions?'" He reproached the latter of useless repetition, with the economic organs and enterprise managements, "when the essential task of the unions should be to concentrate all their attention on the cultural and daily needs of the masses."[112]

According to the account of this conversation which was published (but only almost *seven months*—later and which indicated the existence of serious resistance by numerous cadres to the guidelines then sketched), Stalin also declared:

> Caring about the human personality, housing, culture, the daily needs of the working class: that is where trade union preoccupations should be centered.

In the tasks there by assigned to the unions, it was no longer a matter of directing efforts above all to production, but rather toward "the cultural and daily needs of the masses." Nor was there further mention of the role of the unions in the determination of working conditions and production.

These declarations opened what would be called the "trade union crisis" and seemed to mark a turning point. In reality, the subsequent course of events showed that there was not a turning point but only phrases, and some measures intended to transform part of the union cadres—who were applying the Party line—into "scapegoats" offered up as expiatory victims to the discontent of the workers.

What actually happened was that following this conversation of May 26, 1935, the Party CC appointed a committee, chaired by L. Kaganovich, entrusted with the reorganization of union activities. This committee operated for several months without the trade unions being publicly informed. Its first decision was to suspend the elections. In November it invited the Central Council of Trade Unions to call a conference in which would take part the central councils of the union federations. The five central secretaries then publicly condemned the situation and openly admitted that there was a "union crisis." In the record of the conference can be read:

> The trade unions are passing through a crisis. Numerous union members express the justified

> discontent they feel about union activity, they ask what is their use and how can they serve the proletarian state and the working masses. It is necessary, on the part of unionized workers and employees, to interpose self-criticism of the most severe and pitiless type, a radical and decisive turning point in union activities... Scope for initiative from below must be allowed, for only the working masses will succeed in bringing union activities to the necessary level.[113]

It was here that the pursuit of scapegoats began; the conference was followed by a wave of self-criticisms by union officials. However, this wave was not long in subsiding. During December talk of a "union crisis" diminished. There was only mention of a "certain union crisis." In January 1936 the self-criticisms ceased. In fact, relationships between the union organizations and the workers deteriorated to such an extent that the existence of anything that could be called "union life" was impossible.

In any case, during 1936 trade union problems retreated into the background. At that time there was beginning a period of acute social and political conflict within the dominant class itself. All the attention of the Party was reserved for the "great trials" and vast repressive operations. True, the problems that the trade unions should have tackled continued to demand solutions. Echoes of this can be found in the central and regional press; For example, in *Rabochii put (The Workers' Path)*, the newspaper of the Smolensk Party regional committee.

Specifically, the Party archive of this region, available in the USA,[114] contains correspondence which is very interesting for the light it throws on the nature of the problems posed by the workers in 1936. Thus, one finds in this correspondence letters addressed to the regional Party Committee secretary, Rumantsev, by the workers of a factory of the region (a factory to which, moreover, had been given the name of this Party cadre).[115] In these letters, the signatories denounced excessively high norms, inadequate wages, deplorable housing conditions, and condemned the indifference of the union representatives.

For example, the workers of workshop No. 2 of the Rumantsev Factory wrote:

> We have a great request. If you do not intercede, we will all leave work. It is impossible to work further... We do not earn anything ... since the leaders are concerned only with themselves, and they receive salaries and give themselves premiums. Metelkova... takes their side. For them there are spas, rest homes, and sanatoria, but there is nothing for the workers.[116]

In the correspondence received by Rumantsev can also be found a letter sent to him by Metelkova. The latter defends herself against accusations made against her, including accusations in letters sent to *Rabochii Put'*. Taking up some of these charges, she claims that she has no means of coping with the demands addressed to the union, especially the ones concerning the housing problem. Thus, she writes:

> It is not possible to repair the quarters of the worker Safranova, since the worker lives in a place suitable for hay and the place is rotting—the whole roof fell in, and all the timbers are rotting... we begged the proper organization to give her an apartment... I turned to the city soviet. Comrade Pliusnin answered that there were no rooms... there must be many dissatisfied people among us at the factory, since we investigated 843 workers' quarters and discovered that we have 143 workers who need quarters, who live under very bad conditions, and that 205 apartments need repairs...
>
> These people come to the factory committee, beg for repairs, for apartments, and I have to refuse them. They in turn tell me that they will write to *Rabochii Put'*, will write to you...[117]

What the result of this correspondence was is unknown, but it shows the exasperation of certain workers toward their union representative. Some months later the "purges" (obviously intended to moderate this exasperation) struck a large part of the Party and union cadres in Smolensk, as elsewhere. Evidently this was not enough to solve the difficulties with which the workers were struggling, nor to establish relationships of trust between them and their union organizations.

In fact, despite the purges, the discontent of workers in regard to their union organizations deepened. At the beginning of 1937 the Party again attacked "scapegoats." This time, it was the union representatives at the regional level who were accused. The first accusations were made in March 1937 against the union council of Leningrad region. For example, the secretary of the regional Party committee declared:

> The activity of the regional union council is completely rotten. One cannot see any sign of democracy in it... In many meetings of the presidium the statutory quorum was not reached and there have been many cases when comrade Alekseev, president of the union council, has sat quite alone.

To which Alekseev replied:

> There can be no doubt that there is no other organization in our country where the principles of democracy are flagrantly abandoned more than in the unions. The most blatant violations are considered normal... As a general rule, holders of union offices have been appointed from above.[118]

Some days later Shvernik condemned in his turn "the forgetting of the rights and needs of union members," and added:

> The unions have stopped caring about the workers' protection and security... Union activity among the masses is in a state of complete decay.[119]

All these statements convey the disarray of the political and union cadres in a situation where the union organizations were unable to fulfil (lacking both credibility and listeners) the role that the authorities wishes to assign to them.

It was in this situation that the signal was given for a new "self-criticism" campaign. Shvernik set the example at the meeting of the Plenum of the central Council of April 27, 1937.[120] His contribution illustrates the state of decay in which the unions found themselves.[121]

The Sixth Plenum decided that a draft statute should be prepared for the unions and submitted to a Seventh Plenum not later than July 1. In fact, the social crisis was too deep for this decision to have any result, even in a formal sense. A new plenum met only in September 1938, and no statute was submitted to it.[122]

The Sixth Plenum also decided that the unions had to be "democratized" and that the secret ballot should be introduced for union meetings. In practice, this decision had no more effect than the others; choice of candidates was made at public meetings and the open vote was adopted for election of lower union officials as well as for those who served as auxilliaries of the labor inspectorate.[123]

Finally, all the backwash created in the name of the "union crisis" changed nothing, and did not prevent the growth of workers' discontent. To cope with this discontent, the path of repression was increasingly chosen.

Thus from the Eighteenth Party Congress, in March 1939, union questions received little attention. Unions were mentioned only in passing, alongside other organizations which were asked to contribute to the "development of socialist competition and the Stakhanovite movement... and to ensure... firm discipline and high labor productivity."[124]

The actual "nationalization" of the trade unions facilitated a substantial deterioration in the living and working conditions of the working class, which will be seen when examining the development of the wage system, work norms, and the level of real wages.

## IV. Transformation of the wage and norm-fixing principles and some effects of this transformation

Throughout NEP it had been acknowledged that the development of production and the raising of the technical level of industry would have to be accompanied by a progressive leveling of wages. This principle was still accepted by the Seventh and Eighth trade union congresses.[125] In 1929, after the elimination

of the union leaders following the Eighth Congress, this principle of progressive wage leveling (inherited from the revolutionary ideology of 1917) was increasingly rejected. An opposite principle triumphed, that of "struggle against leveling."

### (a) *The "struggle against leveling"*

The most systematic formulations on this question may be found in Stalin's words to a conference of industrial managers on June 23, 1931.

This speech—which at the time was often referred to as enunciating "the six new conditions" of socialist construction[126]—included a violent attack against "the 'leftist' practice of wage equalization" and insisted on the need for wage differentiation. He criticized the "egalitarians," who ignored "the difference between skilled and unskilled work."[127] He emphasized "personal responsibility" in production and the need for "incentives for increasing the productivity of labor."[128] He also insisted on the necessity of profitability and a growth of accumulation within industry.[129]

In the following years, enterprise managers and union cadres strove to put these principles into practice. They sought to use them as a means of combatting the fast rise of costs which characterized—despite the introduction of modern production techniques – 1931 and 1932.[130]

At the Ninth Congress of trade unions (April 1932), Shvernik declared:

> The six conditions of Comrade Stalin constitute the militant program of the union movement. He affirmed that the maximum introduction of piece rates on the basis of technical production norms is the most important union task.[131]

Piece rates thus ceased to be officially regarded as a temporary measure. They were put forward as inherently socialist. As for the formulations of Marx declaring that "piece wage is the form of wage most in harmony with the capitalist mode of production,"[132] this was not mentioned. Nevertheless, for those

who acknowledge these formulations, the generalization of piece-rates reveals the extention of capitalist relationships in the 1930s.

Wage differentiation was extolled both as a means of increasing production and of encouraging the formation of technical cadres. For example, receiving a delegation of metallurgisits on December 26, 1934, Stalin enunciated the formula:

> It is necessary to organize wages so as to strengthen the decisive links of production and to impel people towards higher qualifications – that is what we must do in order to create a numerous army of technical cadres for production.[133]

Differentiation of wages in accordance with "qualifications" and industries was also highly revealing of the predominant type of social relationships. It portrayed the *labor force* as operating in effect as *commodity* whose current price depended on its reproduction cost and was influenced by supply and demand.

The struggle of the Party against "leveling" was part of a total perspective. It aimed at a differentiation of workers' wages[134] *and at the growth of the gap between the wages of immediate producers and those of enterprise managers, engineers, technicians and administrators.* It will be seen what effects this struggle had on the real differentiation of wages and on the general picture of social relationships.

From 1931 the "struggle against leveling was tightly bound up with an effort aimed at raising production norms assigned to workers, which were indeed raised several times. But the question of norms revision was especially conspicuous during the Second Five-Year Plan.

### (b) *The upward revision of production norms*

From the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan the Party leadership put considerable pressure on all cadres to persuade them to obtain an increase in labor's output, by means of increasing its intensity and productivity. It was not simply a

question of increasing production but also of reducing production costs and improving enterprise profitability. The pressure thus imposed led many enterprise managers to increase production norms by 10 or 20 percent, which had the effect of reducing the wages of those workers who failed to increase their output in accordance with the increased norms applicable to them. Such norm increases occurred from 1929 and 1930. Enterprise managements which followed this course justified themselves by reference to the higher output obtained by shock workers *(udarniki)* taking part in socialist competition.

In 1931 and 1932 the raising of norms continued. The Party and the managing economic organizations tried in this way to compensate increased prime costs by a lowering of wage costs, the former being connected with the entry into production of a mass of inexperienced workers and to the disorganization of enterprises and construction sites resulting from the exaggerated scale of the tasks assigned to them.[135]

A certain resistance to increased norms then made itself felt. It appeared not only in the working class but also in various organs entrusted up to then with establishing production norms, for they wanted to take into account the effects of these increased norms on workers' health. This resistance was severely condemned by the Party leadership and its ideologists, especially after the spring of 1931.

In April 1931 the "fatigue theory" was criticized in the name of "a Marxist-Leninist conception of the physiology of work." For example, S. Kaplun, chief of the Institute of Worker Protection, lashed out at the physiologists who, according to him, seriously overestimated the "subjective feeling of fatigue."[136] S. Kaplun claimed that this "subjective factor" could be overcome by an effort of will, and that work continued in spite of fatigue was not bad for the workers' health. S. Kaplun did not hesitate to describe as "class enemies" those who defended a contrary opinion. He wrote, in particular:

> The activation of hostile elements among a sector of the scientists reflects the class enemy's bitter resistance to the socialist offensive of the proletariat. Decisively beaten all along the economic front, the class enemy thinks he can hold the last trench line

> on a few sectors of the ideological front. There need be no doubt that he will also be crushed in this, his final position.[137]

Such formulations are typical of the recourse to a "proletarian ideology," constructed of all kinds of ingredients, to defend the policy of work intensification and the growth of exploitation to which the workers were subjected. These formulations were in preparation for the new campaign that was conducted for the raising of work norms. Thus, on the occasion of the fourteenth anniversary of the October Revolution, the journal of the Heavy Industry commisariat declared:

> Bolshevism must enter into scientific and technical calculations as a new category overturning all previous views of the bases of such calculations.[138]

These standpoints began a rupture, that was progressively more complete, with the previous practices for fixing production norms, practices which had tried to keep in mind the need for inactive time during the working day so as to avoid an excessive intensification of work.

It was in these conditions that new partial revisions of production norms appeared in 1932 and 1933. However the quest for increased industrial profits, required to cope with ever-higher investment,[139] led the Party to demand, in a resolution adopted in 1934 by the Seventeenth Congress, a reorganization of the wage system,[140] and then, at the beginning of 1935, a substantial upward revision of production norms.[141]

The Stakhanovite movement, which began with the record output of August 31, 1935 by the miner Aleksei Stakhanov,[142] made it possible to proceed to new and large upward revisions of the norms. These revisions were obtained by steering clear of the outputs obtained by average workers, for the records of the Stakhanovites became one of the factors taken into account in establishing new production norms. Thus was abandoned the principle, more or less accepted until then, by which the output of the average worker was one of the main bases for the calculation of production norms.

The establishment of norms fixed in these new conditions was demanded by Stalin in a speech he made on November

17, 1935 at a conference of Stakhanovites. In this speech, he gave a definition of the Stakhanovite movement by declaring that it should open the way to an upward revision of the production and productivity plans. He advanced the following formulations:

> The Stakhanovite movement is a movement of male and female workers who set themselves the target of exceeding the existing technical norms, of exceeding the forecast output capacities, of exceeding the current plans of production and balances... This movement overthrows the old way of regarding technique, it overthrows the old technical norms, the old forecast output capacities... It demands new, higher, technical norms, output capacities, production plans. It has been summoned to make a revolution in our industry.[143]

After affirming that "male and female workers" (by which must be understood Stakhanovites) had already rejected the old technical norms,[144] Stalin contrasted the Stakhanovites with workers who wanted to hold on to the old norms, whom he described as "retarded masses."[145] But he recognized that there was resistance among workers by indicating that "certain workers have attacked Stakhanov for his innovations."[146]

Finally, Stalin demanded that *new norms* be adopted that took account of the production "records" without being total alignment with them.[147]

At the beginning of 1936 the work norms were substantially increased. Simultaneously some piecework wage-rates were reduced.[148]

At the same time, the Central Institute of Labor (which customarily checked the compatibility of norms with workers' health) was abolished.[149] It had put up some opposition to these revisions.

In 1937-38 the production norms were again increased. A growing number of workers were not able to fulfil the minimal norm that had been imposed and thereby lost part of their wages. In 1938, 60 percent of metallurgical workers could not reach their norms. The same applied in 1940 for 22 to 32 percent of workers in all industries.[150]

It should be emphasized that during the 1930s and especially after 1936, the number of norms was multiplied. For example, in 1939 in the Machine and Vehicle Construction Commissariat alone there were 2,026,000 norms.[151]

At the end of the 1930s more than 75 percent of wage-earners were on piece-rates (of whom about three-sevenths received a progressive piece-wage);[152] about 10 percent received a wage with bonuses; only a minority were on a simple time-rate.

### (c) *Wage differentiation and the "economic atomization" of the workers*

The struggle against the alleged "leftist equalization" of wages, and the multiplication of norms and of the ways of calculating the receipts of the workers, led to an increased differentiation in the working class's living conditions and to an "economic atomization" of that class.

The starting point of this change was the growing extension of wage categories. Whilst by virtue of decisions taken in 1928 there were eight categories for workers' wages, the number of these scales was sometimes increased, during the 1930s to eleven (for example, in the mines and metallurgy.)[153]

The complexity of the system was increased by the existence of three distinct wage scales, according to whether it was a matter of piece-work within mass production, piece-work outside mass production, or hourly work.[154]

The differences *in reality* between workers' wages were increased still more by the existence of *different basic wages* according to industries, localities, and enterprises. In fact, each year, the government and the central economic organs fixed the amount, in money terms, by hour or by day, of the wage corresponding to the first scale *for each enterprise.*[155] They fixed at the same time the maximum amount of wages the enterprise was allowed to pay out. In practice it is impossible to calculate the maximum coefficient of inequality, but it was certainly much more than 10 in 1936 at the level of the *average* extreme. Obviously it was greater at the level of individual wages.

One example illustrates the size of wage differentials towards the middle of the Second Five-year Plan, at a time when the Stakhanovite movement was having its first effects.

The differentials between the extremes of pay for workers belonging to *different industries* were obviously greater. In fact in 1936 about two or three million workers received *less than 100 rubles per month.*[156] whilst Stakhanovites of the Kaganovich factory in Moscow received several hundred rubles per month, upto 1,800 rubles.[157]

By causing a drop in the wages of those who could not achieve the new norms,[158] as was the case for numerous workers, the *Stakhanovite movement helped to increase wage inequalities.*

However, the growth of these inequalities was far from solely attributable to the influence of Stakhanovism. For example, from 1934 the growth of such inequalities was already noticeable, as can be seen from the quoted figures and the statistical analyses by A. Bergson. Comparing 1928 and 1934 wages, and the distribution by levels of income of Soviet and American wages, Bergson concluded that, so far as wage inequalities are concerned, capitalist principles were stronger in the USSR.[159]

In 1934 wage inequalities could still appear as "nominal," because numerous products were rationed. it was different after 1935, when rationing was abolished. At that time prices and wages simultaneously rose, but the wage increases benefited the higher-paid more than the lower-paid.[160]

Two more things should be said about the wage system:

(1) First, it will be noticed that each people's commissariat established its own list defining the nature of different jobs and indicating the places they occupied in the wage scale. This list specified the "qualifications" required to take a given job.[161]

(2) Secondly, decisions about the allocation of workers to jobs were taken by heads of workshops or foremen. This practice was confirmed by a decision of the CC and Sovnarkom of May 27, 1940. This decision strengthened the power of these instruments of management, who also had to check and observe wage rates and work norms, to "improve tecnhique" and take "rationalization measures."[162]

The procedures for fixing wages illustrates a clearly important aspect of the development of capitalist relationships

within state enterprises. A more complete appreciation of the development of these relationships during the 1930s requires, however that there be taken equally into account the evolution of the intensity and productivity of labor.

### (d) *The evolution of wages*

The complexity and scale of questions raised by an analysis of the evolution of wages during the 1930s means that only one general view may be taken of this evolution, covering only the *real average wage.*[163] In fact, because of the growth of wage inequalities, the figures quoted underestimate the decline of the average wage of workers at the bottom of the wage scale; these workers constituted a majority of the working class. At the same time, these figures obscure the growth of real wages benefiting those at the summit of the income pyramid.[164]

The years 1928 and 1933 witnessed severe drops in real average wages. In fact, these years were characterized by very grave shortages of numerous products, and retail prices rose much faster than the nominal average wage. Retail price increases can be estimated only roughly, because they varied substantially between the different supply sources (state trade, cooperative trade, or "free market"). Taking into acount only the first two categories (although the amounts obtainable from them were insufficient) the real average wage in 1932 had fallen by about 11-12 percent compared to 1928.[165] Authors who have tried to take into account the evolution of retail prices other than official prices, and of the need to obtain supplies at such prices, arrive at the *drop considerably greater than that of the real average wage, on the order of 50 percent.*[166] Nevertheless it seems that this presents a somewhat too dark picture of the fall experienced in 1932 by the real consumption of the working class.[167]

The fall registered between 1928 and 1932 for the average real wage was obviously in complete contradiction to the forecasts of the Five-Year Plan.[168] Nothing was said about this in the official report of the results of this plan. In the report on the plan that he presented on January 7, 1933 to the Plenum of the CC, Stalin claimed that the "average annual wage of

workers and employees in large scale industry has grown by 67 percent compared to 1928,"[169] which was only true for the *nominal wage*.

In 1933 the average real wage again fell; this was the year when the food supply crisis was most grave. It is not possible to put forward a statistically based evaluation of this new fall, for no meaningful figure is available covering the evolution of prices in the state and cooperative sectors. However, it may be said that agricultural prices on the free (kolkhoz) market then grew by 48 percent whilst the average nominal wage grew by only 9.7 percent.[170] In 1934 the average real wage was still below that of 1932, although it is impossible to put a figure to it.[171]

Rationing was entirely abolished in October 1935, and state and cooperative trade prices were increased. *This increase of prices affected above all the workers, for whom purchases made in the framework of rationing had been a main source of food-supply.* The extreme variety of prices which were typical of 1934 makes impossible a statistically-based evaluation of the change in the real average wage.[172]

In 1937, it can be estimated, the average real wage of workers and employees was about 56-60 percent of the 1928 level (or the 1927-28 level),[173] which was an improvement of about 20 percent compared to 1932. This was far from the "targets" of the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-37), which "forecast" a doubling of the real average wage in industry.[174]

Judging from the price and wage statistics, the real average wage grew in 1938 and 1939. In fact, shortages returned, as did the black market,[175] so it is probable that the real average wage did not in fact increase in those two years. In 1940, even ignoring the shortages, the real wage was about 10 percent lower than in 1937.[176] The Third Five-Year Plan (1938-42), which "forecast" an increase of 35 percent for real wages, was no more "achieved" in this field than it had been in the previous plans.[177]

Finally, in 1940 the real average wage of industrial workers and employees was about 52-57 percent of that of 1928.[178]

Many other indices of the material situation of urban workers make equally clear a substantial decline in the living conditions of the latter. Thus, the number of square meters of

accommodation available per town inhabitant fell from 6.1 to 4.2 between 1927-28 and 1937.[179] However, the situation of workers, especially manual workers, was much worse than these figures suggest. For example, in Moscow, while 6 percent of "tenants" (that is, "households" of one or more persons) had more than one room, 40 percent had only one room, 23.6 percent occupied part of a room (or, as the term was at the time, a "corner"), 5 percent lived in a corridor or kitchen, and 25 percent in dormitories (usually wooden barracks).[180]

The situation was just as catastrophic outside the capital. At Smolensk, a report of the Party committee and the discussions that followed this report illustrates the disastrous situation of workers accommodated in barracks. The latter were overcrowded and badly maintained. Often water fell from the ceiling "right on to the workers' beds." Sanitary facilities were practically non-existent. At construction sites there were neither kitchen nor canteens. A female Party member pointed out that many women workers "lived virtually on the streets: some of them threatened to commit suicide."[181]

It should be added that during the first three Five-Year Plans an increasing proportion of workers was deprived of the full benefit of social legislation. In fact, henceforth the latter was applied without restrictions only to workers who had stayed sufficiently long in the same enterprise and had not been penalized for "unjustified absence." In addition, places in holiday homes were reserved, and priority was given to cadres and Stakhanovites. So between 1928 and 1937 the real average wage and the social benefits of most workers were in serious decline.

The Stakhanovite movement developed on the basis of this decline and on the spread of piece-rates and bonuses. For that minority of workers who achieved exceptional output, Stakhanovism was a way of escaping difficult living conditions, and even for attaining an exceptional level of consumption.

While the real average wage declined by more than 40 percent between 1928 and 1937, the productivity and intensity of labor increased considerably, and hence there was a substantial rate of exploitation of industrial workers.[182]

The general development of the 1930s—a development characterized by a substantial lowering of real wages, a sharp rise in

the rate of exploitation and a decline of living conditions raises numerous social, ideological, and political problems. Briefly, these problems are of two types: (1) what were the social and political forces which inflicted such defeats on the Soviet workers? (2) how were these defeats inflicted? For the momnet, we will concentrate our attention on this last question, and will reserve the fourth volume of this work for an attempt to answer the first.

## V. The circumstances of the workers' defeat of the 1930s

When one analyses the conditions that led to the serious defeat of the workers in the 1930s one has to acknowledge that the root of these defeats lay in the extreme division of the workers and their economic and social atomization. This has already been mentioned, but now it behooves us to see what made possible these phenomena possible and the way in which they manifested themselves and developed.

### (a) *The expropriation of the workers' organization*

At the end of the 1920s the starting point for the workers' defeats was the dismantling of the last organizations in which they had faith and which were still in existence, namely the trade unions.

Whatever the limits put on union action during the NEP, the unions remained, nevertheless, organizations through which workers could put up a more or less organized resistance against the decline of their living and working conditions. This resistance was expressed through strikes (admittedly rare, but nevertheless effective) and through negotiations in which the union representatives fought for certain worker demands which could be expressed, more or less, at union meetings and union congresses. The elimination of the old union cadres and leaders, from the end of the 1920s, and their replacement by cadres and leaders who were above all concerned with the

increase of production and productivity, indicates that *the workers suffered the expropriation of the last forms of their own organization that the state tolerated.* From that point the union became a state institution, entirely ceasing to be a class organization.

During the 1930s the authorities multiplied measures intended to prevent the reconstitution of true worker organizations: all attempts in this direction were brutally repressed by the police as "anti-Soviet."

There were many reasons for the authorities' hostility toward real unions. There were economic reasons, for anything which served to improve wages and living conditions would reduce the surplus value that might be accumulated. There were ideological reasons, because the Bolshevik Party portrayed itself as the "vanguard" of the working class, so any other organization of the workers, in its eyes, could only represent "backward" elements subjected to the influence of "hostile classes." There were political reasons, because any union that was not a Party-controlled apparatus could only seem to be an "organized pole of opposition."[183] Two observations might be made.

First, even during the NEP, "the idea that the unions could defend the workers against managers, which meant against the government's economic policy, had never had the happy acceptance of the Party." As J. Sapir remarks, this was connected with an "old anti-union tradition" of the Bolsheviks.[184]

Second, the anti-union ideology of the 1930s was strengthened by what J. Sapir justifiably terms "anti-worker workerism" which presented such an idealized image of the proletariat (which would be entirely devoted to the state's requirement for production, and regard the state as "its own") that the *genuine working class found itself devalued.* It was not "proletarian" but "petty bourgeois" or "peasant" and the Party therefore did not want to allow it to organize itself genuinely.

Thus the destruction of any real union organization was necessarily written in to the Party's policy, and also was facilitated by the objective circumstances of industrialization (a matter to which we shall return).

The major effect of this destruction was the *disappearance of the working class as such,* it having in effect been deprived of

its last remaining form of organization and the ideological models that were tied to them. In fact, what happened here, at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s was a prolongation of the October Revolution. The latter, by establishing the power of the Bolshevik Party and identifying the latter with that of the working class, *expropriated* from the latter the aims of its political struggle. In order to be in a position to take back its own aims, the working class would have had to build new organizations and work out a strategy of struggle, something which historical circumstances rendered impossible. Quite the contrary happened: at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s the process of destroying the union organizations was carried through to the end.

This destruction produced a bundle of negative effects for the authorities themselves. On the one hand, it produced a *negative effect on the growth of social labor productivity* for, in the existing conditions, this growth assumed a fully-formed working class, capable of conducting organized struggles. In the absence of such a class, accumulation took forms that were very particular, and its productive effects had a specific character (this is a point to which part 4 of this volume will return). On the other hand, this same destruction of the class organizations made the workers indifferent to the union pseudo-organizations that replaced them. This induced the workers to develop *forms of resistance*, against which the authorities could use only means of repression whose "effectiveness" (from the production point of view) remained very limited, hence the attempts (vain, as has been shown) to "revivify" the unions.

Although the destruction of the union organizations was one of the preliminaries for the worker defeats of the 1930s, it is also true that this destruction was made possible by certain objective circumstances, such as the mass "renewal" of the worker ranks, and the various ways in which workers were divided during this period.

### (b) *The mass "renewal" of worker ranks in the 1930s*

There having been no detailed investigations, it is only possible to give very general indications about that process of "renewal"

of the ranks of the workers which developed during the 1930s. Some figures do permit an approximate measure of the scale of this process. One may note, firstly, that the number of wage-earners in main industry rose from 3.8 million in 1982 to about 8 million (of whom 6 million were workers) at the beginning of the Third Five-Year Plan,[185] an increase of 4.2 million. On the other hand, it is generally estimated that during this period about one million workers left the ranks of the working class to become cadres of production, administration, and party. Consequently, with an adjustment for "renewal" due to death and retirement (a renewal amply ensured by the children of workers), it is possible to estimate that the great majority of workers of the late 1930s *consisted of workers lacking any experience* either of a union organization more or less truly representing them, or of collective struggles, and this had significant ideological and political effects.

From the mid-1930s the majority of industrial workers lacked a living tradition of collective struggle for the defense of their interests. These workers were strangers in their surroundings, which imposed severe constraints which they tried to escape by their own gumption and by changing their place of work. Ties of solidarity were only with difficulty established between workers who were barely acquainted with each other, and they were vulnerable to the "sanctions" and arbitrary acts of enterprise managements, and all the more so since the unions had practically ceased to function except as transmitters of the party policy and as defenders of decisions made by the economic cadres. Additionally, many workers knew that they were regarded with distrust by the party and enterprise cadres, who saw among them "petty bourgeois elements" motivated by feelings that were "egoistical," "apolitical," and "indifferent."[186] These cadres often treated them even as "class enemies" by reason of their presumed "kulak" origin, and of the sympathy they were said to have for the rich peasants. The press of the 1930s often described workers as "idlers" and "shirkers."

Thus the various structures that the workers had been able to visualize more or less as "their own" (trade unions, soviets, and the party)—despite contradictions which for some years had placed them in opposition to the workers—completely ceased to function as such. These structures showed themselves

to be indifferent and even hostile to their interests and to any attempt by the workers to organize themselves. The cadres were not concerned about the problems posed by the workers' working and living conditions; they cared only about output growth and productivity. They lived better than ordinary workers. They belonged to a different world. Workers called them, collectively, "them" (that is, "them above").

Being thus deprived of the means of collective resistance to the aggravation of exploitation and arbitrary decisions, and the reconstitution of these means of collective resistance coming up against numerous obstacles, including police repression and the weak social fabric, the workers had recourse essentially to "passive" forms of resistance: absenteeism, frequent changes of enterprise (despite all the regulations), silent opposition to the growth of productivity, bad workmanship, poor upkeep of equipment, etc.

These forms of resistance at the time seemed the only ones feasible. They did nothing to unify the workers; on the contrary, they divided them. However, they were widely practised, the majority of the workers being indifferent to boastful talk about "productive enthusiasm" and to promises of a "better life" obtainable by conforming with the orders of the cadres.

Apart from the majority of workers who resisted the appeals made for production, there was a minority that did respond to such appeals. This minority above all included the older workers, mainly skilled, whom the party and trade unions treated with more respect and who benefited from wages higher than those of the great mass of workers. It included also a small part of the younger workers. These comparatively few workers hoped to be able to improve their living conditions by supporting the industrialization policy, participating in the quest for higher productivity, and improving their professional skills. The existence of these active elements helped the development of Soviet industry.

During the First-Five-Year Plans, two "movements" with very different characteristics, mobilized—at the production level—these more active worker strata: socialist competiton and the Stakhanovite movements.

### (c) *Socialist competition*

At the time the First Five-Year Plan was launched, the party leadership laid emphasis on what it called the "Bolshevik offensive" in the fields of production and construction. According to the slogans of this period as they were developed, in particular by Stalin, the key to the success of this "offensive" lay in the organization by the party of an "extensive socialist *competition* and... *mass enthusiasm for work.*"[187] Stalin then evoked an appeal of the Sixteenth Party Conference on April 29, 1929 which had insisted on the large-scale development of "socialist competition."[188] On this occasion, he declared that "the most remarkable feature of competition is the radical revolution it entrains in the concepts held by working people, because it transforms work... into a matter of *honor*, a matter of *glory*, a matter of *valor* and *heroism.*"[189]

This competition, combined with the reconstruction of the technical base, should, according to the official spokesmen, permit an *accelerated rhythm* of industrial development, described as "Bolshevik,"[190] and regarded as indispensible in a period in which it was claimed that "rhythms decide everything."

Already, in May 1929, Stalin had insisted on the importance that he gave to competition *(sorevnovaniye or "emulation")* as a communist method to build socialism" and he contrasted it with *konkurentsiya* (competition of the capitalist variety):

> The principle of competition is: *defeat and death for some* and victory and domination for others. The principle of socialist emulation is: comradely assistance by the foremost to the laggards, so as to achieve an advance *by all.*[191]

These appeals by Stalin and other leaders led the Party and union cadres to initiate, from above, "socialist competition," which was based on promises by certain workers, called "shock workers" or *udarniki*, to exceed the current norms through a system of "socialist challenges" which could pit some workers against others, either by factory, brigade, or by individual. In reality, far from resting on "help" and

"comradeship"—as Stalin claimed—it developed contradictions among the workers: it permitted a raising of norms.[192] If competition took shape it was not because work had become a matter of "honor and glory" but because a strong pressure was put on workers, and above all because he who triumphed in this competition received big bonuses and considerable allocation of consumer goods. It was in no sense a matter of a new attitude towards work, nor of solidarity, but rather of egoism and acquistiveness.[193] Behind the trumpeting it was the latter which really suited the authorities because it permited output growth while at the same time dividing the workers even more.

Measures taken by the party played a decisive role in the development of "socialist competition." These measures led to agreements between *udarniki* and enterprise managers. By virtue of these agreements the *udarniki* undertook to provide a certain volume of production (above the current norms), to be punctual (not more than three minutes lateness per month), to subscribe a certain amount to the State Loan, and give at least one day a month of extra work. On its part, the management gave a certain number of privileges to the *udarniki:* priority on the housing waiting-lists, allocation of foodstuffs in short supply (important during a period of shortages), grants for professional training, the possibility of taking courses during working hours, favorable treatment in matters of social security, and priority access to holiday homes. In addition, the *udarniki* might receive honors, which themselves carried material advantages in their own right.

The *udarnik* movement, by the privileges it accorded some workers, made many workers hostile to shock-workers. This hostility appeared from 1929.[194] It increased particularly when enterprise managers used the "production records" established by the *udarniki* to raise production norms.

The placing of the *udarniki* in their own stratum, cut off from the mass of workers, had another aspect: the recruitment from this stratum of basic production cadres and minor administrative cadres. This became a large-scale phenomenon in the first half of the 1930s. It brought with it various consequences. On the one hand, it "took out" the especially active workers from production and from the working class. On the other hand,

it attracted the pushers toward "socialist competition." In these circumstances the movement was fated to take a more and more bureaucratic direction. Very quickly the vocational schools cut their worker intake and recruited most of all among ordinary school-leavers; the fact of being an *udarnik* therefore gave progressively less opportunity to enter administration or production at cadre level. "Socialist competition" consequently ceased to play the role that it had played at the beginning of the 1930s. However, it did not disappear completely. It remained as one of the means at the disposal of enterprise managements, through the privileges granted to participants, to pursue the increase of production and the revision of norms.

### (d) *The Stakhanovite movement*

In 1935 the Stakhanovite movement rose into view. It might seem to be only a variant of socialist competition, but in reality it was something very different. Socialist competition by *udarniki* resulted above all in an intensification of labour. Stakhanovism tended to transform the production process, the place and role of different ingredients of production, and all this on a foundation of worker initiative. From this point of view Stakhanovism bore a revolutionary character, even though accompanied also by an intensification of labor and an accentuation of capitalist features of production.

Stakhanov was a coalminer who achieved his first output record on August 31, 1935 in the Tsentral'naya-Irmino mine. Before his method was introduced, coal-hewing was done on a face 85 metres long and 10 meters wide. The face included eight work positions to which in all were allocated 17-18 workers. The latter did both cutting and propping. In addition, five laborers looked after the clearing away of the coal. Of the Six hours spent below two-and-one-half to three were spent on coal-hewing and the rest on propping. The picks were employed therefore for only about half the time. Moreover, only two shifts actually cut coal, the third shift being used exclusively for repairs and for preparing the work of the following shifts. In practice, the picks were used only for six hours out of eighteen; that is, at one third of capacity.

In the circumstances of this mine and with this organization of the work process, the 17-18 hewers-proppers obtained an output of 250 tons, or 14.7 tons per worker on average, or 11 tons when the laborers were taken into account.[195]

Stakhanov introduced the following modifications to the production process. First, a single worker was to carry out the entire hewing and accordingly utilize his pick completely. Other workers prepared the work and did all the other tasks (propping and coal-handling) during the hewing. Henceforth a face would require only five hewers (four permanent and one to replace another at certain times), and five laborers; that is 10 workers instead of 23. A team organized in this way could cut 300-330 tons of coal per shift (instead of 250). Individual output exceeded, on average, 32 tons per day instead of 11, an increase of about three times.

The type of transformation that Stakhanov introduced in his mine spread rapidly. In September and October mention was made of quite a few miners who fulfilled their norms by 500, 600 and 1000 percent; a miner named Mokar Lashtoba even achieved 2274 percent of his norm.[196] The movement spread to other industries: to the Gorki Automobile Works (where the smith Busygin became famous for his records), other engineering industries, the textile industry, etc.

### (1) The nature of the changes in the production process induced by Stakhanovism

The nature of these changes may perhaps be illuminated by an analysis of the most important of them, carefully described in the Soviet press in 1935 and 1936. In this connection, the most revealing are initiatives of Stakhanov himself, Busygin, and the textile worker Vinogradova.[197]

In summary, these changes had the following features: (1) they led to deepening of the capitalist division of labor. They "liberated" skilled workers from secondary tasks and tranferred the latter to unskilled workers. Thus they encouraged a *greater division of the labor collective between a small number of skilled workers and a relatively large number of unskilled*. The *polarization*

which characterizes collective labor in capitalism was therefore *accentuated*. In the example of Stakhanov cited above, 17-18 skilled workers with five unskilled gave place to six skilled with five unskilled. In the case of the transformation of the production process by the woman worker Vinogradova, who worked on Northrop weaving looms, there were nine skilled workers and four unskilled in a team before the transformation. After the transformation there was one skilled worker and twelve unskilled.[198] *Since the unskilled were paid less, the average cost of labor was reduced and profitability enhanced. (2) it allowed, in general, an intensification of utilization of the work instruments already existing* (thus, in the case of Stakhanov, the picks were henceforth completely utilized). There was therefore an economy in fixed capital and a possible increase in the rate of profit. (3) it entailed *an increase of the intensity* of labor, thanks to the elimination of "dead time." This can be seen in the case of Stakhanov as well as of Busygin, who *packaged the tasks* in such a way that *each worker repeated at a rapid rhythm the same movements.*[199] The intensification of labor can be clearly seen through a report describing the work of Busygin's team:

> The entire brigade is in the grip of a tremendous work fury. It is simply impossible to conceive of going up to one of these people to distract him for a minute. No one smokes, no one talks. I have visited many camps, but nowhere have I seen such an ecstasy of work.[200]

This intensification of work was also obtained by analysis of movements, with the aim of eliminating any that were superfluous,[201] which permited an acceleration of the work rhythm. An analogous result was obtained in numerous cases by a reorganization of the workplace.

As Marx has shown, this type of transformation of the production process facilitates a tightening of the working day, leading to an *absolute production of surplus value.*[202]

Generally speaking, the dominant aspect of the Stakhanovite movement was the *adaptation of labor that was alive to the demands of a full utilization of labor that was dead, thus permitting an increased rate of profit.*

Thus the *transformations of the production process induced by the Stakhanovite movement were totally expressed in the capitalist form of this process.* They corresponded to its final development. They did not open the way to a collective mastery of production, but rather to its parceling, and to a degrading and increased intensification of labor. They originated from the same trends as did Taylorism, but they transformed one of the workers into a shift or brigade leader.

However, an examination of the Stakhanovite movements suggests that, apart from these *dominant characteristics* (those which attracted the intense attention of the Party, unions, enterprise managers, press, etc.), it was also characterized by a certain development of *technical innovations* put forward by the Stakhanovites. But this was a secondary characteristic; the ideological and political conditions which would have allowed the development of an innovational movement from below and not been created, largely because of the prevailing principle that changes in matters of equipment could be undertaken only by engineers and cadres. In this field, workers could not take the initiative. But they could make proposals leading to a better utilization of existing equipment, to an intensification of labor and to economies in wages.

Despite their expression in the capitalist form of the production process, the transformations of this process induced by the Stakhanovite movement nonetheless had, *originally* a unique character. This was connected with the fact that initially Stakhanovism developed from a *worker initiative,* an initiative by workers who were relatively skilled and who encouraged, and sometimes imposed, certain transformations of the production process.

### (2) The circumstances in which the Stakhanovite movement appeared

The enormous equipment effort made between 1928 and 1935 provided the material conditions for the development of the Stakhanovite movement. During this period nearly all branches of production were given new work tools, much improved on the older ones. However, the utilization of these new instruments

was very defective, the production processes not having been transformed as much as these new means allowed. The latter were therefore substantially under utilized, and there was a large reserve of unused production capacity.[203] The reasons why such a large gap appeared between physical production capacity and actual production were numerous. One of the most important was the inability of engineers and cadres to impose serious changes in the production process. This inability was essentially *political*. It was connected with the "passive" resistance that the workers put up against the raising of norms and the intensification of work. This resistance held back the full utilization of productive capacity. The Stakhanovite movement, issuing from the initiative of a part of the workers, would take advantage of this underutilized capacity.

The ideological conditions for the development of this movement consisted of the emergence of new contingents of skilled workers who had acquired enough knowledge and authority to suggest, and even impose, certain changes in the production process (insofar, at least, as these transformations belonged to the capitalist form of production relationships and promoted the aims of industrialization). These ideological conditions comprised, also, the seeking and acceptance by these workers of the *material privileges* that their initiatives could bring. The Stakhanovites thus allowed themselves to be separted from other workers, and this separation sometimes went as far as antagonism, for the initiatives of the Stakhanovites allowed an upward revision of production norms (which entailed lower wages for those who did not adapt themselves to the new norms) which were opposed by a large part of the working class.

This opposition led to numerous "incidents" between Stakhanovites and ordinary workers, incidents that were echoed in the Soviet press of the time. For example, the Stakhanovites had certain tools stolen, and if they threatened to lay a complaint they were beaten up by those who had done the thieving. The latter, if found out, could be sentenced to several years of camp or prison.[204]

Other ideological circumstances were necessary for the development of the Stakhanovite movement. It was necessary that those who joined this movement adhered to the principles of

wage differentiation proclaimed as "just and necessary" since 1931. The quest for personal advantages was certainly not the only "ideological base" for the rise of Stakhanovism but it was an important part of it. In this connection, it is highly significant that the *movement took off precisely when rationing was ended;* that is, when the high incomes gained by Stakhanovites[205] could actually be used to buy products that henceforth were "freely" available. And the fact that the majority of those who participated in the Stakhanovite movement *were not Party members* suggests that political motives played only secondary role in this movement.

In sum, at its beginning, Stakhanovism corresponded to a *workers' initiative coming from a narrow stratum of skilled workers,* mainly those wishing to put their capacities to "gainful use." This movement was made possible by the ideological transformations that had occurred from 1931, especially by the decline of egalitarian ideas that had been widespread among the working class at the end of the 1920s.

### (3) The seizure from above of the Stakhanovite movement

From the end of the summer of 1935 the initiatives of Stakhanov and his imitators were utilized by the unions, Party and managers of the economy to promote a countrywide *production campaign.* The quantitative results that were obtained were above all what attracted attention, whilst the effects of Stakhanovism on the quality and regularity of production were ignored. Those who took the risk of warning against such effects were violently attacked in the press and easily treated as "class enemies."[206]

In October 1935, the first inter-union conference of Stakhanovites was held. One Stakhanovite still tried to raise questions about the nature of the movement that had just been born. He was brusquely interrupted by Pyatakov, then deputy commissar for Heavy Industry, who declared:

> Why take the trouble to find a definition of Stakhanovism? A Stakhanovite is someone who shatters all the norms.[207]

The tone was thus given: Stakhanovism was to be a war machine against existing norms. This "utilization" of Stakhanovism was confirmed by the same Pyatakov, in his closing speech to this conference, in which he claimed:

> The essence of the Stakhanovite movement consists in that the Stakhanovite shatters with his own hands, in practice and not only in theory, all the so-called technical work norms... Norms based on technique—this was only a ghost intended to frighten us, a brake to hold us back.[208]

A few days before, the newspaper of the Heavy Industry Commissariat had gone so far as to say that the "ghost" of production capacities and norms "should be sent to the devil."[209] It was to these unilaterally "voluntarist" claims that Stalin alluded, in order to criticise them, at the first conference of Stakhanovites of the USSR. Thus in his speech of November 17, 1935 he declared:

> There are some who say we no longer need technical norms. That is false, comrades. Even more, it is absurd. Without technical norms the planned economy is impossible... Technical norms are a great regulatory force, which in production organizes the great masses of workers around the advanced elements of the working class.[210]

Following this speech, Stalin said that *new* technical norms should be adopted, and he specified that these new norms should be about halfway "between the present norms and those that have been established by the Stakhanovs and Busygins."[211] This latter formulation was then used to fix new norms not on the basis of a concrete analysis of the circumstances of production, but on the basis of estimates, purely subjective, of the "possibilities," and this despite the warnings, perhaps ambiguous, in the resolution adopted by the plenum of December 1935.[212] For example, the annual plan of 1936 provided for an inrease of 21 percent in the norms of heavy industry, 23 percent of light industry, and 30 percent

of construction. To match these forecasts the plan fixed the respective average wage increases of these industries at 12, 14 and 10 percent.[213] At the beginning of 1936 these forecasts were turned "upside down." In fact, the industrial conferences at this time raised norms by 30-40 percent in the engineering industry, 34 percent in the chemical industry, 51 percent in electricity generation, and so on.[214]

Such norm increases led the enterprise managers to strive for a considerable increase of work intensity. Also, they often led to disorganization of production, especially when actual conditions did not permit them to obtain regularly the level of productivity that had been forecast. Lastly, they imposed loss of wages on workers who could not fulfil the new norms, either because they were paid piece-rates or because they were demoted because they could not fulfil the norms of their category. In general, the demotion of a worker from one category to the next one below corresponded, in 1936, to a wage loss of 50 rubles per month in industry, (in Category 3 the basic wage was then 300 rubles.)[215] Lacking detailed figures, it is impossible to know what proportion of workers was able to fulfil or overfulfil the new norms, thereby raising their incomes, and what proportion conversely suffered a wage reduction. In any case, it is certain that the introduction of new norms increased the real differentiation of wages and accentuated the division of the working class.[216]

### (4) The longer-term effects of the Stakhanovite movement and its transformations

The hold taken from above of what had once been essentially a worker initiative tended to transform the "Stakhanovite movement" into its opposite. More and more often, "Stakhanovite days" were organized by enterprise managers, wishing for recognition by the central leadership, who induced their workers, to "break records." These managers thereby received bonuses, honors, and promotion. Some of the workers who had participated in the "records" were also rewarded.

However, performances obtained in such circumstances could only be temporary as a rule. In reality, they often disorganized

production; during a more-or-less brief period an intensive effort was achieved, stocks of raw materials were used up and, above all, work intensity was pushed up to a level that could not last. Thus the "records" were usually followed by a period of production decline which took output below the previous level. Consequently, quite often, the average output of a period which covered the "records" and the period which followed them was often below the average obtained before the coming of Stakhanovism.

Still more serious for the workers, "Stakhanovism," thus transformed, became the pretext for frequent violations of the labor legislation (multiplication of extra hours unpaid as such, retention at their workplace of workers, especially young workers, for two consecutive shifts, etc.), and infringement of safety regulations. In the mines, for example, this latter gave rise to grave accidents, which later would be punished by death sentences for the engineers regarded as responsible for them.[217]

So that the "Stakhanovite movement" in spite of everything should continue, enterprise managers accorded privileges to a minority of workers, foremen, and shift leaders. They promised also to satisfy wider worker demands, notably to provide better work tools, but often they did not keep these promises.[218]

The Stakhanovite movement in this way came into contradiction with one of its initial fundamentals, of obtaining a substantial long-term growth of production based on a more intensive utilization of existing equipment.

In fact 1936 (which had been decreed as the "Stakhanovite Year") was characterized by serious difficulties in the field of production, by fluctuations in the progress of the latter, and by the non-fulfilment of plans in the main branches of industry. For example, coal production (in which the Stakhanovite movement had been born) reached 126 million tons in 1936, whereas the plan had set a target of 135 million; thus the plan was fulfilled by only 93 percent (and not exceeded as had been forecast at the beginning of the year). Compared to 1935 the increase was 15.8 percent, a *smaller increase than* in 1935 (+ 16.4 percent).[219]

Even during the course of 1936 the inability of the "Stakhanovite movement," thus transformed, to secure a fast and

lasting increase of industrial production was condemned by the Party leadership and the press. The latter stated that large percentages of workers were not succeeding in fulfilling the new norms, including those in the Donets Basin, where Stakhanov was working.[220] On the other hand, internal documents of the Party at this period note the indifference of the majority of the older skilled workers to "Stakhanovism," and even their hostility toward Stakhanovites' privileges. They also state that norm increases brought in their wake the departure of the worst-paid workers for enterprises or regions where they hoped to get better wages.[221] In general, at the end of September 1936, heavy industry had reached its annual plan target in monetary terms only to the extent of 59 percent.[222]

Usually, the chaotic revision of norms due to Stakhanovism was a source of discontent, because it gave rise to many wage inequalities than workers regarded as unjustified. This feeling of injustice was all the greater to the extent that these wage inequalities had grown in an arbitrary way, thanks to the irregular ways in which the title of "Stakhanovite" (with its attendant advantages) was awarded. Thus in 1936 the proportion of "Stakhanovites" varied considerably between different factories and workshops, without the reasons for these variations being clearly apparent. G. Friedmann, who visited a certain number of enterprises in the summer of 1936, estimated the average proportion of "Stakhanovites" in these enterprises at 15 percent, but he said there were discrepancies that were hard to explain. For example, in a metal seatings workshop of the Kaganovich ball-bearing plant in Moscow, there were 20.4 percent of workers overfulfilling their norms by more than 200 percent, but out of 542 workers there were only 62 Stakhanovites and 36 *udarniki*. In another workshop, where there was the same percentage of high outputs, there were 282 Stakhanovites and 211 *udarniki*. G. Friedmann also remarks that the biggest wage increases apparently benefited most of all the workers having the best equipment.[223]

In fact, from the beginning of 1936, the Party leadership was worried about different aspects of the situation it could see developing. At first it warned against the increased pressure put on workers by enterprise managers.[224] In March the tone hardened; a *Pravda* editorial was entitled "Open fire on the

saboteurs of the Stakhanovite movement."[225] Spring witnessed several articles of this type.[226] Such articles were often interpreted by regional and local Party offices as giving the signal for a repression to be carried out against engineers and technicians on the lower levels. This interpretation was not encouraged by the central leadership of the Party, which at the time wanted sanctions against lower administrators and cadres to be limited to extreme distortions of the "Stakhanovite movement." For example, *Pravda* of June 2, 1936 condemned the "programs against managers" which, it said, typified the interventions of certain regional Party authorities (especially in the Donbas). Five days later the Party's official newspaper even stated that those who talked about a massive sabotage of the Stakhanovite movement by technical cadres in effect were helping the enemies of the movement.[227] Soon afterward, *Pravda* wrote about the need to watch over the material interests of the technical cadres and condemned those who opposed piecerates and favored egalitarianism.[228] These positions were still being defended at the beginning of the summer: the difficulties of the development of the Stakhanovite movement were then mainly attributed to "dizzyness" brought on by the initial successes, and were still not attributed to sabotage. The regional and local Party offices were bidden to help the industrial cadres instead of accusing them.[229]

The "moderation" which the Party leadership called for in the treatment of industrial cadres tended to be abandoned during the summer of 1936. The reasons for this abandonment were various and numerous, with each reinforcing the others. At the economic level, the inadequacy of the results obtained (compared with the ambitions at the beginning of the year) played a decisive role. At the social level, the evident growth of discontent on the part of workers confronted with revised norms, increased wage inequalities, intensified work and the multiplication of accidents, led to the punishment of industrial cadres, who were blamed for this discontent. Contradictions between the chiefs of the central departments and enterprise managers also tended to be exacerbated. The latter more and more sought to escape the obligations placed on them by the former, and they often deceived the central organs by presenting a deceptively embellished picture of the results obtained in

the factories that they managed. Finally, the political situation in the second half of 1936 was characterized by a serious aggravation of tensions. The prosecutions brought against certain old leaders of the "left" opposition (including Zinoviev and Kamenev) and their death sentences was one of the manifestations of this increased tension.

The multiplication and the merging of contradictions determined the start of the general social and political crisis of 1936–39, and accelerated the final crisis of the "Stakhanovite movement." The latter in any case could not survive being taken over from above, because it was impossible to maintain for long the ingredient of worker initiative which Stakhanovism contained while *subordinating* it to demands imposed from above.

From August 1936 the crisis of the "Stakhanovite movement" took the form of an explosion of worker discontent, over which the Party tried to gain control. There was then an elimination of managers of the most unpopular enterprises. This unpopularity had its objective foundation in the abuses perpetrated by these managers (involving working conditions, wages, and norms, but also the material advantages that managers had obtained for themselves or which had benefited their own circle of family, friends, and "personal clique").

One example of the scale of worker discontent is provided by what happened after the arrest of a depot manager of the Timber Trust's Western Region (in Smolensk Region). He was arrested at first as a "former Trotskyite". However, very rapidly, his past adherence to the opposition (real or supposed) ceased to be the centre of the affair. He was accused of having held back the Stakhanovite movement by making working conditions intolerable, of having reduced arbitrarily the workers' wages, disorganized transport of timber, taken bonuses without justification, etc.[230] Some days after the publication of these accusations in the regional press, the union officials organized a general meeting of the workers and employees of the depot. This meeting adopted a resolution demanding the appearance in court of the depot chief and his accomplices and his condemnation to death by shooting. This resolution was printed in the press. The official report of the meeting testifies to the hatred of the workers toward the technical and administrative cadres of the depot and trust. The workers

were exasperated by arbitrary wage reductions and poor work organisation (which they regarded as deliberate, and intended to reduce their pay packets). They were equally discontented with poor safety at work, the living standards of their families, and so on. All this was blamed on the lower cadres and, in these circumstances, was utilized by the union officials against the technical and industrial cadres with whom they were in conflict.[231]

Cases of this kind multiplied up to the fall. They testify to the ease with which certain leaders of local Party organizations could mobilize worker discontent against other leaders belonging to the economic departments. They also show that there were numerous escape routes: appeals to higher bodies, and transfer of the accused cadres to other posts. On the whole, the central press took little part in these campaigns. No doubt it then seemed dangerous to "calm" the worker discontent in that way. In October 1936 there was an appeasement of the criticism campaign, based on direct expression of discontent.

In fact, the crisis of the "Stakhanovite movement" which began in 1936 made evident the *inability* of the existing social and political system to fully utilize the *installed productive potential,* a potential whose size had been demonstrated by the early Stakhanovite movement. One aspect of the 1936-39 crisis was a *blind struggle* to overcome this inability, whose cause was not identified and whose effects were blamed on *acts of sabotage.*

In any case, so far as production was concerned, the "Stakhanovite movement," after its transformation in 1936 and 1937, was less and less capable of responding to the hopes that the Party leadership had placed in it in 1935. For example, the industrial plan (in 1926-27 prices) was achieved in 1937 only to the extent of 92 percent; achievement rates were even lower for coal (91 percent), petroleum (88 percent), and sheet metal (83 percent),[232] while the rate of growth for industrial production was falling (11.1 percent in 1937, and 11.2 percent in 1938, against 28.5 percent in 1936).[233]

### (e) *The reproduction on a larger scale of differences between unskilled and skilled workers*

In Part One of Volume Two of *Capital*, Marx devotes a chapter to mechanization and large-scale industry.[234] He observes that

in the capitalist use of the machine, it is the whole system of machines, what he terms the "automaton," which is the subject, while the workers are simply auxilliary conscious organs helping its unconscious organs and, like them, subordinated to the central motive power. To this relationship of workers with the machine, which signifies the subordination of live labor to dead labor, Marx opposes that in which the collective worker or the body of social labor appears as the dominant *subject*, and the mechanical automaton as its object.[235]

Marx remarks that the capitalist use of the machine transforms the forms of division of labor among the workers. It brings about a new relationship between the main worker and his assistants. It divides workers into those who work with mechanical tools and the laborers. It engenders more qualified personnel: engineers, mechanics, joiners, etc., who supervise the general mechanism and make the necessary repairs.[236]

Marx also observes that the bourgeoisie creates for its children *polytechnic schools* while it reserves for the proletariat only the shadow of vocational training. Thus he thinks that with the conquest of power by the working class there will be introduced the teaching of technology, practical and theoretical, in the people's schools,[237] a *teaching needed to break up the accumulation of knowledge*, technical and scientific, at one pole of society, which serves the interests of capital and reduces the direct producers to servitude.

The character of the capitalist revolution of October did not prevent, in its aftermath, attempts being made to struggle against the capitalist characteristics of the educational system. The Bolshevik Party, in fact, wanted to be the instrument of a proletarian revolution and was therefore led to create "the unique school of work," and the "workers' faculties" *(Rabfaks)*.[238] Similarly it decided on the creation of factory trade schools.

However, the combination of the concrete conditions (disorganization of industry, resistance to the teachings handed down by the old regime, illiteracy, etc.), and the logic of a capitalist development of productive forces (which the Bolshevik Party did not get to grips with) soon limited, and increasingly so, the scope of the decisions taken in the morrow of October. For example, the *Rabfaks*, which were simultaneously to contribute to political education and teach a variety of industrial

techniques, tended little by little toward the training of specialists, who constituted a sort of "worker elite," and engineers of proletarian origin.

Throughout the 1920s two tendencies were still in confrontation. One of them emphasized mass polytechnic training and a single-stream approach (this tendency was often to be found within the Komsomol); the other insisted on rapid specialization and the setting up of *distinct* training streams.[239] This second tendency was supported by enterprise managers and certain trade-unionists.

At the end of NEP, when the capitalist revolution was deepening, the second tendency was more and more strengthened. Priority was given to the training of narrowly specialized workers. The conceptions of the Central Institute of Labor thus prevailed both in the organs of accelerated professional training connected with this Institute and in the trade schools, henceforth authorized to provide a rapid "training" of a limited six-month term. This training was distinct from that given in the course of the "normal" previous two or three year cycle. Training on the job then became very important.[240]

Partisans of this orientation invoked, in justification, its cheaper "cost" and greater "profitability," and they were believed. Thus there was consolidated a division between two training streams. One "produced" workers who were narrowly specialized and subject to the short-term demands of production. The other trained a "worker elite," destined to enjoy much higher wages than those of the mass of the workers. Dual streaming contributed to the development of a "qualification" polarization.

The "short stream" insisted on "drills" necessary for very specialized activity: it was a matter of adapting future workers to work that was parceled into small blocks. Apprentices were shown how to do physical exercises.[241] Formally, this stream also included scientific and technical instruction (leading to a so-called "technical minimum" diploma), but the content of this instruction was increasingly specialized. Thus the decree of September 15, 1933[242] reduced to six months the duration of courses in the factory schools, and theoretical instruction to 20 percent; in addition, the latter had to be directly relevant to the specialization. In these circumstances, only specialized workers

could be trained, not skilled workers, and there could not longer be any question of a polytechnic training. The latter henceforth was criticised for producing "intellectuals rather than manual workers."[243] Its contents reduced, the "technical minimum" no longer prepared the way for entry into another training stream.

During the First Five-Year Plan the trade schools of two or three years still trained a large number of skilled workers, mainly recruited from old workers and the sons of skilled workers.[244] Later, skilled workers were increasingly trained in technical schools, which drew their pupils from secondary and primary education. The same thing happened with the engineers' schools and the institutes of higher education,[245] which especially flourished.[246] Hence forward the principle of a single stream was abandoned. The separation between the training and situation of skilled workers on the one hand, and the mass of workers on the other, became ever greater.

At the end of the 1930s the division of the working class was consolidated. The bulk of the industrial working personnel consisted of laborers and specialized workers who had received a really *minimal* training. A minority consisted of skilled workers whose living conditions differed greatly from those of the mass of workers. Movement from one category to the other was increasingly difficult, despite the existence of a network of relatively large evening schools. In effect, the recruitment of skilled workers was mainly from the secondary schools. As well, the living and working conditions of the mass of workers constituted important obstacles to sustained and successful participation in the evening schools. Consequently, the polarization of the working class was consolidated.

### (f) *Forms of worker consciousness*

Obviously, an analysis of the forms of workers' consciousness would be very important for gasping certain of the ideological effects of the offensives and defeats suffered by the workers, of the destruction of all organizations they could call their own. However, a true analysis of these forms of consciousness is for many reasons extremely difficult, perhaps even impossible.

In fact, the possibility left to the workers to express themselves and even to act outside the control of the authorities was reduced to a minimum by a brutal repression based on the near-omnipresence of the police.[247] On the other hand, the very conditions under which workers lived, the diversity of their origins, the conflicting relationships they had with official ideology (which did not succeed in functioning as a true dominant ideology),[248] contributed to a real explosion of the forms of consciousness while hindering a clear understanding of them. Consequently what is said about the forms of worker consciousness can only be fragmentary.

### (1) Worker Party-members

Firstly, here are some figures for the evolution of the worker Party-members. These figures show that two clear periods must be distinguished from each other: firstly 1928-32, then the period from 1932 to the war.

During the first period the number of workers who were Party members grew strongly, from 572,000 in 1928 to more than 1.5 million in 1932 (end of December).[249] This growth was faster than that of the total workers. It corresponded to a systematic policy of the Party leadership that sought to increase the proportion of cadres of worker origin, regarding the latter as more "reliable." The scope of this increase of the worker Party-members can only be appreciated if account is taken of both the policy that the Party was putting into operation (and it is known that this manifested itself by anti-worker offensives that deeply lowered the working and living conditions of the workers) and of the motivations and attitudes of the workers who then belonged to the Party.

The greater part of the information that is available about the worker recruits of the Party at the beginning of the 1930s (and this information comes as much from the soviet press, which took up the complaints and requests of simple workers, as from the descriptions originating from workers and leftwing foreigners who worked in the USSR at this period), suggests that the recent worker-members of the Party were increasingly inclined, as soon as they had received a promotion, to consider

themselves "above" ordinary workers, and to assert themselves as an "elite" with a right to a certain number of privileges.[250] The rift between ordinary workers and Party-members of workers origin, because of this, tended to deepen. This tendency was all the stronger in that the scale of the industrialization program and collectivization, and the development of the tasks of management, administration, and organization that this program implied, impelled the Party leadership to transform rapidly a large proportion of its new worker recruits into officials and administrators.

The behaviour of new Party-members of working-class origin promoted to responsible posts (but also that of older Party-members) was a source of real tension between the population and numerous cadres. These tensions impelled the Party leadership to launch the purges of 1933 and 1934. These purges were accompanied by press campaigns from which it seems that most of those expelled in these years were accused of being "careerists," "bureaucratic elements seeking personal advantage," "morally corrupt," "passive," and so on.[251] Without taking all these charges at face value, one can still acknowledge that they roughly reflect reality.[252]

Among the direct testimony that is available about the new adherents and sympathizers of the Party at the beginning of the 1930s is that of Ciliga. The general tone of his writing (and the cross-checks that are possible) make it hard to doubt the authenticity of this account.

In his book, published for the first time in 1938 and republished twice since,[253] this old member of the Yugoslav Politburo tells of his experience with the young militants of Leningrad whom, up to May 1930, he was charged with instructing. This instruction was given to three categories of young militants, usually originating from the ranks of the workers.

A first category was that of students of the Communist University. Ciliga writes that at first they seemed to form "in some way the Leningrad proletarian elite." They were 25-30 years old, and he describes them as "healthy and energetic," adding, "They were nearly all working men and had long careers of public activity behind them."[254] He emphasized their capacity to learn, but notes at the same time what might be termed an attitude of passive scholarship: "They certainly

learned very well all they were taught; they learned it too well; for them what was not written in the manual did not exist." They were limited to the official program and showed no "critical sense."

When Ciliga spoke to them about the role of the "free activity of the masses" they remained indifferent. In their eyes, "it was the part of leaders to make decisions." On the material level, they enjoyed real privileges in a period of rigorous shortages, during which worker families were short of bread, milk, and butter, but their privileges and the sufferings of the workers did not seem to embarass them. When one spoke to them about it, they replied with generalities like "the building up of socialism is not without its difficulties." Thus, in the end, knowing them better, Ciliga no longer regards them as a "workers" elite but as "parvenus" anxious above all to defend their privileges.[255]

About the second category of these students, those of the regional Party school, Ciliga does not say very much. He indicates that they were young communists from the provinces, usually of peasant origin. They acknowledged the contradictions in which they found themselves, adhering to the political line of the Party but sharing the "peasants' uneasiness." Of these contradictory aspects it was the first which triumphed, for these militants also were ready to be nothing more than low-level executants of a line determined by others.[256]

The last group of Ciliga's students comprised factory communist militants, members of the agitation and propaganda departments of enterprise cells in Leningrad, or secretaries of these cells. Nearly all were, or had been, workers. A third already occupied minor official positions. Others, while continuing with their manual labor, filled unpaid offices and were candidates for official positions. This was one of those channels by which the politically active left the ranks of the workers to enter official careers.

Ciliga indicates that the living conditions vouchsafed these pupils (who followed courses of three to six months) were excellent and privileged compared to workers who remained in the factories. All the same, unlike the pupils of the other categories, they remained close to the preoccupations of the worker masses; they would speak about them while avoiding

the common place explanations. They did not hesitate to declare "The worker's life is unbearable, his patience is at en end; our propaganda meets with great obstacles among the workers." Unlike the other students, these also showed a great interest in the revolutionary worker movements of other countries, in which they still placed a good deal of hope.[257]

Through these several observations can be seen the outline of several new types of new cadres and Party members. Some already gripped by anxieties about their own careers, others anxious about the situation of the workers but relatively passive; and the last category closer to the working masses, whose discontents and hopes they expressed while partly turning toward the international revolutionary movement.

The scale of the 1933-34 purges[258] suggests that the mass entry of these types of cadre originating in the factories did not help Party activity among the workers of factories and construction sites.

For the period which begins after 1932 there is less information about the Party's worker recruitment. Nevertheless, it is known that in 1939-40 it provided less than 20 percent of new members.[259] In 1939 it would seem that workers formed only about 30 percent of the membership. They numbered about 700,000 a decrease of more than 50 percent since 1932. Even more important was that a percentage of Party worker-members represented no more than the equivalent of 5-6 percent of the total factory and construction site workers, against 19 percent in 1928 and 14.6 percent in 1932.[260]

These figures demonstrate the depth of the rift separating the Party from the working masses. They confirm that the Party's official ideology, exculpatory and triumphalist, was foreign to the forms of consciousness of the working masses.

### (2) The non-Party workers

While it is difficult to comprehend the forms of consciousness, motivations and aspirations of worker Party-members, it is even more difficult to investigate the same topics in relation to the non-Party members. In fact, the open expression of the latters' feelings were strongly repressed, while on the other hand, these feelings, were extremely mixed and contradictory.

The bits of knowledge that we have suggest that there co-existed within these masses deep discontent (to which we shall allude later) and a kind of mass adhesion to the existing order. Most often, this discontent was not aimed at the regime but at what were regarded as the "abuses" and "shortcomings" of its operations, abuses and shortcomings which were regarded as remediable.

Among the pieces of knowledge available a special place may be granted to an investigation carried out between September 1950 and September 1951 among several thousand Soviet refugees in West Germany and the United States.[261] (The conclusions of this do not seem to conform to what those who financed this project would have wished to "reveal"). In fact, one of the conclusions the authors of this enquiry arrived at was that the majority of workers accepted the existing social and economic situation. The authors observe that the workers who were interviewed did not usually question what is termed "the institutional aspects of the Soviet system, such as government ownership of industry."[262] They also note:

> The Soviet worker appears to take the Soviet factory and its special form of organization for granted and as the natural way of doing things. He is unhappy about the low pay, he wants the harsh labor laws eased or eliminated, he would like the pace eased and would be happy to have better materials to work with, but he questions hardly a single major aspect of the general organization of the Soviet factory system.[263]

However, this "acceptance" of the existing order was combined with discontent whose causes went far beyond those recalled in the above quotation. There were many reasons for discontent.

In the first place, it is known that at the end of the 1930s about two thirds of the Soviet workers were "new proletarians" snatched from the village by the brutal methods of collectivization and the claimed "dekulakization." The great majority of these workers were placed in a miserable situation in consequence of Party policy, and their situation was more

painful than the one they had known previously, especially from the point of view of accommodation, food, and dependence on a hierarchy. This was extremely important. Even if it was lived through by some as though it were some kind of "natural catastrophe," it nevertheless provoked a discontent much deeper than that caused by one or another particular "abuse."

At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s the deracination of large masses apparently gave rise to a rebirth of religious practices. This rebirth was felt by the Party as a manifestation of opposition and was repressed as such. This happened above all in the smaller towns at the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan. For example, in May 1929 an OGPU report noted that whilst the workers of a locality near Smolensk were largely absent from May 1 holiday celebrations, they openly participated in large numbers at the religious ceremonies accompanying Easter. This report quotes the words of a young worker who declared:

> The Bolsheviks spite the workers, so the workers spite the Bolsheviks. Take their May Day holiday. The little children came out to hear the music, but all the workers stayed at home. But on their own Easter holiday they all went to church. The Bolsheviks do evil to the workers, so the workers do them evil.[264]

In the following years this sort of oppositional manifestation seems to have been less frequent. Religious practices then no longer appeared as a challenge. Rather they were a sign of allegiance to an ideology other than that of the Party, an ideology in which part of the workers sought to "forget" the difficulties of daily life. It is not possible to evaluate the degree of influence of religious ideas within the working class. In any case it seemed sufficiently worrying to the authorities to persuade the latter to launch several anti-religious campaigns, notably in 1936.[265] Conversely, at the time of the war, the influence of religion (which actually was stronger among peasants then workers) seemed so strong that the Party ceased to attack it and contrived non-hostile relations with part of the clergy.

Thus the circumstances in which the large worker strata were formed weighed heavily on their forms of consciousness, all the more durably because the "new proletarians" were most often the ones who had the most difficult life. Usually they received the lowest wages because, having no qualifications, they provided the great majority of laborers. They were the most poorly housed, most often in barracks, and in general they were immersed in work surroundings where powerful coercion held sway, and which had nothing in common with the surroundings they had known previously.

In fact the difference of origin (town or country) and the differences of remuneration converged and mutually reinforced each other, marking out various clevages within the working masses. The enquiry by R.A. Bauer and his associate already quoted confirms the depth of one of these cleavages. The authors of this investigation write, for example:

> It is important to recognise that the Soviet policy of marked differentials in pay and other rewards according to skill and productivity has apparently succeeded in introducing marked distinctions within the working class. The segment of the working class which separates itself under the self-designation "skilled worker" is much more satisfied with its job experience in general, and with its pay in particular, than is the rank-and-file worker group.[266]

These same authors specify that from certain points of view the skilled workers were closer to the non-manual workers than they were to the other workers (laborers and peasants) although they identified themselves as belonging to the working class. They also note that their relationships with other workers seemed to be tarnished by antagonisms, especially when they served as an instrument for the revision of norms.[267]

However, what was most characteristic of the forms of consciousness of the working masses was the way in which the laborers and near-unskilled workers (who represented the great majority of the mining and construction industry) "endured" their implantation in production. The available information

suggests, from numerous indicators, the existence of a critical (and sometimes hostile) attitude not toward the "system"—which, as has been seen was "accepted as an abstraction"—but of its concrete operation. These indications were to be found as much at the level of individual or collective attitudes as at the level of verbal expression.

Most aspects of behavior which revealed a critical attitude toward the operation of the system have already been mentioned. To recapitulate, they were: resistance to norm increases, indifference to output quality, absenteeism, etc. It has been seen how the authorities reacted to these attitudes, and how they strove to divide the workers by developing a complex system of bonuses and personal "incentives."

It should be added that the authorities used another means to "help" the workers to endure the miserable existence that was their lot. This means was alcoholism. It is a fact that millions of Soviet workers drowned their sorrows in drink. It is also a fact that, whilst so many other products were unobtainable, the state shops were never short of alcohol. The effects of this alcoholism were disastrous from the point of view of health and also of production, but nothing was done (and this is an understatement) to combat it, because it constituted a "political insurance," a means of atomizing the workers, to increase their social and political passivity. It was the opium of the Soviet people.

True, the increase of alcohol consumption was not enough to obstruct various explosions of radical and deep discontent. These explosions (relatively rare because of the severity of repression and police vigilance) manifested themselves as voluntary and collective work stoppages and street demonstrations. Because of the tight censorship, little is known about these worker struggles, but it is known that they broke out from time to time in forms that may be called "spontaneous" by reason of the absence of stable workers' organizations. These struggles unfolded mainly in the industries in which wages were lowest (like the textile industry) or in towns that were especially badly supplied with food. During the First Five-Year Plan it is known, for example, that there were strikes, demonstrations, and "hunger marches" in various textile factories in Ivanovo Voznesensk, Vychuga and elsewhere, and that these worker struggles gave rise to severe repression.[268]

The unfolding of the repression and the way in which the workers reacted are very significant. In general, the authorities began by satisfying the essential demands (to defuse the movement and ensure a return to work). Then they exiled two or three workers and sent ten or twenty to camps. Later, in the following months, arrests of workers continued under various pretexts (usually for "individual crimes"), so much so that thousands of workers were deported in the end. Ciliga, who provides information about these struggles and the repression that they provoked, also notes about the participants in these struggles that in no way did they put themselves up as champions of a political cause, less still as adversaries of the regime. They took part for concrete and specific reasons and, once sentenced, they wished above all to re-enter society, such as it was, find work, and earn their release.[269] These workers did not therefore appear to be "opposers" of the regime.

The complexity of the forms of consciousness of the workers also appeared, as noted above, at the level of verbal expression, but the latter could not be known until later, and only in the particular circumstances which occurred especially in the second half of the 1930s. Then the Party leadership itself decided to make room for the expression of worker discontent, while taking care to see that it was directed toward local-level bosses in industry, and more exceptionally, in the Party. Following decisions taken after 1935,[270] numerous complaints flooded the newspapers and certain official departments (notably those of the judiciary) from 1936 to 1938.

A perusal of newspapers of the time, and of those archives to which access is possible (in practice, this means essentially the Smolensk Archives, now in the United States), enables a certain view to be taken of the picture made of the situation by the different worker strata, the judgements that they made on it and the changes they wished to make in it. Nevertheless, information obtained in this way is necessarily limited. Firstly, it was only a minority which complained by addressing itself to the authorities. Secondly, those who complained apparently "censored" the expression of their recriminations because previous experience had shown that excessively pointed complaints could rebound on to the heads of their authors, with the authorities declaring: "These complaints are from the

enemy,"[271]. In these circumstances, what was condemned in letters from the population corresponded above all, but not exclusively, to what was condemnable by official ideology. Despite these limitations, an examination of the complaints coming from the public is still very instructive.

If one takes, to begin with, the dossiers of complaints in the Smolensk Archives, it would appear that the authors of the letters emphasized above all the *"abuses"* which were being produced in the economic and social system as it was, and that these "abuses" to them seemed to come essentially not from the objective circumstances of the system's operation (from the social relationships and practices that were objectively dominant), but from *subjective personal* characteristics of one or another agent of the system. Thus the workers who wrote these letters ascribed their difficult or intolerable situation to the cadres connected with them and to the latters' indifference. They complained of definite *individuals*, who were exercizing managerial functions and who were criticized for administrative arbitrariness, brutality, behaving like "potentates" or "great lords," corruption, etc.[272] As Rittersporn remarks, these missives were written in the "official style." Their authors ostentatiously used the arguments used by the press and official spokesmen. They affected proclaimed principles in order to protest against their infringement.[273] On the whole, they did not put into explicit question the economic and social system, or the principles by which wages and norms were fixed. This type of letter did not usually contest the way the managers they condemned were appointed, nor the circumstances in which they were chosen. Their authors complained only of "concrete facts": wages that were too low, managers who were brutal or corrupt, etc.

The perusal of such complaints obviously does not tell us whether those expressing them limited themselves voluntarily to condemning mainly those acts which official propaganda had designated as condemnable, and whether the authors of letters sent to the authorities actually believed they had only complaints to make about facts that were "isolated" or "particular" (even though the same facts were widespread throughout the country). The almost total absence of complaints going beyond the immediate situation—while repression was developing on

a large scale—invites the thought that here there was an extreme prudence toward the authorities. Those who addressed themselves to them did so in despair, in face of situations felt to be intolerable.

The style of these complaints therefore reflected more distrust than confidence toward the Party organizations, press, or judiciary, which were meant to take notice of them. This appeared when the authors of these complaints threatened to carry them—if a favorable outcome failed to appear—to a higher level, to appeal to Moscow or to Stalin.[274] However, such a threat suggests that the authors of these complaints had perhaps a little faith in the higher levels. This faith—if it was genuine, and it seems that part of it was — was nurtured by the repression that the higher leadership was exercizing at this time against the local and intermediate cadres. The latter were often hated, and the repression that struck them was felt to conform to popular sentiment.

Fear of being punished for making a complaint impelled some writers of letters to refer to a much wider discontent which they said was felt by workers who did not dare to protest by letter. These writers *held the authorities themselves to blame*. For example, the authors of a letter denouncing the behavior (described as stupid) of certain managers, declared:

> We are writing... because all the ignorant and consciousless workers are slandering the authorities because of such idiots.[275]

This suggests the existence of a discontent much more radical than that personally expressed by the authors of the letters.

The discussion campaign, mounted in 1936 around the project of the new Constitution (which was adopted at the end of the year), was also an opportunity for a certain number of workers to express their point of view and their criticisms, but information about the criticisms expressed in the framework of these discussions is relatively rare. However, it does suggest that at times the discussion was carried further than the authorities wished. For example, while certain officials were blamed for having reduced the discussion to a mere "formality," others were attacked for "not having been able to lead the criticism,"

which meant that questions were raised whose discussion did not seem desirable to the authorities. [276]

The Smolensk Archives reveal some of the themes raised against the wishes of the authorities. Among them figure changes to be made in labor legislation (for example, workers wanted to see in the Constitution the obligation of enterprise managers to respect this legislation). Suggestions were also made with a view to a more strict regulation concerning dismissals, work safety, and the extension of free medical services. Workers demanded a better guarantee of their personal safety, or a change in the way officials, and especially judges, were appointed. Some demanded that officials should be elected, and some workers suggested that opposition parties should be legalized.[277] All this indicates the existence of an ideology quite different from the official ideology.

The available information enables us to known only very little about the ideological differentiations existing between workers, and about the discussions which resulted from this. However, we know that discussions took place, and that points of view that differed from the official point of view succeeded in getting themselves expressed. We also have that, when these diverging points of view obtained sufficient support, they sometimes got mentioned in the press.[278] Nevertheless the active participants in the discussions were a minority, the majority of workers staying aloof, participating in only a formal sense when meetings were organized at which attendance was practically unavoidable.

In sum, everything indicates that there were shattered forms of worker consciousness. These forms coincided very rarely with the justificatory and triumphalist discourse of the authorities, for the latter had scarcely any relationship with the great difficulties in which the public was floundering. These forms of shattered worker consciousness favored the more or less passive acceptance of the situation, but did not block the expression of much recrimination or even the explosion of open, but local, demonstrations of discontent. Two elements contributed, at the time, to prevent this discontent taking an organized, explosive, form.

The first, perceptible especially in the second half of the 1930s, was the ability of the authorities to themselves talk

about the situation and denounce the circumstances that especially exasperated the workers; hence the numerous interventions by Stalin, pillorying the "bureaucracy," the attitudes of "great lords" and of certain managers and the "scandalous attitude towards people, cadres, and workers."[279]

Such words obscured the role played by the authorities themselves in the consolidation of a system that multiplied the privileges and the arrogance of an exploiting managing minority. However, through the denunciation which it included, this discourse sounded in the ears of the workers like an echo of their own complaints. It contributed—above all when repression fell on part of the cadres—in developing a populist feeling with a certain faith in the power summit from which this discourse came. Thus there coexisted in the worker consciousness an absence of adhesion to the official ideology, a multiform discontent with the functioning of the system, together with a *"faith" of the populist type in the top leadership of the Party.*

The second element which prevented accumulated discontent taking an explosive form was the scale itself of the repression. The latter succeded in dismantling any attempt at organized resistance. It gave rise to "prudence," fear, and the passive acceptance of things as they were. Above all, since it generated a vast sector of penal work it made those who were not subjected to that kind of work feel that they were "privileged."

## Notes

1. These figures are from *N.Kh... 1970g*, p. 509. They have been revised upwards from those which were in the statistical collections published before the 1962 publication of the 1959 census results, which also revised the 1939 census results. (See *Itogi vsesoyuznoi perepisi naseleniya 1959g. SSSR*, (Moscow, 1962). I mention this revision because of its scale and the conclusions that can be drawn as to the dimensions of penal labor (which at least in part, may—or may not—be included in the statistics about wage-earners in the Soviet economy). To illustrate the magnitude of the statistical revisions, I would mention that in the 1956 year book the same wage-earning population is estimatd at 31.2 million for 1940 [*N.Kh... 1956g.*, p. 203], which corresponds to the figures obtained on the

basis of annual reports from the different organizations that were required to report to the Central Statistical Office the number of wage-earners that they employed.

2. Percentage estimated from *N.Kh. ...1970g.*, p. 508.
3. However, the two phenomena are not identical because part of the wage-earners worked in places not falling into the category of towns [for example, sovkhoz and MTS workers]. It should also be noted that part of the wage-earners in fact belonged to the category of penal workers but, as has already been said, it does not seem that these latter were usually included in the statistics of wage-earning workers. In any case, what is said here about the transformation of the wage-earners' working conditions applies in principle only to the "free" workers; these will be discussed later.
4. See C. Bettelheim, *La Planification soviétique*, p. 306; W. Eason, "Population and Labour Force," *in Soviet Economic Growth* [ed. by A. Bergeon] (Evanston, 1953), p. 110; and Lorimer, p. 100.
5. Estimated from *N.Kh...1970g.*, p. 509.
6. One of the first signs of the anti-worker offensive was the adoption of the alleged seven hour working day which coincided with the setting up of *allotted work*, operating in circumstances especially disadvantageous for the workers. [See J. Sapir, *"Organisation du travail, classe ouvrière, rapports sociaux en URSS de 1924 à 1941"* (Thesis 1980, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales), p. 238.
7. In 1930 this phenomenon was of such magnitude that on average each worker changed jobs once every eight months. See S. Schwarz, *Labor*, p. 98, quoting the Soviet statistical year book for 1936.
8. *Izvestiya*, Sept. 8, and Dec 17, 1930; also *Izvestiya Warkomtruda*, No. 1-2, 1931, quoted by Schwarz, pp. 66 and 95. Schwarz followed these questions very closely and systematically combed the press of the time, and will be frequently quoted in this present work; see also *VKP (b) o profsoyuzakh* (Moscow, 1939), pp. 50 ff.
9. See the article by S. Moshkov, *Voprosy truda*, July 1931, and Schwarz, pp. 107 and 312-13.
10. *Izvestiya*, Jan 15, 1933.
11. See *Annuaire statistique de l'URSS*, Moscow, p. 133.
12. For workers with certain skills and employed in industry and transport the labor book had been introduced from February 1931 *[ZI*, Feb. 12, 1931]. By a decree of Dec 20, 1938, this labor book has henceforth issued to all wage-earners *[Izvestiya*, Dec. 21, 1938].
13. *Izvestiya*, Dec. 29, 1938.
14. These measures were made worse after the war (by a decree of August 9, 1948; see Schwarz, p. 316], which shows that they were not due in any special way to the circumstances of the 1930s.
15. A decree of Nov. 1917 had introduced the eight-hour day, an old demand of the Russian Social Democratic Party [see *KPSS*, 1953, Vol. 1, p. 41]. In 1927, parallel with the introduction of allotted work, the seven-hour day had been introduced. From 1929 there was an extension of the "five-day week" (four days work and one day of rest] or the six-day week.

the rest day varying so that enterprises did not break off work. The decree of June 1940 returned to the seven-day week [six full-time days and one day of rest, the latter being fixed]. It was a question of increasing working hours without a corresponding wage increase and was in contradiction with the 1936 Constitution [modified only in 1947]. [See *Izvestiya*, Dec. 26, 1947].

16. *Izvestiya*, June 27, 1940. In A. Bergson, *The Structure of Soviet Wages*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1954), pp. 235ff there are English translations of large extracts from the decree of June 26, 1940, and also from that of Oct. 20, 1940, to be mentioned in the next section.
17. This right ,was recognized by Article 46 of the 1922 Labor Code [See *Kodeks zakonov o trude RSFSR*, Moscow, 1931].
18. See Schwarz, pp. 106-107.
19. Articles demanding an "iron discipline" may be found in *Sovietskaya zakonnost'* of Oct. and Dec. 1940.
20. *Sovietskaya yustitsiya*, No. 17-18, 1940, p. 3, and *Izvestiya*, August 11, 1940.
21. See A. Nove, *An Economic History*, pp. 260ff.
22. Schwarz, p. 119-30.
23. See especially *Izvestiya*, Dec. 27, 1941, and *Vedomosti verkhovnogo sovieta*, March 5, 1942, Oct. 10, 1942, and Sept. 23, 1943.
24. Schwarz, p. 116.
25. For example, a decision of Narkomtrud of the USSR dated Jan. 15, 1931 or of Narkomtrud of the RSFSR dated Jan. 23, 1931 [*Izvestiya*, Jan. 18, 1931 and *Izvestiya Narkomtruda*, pp. 137-40].
26. In any case, at this time, a management of an enterprise could dismiss a worker for many reasons; for a punishment, because it was "necessary" to reduce the work-force [a period of notice had then to be observed, and in certain cases a redundancy payment might be paid]. See *Sbornik zakonodatel'nykh aktov o trude (Moscow*, 1956), pp. 99 and 103, quoted by R. Conquest, *Industrial Workers*, pp. 18-19. In principle the agreement of the trade union local and enterprise organizations was required; in the 1930s situation such agreement was almost always granted.
27. The business of this commissariat was then mainly transferred to the trade unions [*Izvestiya*, June 24, 1933]. - Until finished
28. See above, previous section, and *Izvestiya*, Oct. 20, 1940.
29. R. Conquest, *Industrial Workers*, p. 31.
30. Little by little these measures fell into desuetude after the war. They were formally abolished only in 1956 [R. Conquest, *Industrial Workers*, p. 31].
31. See *Izvestiya Narkomtruda*, 1929, p. 787, and Schwarz, p. 77.
32. See *Izvestiya*, Oct. 3, 1940, and *Revue internationale du travail*, Dec. 1940.
33. The decree of Oct. 2 stipulated that only those students and pupils who had an "excellent" notation would qualify for a study grant. There is a text in English of this decree in A. Bergson, *The Structure of Soviet* Wages, pp. 234ff. In 1940 the grants varied from 150 to 200 rubles per year for schools and from 300-500 for universities. At that time, the average monthly wage of a First Category worker [the lowest paid] was

around 100 rubles. It should be mentioned that after the death of Stalin the university grants were abolished. In 1958, 60-70 percent of Moscow students were the children of cadres or members of the intelligentsia. [See. I.R. Azrael, *Managerial Power and Soviet Politics* (Cambridge, Mass), 1966, p. 250, note 14.

34. K. Marx, *La Capital* [Paris, Editions Sociales edition, 1967-1969] Vol. 3, p. 20.
35. *Pyatiletnii plan narodno-khozyaistvennogo stroitel'stva SSSR* (Moscow, 1929), Vol. 1, p. 185.
36. See V.M. Dogadov, "*Etapy razvitiya sovietskogo kollektivnogo dogovora*," in *Izvestiya Akad. Nauk* (Moscow, 1948), No. 2 [quoted by P. Barton, Conventions collectives et Réalités *ouvrières en Europe de l'Est* (Paris, 1957), p. 51].
37. S. Zagorsky, *Les salaires et la Règlementation des conditions de travail dans l'URSS* (Geneva, 1930), pp. 69ff.
38. P. Barton, *Conventions*, p. 61.
39. Quoted from Schwarz, p. 186.
40. See C. Bienstock, *Management*, p. 40, and P. Barton, *Conventions*, pp. 62-63.
41. See the section of this chapter devoted to the trade union crisis.
42. This has been acknowledged by many Soviet writers. Thus in the book by N.G. Aleksandrov, published in Moscow in 1949, and translated into German with the title *Lehrbuch des sowjetische Arbeitsrechts* [Berlin 1952], one can read "During 1933-1947 collective agreements were not signed" [p. 160]. It should be noted that the collective agreements signed after 1947 could not conflict with the official regulations concerning wages and work conditions; they could only concern secondary matters except when reproducing the official dispositions [See the trade-union monthly, *Professional'nye soyuzy*, No. 2, 1947, and the book by Aleksandrov.
43. S.K. Ordzhonikidze, *Stati i rechi* 1911-1937 (Moscow, 1939), p. 359.
44. *Pravda*, Dec. 29, 1935.
45. We shall see that, during the 1930s, nominal wages grew much faster than the plans "forecast," while real wages grew more slowly and even fell.
46. That is, Commissions for Settling Labor Disputes [literally "arbitrating-conflict commissions"].
47. See M. McAuley, *Labour Disputes in Soviet Russia* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 12-13, and Schwarz, p. 184; also Vol. 2 of the present work, p. 344.
48. See the resolution of Jan. 2, 1933. A significant fact is that the resistance this decision aroused meant that it was not published until May 1933, *in Trud*.
49. *Trud*, July 8, 1933.
50. *Voprosy truda*, No. 9, 1930, p. 37, and Vol. 2 of this work, p. 344.
51. *M. McAuley*, p. 37.
52. See Markovich, *RKK na novom etape* (Moscow, 1933), section 2.
53. See the circulars of December 15 and 30, 1936 of the Justice Commissariat in *Sovietskoye trudovoye pravo* (Moscow, 1938).
54. See the translations of the principle clauses of Article 58 in R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 557-61.

55. See *Soveshchaniye khozyaistvennikov inzhenerov, tekhnikov, partiinikh i profsoyuznykh rabotnikov tyazheloi promyshlennosti* (Moscow, 1934), p. 212-13, quoted by A. *Azrael, Managerial Power*, pp. 247-48.
56. Marx remarks that the direction of the production process "necessarily becomes despotic" when it has a capitalist nature [Marx, *Le Capital, Editions Sociales* edition, Vol. 2, p. 24]. He also notes that the more the collective labor force grows, the more the function of surveillance is exclusively entrusted to an "officer corps" [*Capital*, p. 24]. He adds that this discipline that has been imposed would become "superfluous in a social system where the workers worked for themselves" [*Capital*, Vol. 6, p. 102].
57. *Spravochnik profsoyuznogo rabotnika* (Moscow, 1967). This regulation is still in force See T. Lowitt, *"La remuneration du travail dans l'entreprise de type soviétique,"* in *Sociologie du travail*, No. 2, 1970, pp. 155-56.
58. Para. 2 of the order of Feb. 25, 1932 [*Spravochnik profsoyuznogo*, p. 103.
59. On these and following points see Schwarz, pp. 278ff.
60. Among others, see *KP*, April 29, 1930; *Trud*, Feb. 25, 1930, Sept. 18, 1930, Nov. 7, 1930, and then throughout the 1930s. [*Schwarz*, pp. 278ff.].
61. *Izvestiya*, Nov. 7, 1931.
62. *Trud*, March 21 and 29, May 11, 1934.
63. *Trud*, May 16, 1937.
64. Schwarz, pp. 288ff.
65. Articles quoted by Schwarz, pp. 292-93.
66. See the official reports of the trials [Note 18, Chapter 1, Part 3 of this volume].
67. We shall return to this question in Part 3.
68. See Schwarz, pp. 293-303. This author shows that the Work Inspectorate was made incapable of performing its duties.
69. K. Marx, *Le Capital* [Editions Sociales edition], Vol. 6, p. 107.
70. Contingents of detainees could also be allocated to these production units. It was then a matter of the penal colony workers rather than those of the labor camps.
71. Schwarz, p. 99, and T. Cliff, Russia; *a Marxist Analysis* [London, 1970], p. 26.
72. See *Sobraniye zakonov i rasporyazhenii raboche-krestyanskogo pravitel'stva SSSR*, No. 244, 1933.
73. *Sotsialisticheskoye stroitel'stvo* (Moscow, 1936), p. 530, quoted by Schwarz, p. 100. It will be noted that the first figure, denounced as "scandalous" by the Soviet press, was not exceptionally high at all when compared with other countries.
74. *Izvestiya*, Dec. 29, 1938.
75. *Izvestiya*, Jan. 9, 1939.
76. '*Sovietskaya zakonnost*', No. 1, 1939, and *Pravda*, Jan. 26, 1939.
77. Schwarz, p. 103.
78. *Trud*, Feb. 3, 5, 10, 1939, quoted by Schwarz, p. 104.
79. *Izvestiya*, June 27, 1940.
80. *Sovietskaya zakonnost'*, Oct. 1940, pp. 29-30, and Dec. 1940, p. 7; Schwarz, p. 109.

81. See *Sovietskaya yustitsiya*, No. 13, 1940, pp. 6-10, quoted by Schwarz, p. 113.
82. R. Conquest, *Industrial Workers*, pp. 105-107.
83. *Izvestiya*, Dec. 30, 1940, quoted by T. Cliff, Russia, p. 27.
84. See Vol. 1, p. 183-185 of the present work.
85. See above, pp. 391-92, and V. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1965), Vol. 32, p. 24.
86. See above, Vol. 32, p. 96.
87. See above, Vol. 33, p. 187.
88. Vol. 2, pp. 372-73 of the present work. Also KPSS [1953], Vol. 2, pp. 95FF.
89. See Vol. 2, pp. 346 and 455 of the present work.
90. *XVIyi s'ezd VKP* [b], p. 63. Another English version is given in T. Szamuely's "The Elimination of Opposition between the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Congress of the CPSU," in *Soviet Studies*, [January 1966], pp. 318 FF [Quotation on p. 336].
91. See KPSS [1953], Vol. 2, pp. 604ff.
92. See above, pp. 607 and 616.
93. See Vol. 1 of the present work, p. 389.
94. *KPSS* [1953], Vol. 2, p. 608.
95. See the article by I. Kossior, deputy chairman of VSNKh, *in ZI*, Jan. 13, 1931. This paper at this time replaced *Torgovo-promyshlennaya gazeta*.
96. *Trud*, Feb. 6, 1931, and Schwarz, pp. 248-49; also pp. 516-17 in Schwarz. French edition [S. Schwarz, *Les Ouvriers en Union soviétique* (Paris, 1956).]
97. For example, see *Trud*, April 13 and 7, Sept. 1931.
98. *Trud*, April 9 and 12, 1931.
99. J. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 13, [Moscow, 1955], pp. 53ff, especially pp. 61-62, Stalin's speech of June 23, 1931 was called "New conditions — new tasks in economic construction."
100. *Trud*, August 15 and 16, 1931.
101. *Trud*, January 14, 1932.
102. *Trud*, February 16, 1932.
103. This trade union responsibility was emphasized by Gavril Veinburg, secretary of the Central Council Presidium in charge of wage matters, in May 1932 at a meeting of the Presidium [See *Trud*, May 21, 1932].
104. See *"Materiaux pour le rapport soumis par le Conseil central au IXe Congrès intersyndical,"* [Moscow, 1932], pp. VIIFF, quoted by Schwarz [p. 433 of the French edition of his book].
105. The Ninth Congress still included 84.9 percent of delegates regarded as "workers." At the Tenth Congress the latter constituted only 23.5 percent, while 43 percent were union officials and 9.4 percent technicians [See I. Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions*, [Lonodn, 1950], pp. 128-29.
106. As is known, the same situation still prevails today in the USSR, as in the Soviet bloc countries, and also in other "socialist countries." The only exception is Poland, where the workers' struggles enabled the workers to again form a union organization that would not be simply an instrument used by the exploiting class and its power.

107. *Trud*, January 24, 1933.
108. *Trud*, April 6, 1933.
109. *Sobraniye zakonov i rasporyazhenii raboche-krestyanskogo pravital'stva SSSR* [Moscow, 1933], 40/238, art. 1, and [1934] 43/342. See also *BSE*, 2nd Edition, Vol. 35, p. 161, and *KPSS* [1954], Vol. III, pp. 230FF.
110. *Trud*, September 1, 5 and 6 1934, and *Pravda*, September 9, 1934. Also see Schwarz, pp. 453-55 and 517 [of the French edition].
111. *ZI*, September 24, 1934.
112. *Pravda*, December 11, 1935.
113. *Trud*, November 22, 1935.
114. On this point see Vol. 2 of the present work, p. 167, note 12. These archives comprise 536 dossiers, of which 527 are numbered WKP 1 to WKP 527, two are numbered RS 921 and 924, and the others are numbered separately.
115. See the archival documents under WKP 355, p. 114, an extract of which is quoted in M. Fainsod, Smolensk, p. 236.
116. See WKP 105, p. 142, quoted by M. Fainsod, Smolensk, p. 321.
117. See above, pp. 323-24.
118. *Pravda*, March 21, 1937.
119. *Trud*, March 26, 1937.
120. This Plenum was the sixth since the 1935 Congress; the Fifth had met two-and a half years previously. However, in 1934 it had been decided that the Plenum would meet every two months [*Pravda*, September 9, 1934].
121. These extracts from Shvernik's speech may be found in Schwarz [French edition], pp. 522-23.
122. This statute was elaborated only in April 1949. It would be ratified by the Tenth Trade Union Congress. It consecrated the concept of union tasks that had prevailed since 1930, giving priority to the task of mobilizing the workers for the fulfilment and overfulfilment of the plan, for the increase of labor productivity and the reduction of production costs. The other tasks are only mentioned toward the end. [See P. Barton, *Conventions collectives*, pp. 34-35.
123. *Pravda*, May 20, 1937, and, *Trud*, September 15 and October 4; also Schwarz [French edition], pp. 464-65.
124. *KPSS* [1945], Vol. III, p. 364.
125. See Vol. 2 of the present work, pp. 249-50.
126. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 13 [Moscow, 1955], pp. 58ff.
127. See above, p. 63.
128. See above, p. 64.
129. See above, pp. 77-78.
130. See Note 74, Ch. 2, in Part 3 of this volume.
131. IX *Vsesoyuznyi s'ezd professional'nykh soyuzov SSSR*, [Moscow, 1933], pp. 308 and 406.
132. K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 [Moscow, 1974 edition], p. 521.
133. Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 1 [XIV], [Stanford, 1967], p. 50.
134. This differentiation was part of a policy of *dividing the working class* [a subject to which we shall return] and of constituting a worker minority

that was relatively "privileged." The existence of this latter gave to the power of the dominant class a particular social base. It permitted the practice of a "workerism" of specific type.

135. The costs increase in 1931 and 1932, especially in construction, is from E. Zaleski's analyses in *Planification*, p. 182. The author writes that in 1931 construction cost increased by 17 percent whereas the plan anticipated a decrease of 15 percent [See his note 1, p. 185].
136. See *Pravda*, May 21, 1931.
137. S. Kaplun, quoted from Schwarz, p. 282.
138. *EI*, November 7, 1931, quoted from Schwarz, p. 282.
139. The growth of investment had in fact as a consequence the circumstance that ony a relatively small part of it was covered by the profits of enterprises. Thus in 1935 the profit volume of the state sector rose to 7.8 billion rubles [See *Les Finances publiques de 1920 a 1936*, [Geneva, 1937], whereas investment in the "socialized economy" was 22.7 billion [See C. Bettelheim, *La Planification sovietique*, p. 268].
140. KPSS [1971], Vol. 5, p. 149.
141. See Smolensk Archives, WKP 189, p. 26, quoted by G. Rittersporn in his "*Conflits sociaux et politiques en URSS, 1936-1938*" [University of Paris 1 thesis, 1976], p. 21 [Copy at L'Institut d'histoire des Slaves].
142. We shall see later the developent and significance of this movement.
143. Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 1 [XIV] [Stanford, 1967], p. 80.
144. See above, pp. 93-94.
145. See above, p. 94.
146. See above, p. 87. We shall see later more about the resistance of the workers to Stakhanovism, and how it was use to increase work intensity.
147. This is developed later in this chapter.
148. See *Sotsialisticheskoye narodnoye khozyaistvo v 1933-1940gg* [Moscow, 1963], p. 107, and A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 233.
149. *Izvestiya*, April 2, 1936.
150. A. Yugow, *Russia's Economic Front For War and Peace* [London, 1942]; also Shvernik in *Trud*, April 17, 1941.
151. *Mashinostroeniye*, April 11, 1939, quoted by T. Cliff, Russia, *a Marxist Analysis*, p. 24.
152. Progressive piece-rates gave way to a basic piece wage for an output within the norm. Once the norm was reached, each unit of output was remunerated at a rate that was much higher. For example, for a worker who overfulfilled his norm the units corresponding to the 5 percent above-norm output could be paid at 1.5 times the usual rate. Beyond 5 percent, the rate was double, and beyond 10 percent it was triple. This example is quoted from N.S. Maslowa, *Der arbeitslohn* [Berlin, 1953], a translation from a book of the same title in Russian [Moscow, 1952]. This writer recalls that "the progressive piece-rate is applied correctly only when it permits a reduction of production costs." [pp. 43 and 48].
153. Schwarz, p. 147.
154. Schwarz, p. 148.
155. N. Maslowa, *Der Arbeitslohn*, p. 27.

156. This emerges from the decree of November 1, 1937 [*Izvestiya*, November 2, 1937], which for most industries introduced a minimum wage of 110 and 115 rubles per month. [See also Schwarz, p. 165].
157. G. Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie a l'URSS* [Paris, 1938], pp. 112-15.
158. For an example, see above, p. 114.
159. See A. Bergson, *The Structure of Soviet Wages*, [Cambridge, Mass., 1954], pp. 207-10.
160. Schwarz, p. 157.
161. N. Maslowa, *Der Arbeitslohn*, p. 29.
162. See above, pp. 36-37.
163. We shall therefore not examine here the development of nominal wages, for this has hardly any significance from the point of view of the workers' living conditions at a time of fast-rising prices. It should be emphasized that the calculation of changes in the real wages is made a little uncertain by the absence of an official index permitting a tracing of variations in the cost of living [there is not even a roughly approximate index of any significance]. However, published information about price movements allows an estimate of the order of magnitude of price fluctuations and, consequently, can lead to *estimates* about the development of real wages.
164. It will also be noted that during the 1930s high wages were much less taxed than in the 1920s. Thus in 1928 income tax was very progressive [From 0.60 percent to 30 percent]. In 1934 the tax ceiling was 3.50 percent. On this point see A. Bergson, *The Structure*, p. 33. In the next volume we shall return to this problem, to the measures which mainly favored the differentiation of incomes between workers and managers.
165. This corresponds to an increase of 155 percent in retail prices and 126 percent in average wages. [See A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 208].
166. See N. Jasny, *The Soviet Economy during the Plan Era* [Standord, 1951], p. 59. The calculations of E. Zaleski show an even stronger reduction in the wages of industrial workers and employees. According to various Soviet sources used by that author, the *nominal wages* of workers on average grew by 68.7 percent between 1927-28 and 1932, whilst the *price index*, calculated by him with an allowance for supplies bought on the free market, *increased in the same period by 271 percent; thus he* obtains for 1932 an average wage for workers and employees of industry that is equal to only 45.5. percent of that for 1927-28 [E. Zaleski, *Planification de la croissance*, pp. 358-61].
167. In fact, a fraction of the latter benefitted from food rations larger than average; also, some factories organized canteens which provided quite cheap meals; Finally, many workers had gardens which provided part of their food supply.
168. According to the First Five-Year Plan, the real wage in industry was to increase by nearly 60 percent in the optimal variant. See *Pyatiletnii plan narodno-khozyaistvennogo stroitel'stva SSSR*, Vol. 2 [1], and the calculations of E. Zaleski in *Planification*, pp. 314 and 319.
169. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 13, pp. 203-4.
170. See Malafayev's *Istoriya tsenoobrazovaniya*, p. 402, and *Trud v SSSR* [Moscow, 1936], P. 21.

171. According to S.N. Prokopovicz in *Russlands Volkswirtschaft unter den Sowjets* [Zurich, 1944], the worker's average real wage fell by about 30 percent between 1932 and 1934.
172. At the same time as rationing was abolished, the prices of products, henceforth to be sold without "coupons," rose on average *five times* above the prices of the same products previously sold against ration coupons. [See Schwarz, p. 162].
173. E. Zaleski suggests the figure of 56.1 percent [*Planification*, p. 358]. M. Jasny ends up with 57.6 percent [*The Soviet Economy*, p. 59], and J. Chapman 58 percent [J. Chapman, *Real Wages in Soviet Russia since 1928* [Cambridge, Mass, 1963], PP. 145FF.].
174. See *Vtoroi pyatiletnii plan razvitiya narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR*, [Moscow, 1934], Vol. 1, p. 504.
175. Schwarz, p. 169.
176. A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 259.
177. See Molotov's report to the Eighteenth Party Congress in *Correspondence internationale*, April 11, 1939, p. 393.
178. E. Zaleski, *Planification*, p. 358, and J. Chapman, *Real Wages*, p. 153.
179. S.N. Prokopovicz, *Russlands*, p. 309.
180. See *Trud v SSSR*, quoted by A. Nove, *An Economic History*, pp. 250-51.
181. See Smolensk Archive, WKP 109, quoted by M. Fainsod, *Smolensk*, p. 322.
182. Unfortunately it is impossible to even approximately calculate the evolution of this rate. To simply indicate orders of magnitude, the following figures can be quoted:
In 1928 the national income, in 1926-27 prices, is estimated to have been 25 billion rubles [C. Bettelheim, *La Planification*, p. 268]. If it is accepted that the share of industry in this sum was 29.2 percent [E.H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, [London, 1969], Vol. 1, p. 977, the net production of industry can then be estimated at 7.3 billion rubles [industrial prices having varied little between 1926-27 and 1928, there is little point in making an adjustment for price changes]. In 1928 main industry employed 3.7 million workers [O.R. Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial Production, 1928-1951* [Cambridge, Mass, 1954, p. 112], and employment in small-scale industry can be estimated at 700,000 [Carr and Davies, p. 385, note 4], which totals 4.4 million workers, giving a net value of industrial production per worker of 1,660 rubles. This same year, the average wage in reported industry was 70.9 rubles monthly [*Foundations*, p. 58], or about 850 rubles per year [a slightly overestimated average because wages in small-scale industry were smaller]. These figures reveal an "excess" of 810 rubles of average value produced per worker over the annual wage; from this an "index of the rate of surplus-value" can be deduced, 95 percent in 1928.

In 1937 annual labor productivity had advanced by 55 percent over 1928 [according to the productivity index as revised by Hodgmen, p. 113]. If this figure is retained [because the official index which shows an advance of 146 percent is clearly not usable, for reasons that are too long to give here], the net value of industrial production per worker is 2,570

rubles in 1927-28 prices [making the hypothesis that net value and gross value of production have moved at approximately the same rhythm — which no doubt is optimistic but compensated more or less for a possible under estimation of the advance of productivity in the revised index]. Admitting that the real 1937 wage is 60 percent of that of 1928, this shows an "excess" of more than 2,000 rubles of the average value produced per worker over the annual wage [all in 1927-28 prices], hence an "index of the rate of surplus-value" of the order of 400 percent, a quadrupling in comparison with 1928. Obviously all this is a very approximate estimation, but it seems impossible to suggest anything better.

183. See J. Sapir, *Organisation*, p. 366.
184. See above, pp. 358-65.
185. See. C. Bettelheim, *La Planification*, p. 306; *N. Kh.*.., 1958g.
186. From 1929 the Party warned about the "new worker strata" and the latter were the subject of unfavorable GPU reports [See M. Fainsod, *Smolensk*, p. 309].
187. See the political report presented by Stalin to the Sixteenth Party Congress [June 27, 1930] in *Works*, Vol. 12, p. 323. Italics are in the original.
188. *KPSS* [1953], Vol. 2, pp. 496-97.
189. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 12, p. 324. [Italics in original].
190. See above, p. 362.
191. An alternative English translation appears in Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 12, pp. 115-16.
192. For this emulation, see H.F. Ward, *In Place of Profit — Social Incentives in the Soviet Union* [New York, 1933], PP. 128-35.
193. See above, pp. 34 and 44-49; see also J. Sapir's thesis, pp. 402-3.
194. See issues of *Trud* from May 1929.
195. There is a description of this production process and its transformations by Stakhanov in A. Pasquier, *Le Stakhanovisme; L'organisation du travail en URSS* [Caen, 1937], especially pp. 26.30. This book contains an overall description of Stakhanovism up to 1937. Also see J. Sapir's *thesis*, pp. 451ff, and G.T. Rittersporn, "Le mouvement stakhanovists," in *Recherches, Le soldat du travail*, Nos. 32-33, September 1978.
196. *Trud*, November 1, 1935.
197. These changes are examined notably in A. Pasquier, *Le Stakhanovisms*. The nature of these transformations, especially those which attracted the attention of the Party leadership, can also be seen by reading the resolution adopted by the Plenum of December 21-25, 1935, titled, "Questions of industry and transport in connection with the Stakhanovite movement," [*KPSS* [1953], Vol. 2, pp. 810 FF].
198. A. Pasquier, *Le Stakhanovisme*, pp. 31-35.
199. See above, pp. 42-44, for a description of the transformation of the production process.
200. *ZI*, October 15, 1935, quoted by Schwarz, p. 194.
201. See B. Markus, "Le mouvement stakhanoviste et l'accroissement de la productivité du travail en URSS," in *Revue internationale du travail*, July 1936, p. 26.
202. See K. Marx, *Oeuvres-Economie* [Paris, 1968, La Pléiade edition], Vol. 1, p. 950.

203. B. Markus, "Le mouvement stakhanoviste" notes that in 1935 50 to 70 percent of equipment in service in Soviet industry dated from after the commencement of the First Five-Year Plan. *Their low utilization made possible the production increases due to the Stakhanovite movement* [See p. 20].
204. *Trud*, November 1, 1935, and *Pravda*, November 8, 1935. Also see the pamphlet "De Taylor à Stakhanov," *Cahiers de la "Terre libre,"* 1937.
205. These incomes could reach 1,000 to 2,000 rubles per month whilst current monthly wages were 90 to 100 rubles. As well, some Stakhanovites, especially those who received decorations, gained from various material advantages of various orders of magnitude: tax relief, free rides on some transport services, priority in housing allocations and places in holiday homes, gifts in kind [cars, motor cycles, and so on].
206. See for example, *Izvestiya*, October 2, 1935, quoted in "De Taylor à Stakhanov."
207. *ZI*, October 22, 1935.
208. ZI, October 24, 1935.
209. ZI, October 21, 1935.
210. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 13, p. 95.
211. See above, p. 96.
212. *KPSS* [1953], especially pp. 813-14.
213. See A. Pasquier, *Le Stakhanovisme*, p. 70.
214. *Sotsialisticheskoye narodnoye khozyaistvo* v 1933-1940gg [Moscow, 1963], p. 107, quoted by A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 233.
215. A. Pasquier, *Le Stakhanovisme*, pp. 50-54.
216. It will be noted that in 1936 the advance of the average *nominal* wage was quite slow [+ 20 percent], taking into account the prices rise of October 1935 and the substantial increases in Stakhanovites' wages. In the investigatio that G. Friedmann made at the time in the USSR he noticed that in a certain number of the workshops he visited the nominal wages had fallen between period October 1935 to March 1936 and the period March-September 1936 [either because of new norms or because of bad production organization]. See F. Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie*, p. 114.
217. The Soviet press of 1936 provides numerous examples of these practices—which amount to a radical transformation of the "Stakhanovite movement"—and of their consequences. Also see Schwarz, pp. 195-98.
218. For example, see *Trud*, September 9, 1936.
219. C. Bettelheim, *La Planification soviétique*, p. 288. Global figures expressed in 1926-27 "prices" do not show the same difficulties [see above, p. 273], but to a large extent this is because of the way in which statistics presented in "prices" were made up.
220. *Bolshevik*, No. 21, 1936, p. 67, and *Pravda*, April 15, 1936, June 2, 1936, and October 21, 1936. See also G. Rittersporn, "Le mouvement stakhanoviste," pp. 263FF.
221. See WKP 97, p. 5, and WKP 239, p. 222 of the Smolensk Archives.
222. *Bolshevik*, No. 21, 1936, pp. 71-72 and 75-76.
223. G. Friedmann, *De la Sainte Russie*, pp. 112-14.

225. *Pravda*, March 26, 1936.
226. *Pravda*, April 15, 1936 and June 2, 1936.
227. *Pravda*, June 7, 1936.
228. *Pravda*, June 23, 1936. Also see G. Rittersporn, "Le mouvement stakhanoviste," pp. 270-71.
229. *Pravda*, July 10, 1936, and the speech by L. Kaganovich in *Bolshevik*, No. 4, 1936. The situation in this period and the following months is analysed by G. Rittersporn in *Conflite sociaux*, pp. 60-68.
230. WKP 195, pp. 1, 5-6, 27-28, 36, in Smolensk Archives.
231. See above, pp. 19-25, quoted by G. Rittersporn, *Conflite*, pp. 116-17.
232. C. Bettelheim, *Le Planification soviétique*, pp. 273 and 288.
233. Calculated from *N.Kh... 1958 g*, p. 136. As is known, the evolution of production in money terms tends to show growth rates higher than those measured on the basis of production statistics based on physical measures.
234. K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 [Moscow, English edition, 1974], p. 360.
235. See above, p. 399.
236. See above, p. 399.
237. See above, p. 458.
238. See Vol. 1 of the present work, pp. 169-71.
239. Various aspects of this struggle are noted in Vol. 2 of the present work, pp. 240-41.
240. On this point see M. Anstett, *La Formation de la main-d'oeuvre qualifiée en URSS* [Paris, 1958].
241. See the observations made by G. Friedmann in his book, *Aspects du machinisme en URSS et aux Etats-Unis* [Paris, 1934], especially pp. 45-48.
242. *Sobraniye uzakonenii rasporyazhenii rabochego i krestyanskogo pravitel'stva SSSR*, 1933, No. 59.
243. See M. Anstett, *La Formation*, pp. 126ff.
244. These schools trained 450,000 workers in this period [See A. Baykov, *The Development of the Soviet Economic System* [Cambridge, 1947], p. 217], which, however, represents only about 18 percent of the increase in worker numbers in main industry. Some of the workers who graduated from these schools, moreover, went through a shortened course which did not give them a general view of the production process of which they were a part.
245. M. Anstett, La Formation, p. 126.
246. The number of specialists trained by the universities grew from 170,000 during the First-Five-Year Plan to 369,000 during the Second. Specialists trained by technical schools and special secondary schools grew from 291,000 to 623,000 [A. Baykov, *The Development*, p. 353]. The common characteristic of this training was that it was cut off from production. The instruction given was predominantly theoretical. However, this instruction was also very specialized. There was therefore a departure from polytechnical forms.
247. We deal with the mass repression and its "contribution" to the development of penal labor in Part 3 of this book. Here it will only be added

what this did to reduce the workers to silence; it provided both repression and the enormous extension of police activity characteristic of the 1930s. In the second half of the 1930s there existed in each factory above a certain size a "special section" of the NKVD charged with checking the activity of the enterprise management and with using a network of informers to maintain a dossier on each worker. [See M. Fainsod, "Controls and Tensions in the Soviet System," *The American Political Science Review*, June 1950, p. 28].

248. This will be studied in the fourth volume of this work.
249. Figures calculated from T.H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917-1967* [Princeton, 1968], pp. 52, 116, and 199.
250. Obviously this kind of behavior was not new; it appeared from 1918 onwards. It was often "condemned" by the high Party leadership but this did not prevent its continuation. At the beginning of the 1930s it became worse, because the privileges enjoyed by Party members increased, and these became especially visible after 1931 when "egailtarianism" was officially condemned.
251. *PS*, January 1934, p. 22, quoted by Rigby *Communist Party Membership*, p. 204. Other information on these points can be found in M. Werth, *Etre communiste*, especially pp. 13ff and 207ff.
252. The real political motives for expulsion [that is, expulsion for deviations from the leadership's political line] became important especially from 1935. The political motivations were then not generally disguised.
253. The following quotations are from A. Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma* [1979, London edition], pp. 75-76.
254. This remark implies that these members had already been "active sympathizers."
255. See above, p. 76.
256. See above, p. 77.
257. See above, p. 78.
258. T. Rigby, *Communist Party*, pp. 203-4.
259. See above, p. 225.
260. The worker numbers are estimated from *N.Kh... 1958g*, p. 658, and C. Bettelheim, *La Planification*, p. 306.
261. This investigation was in response to an "order" of the U.S. government. It was intended mainly for federal administration officials, such as military leaders, more than for a reading "public." It aimed to give a certain knowledge of the ideological and political conditions which existed in the USSR in the late 1930s and early 1940s. It was basically compiled with the help of former Soviet prisoners of war and deportees who did not return to the USSR after the war. Despite the very particular circumstances in which it was done, this enquiry seems to be reliable, for its results checked out well with the knowledge obtained elsewhere on the matters investigated. There is a report of this work: R.A. Bauer, Alex Inkeles, and Clyde Klukhon, *How the Soviet System Works* [Cambridge, Mass., 1964].
262. See above, p. 101.
263. See above, p. 188.

264. Smolensk Archive [WKP 150, pp. 8-9] quoted by M. Fainsod, *Smolensk*, p. 308.
265. See above, pp. 437-40.
266. R. Bauer *et al. How the Soviet System Works*, pp. 186-87.
267. See above, p. 287.
268. On this and the following points see A. Ciliga, *The Soviet Enigma*, p. 245.
269. See A. Ciliga, *Dix Ans au pays du mensonge deconcertant*, [Paris, French edition, 1977], p. 235].
270. These decisions aimed to impose more "discipline" on economic managers and local or regional cadres. For this, the Party leadership sought to rely on the public, asking it to "unmask faulty cadres." The main decisions then adopted were the following: a resolution of June 1935 condemning the negligence with which requests and complaints from the public were treated [Smolensk Archive, WKP 322, p. 81]; a directive of the Supreme Court which prohibited the divulgence of the names of people supplying compromising information [See *Ugolovnyi kodeks RSFSR*, [Moscow, 1953], p. 106, quoted by Rittersporn, Conflits, p. 106, note 4]; a decision of March 1936 that obliged newspaper editors to publish the "politically most important" latters and to study what such letters meant [See *PS*, No. 8, 1936, pp. 54-55], etc. In fact, several measures were taken at this time in the same direction [See Rittersporn, *Conflits*, p. 106] and numerous articles aimed at encouraging the bringing to light of bad work of Soviet institutions and enterprises.
271. Thus on a letter of complaint may be read the following note: "The enemy's method of discrediting the administration." This note was apparently written by the addressee of the letter himself [See Rittersporn, p. 110].
272. Smolensk Archives. WKP 195, pp. 52ff, 76ff, 121ff, 182; WKP 197, pp. 199, 200ff, 230, 235 [See Rittersporn, p. 108].
273. Rittersporn, p. 109.
274. Smolensk Archives. WKP 195, pp. 52, 261; WKP 355, p. 187, quoted by Rittersporn, p. 109.
275. Quoted by Rittersporn, p. 109, [Smolensk Archives, WKP 355, p. 187]. This suggests the existence of a discontent much more radical than that expressed by the authors of the letters personally.
276. See above, p. 112.
277. See above, pp. 112-13.
278. This was especially the case in different numers of *Pravda* in July 1936, in the columns devoted to discussion of the draft constitution.
279. See, for example, the speech by Stalin on May 4, 1935 in *Sochineniya*, Vol. 1 [XIV], pp. 55-64.

PART 3

# Mass terror and forced labor

The brutal expropriation of the peasantry, the accelerated rural exodus and the anti-worker offensives of the 1930s were accompanied, both as cause and effect, by a mass repression and a terror which allowed the development of capitalist forms of work and exploitation *sui generis.*

Repression and terror of the 1930s were linked to the completion of the capitalist revolution from above, which began at the end of the 1920s. At that time it was above all workers and peasants who were affected, but militants of other origins were also stricken, when they were accused of being hostile to a policy that was presented as being the "building of socialism." On the other hand, at the end of 1934, this same capitalist revolution embarked on a *terror* that was more "individualized" and "inquisitorial" than that which had preceded it. It systematically had recourse to other methods (long interrogations and tortures) and aimed at other "social targets." Among the latter figured a large number of Party members, economic and administrative cadres, scientific workers, etc.

The terror in the main struck not the "guilty ones." At first, it affected men sent without trial to deportation or death, or it struck "accused" who might be the object of a "trial" that could be apparently meticulous, but who were then sentenced even if they had not clearly committed the acts of which they were accused: these were the "criminals without crimes."

We shall see in Volume 4 of the present work that the transition to "individualized" and inquisitorial terror was mainly connected with social struggles, ideological and political, within the leading or privileged strata; those belonging to these strata were thereby placed in a situation

of enormous dependence on the good will of the Party leadership.

Through mass repression and terror there was achieved a social and political transformation which virutally gave birth to a capitalism of a new type, and which basically conformed with the ideas of the Party leadership.

1

# Mass repression and terror

SINCE the first years of its existence, Bolshevik power had not hesitated to have recourse to brutal forms of repression and terror, especially against workers or peasants who resisted it either for economic reasons (for example, the peasants shot during the Civil War because they tried to evade food requisitions which would have left them with nothing to eat), or for political reasons (like the workers and sailors of Kronstadt, who in 1921 demanded a return to the genuine power of the soviets).

Following 1917 and at the beginning of the 1920s, repression and terror also struck, of course, members of the old dominant classes and equally the specialists or administrators who were working for the new authorities, if their activity did not develop in the way the leaders wished. Thus, in September 1921, Lenin demanded that officials working for the authorities should suffer "strict punishment" for their "red tape" and that their trials should be regarded as a "*political affair.*" Instructions to this effect were given to the courts.

For most of the 1920s, mass repression and terror were in decline. They resumed from 1928-29, with the recourse to grain requisitions and then collectivization from above.

## I. The upsurge of mass repression and terror

Mass repression and terror began at the end of the 1920s. They were engendered, above all, by the anti-peasant struggle, but also extended to the working class.

### (a) *The anti-peasant war*

The historical starting point for the mass repression and terror was the anti-peasant war at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. This war resulted from the *rupture of the compromise* that the NEP had established between the peasant revolution and the capitalist revolution, a rupture which henceforth would be pushed to the very end. This rupture, if we look at it schematically, was accomplished in the name of the "anti-kulak struggle" and of the "building of socialism." It resulted in the expropriation of the peasantry, the destruction of the peasant civilization and of the experience contained in the latter. It led to the development of social relationships which slipped the rural workers into a new division of labor and subjected them to new forms of domination and exploitation. These upheavals encountered enormous resistance put up by the peasants, who refused to integrate themselves actively into the new social relationships that the authorities imposed on them. It was this resistance that brought forth mass repression and terror. Deportation struck millions of kulaks and alleged kulaks, while millions of peasants died from a famine that was largely "fabricated" in order to "punish" their resistance (the authorities refused to draw on grain stocks and let those peasants die who would not conform with their instructions). This anti-peasant war developed in two great waves. For the first wave of repression there is an official estimate of the number of peasants deported. According to this estimate, deportations at that time struck 240, 757 families (representing about 1.2 million people). It was stated that the majority of these deportees were not put in camps but were exiled in underpopulated regions of the North Siberia, Kazakhstan, and the Urals. Those who were of working age were attached to the timber industry, to the mines, or to other industrial enterprises.

Some were on state farms. Others were authorized to form kolkhozes in the regions to which they had immigrated.[2] In fact, some of the deportees were interned in work camps, but how many is not known. However, it is known that the deportation took place in the worst possible conditions, entailing numerous deaths, mainly among young children and old people.

The second wave (1932-34) of anti-peasant repression and terror was not marked in any published official estimate it seems. Peasants were then deported for the most varied reasons. Many of those who continued to be described as "kulaks" or "pro-kulaks" were among them, but others were accused of "sabotaging" the work of the kolkhozes, of embezzlement or the theft of property belonging to the kolkhozes; most often it was a question of gatherers or gleaners of grain who acted as they did simply to ensure own and their families' survival.

During these years, repression extended also through the progressive "penalization" of labour legislation and by virtue of an increasingly extensive application of Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, which allowed anyone to be sentenced who had committed an act intended to "weaken" the standing of the authorities. And the police and the courts could include in this type of act the non-fulfilment of a work norm or, more often of a task that had to be fulfilled. This widening of the application of Article 58 also permited the sentencing of those who had made critical remarks considered to be "anti-Soviet" or "counter-revolutionary." Failure to denounce the author of such acts was also regarded as an "act which weakened why the standing of the authorities," and was therefore actionable, which explains why the parents and friends of those sentenced were also sentenced in their turn. These latter forms of repression - which struck not only the peasants - developed well beyond the years 1932-34; that is, when repression was transformed into mass terror whose main target was no longer the peasantry.

However, before this transformation came into force, attempts had been made by the party leadership to put a brake on the "excesses" of the anti-peasant repression because of the negative economic effects this was causing. At the beginning of 1933, the wave of arrests and deportations became so large that

it had a bad effect on production and even disturbed railway operations, the deportees being transported by train. At this juncture the party leadership made a momentary effort to put a brake on repressive measures, as is testified by a secret letter sent to the cadres of the main Soviet organs by Stalin and Molotov. In this letter, dated May,8 1933,it was said, in particular, that:

> The Central Committee and Sovnarkom have been informed that in the countryside massive and thoughtless arrests still in part characterize the behavior of our officials. Such arrests are made by village soviet chairmen, secretaries of party cells, and responsible officials of the **krais** and **rions**; these arrests are made by anyone who feels like it, and they have absolutely no right to do so. It is not surprising that with this orgy of arrests the judiciary organs which have the real right to conduct them, including those of the OGPU and especially of the militia, are losing all sense of proportion and are propogating abusive arrests on the principle: "first arrest, then investigate."[3]

The letter indicates that of 800,000 detained in penitential institutions (a figure which includes neither camps nor labor colonies), 400,000 were to be freed within two months, and the others were to be transfered to camps and labor colonies. The courts and the procuracy were entrusted with checking the activity of the organizations of repression.

For several months, this circular had a certain effect, but at the end of 1934, after the assassination of Kirov, mass arrests reappeared on an even larger scale than in 1933. At the same time the anti-peasant war, then the anti-worker struggle and the development of terror, quickly swelled the apparatus if repression and gave it political weight and unprecedented possibilities of action.

### (b) *The anti-worker offensive*

Although it is impossible to "measure" their dimensions, the anti-worker repression and terror were apparently not on such

a large scale as those which struck the peasants. In addition it took other forms, because the priority accorded to industrialization did not allow the factories to be deprived of too large a proportion of their workers.

Nevertheless, it would be quite false to think that the workers were not touched by the repression. On the one hand the testimony of those who were held in the camps, who came out of them and were able to make known what life was like in them at different times,[4] reveals that a large number of workers were in the camps. On the other hand, it is known that during the 1930s many factories were managed by the NKVD,[5] and that the workers who worked in them were those who had been sentenced. Finally, the working class was hit throughout the 1930s by various repressive prescriptions: "general prescriptions like Article 58 of the Criminal Code, which allowed many workers to be sentenced for non-fulfilment of norms or for "anti-Soviet talk" (the slightest criticism could be described as such), and penal prescriptions of the "labor legislation"[6].

Repression and anti-worker terror made it possible to subject the industrial workers to a discipline that was increasingly brutal, and to make them "accept" a serious decline of their working and living conditions.

The threat of arrest, or deportation, or work in the camps, subjected industrial, transport, mining, and construction workers to the increasing demands of factory despotism, which itself was pushed to an extreme point by the economic policy of the Party and by the requirements of obedience and attention to work which it imposed. This threat fulfilled the same function as that which in the development of "western" capitalism (especially in England, Germany, and France) had been fulfilled by "workhouses", "houses of terror", houses of correction and other forms of forced labor and of farming out the poor[7]

The *disciplinary function* which repression carried out in regard to the working class during the 1930s in the USSR was, however, deeper than that which at the beginning of "western" capitalism was carried out by the "houses of terror" because it was a matter of getting accepted at the same time both a factory despotism and an especially severe political despotism. Also, the scale of repression and terror in the 1930s was without precedent.

The repression had a profound "disciplinary" effect in terms of daily attitudes. In fact, part of the *zeki* (see list of abbreviations, on page xv), instead of being separated from "free" workers, were placed beside them, so the latter could see the miserable circumstances in which those who had been sentenced found themselves. The effect of terror thus imposed on the workers a discipline that was not only economic but also political: the disciplinary fear of criticizing the existing order.

Numerous testimonies indicate that the presence of detainees by the side of free workers was very frequent; some of these testimonies come from Soviet citizens who fled abroad,[8] and others from foreigners who worked in the USSR. For example, John Scott, an American who worked at the Magnitogorsk construction site in the mid-1930s, said that about 30 percent of the workers at this site were attached to various forms of penal labor: usually they were alloted to the hardest kinds of work.[9]

These various aspects of the mass repression and terror represent the most extreme forms of the struggle of the dominant to subjugate, oppress and exploit to a maximum the dominated classes. They did have their equivalent in the capitalist centers and, even more, in countries under colonialism or imperialism. They can still be found today in a certain number of American and southern African countries. The development of individualized and inquisitorial terror which took shape on a large scale from 1935 constitutes, on the contrary, a particular phenomenon, connected with the specific form of capitalism which at that time was born in the Soviet Union.

## II. The "individualized" and inquisitorial terror of 1935-38

The late 1920s and early 1930s were marked by the first rebirth of individualized and inquisitorial terror. This began in 1928 with the trial of non-communist engineers and technicians at Shakhty[10] and continued through several other show trials, like those organized against the alleged "industrial party" or against the "peasant party." But these were only "preliminaries" which did not directly involve members of the Party. The years

1932, 1933, and most of 1934 were even characterized by a relaxation of mass repression and of the different forms of terror. But suddenly, from December 1, 1934, following the assassination of Kirov (Party secretary at Leningrad), the country entered a period of terror whose development was an initiative of the Party leadership. From the second half of 1936 and up to the end of 1938, this terror, mainly individualized and inquisitorial,[11] took an exacerbated form. From 1939 to the death of Stalin in 1953 it became more "routine" (without becoming less extensive or less brutal), especially as it combined with new developments in repression), but there were new explosions after the war. Some of the occurrences which inaugurated the terror of 1935-38, as well as some of their most spectacular manifestions, should be mentioned.

On December 1, 1934, in the afternoon, Kirov was assassinated by a young communist, quickly accused of having acted under the influence of the ideas of old Party leaders who had been removed from power since the late 1920s: Zinoviev and Kamenev. In reality, the very way in which this event took place (as well as its aftermath) makes it almost certain that the assassination was organized by Stalin with the help of the NKVD.[12] The speed with which the mechanism of terror was unloosed amply confirms this.

In addition to details about the circumstances of the assassination, one of the most striking facts is the signature, on the *same day as the assassination*, of a decree which organized the "judicial procedure" of the terror. This decree was certainly prepared in advance. Another noteworthy detail in that the decree was signed by the state authorities without the Politburo having been told,[13] which was contrary to all the rules about the pre-eminence of the Party over the state. It was only on the following day that the Politburo, faced with this *fait accompli*, "ratified" the decree. The latter radically modified judicial procedure. It ordered investigatory organizations to carry out death sentences pronounced for this category of crimes immediately, without awaiting possible pardons from the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee. *The organs of the NKVD* (that is, the police) also received the order to execute without delay those sentenced to death. The decree was published on December 2, and on December 10 the Criminal Procedure Code

was modified. Extra-judicial organs were installed within the NKVD and these could pronounce sentences (death or deportation) without investigation or trial.[14]

On December 4 there was published a long list of "white-guards" arrested and condemned to death in Moscow and Leningrad. Similar sentences were pronounced in various regions of the Soviet Union, especially in the Ukraine. However, some days later, the real targets of the terror unleashed by the authorities appeared. These targets were, firstly, oppositionists or former oppositionists who were members or ex-members of the Party, then all those labelled as oppositionists, "saboteurs," or "spies."

Before mid-December, the CC (in fact, the General Secretary) sent a secret letter to all Party committees requiring the denunciation, expulsion, and arrest of all oppositionists who were still Party members. This initiative launched a series of denunciations and a press campaign directed against the "Trotskyists" and the "Zinovievites." At Leningrad alone, tens of thousands of people were deported following this campaign. People who had recently met Kamenev or Zinoviev were accused of "plotting."[15] On December 16, a resolution of the Leningrad Party Committee denounced the anti-Party group of former Zinovievites as being responsible for the assassination. On December 17, the Moscow committee voted a similar resolution (*Pravda*, December 17, 1934).

On December 22, *Pravda* published a list of arrested "Zinovievites," on which were included Zinoviev and Kamenev, former members of the Politburo. A case was prepared against them for their "political responsibility" in the assassination. However, the political situation was still not quite right for a severe sentence against these two Party leaders. Finally, on January 16, 1935, they were sentenced respectively to ten and five years in prison, after which Zinoviev apparently made a "self-criticism," in which he declared that the past activity of the opposition had impelled certain people to criminal acts, due to "objective circumstances."[16]

In the following months, arrests and deportations made by simple decision of the NKVD proliferated. During this period, entire trains of deportees left from the different regions of the Soviet Unions to fill the prisons and the camps. The public

spoke of these trains as being the "trains of Kirov's assassins"; the same term "Kirov's assassins" was used in the camps to describe these new waves of deportees.[17] Henceforth, the still-existing statute for political prisoners was suppresed, everyone being subjected to a harsh regime.

Thus the assassination of Kirov was the starting point for a wave of repression, whose scale increased from 1935 to 1938, with the most typical manifestations of individualized and inquisitorial terror occurring between 1936 and 1938.

One of these manifestations were the so-called "show trials" in Moscow, but there were others. These trials simultaneously prepared (up to a certain point) and obscured the massive scale of the terror and its real significance; we shall return to this in Volume 4 of the present work, when we shall examine the social, political, and ideological contradictions which contributed to development of state terror.

### (a) *The three Moscow "Great Trials"*

In chrnological order these three trials were: the trial which began on August 19, 1936, called the "*trial of the Sixteen,*" after the number of accused, the two main accused being Zinoviev and Kamenev; the trial which began on January 23, 1937 where there were 18 accused but often called the "*Pyatakov Trial*"; the trial which began on March 2, 1938 and frequently described as the "*Bukharin Trial,*" because the latter was the principal accused, although at his side appeared also Rykov, Yagoda (the former chief of the NKVD and the organizer of the two preceding trials), Krestinsky, and several other old Bolsheviks.

These trials took place in public and were presented with real "stage management." Reading the transcript of these trials,[18] it would seem that, in effect, not only the *prosecutors and "judges" were playing a role which had been assignd to them but the accused were also doing the same thing.*[19]

The accused admitted practically all the "crimes" which the authorities required them to confess. If one or another of them strayed a little from his role, or momentarily hesitated to accuse himself, the intervention of the prosecution visibly brought

him to order. If these interventions were not enough, "suspensions of the session" were ordered, following which the accused rediscovered the "path of confession." Since then it has been learned that the confessions were extracted by all possible means, including torture, to which both the accused and those people close to them were subjected.

These trials served as prototypes for thousands of others which took place all over the Soviet Union and resulted in death sentences, prison sentences, or deportation. They served as "demonstration of the all-powerfulness" of the police and to orchestrate great ideological campaigns aimed at proving the criminal nature of all opposition, real or assumed.

Without recourse to the proofs that later became available of the fabricated nature of these great trials, a careful analysis of the official transcripts reveals the inconsistent, contradictory, and implausible nature of the basic accusations, as well as the "confessions" which were used to "confirm" the truthfulness of the accusations;[20] putting the known facts and the "confessions" side by side clearly shows the absurdity of almost everything that was "confessed."[21]

### (b) *The liquidation of the army officers and the High Command*

Although it did not take the form of a show trial, the liquidation of the army High Command and the main military cadres cannot be separated from the "great trials." In fact, those who were stricken in this liquidation were, like the Moscow accused, Party members of long standing, and they had passed the test of fire. The trials of these military leaders developed from the spring of 1937.[22] They took place "discreetly" and rapidly.

On May 11, 1937, the Chief of Staff of the Far East Army Corps, Lapin, was arrested; he would "commit suicide" in his prison cell. On May 31, 1937, Gamarnik, head of the army's political directorate, and who had always been devoted to Stalin, likewise "committed suicide." On June 11 there was the arrest, the sentence (in closed court), and the execution of nearly all the High Command: Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Uborevich, and many others. The "purge" of the army continued up to 1938.

Among those who were dismissed, arrested and sentenced were seven deputy commissars of defense, three out of the five marshals, thirteen out of the fifteen commanders of military districts, three out of the four army commanders of first rank, all twelve army commanders of second rank, sixty of the sixty-seven corps commanders, one hundred and thirty-six of the one hundred and ninety-nine division commanders, and from 15,000 to 20,000 officers. On an equally massive scale, political commissars and naval officers were also striken.[23]

Officially, the military leaders who were arrested and executed were accused of having prepared a "coup d'etat" that would have included the occupation of the Kremlin by the army officers, the physical liquidation of the Party leadership, the occupation of the NKVD headquarters, etc. To these accusations were added those of spying for Germany and the setting up of a "fascist military organization within the armed forces."[24]

The secret nature of the "trials" of the military leaders allowed the prosecution to dispense with publishing even the semblance of "proof."[25]

We shall see in Volume 4 of the present work that the most spectacular trials were the most visible peak of an operation designed to eliminate on a large scale several strata of Party, state and economic cadres. In essence, this operation finished at the end of 1938, because the goal pursued was practically accomplished; moreover, continuation at the same rhythm of the terror, combined with mass repression, was seriously disorganizing economic and administrative life. Nevertheless, although the intensity of the terror was then reduced, the latter was far from disappearing: henceforth it was part of the technique of governing. In addition, mass repression continued because the authorities had to make their power felt by those who were liable to resist them, and it was necessary to continue supplying the camps with labor power.

### (c) *The continuation of mass repression and terror after 1938*

In the short account given here of the continuation of mass repression and terror after 1928, it is obviously important to make a distinction between the years 1939-41 and the following years.

(1) 1939-41

In 1939-41, mass repression and terror took esentially two forms. Firstly, we have already seen what hit many workers after the putting into effect of labor legislation of an increasingly penal nature. Secondly, there was what developed after the fall of 1939, when repression and terror struck the populations of territories annexed following the signature of the German-Soviet Pact.[26] For example, a short while after the occupation of Eastern Poland by Soviet troops, the NKVD deported Poles *en masse* to Siberian camps.[27] After the annexation of the Batlic States, deportations of the population also took place on the large scale; it is estimated that 170,000 inhabitants of these states were added to the deportees from Poland, Bukovina and Bessarabia.[28]

In addition to these mass police operations, there was the individualized terror which struck leading cadres, diplomats, and higher officers who had played an especially active role in the execution of the "anti-fascist" policy and "collective security" associated with the League of Nations. Thus at the end of 1939, the year of German-Soviet Pact, arrests were made of some of the leaders of the "anti-fascist committees" operating in Moscow and other large cities; also arrested were some of the chiefs of the spy network involved in the collection of information in the "Axis countries" (Rome – Berlin – Tokyo), networks which for a long time remained disorganized.[29] Terror also struck former participants in the Spanish Civil War, while from 1939 the trials that had begun in 1937-38 were continued and brought to a "satisfactory conclusion," resulting in thousands of sentences and executions.[30].

(2) Repression and terror during the war and after

The war and the post-war period witnesed a continuation of large-scale repression and terror. These operations reduced the population to silence and kept the camps well populated. The camps thereby received bits and pieces of population which were sent where the authorities thought they were needed.

During the war, mass deportations continued; they struck the nationalities. Tartars of the Crimea, Ingushes, Chechens,

Volga Germans, etc., were either deported to camps, or transferred to regions far distant from their own territory. This repression, in addition, took on real "racist" character.[31]

At the end of the war, arrests multiplied even in the ranks of the Soviet army (Solzhenitsyn and Kopelev, among many others, are examples of this). Above all, mass repression struck the majority of Soviet citizens who had been made prisoner and deported to Germany or to occupied territories by the German army. These prisoners and deportees left the Nazi camps only to enter Soviet camps. The "Allies" took part in this repression by handing over to the repressive organs of the USSR Soviet prisoners and deportees who had escaped from the German camps.[32]

From 1946 new arrests were made when "massive changes of cadres" were made. In certain regions these affected 50-80 percent of Party cadres and industrial managers.[33]

Simultaneously the purge developed among intellectuals, who in large numbers were deprived of their employment, arrested and deported. Some of the scientists were detained in *sharagas* where they continued their research, but others went off to die in the camps. During the years 1946-1950 there developed the campaign against "bourgeois culture" and "cosmopolitanism" (which allowed the glorification of the Russian past and the arrest and execution of numerous Jews as "cosmopolitans without country").

Zhdanov, first secretary in Leningrad, was at the time regarded as one of the initiators of this period of terror, and there was talk of *Zhadanovshchina.* In reality Zhdanov was only a cog in the terror-making machine. He died on August 31, 1948, and the terror intensified.[34]

The struggle against cosmopolitanism continued, but added to it was what was called the "Leningrad Affair" and then the Moscow Affair. These entailed the sentencing and/or execution of close colleagues of Zhadanov,' like Nikolai Voznessensky, a Politburo member, and then in successive waves larger and larger circles of victims, for the ripples from these affairs lasted up to 1952. The two main agents of this repression were Malenkov and Beria.[35]

Even before the fallout from the "Leningrad Affair" had ceased, another "affair" was being prepared and launched: this was that of the "killer doctors," accused of having caused the

death of Zhdanov and other leaders.[36] This affair, which was also called the "plot of the white-coats," was entirely staged by the police services under the direct control of the General Secretary. It had several targets. It was accompanied by an "anti-Zionist" campaign, that was in fact anti-semitic, that was developed on an international scale and that led, from 1951, to the indictment in Soviet bloc countries of many leaders accused of Zionist and other activities; among them were Rajk, Slansky, and others (who later would be rehabilitated). At the same time, the campaign was aimed at the leaders of the security services themselves (who were accused of having "lacked vigilance"). In fact, the accused doctors were freed as innocents in April 1953 by decision of Beria, who was then in charge of security. But some months later Beria and other security service leaders were executed, and in the list of accusations brought against them, among others, were the same charges that had previously been brought against the "killer doctors."[37]

After the death of Stalin, recourse to this type of individualized terror, which was on large scale — and which developed from an "affair" or "show trial" — became less frequent, and accusations no longer tended to spread to successive and increasingly important circles. Recourse to terror and to fabricated accusations did not disappear,[38] but took other forms. In this change can be clearly seen the establishment of new balances between the dominant and exploiting strata and the leading political group, and the effects of ideological changes affecting these strata and this group.

In the "Stalin period," terror was combined fundamentally with mass repression. This combination marked with a particular stamp the relationships of the leading group with all the social strata and classes. It led not only to the very numerous executions, but also allowed regular "supplying" of the camps with new labor forces.

## Notes

1. See the letter Lenin sent to the Justice Commissariat on September 3, 1921. (In this *Collected Works*, (Moscow edition), Vol. 35, pp. 521-22; the italics are Lenin's.

2. V. Yakotsevskii, "Rapports agraires et collectivisation," in *Recherches internationales à la lumière du marxisme*, No. 4, 1975, pp. 55ff and especially p. 95.
3. Smolensk Archives, WKP 178 pp. 134-35, quoted From M. Fainsod, *Smolensk*, p. 185.
4. Among these testimonies, covering various periods, are the following: A Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma* in several editions, not always identical, in French and English); M.B. Neumann, *Deportée en Sibérie* (Paris, 1949); E. S. Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind* (London, 1967) and *Le Ciel de la Kolyma* (Paris, 1980); V. Shalamov, *Recits de la kolyma*, (Paris, 1981-82, three vols.) V. Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901-1941*, (London, 1963); M. Zalcman, *La Vie de Moshe, ouvrier Juif et communiste sous Staline*, (Paris, 1978); L. Kopelev, *A conserver pour l'éternité* (Paris, 1976-77, two volumes); A. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, (London, 1974-78, three volumes); E. Guarnascelli, *Une petite pierre*, (Paris, 1979).
5. See, four example, the secret version of the economic plan for 1941, *Gosudarstvenyi plan razvitiya narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR na 1941 god*, (Baltimore, n.d.).
6. See Part 2 of this volume.
7. For the forms of work, see K. Marx, *Capital* (1974, Moscow edition), Vol. 1, pp. 263 and 275ff. Also M. Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London, 1964), p. 234.
8. Among the first eye-witnesses in the immediate post-war period, V.A. Kravchenko and his book *I Chose Freedom*, (New York, 1946) should be mentioned.
9. These facts have been provided by John Scott in January 1938 for the secretariat of the U.S. embassy in Moscow. They occur in a recently published report of that period. (See on this point the article by S. G. Wheatcroft, "On Assessing the Size of Forced Concentration Camp Labour in the Soviet Union, 1929-1956" in *Soviet Studies*, April 1981, p. 291, note 1). This moreover is only confirmation of things known from numerous other sources.
10. See Vol. 2 of the present work.
11. In the sense that it gave rise to formally painstaking police enquiries, to the compiling of police reports "to be preserved for eternity" (according to the official formula) and, on every possible occasion, public trials that were real instructional shows taken to the extreme limit.
12. In the book by R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, one chapter is devoted to the detailed account of the murder of Kirov ((pp. 43ff) and this includes the various arguments tending to prove that this assassination was initiated by Stalin and carried out with the help of certain NKVD agents. The comments of Khrushchev and other participants at the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961 provide many signs pointing in the same direction but without drawing definite conclusions (See the report of this Congress, the speeches of Khrushchev and Z. T. Serdyuk in *Cahiers du communisme*, Special No., December 1961).
13. See the "Secret report" of Khrushchev to the Twentieth Party Congress, published in English in various publications, including T. H. Rigby, *The Stalin Dictatorship* (London, 1968).

14. R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 48 and 53.
15. B. Nikolaevsky *Los Dirigeants Sovietiques at la Lutte pour le pouvoir* (Paris, 1969), pp. 65ff.
16. I. Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 354.
17. P. Broué, *Le Parti bolchévique*, (Paris, 1963), p. 353.
18. These reports have been published as follows: *Report of Court proceedings: The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre*, (Moscow, 1936) — referred to as "Zinoviev Case" in following notes; *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre*, (Moscow, 1937)—referred to as "Pyatakov Case" in notes of this book; *Report of the Court Proceedings in the case of the Anti-Soviet, "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites,"* (Moscow, 1938)—the "Bukharin Case" for the purpose of notes for this part of the book. Also see, in particular, R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, and also "The Great Terror Revised" in *Survey*, No. 78, 1971; R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, chapter 6. As well there are P. Broué *Less Procés de Moscou* (Paris, 1965); A. Kriegel, *Les Grands Procés dans les systémes communistes* (Paris 1972); and *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, July-September 1979.
19. In the course of years, eye-witness testimony and proof have accumulated to confirm the falsity and the fabricated nature of the accusations, and to show that these "great trials" as well as thousands of others taking place in the same way followed a "scenario" prepared in advance down to the smallest details. The same procedures were sent into operation between 1948 and 1954 in the countries of the Soviet bloc. For Czechoslovakia, there is a dossier which illuminates especially well the method of fabrication in such cases: K. Kaplan, *Procés politiques à Prague* (Brussels, 1980); the author in fact had access to the archives of the Czech Communist Party, to archives of the political trials and other archives. The documents show the role played by Soviet advisors in several cases, these advisors helping to reproduce the Moscow trials "model."
20. In one of the statements that he made before the judges, Bukharin succeeded in emphasizing that only "proofs" of the "truthfulness" of the accusations were the confessions coming from *people who themselves had declared that they had lied all their lives*. He also recalled that since the Middle Ages no court had relied *totally* on confessions of the accused. For Vyshinsky, then public prosecutor, confession was, on the contrary, the supreme proof!
21. For example, Zinoviev and Kamenev "confessed" to having directed a "terroist center" from 1932 to 1936. However, since 1932 they had been under strict surveillance, being at first deported, then put in prison in December 1934. Similarly, in the second trial, Pyatakov stated that he had flown to Oslo in December 1934 and had there met with Trotsky to prepare, in agreement with Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, a plot and various sabotage plans. However, on the named date no aircraft had landed at Oslo and the Hotel Bristol, mentioned in Pyatakov's "confession," had ceased to exist long before December 1934. One could make a long list of such "confessions" that were in opposition to facts. (On these points, see P. Broué, *Le Parti bolchévique*, pp. 365 and 372-75. See also the "counter-trial" of

the Dewey Commission which appeared under the title *Not Guilty: The case of Leon Trotsky* (London, 1937). On this subject one of the most detailed and recent studies is T. R. Poole's *"Counter Trial": Leon Trotsky on the Soviet Purge Trials*, (Thesis, U. of Massachusetts, 1974). One can also find copious documentation and references in the special number of *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* (July-September 1979) titled *Less Procés de Moscou*.

22. The first signs of an attack to come against the army leaders appeared at the beginning of 1937. In January the names of two of these leaders were mentioned at the Pyatakov trial. At the February-March Plenum Stalin alluded to the threats that could weigh on the country should there be spies among the army high command. On May 10 1937 the system of army political commissars was reintroduced. (See L. Shapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London, 1970), p. 423.
23. See Broué *Le Parti bolchévique*, p. 396; R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 201ff, and R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 213. See also L. Shapiro, *The Communist Party*, p. 424. More specialized are: *June 22, 1941 Columbe, S.C.* 1968) by the Soviet historian A. Nekrich, and P. Grigorenko's *Staline et la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (Paris, 1969).
24. These accusations were formulated especially from the *"Bukharin trial"* (See the report of that trial); See also You. Petrov, *Partiinoye stroitel' stvo v sovietskoi armii i flote (1918-1961)* (Moscow, 1964), p. 299.
25. What at this time functioned as "elements of proof" were statements or even allusions made at the various public trials. There was talk also, of vague "material proofs" in the possession of the NKVD. Among these "proofs," not officially presented, was a document fabricated by the *Ostabteilung* of the German security service which purported to establish that Tukhachevskii was in the service of German espionage (See W. Schellenberg, *The Schellenberg Memoirs* (London, 1956), p. 49, where the "fabricated" nature of this document is confirmed). The secret Nazi archieves, seized at the end of the war, do not suggest the existence of any plot that could have been prepared in liaison with the German Services. At the Nuremberg Trial of the Nazi leaders the Soviet prosecution never raised the question of this alleged "conspiracy."
26. For the German-Soviet Pact, see Vol. 4 of this work.
27. A. S. Cardwell *Poland and Russia*, (New York, 1944) pp. 93-114; R. Conquest, *The Soviet Police System* (London, 1968), p. 48.
28. See the sources in the preceding note, and Anoriymous, *The Dark Side of the Moon* (London, 1946).
29. See L. Trepper's *Le Grand Jeu* (Paris, 1975).
30. R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, pp. 245-49.
31. The "racist" nature of the repression which struck a part of the population involved, among others, the Crimean Tatars (whose decendants are still prohibited from living in their region of origin and are obliged to stay in Uzbekistan, where they were henceforward "Free"). It also involved the Germans settled for several centuries in Russia (the Volga Germans, who had their autonomous republic before the war and settlements in the Ukraine and the North Caucasus, and were almost entirely peasants). During the war they were all arrested, men, women, and children.

As Solzhenitsyn remarks, "the criterion which enabled the ... decision to be made as to whom should be arrested was *blood* and irrespective of whether one was a hero of the Civil War or an old member of the Party, one went into exile" A. Solzhenitsyn, *Sobraniye Sochinenii*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1980) this Vol. 1 of *The Gulog Archipelago*, p. 86). See also R. Conquest, *The Soviet Police System*, p. 49, where different Soviet sources are quoted about the lot of the "nationalities" mentioned above, as well as several others. Also see B. Levitsky, *The Uses of Terror* (New York, 1972), pp. 156ff.

32. On this subject see N. Bethell, *The Last Secret* (London, 1974).
33. P. Broué *Le Parti bolchévique*, pp. 447-48, and Z. Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge* (Cambridge, Mass, 1956).
34. B. Levitsky, *The Uses of Terror*, pp. 185ff.
35. M. Heller and A. Nekrich, *L'Utopie au pouvoir* (Pa..., 1982), pp. 415ff.
36. See above, pp. 419ff.
37. See B. Nikolaevsky *Les dirigeants*, p. 149; J. Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1961), pp. 235ff; M. Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (New York, 1963), p. 56; and L. Shapiro, *The Communist Party* pp. 549ff.
38. To quote but one example, when Beria was condemned he was accused of being a "bourgeois turncoat," an "agent of imperialism," and it was even stated that in a "closed trial" he had confessed to having carried on anti-soviet activities from 1919 (See the Soviet press of December 1953, especially *Pravda* of December 24).

2

# The cumulation of mass repression and terror

MASS repression differed from terror not by the number of people that it affected (which in the circumstances was considerable), but in the fact that the victims of the former were stricken for acts that they were said to have committed or for their opinions (and the definition of "offences" and "crimes" stayed vague, with "proofs" often doubtful) whilst the victims of the second were stricken—even when this was not acknowledged by the authorities—by reason of their social origins, their presumed attachment to a definite stratum of society, or to a current of opinion, or to an institution, or because they carried on certain professions whose members had been taken as "targets." Victims of terror could be pursued "individually," with investigations, trial etc., and this gave birth to a special form of terror, which we have already called "individualized" and "inquisitorial."

In practice it is not always possible to distinguish between mass repression and terror, especially when the victims of terror were tried with due respect to the forms of penal law. Nevertheless it is necessary to make a distinction in principle between these two ways of subjecting the population to state violence.

The most obvious cases are those of the old leaders of the Party and of the revolution, accused of being – without the slightest real proof – spies, saboteurs, and agents of imperialism. Such accusations were sometimes made against

Party members who had never been oppositionists and who had always supported Stalin; this happened often in 1937-39, and again from 1946-53, especially with the Leningrad Affair.

The cases belonging to this type of sentence were so numerous that it is impossible to list them. For example, there were the economic cadres working in branches of the economy which were functioning badly, who were accused of being saboteurs or agents of foreign powers; or again, those who were in an institution whose director had been sentenced for opposition and who in their turn were sentenced either for that reason or another (for example, Evgeniya Ginzburg fell victim to the terror because she had worked under a historian accused of Trotskyism, but they brought against her the laws against terroism and accused her, in 1937, of having participated in the assassination of Kirov, even though she had never lived in Leningrad and had no connection with this assassination;[1] there were also all those who were sentenced to several years of camp because they had "too long a tongue" and let fall some words described as "anti-Soviet"; certain were accused of "Trotskyism" without even knowing what that meant,[2] doubtless because the "*plan*" of the security organs ordained the arrest of a definite number of "Trotskyists" and they had stuck this label onto a certain number of arrested persons. The arbitrariness of the arrests engendered an "atmosphere of terror" and favored a kind of passive co-operation. The latter took the term of "vigilance" and was maintained by the existence of a veritable army of informers; so much so, that there was a feeling, even in those strata of the population which were not particular "targets" of the terror, that "everybody was spying on everybody."[3]

Terror in combination with mass repression (that is, with innumerable sentences for acts that were real although minimal and which were covered by the extraordinary wide penal legislation) constituted an instrument of government. It developed on the basis of informing, which became a "civic virtue," and of self-accusation. The "methods of inquiry" became more and more harsh, going as far as psychological and physical torture and including threats against the families of the accused.[4] The use of such methods succeeded in making self-accusation a common phenomenon, which made the security services

specially terrifying.[5] It facilitated the fabrication of accusations *adapted* to specific political ends. The investigators had to obtain this result: their task was not to "discover the truth," but to fabricate an accusation which would take its place in a *plan of campaign* fixed in advance, a plan which determined the "conception" of the accusation, of the interrogation, and of the replies which had to be obtained at any price, as well as the scenario of the trial.

Contrary to what the present-day Soviet leaders claim, with references not to "terror" but to "mistakes," the victims of the latter were very far from comprising mainly cadres or members of the privileged strata. However, it is on these victims that present-day Soviet historians (with more and more discretion) put their emphasis, just as did the Stalinist propaganda at the time. The latter, in doing this, succeeded up to a certain point in giving to terror the image of a struggle against the privileged cadres who were "abusing" their privileges, and this explains why the terror was able to evoke some good will among the less-favored strata and was able to give a certain populist basis to the authorities.[6]

State terrorist activity rolled along in violation of laws promulgated by the authorities but, simultaneously, it was able to assume the image of an extreme "legalism"; thus in matters of individualized and inquisitorial terror the accounts of interrogations were most often drawn up in a strictly proper way, the signature of the accused had to be attached and the papers of the dossiers had to be carefully preserved. Naturally, all the tortures which the accused had to suffer did not appear there, no more than did dossiers concerning the thousands of "liquidations" which took place without trial and even without investigation.

## I. The scale of repression, terror, and forced labor

It is impossible to "measure" accurately the scale of these repressions because no official statistics of any significance exist on this subject. Moreover, it is probable that the exact number of those who were arrested and deported was not even known

to the Soviet leaders themselves. It is therefore only possible to put forward estimates, using the testimony of former detainees or former members of the repressive organizations and using statistical data about the total population, the active population, and the number of wage-earners. In this way, at least orders of magnitude can be estimated.

This situation was characterized by the "secrecy" of GPU or NKVD operations,[7] and also by the multiplicity of forms of repression and terror. The victims could be kept in prison, executed, sent to a far-distant camp belonging to Gulag, put in a local camp close to their original place of work, deported to a fixed place of residence but without being allocated to specific work, or allocated both to a place of residence and to specific work, but without being detained.

The variety of forms of repression, the variety of methods, and the variety of sources for estimation, explain why figures have been suggested concerning the number of victims which are very different from each other.

It is not my intention here to recall the various estimates[8] which have been made, nor to subject them to a detailed criticism.[9] I wish above all to direct attention to two points: the size of the prison-camp population and its living and working conditions on the one hand; the number of deaths due to repression, and the demographic balance of the 1930s on the other hand. However, I will give priority to the problem of the camps which were connected with the principal forced migrations and, above all, the development of *concentration-camp labor.* The latter constituted a *specific form of labor* which played a considerable role in the economic and social transformation of the 1930s. In addition, its existence raises questions of history and of fundamental theory.

### (a) *The birth and growth Gulag*

Labor camps existed very early in the history of Soviet Russia, but for a long time their population was small. As late as 1928 the population of the camps was estimated by a former agent of the GPU, Kiseliev-Gromov, to be only about 30,000 people[10]. This population played practically no economic role. In any

case, up until 1927 the idea of systematically exploiting the labor of those detained in camps was rejected. Thus at this time an official of the Soviet penal system could declare:

> The exploitation of prison labor, the system of squeezing "golden sweat" from it the organization of production in places of confinement, which while profitable from a commercial point of view is fundamentally lacking in corrective significance these are entirely inadmissable in Soviet places of confinement.[11]

In 1928 the attitude of the authorities concerning concentration camp labor changed, with the adoption by Sovanarkom of a decree dated March 26, 1928. This decree enabled camp internées to be attached to construction sites.[12]

Commentaries which accompanied the decree made it clear that the authorities henceforth considered that the existence of detainees presented a direct *economic interest*, that it was necessary to "increase the reception capacity of labor colonies" and to extend or to multiply those camps which were allocated to "productive work."[13]

Henceforth, the camps rapidly proliferated. Also, a decree of 25, February 1930[14] accorded a special economic status to organizations using penal labor, the latter being used more and more in areas where "free" workers were insufficient because living conditions were very difficult: building sites in the Urals, in the north part of Siberia and in the Far East, construction of the Baikl-Amur railway (BAM), gold mines in the far north, notably at Kolyma, and the Siberian forest.

In 1930, administration of the camps was withdrawn from the Justice Commissariat and transferred to the NKVD, where it became the "Main Administration of corrective labor camps." Yagoda was in charge of this activity at the time.

One of the first great works achieved with forced labor was the construction of a canal linking the white Sea with the Baltic. The construction of this canal took place between September 1931 and April 1933. Many people died there, in conditions which have been described by one of the survivors, D. Vitkovskii.[15]

At the time, the achievement of this work was presented as an "epic" by certain Soviet writers, including M. Gorkii and A. Tolstoy,[16] but they said nothing about the innumerable deaths which took place on this work site, just as on so many others. Afterwards, "eulogies" of concentration camp labour were made by many writers and soviet leaders: by Molotov at the Sixth Congress of Soviets of the USSR, and in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*. For example, one can read in this letter:

> The grandiose victory of socialism on all fronts has made possible the employment on a large scale of the work of criminals for the general construction of socialism. With the entry of the USSR into the period of socialism the possibility of utilizing coercive measures in corrective labor grew enormously.[17]

In the second half of the 1930s concentration camp labor, which developed under the supervision of Yagoda[18] grew further, at first under the leadership of Ezhov[19] (fall of 1936 to the end of 1938), and then under Beria.[20]

The management of the camps was carried out then by a service of the NKVD, called *Glavnoye Upravleniye Lagerei* or *Gulag*. At this time, this service had two central directorates in Moscow (administration of camps and railways, and administration of transport). The different camps were entirely subordinated to the NKVD. The system had its own armed forces and police, and was subdivided into regions. Thus, in the Kuibyshev region there functioned the *Bezimenlag* system which managed a vast munitions production center and directed several sections and numerous camps *(Lagpunkti)*, where there were several thousand detainees. The latter were supervised by armed sentries who could kill them on the slightest pretext. Apart from members of the armed forces, the camps had no other "free" men apart from the camp directors, for all office workers, bookkeepers, "planners," supervisors of norm fulfilment, stock managers, etc., were detainees. Among them one accordingly found the "Soviet hierarchical structure," including people with various "privileges" (especially privileges involving food rations). Most usually, those who had been privileged

before their arrest rapidly gained some privileges in the camps, except when they had committed, or had been said to have committed, "state crimes" of a special gravity.[21]

A. Ciliga is one of the first to have noticed that the hierarchical structure of the camps tended to reproduce that of soviet society in general, and he illustrated this observation with concrete examples. He wrote:

> This tendency resulted in the following paradox... the workers and peasants stayed at the lower level while members of the classes that were said to have been "abolished" or "hostile" received favorable treatment, enjoying privileges and being on good terms with the representatives of the authorities.[22]

The author talks of the high salaries received by the concentration camp engineers (3000 rubles monthly) and indicates that the latter "lived with the GPU and Party leaders and formed with them a sort of elite caste..."[23]

Penal labor did not embrace solely those who were in the big camps. In fact in 1934, when the all-Soviet NKVD was formed, the camps which had been under the Justice Commissariat were transfered to the Gulag administration. The Galag supervised the system of big camps, whose basic unit was the ITL (*ispravitel' no-trudovoi lager'*) and the small camps, the ITK, in which were to be found those who had been sentenced to no more than three years. These condemned stayed near their old places of work. They could even continue, in the daytime, to go to the same factory as before their sentencing, but they received a reduced wage.

In other of its camps, the NKVD supervised laboratories in which detained researchers worked, in conditions less harsh than those of the concentration camps. This was the *sharaga system*[24] described by Solzhenitsyn in *The First Circle*.

The construction of the vast Gulag administration accompanied the development of repression and terror, and hence the upsurge in the numbers of concentration camp inhabitants, or more generally the *zeki*. This upsurge of numbers occurred in successive waves.

### (b) *The population of the camps*

I have already indicated the obstacles that one runs into when trying to estimate the number of the victims of repression and the numbers in the camps; nevertheless it is possible and necessary to give some indication of the order of magnitude. I will quote mainly the figures which seem to me the most reliable, beginning with those covering the years 1930-38.

According to Dallin and Nicolaevsky,[25] who quote a former official of the camps, Kiseliev-Gromov, the number of those in the camps in 1930 exceeded 660,000. The same authors estimate the number of camp prisoners at around 2,000,000 in 1932, whilst Wiles has the figure of 1.62 million for the years 1931-37. For 1938, this latter author suggests the figure of 4.32 million as the concentration camp population.[26] In the light of estimates that one can make today of the number of camp inhabitants in 1939, this last figure seems to me rather high (although it is not possible to suggest another).

For 1939, it is possible to reach indirectly an estimate that is less uncertain than for other years, thanks to the population census whose results were published in detail in 1962 and 1963 at the same time as the results of the 1959 census.[27] The figures made public obviously do not show clearly the number of concentration camp inhabitants; however, by combining the population balances provided by the 1939 census with other data also published (for example, the number of enterprise wage earners and the number of electors), it is possible to suggest plausible figures concerning the detainees of this same year. According to Stephen G. Wheatcroft, who has made various crosschecks, the maximum number of concentration camp inhabitants in 1939 was from 4 to 5 million.[28] In 1940 and 1941 this number doubtless increased, but it would be risky to suggest figures.

It will be noted that the figure of from 4 to 5 million of concentration camp inhabitants in 1939 agrees quite well with another estimate, that made by N. Jasny who used the figures from the secret 1941 economic plan, which contained data relating to the establishments and work-sites administered by the NKVD and employing camp labor.[29]

### (c) *The living conditions of the zeki*

It is necessary to say a few words about the living conditions of the concentration camp inhabitants, because they constituted a very important feature of mass repression and terror. Obviously, however, what can be said on this subject in a few lines is necessarily schematic and not capable of doing justice to an atrocious reality.[30] For this, nothing can replace the accounts and the memoirs already quoted, originating from former camp inmates.

From these accounts it is clear that the camp inmates suffered a work regime of extreme harshness, involving very heavy tasks and very long days: in general, they were undernourished and abandoned to the arbitrariness of their guardians. The latter could use all kinds of pretexts to make even worse the living conditions of the detainees and even to execute, or leave to die, very many of them.

A large proportion of the *zeki* had to work in regions where there was intense cold and in which no "free" labor could have been persuaded to work, sometimes for twelve or sixteen hours per day. For example, describing the construction (by penal labor) of a new railway in Siberia, *Izvestiya*, wrote:

> Up until now, it was believed that the construction season could not exceed 100 days annually. The winter is very cold, 50° below zero. But the construction workers have proven that even in such conditions it is possible to work from one end of the year to the other, without interruption.[31]

The newspaper obviously did not say a word about the number of those who perished, having to work in such conditions. Nor did it specify that it was not only the builders of this railroad who had to carry out their work in a lethal cold, but also millions of detainees allocated to the working of mines (notably the Kolyma Gold Mines), to canal construction, to big building sites, etc.

Meanwhile, the undernourishment which affected the camp workers had a cumulative effect. In fact, those who did not succeed in fulfilling their work norm had their already poor

food ration reduced. Consequently they became weaker and fulfilled their norm even less satisfactorily, which led to another ration reduction and, finally, to total collapse.

During the 1930s, in the Arctic regions, the daily bread ration (the essential basis of nourishment) could vary from 930 grams for those who exceeded their norms, to 500 grams for those who fulfilled their norms by 50 to 60 percent, and to 300 grams as the "disciplinary ration." Quite often the set rations were not distributed in full, especially the few grams of animal protein (salt fish) which were part of these rations.[32]

Undernourishment and ill-treatment in the camps led to heavy mortality, but the latter constituted only one aspect (separated from the others only with difficulty) of the mortality due to repression and, more generally, the demographic effects of this latter.

### (d) *The children in the camps*

It is impossible to talk about the scale of the repression and terror without saying some words about the way in which the state's activities affected the fortunes of a great number of children.

On the one hand, from the beginning of the 1930s with the deportation of millions of "kulaks" and "pro-kulaks," either their children were deported with them, or they were left on the spot, usually abandoned, by the authorities.[33] They then formed wandering bands of "orphan children" who could exist only by robbing, so much so that they were dealt with by Article 12 of the Penal Code.

At first the judges interpreted the code with a moderation that was not for long accepted by the authorities. Thus a decree of April 8, 1935 explicitly laid down that children over 12 years of age would be sentenced to the same punishment as adults, including the death sentence and long-term deportation.[34] On May, 31 1941 (that is, before the war with Germany), another decree specified that minors of 14 years should be prosecuted just like adults for crimes and offences not covered by Article 12. These two decrees and the practices that went with them showed in a startling way what was really meant by the

"solicitude for the young" about which the regime boasted. The stories of former deportees showed that children were numerous in the camps, even though they quickly died there.[35]

Among the children who were imprisoned or deported were, above all from 1937, the urban children whose parents had been arrested. Henceforth, in the NKVD prisons there were quarters for children (*detpriemniki*). Quite often the children of those condemned to death were also executed.[36] This type of repression was not characteristic only of the *yezhovshchina*, but was still practiced at the end of the 1940s, notably at Leningrad and Moscow in 1949.

## II. Repression and its demographic effects

Although it is impossible to estimate the number of deaths due to the different aspects of mass repression, an attempt can be made to estimate the mortality due to the camps and to the executions ordered by the camp authorities, and to try to construct the demographic balance of the repression in a wide sense. The latter includes the famine which struck the countryside in 1932-34, for this was due largely to the wish of the authorities to "punish" the peasants.

### (a) *Mortality in the camps*

The regime imposed on the camp inmates was such that during certain periods deaths were counted in hundreds of thousands for the total of the camps, especially on the Vorkuta Railroad,[37] the Belomor Canal, in the camps and mines of Kolyma,[38] etc.

The Kolyma camps were part of the Dalstroi complex which occupied a territory four times greater than that of France. Placed entirely under the authority of the NKVD, Dalstroi embraced the basins of the rivers Kolyma and Indigirka (northeastern Siberia). There, among other things, were 66 gold mines that before the war produced 300 tons of gold annually (the equivalent of 3 million dollars at the current price of gold). In the Kolyma camps, strictly defined, on the eve of the

war there were more than 300,000 detainees (this figure was widely exceeded in 1944-54). On the basis of death rates estimated by former detainees, it is estimated that about 3 million people lost their lives in these camps during the 1930s.[39]

Anton Ciliga, speaking of the Kolyma gold mine and the conditions of their exploitation, observed:

> If African gold is washed by the blood of enslaved negroes, Soviet gold is washed in the blood of workers and peasants allegedly liberated.[40]

The high mortality rate of camp inmates was due to living and working conditions that were extremely harsh, particularly because of the severe cold of the regions in which a large number of the camps were established (detainees, having learned of the existence of cremation ovens in Nazi camps, called the Soviet farnorthern camps *white crematoria*. More fatalities were due to the executions which escorts carried out (a detainee who strayed a few metres from the road that he was supposed to follow could be killed on the spot), and in a general way to bad treatment from the detainees' escorts. This bad treatment was fatal for the sick, whose "productivity" was too low, or who could not be looked after. The mortality was also large among those who were contagious or vulnerable to contagion by an epidemic, and epidemics were frequent among undernourished detainees. Solzhenitsyn quotes several examples of epidemics, notably that of an "Asiatic typhus" that could not be treated; it was eradicated in the following manner:

> If one prisoner in a cell caught it they just locked the cell and let on one out, and passed them food only through the door till they all died.[41]

Bad, murderous, treatment was also inflicted upon those who did not succeed in producing enough, in the mind of the authorities, usually because they were at the end of their strength. These were the "goners," that were *exterminated by work*. Here is how the latter were treated at Kolyma:

> Multitudes of "goners," unable to walk by themselves, were dragged to work on sledges by other

> "goners" who had not yet become quite so weak. Those who lagged behind were beaten with clubs and torn by dogs. Working in 50° degrees below zero Fahrenheit, they were forbidden to build fires and warm themselves... Those who did not fulfil the norm... were punished... in this way: in winter he ordered them to strip naked in the mine shaft, poured cold water over them, and in this state they had to run to the compound...[42]

In other cases, those who did not fulfil the norms were shut in an isolator without window, bed, and heating: after some days, at the end of their strength, they were piled in and shut up inside a cart that was left exposed to the cold. In that way they died: it was only necessary to throw out their bodies, the snow would inter them.[43] It really was the "white crematorium." Obviously, it is impossible to estimate the number of victims of such treatment.

### (b) *The executions*

To these deaths should be added the numerous executions, more organized, but whose scale is no easier to estimate. Certainly some of these executions, but a minority, were officially known: these were the people condemned by public trials or even secret trials whose sentences were published (like the cases mentioned previously of the Red Army officers executed in 1937). Other executions took place without being made public, following decisions by the judicial or security organs; such was the case of NKVD prisoners who were executed with a bullet in the back of the neck, in the courtyards or cellars of NKVD prisons. These individual executions were very numerous, as is testified consistently by detainees of the time who have since been deported, but it is impossible to know the true dimension of this. Finally there were mass executions, usually fixed by administrative order; the latter seemed to have touched above all those who had been officially sentenced to 20 years detention "without rights of communication." According to R. Conquest, for the years 1936-38

there were 500,000 "legal executions" and 1 million executions in total;[44] according to R. Medvedev, between 1936 and 1939 there were 400,000 to 500,000 executions without trial.[45] The figures cannot be checked, although it is sure that the executions amounted to hundreds of thousands.

In any case, there are several material proofs of executions which took place during these years, and then after the conclusion of the German-Soviet Pact when Poland, the Baltic States and Bessarabia were occupied; these executions struck the populations of the occupied countries and their armies. Among the proofs of these crimes, one should mention the mass burial grounds discovered by the German army when it occupied vast regions of the Soviet Union. One such case was the burial ground found at Vinnitsa in the Ukraine in 1943. Here, there were more than 9,000 bodies. The victims appeared to have been killed in 1938, and a certain number could be identified by their families. The burial ground was exposed because the town population had heard talk of its existence. International commissions of enquiry have declared the existence of other burial grounds at Frunze and Sverdlovsk.[46]

Whatever the size of these mass executions and massacres, the great majority of those who perished in the repression and the terror were not executed but were put in camps where they died because of the extremely harsh living and working conditions which prevailed. However, these camps did not have, it seems, "extermination plans" like the German Nazi camps; the great number of deaths was due essentially to undernourishment, insufficiency of clothes in the very cold regions, excessively long working days which were usually occupied with very heavy tasks (health services hardly existed), and to "sanctions" which terribly exacerbated the lot of the detainees when the latter did not succeed in "fulfilling the norms." All these facts testify to the extraordinary scorn towards the life of millions of men shown by the authorities.

### (c) *A demographic balance in outline*

Repression and mass terror in various forms (deportation, execution and high mortality in the camps, "punitive famines"[47]

etc.) obviously had repercussions on the demographic trend, which was also affected by the lowering of the birth rate, due to separation of families, and by the increase of infant mortality associated with the general deterioration of living conditions.

Analyses of population statistics (which show a rise from 147 to 170.6 million between 1926 and 1939, a growth of 23.6 million, very inferior to all the forecasts of the late 1920s) make clear the decimation that the repression inflicted on the Soviet people.

It is not a matter here of discussing the demographic analyses presented at various times.[48] We shall therefore limit ourselves to the conclusions of recent work by Maksudov.[49] The latter permits an evaluation of the demographic losses[50] due to wars and repression, and makes a distinction between these two sources of excess mortality.

Analyzing the official statistics, Maksudov estimates that, between 1931 and 1939, the demographic "losses" suffered by the Soviet population reached 7.5 million adults; this figure does not include children who died of hunger (the excess mortality of children in the years 1932 to 1934 is estimated to be 3 million.[51]

It should be added that the same author estimates at 9-11 million the "losses" suffered from 1939-53 "and which were not directly associated with fascist aggression."[52] *The demographic losses due to repression and terror of the Stalinist period therefore reached, in total, about 20 million.* These figures can be compared with those of war losses, estimated by the same author at 7.5 million servicemen and from 6-8 million civilians.

In reality, the demographic consequences of the mass repression, of terror, and of famines were even greater than these figures suggest, because the latter exclude the *reduced birth rate* brought about by the deportation or the death of millions of men and women of child-bearing age.

All this amounts to a gigantic demographic catastrophe.

## III. The dynamics of repression and terror, and the "requirements" of the economy

Mass repression and terror developed under pressure from numerous elements which produced multiple, cumulative or

contradictory effects. The decisive elements were political and the main element was the struggle of the leading group *to strengthen its power.*

From a historical point of view, in the USSR the first element in the unleashing of mass repression and terror was collectivization from above. The latter could only have been achieved by these methods and its principal objective was political. The subjection of the working class to an unprecedented despotism, extending beyond the factory, equally demanded recourse to mass repression and terror. The same methods were put into operation by the leading group to annihilate the remains of the old exploiting classes, to oppose the challenge for power of the privileged social strata, to destroy all opposition and all critical thought in the party, and to defend its own unity.[53]

This putting into operation of mass repression and terror tended to be self-amplifying, by reason of its ideological effects. In fact, it aroused among the leaders who had recourse to it fear of revolt, and this led them to accentuate the repression. The remarks made by Marx and Engels about the Jacobinism of the 1793 Terror are absolutely valid here. They often emphasize, in fact, that terror was largely the result of the power of fear, in the sense that it is a form of power exercised by people who are fearful. Thus Engels wrote in a letter to Marx on September 4, 1890:

> Terror is above all useless atrocities carried out by people who are themselves frightened and who in this way wish to calm themselves.[54]

In this sense the very development of repression and terror on a large scale, of trials, executions and deportations, intended to punish acts of sabotage, treason, spying, etc. mainly imaginary created an atmosphere which "intoxicated" the leaders themselves. The latter ended by "seeing" traitors everywhere; they were themselves terrorized and demanded that the security services were more and more "vigilant" and "active."[55]

Keeping in mind concrete circumstances, the thesis of Hannah Arendt, that "totalitarian terror" is launched when

"the totalitarian leader knows that he has no longer any need to be frightened"[56] would seem to contradict the historical facts. In reality, the anti-peasant terror was launched against peasants in revolt (it is true that it continued even when the latter were shattered, but the starting point was nevertheless the fear initially experienced by the authorities). In the same way, the terror which from 1934 struck the Party hit the cadres who had shown (above all between 1932 and 1934) that they would not purely and simply accede to the decisions of the leading group, and who even tried to reduce its power. True, there again, terror continued to develop when all organized resistance had become impossible, but the fear experienced by the leading group certainly continued, for the discovery of even imaginary traitors contributed to its self-sustaining development.

The self-propulsion of the terror was due also to another element; to the fact that those who were in charge of putting it into operation, the officials of the NKVD and the judicial ogans, were frightened of being accused of weakness or tolerance towards the "enemies" if they did not sentence somebody who had been denounced or on whom there was the shadow of the slightest suspicion. Thus those who were "suspect" and who passed through the hands of the NKVD rarely escaped the most severe sentences. In these circumstances, the NKVD strove to obtain "confessions" from every suspect and it also prepared new 'cases," by obtaining from those who had been arrested a "list of accomplices," or by considereing as "guilty" anybody who had met or been with an arrested person. All this, if the authorities had not put an end to it, would have entrained a "*snowball*" development of repression and terror. The dynamics of the terror were also sustained—as has already been noted—by the "populist" element of the policy of the leaders, who wished to provide an outlet for the discontent of the workers. The cadres who fell into the grip of the repression and terror served as "scapegoats": the leading group designated them as responsible for a social and economic situation which was intolerable for the population; doing this, it hoped to divert the frustration of the workers and to preserve its own power.

The development of terror followed a complex dynamic which engendered uncontrollable effects that could exceed

the "intentions" of those who had launched it. Once it was set in action the repression and terror machine could grind up many more men and women than had been at first aimed, at thus bringing perverse political and economic effects along with it.

However, the dynamics of repression and terror was not only political, it was also economic: by mobilizing vast contingents of penal or concentration-camp labor, mass repression and terror entered into a "development" which partly relied on the use of "non-free" workers whose place of residence, conditions and nature of work were fixed in an entirely authoritarian fashion by those who employed them. Thus there appeared, on large scale, *a specific type of exploitation*, that of men reduced to a sort of "*state slavery*," subject to the absolute power of those who directed the work processes, who could even consign them to a rapid death.

The specific type of exploitation was at first bound up with the accelerated primitive accumulation which characterized the Soviet economy of the 1930s. To the extent that it was thus bound, it was not specific to the "Soviet" system: the development of capitalism was accompanied by slaveowners' practices and forced labor, demonstrated by the slave trade of millions of black slaves employed in the plantations of America (North Central and South), the reduction to slavery of the Amerindians (especially in Central America) condemned to work and to die in the mines, and the conscription throughout the 19th century of Indian, Chinese, and Vietnamese workers, heavily indebted and obliged to work until death for their "employers" (who in practice were their "owners"), and this not only in Central and South America but also in North America. What was peculiar to the Soviet Union was that the state, through its police organs, was the "employer" of workers subjected to this forced labor, and that the latter were not recruited beyond the frontiers but in the country itself by "judicial" and "administrative" means.

However, in the Soviet Union this form of exploitation has *another peculiarity: it did not disappear when the initial phase of accumulation in the 1930s was finished*. In the 1940s the number of workers in the camps and penal colonies seems to have been even higher than during the years 1937-38[57] It is known that these workers came firstly from Poland and the

Baltic States. Then at the end of the war they were above all former Soviet prisoners and deportees coming from the German camps; these escaped the Nazi camps only to find themselves in the camps of their own country. Even after 1956, when the previous "excesses" had been condemned, the labor camps did not disappear. According to Kronid Lyubarskii, there were still at the beginning of the 1980s three million detainees in the Soviet camps. The vast majority of these were those sentenced under common law, the number of prisoners who could be considered as "political" being only about 10,000[58]

The scale of the concentration-camp work, its nature and its persistence suggests that this form of exploitation obeyed not only the "political requirements" but also a long-term economic logic. It is only a single step, easily made, to conclude from this that the system did not belong to a specific type of capitalism. To a large extent, this is what Rudolf Bahro does when he sees in the present Soviet system a particular form of despotism, quite similar to that which Marx described as "oriental despotism" or the "asiatic mode of production",[59] but one in which the role of "despot" is played by the party leadership, which has as its object not preserving old agrarian relationships but carrying out a policy of industrialization. In this view of things, work in the camps was only the extreme manifestation of the despotism to which all workers were subjected. According to Bahro, this social form has its roots in the Russian past, but was reproduced while being transformed under the influence of the ideas and the practice of Lenin (as Party leader and as head of state).[60]

Such a description of Soviet reality is essentially metaphoric rather than analytical; it tends to hide the nature of production relationships, and to reduce exploitation to a "political phenomenon, a phenomenon of the political distribution of power."[61]

This description misses the radical difference which exists between the situation of the great mass of Soviet wage-earners and that the camp workers. Also it does not allow a grasp of the difference of situations between these workers and those subjected to forced labor in what Marx called "oriental despotism." In fact, in this latter social form the persons alloted to forced labor were usually there for only relatively short periods.

and most often provided their own subsistence and remained within the social relationships that allowed the reproduction of their labor force. On the contrary, the workers in Soviet camps were cut off from the rest of the world, they depend on their guardians for subsistence, and a large proportion of them died in the camps without leaving any descendants, apart from the children that they had before their internment.

In fact, the work of those in Soviet camps constitutes a form of exploitation *sui generis*. One could say, also in a metaphorical way, that this form of exploitation constituted a sort of "state slavery." However, this term is equally misleading, for slaves reproduced themselves and were usually liable to be bought or sold. So finally one has to acknowledge that his type of exploitation is not definable in term of any other and must be described as "*concentration-camp labor*".

Assuming this is agreed, the question remains: to what economic "requirements" were the development and reproduction of this type labor subordinated?

### (a) *The "requirements" of the economic administration*

At the most immediately empirical level, this type of work was firstly the result of mass repression and terror. On the one hand, the existence of millions of deportees and prisioners meant the establishment of an economic administration managed by the repressive organs, whose job it was to put the detainees to work. On the other hand, once this administration had been set up, it was alloted *production plans* that it had to carry out: to succeed in this it had to ensure a sufficient supply of detainees, which was facilitated by the fact that the NKVD was responsible simultaneously for the management of the camps and for arrests. Thus a connection was established between the extension of repression and terror and the "requirements" of the economic administration of the camp system itself.

The existence of production plans alloted to the repressive organs and plans concerning the number of detainees is an undeniable fact. Certain of these plans have been published,[62] others (although "secret"), reached "western" countries, such

as the detailed economic plan for 1941 of which we have already spoken. This source has given rise to very different estimates of the labor force employed by the NKVD.[63] The estimates of N. Jansy brought him to figure of 3.5 million for the number of detainees occupied with production tasks in 1941. Other calculations show that within a total gross investment program in 1941 of 37.65 billion rubles, the NKVD led with 6.81 billion (which corresponds to more than 18 percent of gross investment).[64]

The existence of production plans that had to be realized with the help of concentration-camp labor led to the informal existence of "arrest plans." Many eye-witnesses confirmed this.

For 1933 the Yugoslav communist, A. Ciliga, then held in the main prison of Irukutsk, noted that one of the main functions of this prison "was the transfer of prisioners to the Far East." He adds that the number of those who were thus "despatched" depended on the telegrams received from the clearing centers.[65] Some years later A. Solzhenitsym in his turn remarked that the "real law" of the arrests was nothing but "planning," which fixed the figures to be reached.[66] This "planning" was not exempt from improvisation, as was seen in 1937-40.[67]

Although a large number of eye-witness confirm that the size of the camp labor force was largely subject to the requirements of the "economic management" of the camp, it is still true that the latter did not constitute an end in itself, and it is therefore necessary to ask what were the imperatives to which it was itself obedient. One of these imperatives was obviously that of production growth, or at least, the growth of certain outputs.

### (b) *Camp labor and production logic*

Because of insufficient information it is impossible to estimate with any precision the contribution made by concentration-camp labor (either penal or general) to production, especially in those sectors where its role was significant, such as construction, mining, forestry, etc. However, it is known that this

contribution was considerable, since it rested on the activity of millions of men whose work was directed and managed by an administration divided into many "main directorates" equivalent to real ministries: the Directorate for Timber, Directorate for Camps in mining, metallurgy, etc.

The detainees built thousands of kilometers of rail roads and canals, and substantially participated in the construction of industrial combines, ports, and new towns, in the cutting of millions of tons of timber destined for export or internal consumption, and in mining for rare metals, gold, minerals, coal, etc.[68]

Nevertheless, recognizing the scale of the work accomplished with the aid of camp labor is not enough to tell us about the size of that labor. Certain writers consider that this size is a very decisive factor; for example, in a recent article, Steven Rosefielde estimates that in 1939 the *zeki* numbered from 8.4 to 10.4 million.[69]

In my opinion such an estimate (like some others which are similar) overestimates the overall economic role played by camp labor in economic and industrial "development" in the USSR during the 1930s. As is pointed out by R.W. Davies and S.G. Wheatcroft, if the methods and the data of Rosefielde are used the conclusion must be that in 1941 "Gulag penal labor" provided more than 60 percent of all industrial production and construction,[70] which is in contradiction with many statistical data, including that of the 1941 plan mentioned above.

As I have already said, it seems reasonable to acknowledge that the number of camp workers was a maximum of around 5 million toward the late 1930s. It would then represent, in 1937 and 1940 respectively, 34 and 31 percent of the workers and employees in industrial enterprises, construction, forestry, and transport,[71] which in itself is a considerable proportion.[72]

Many figures show that the labor productivity of camp workers was lower than that of "free" workers;[73] consequently the "contribution" of this work to production in the branches under consideration must be somewhat less than 30 percent, although nevertheless representing a very high percentage.

However, the submission of the authorities to these economic "requirements" produced perverse effects. One of them, as we have seen, was the enormous mortality among concentration

camp workers; this mortality reduced the demographic potential and the labor force available to the Soviet Union.

Another perverse effect of the development of camp labor was the low productivity of this latter. Thus, in general, transforming a "free" worker into a penal worker led to a reduction of production rather than an increase. However this assertion does not mean that recourse to camp labor did not obey a certain "economic logic," two aspects of which must be emphasized. One was the minimal monetary cost of camp labor forces, which did not receive wages or only very slight wages, and from this it follows that despite the low productivity there was high *exploitation rate*. The other was the very *great mobility* of the *zeki*, whose labor could easily be subjected to the *priorities* chosen by the authorities. In this regard, camp labor had the "advantage" of being more strictly subjected than any other to the "economic logic" of *priorities* and of *exploitation*.

### (c) *The "economic logic" of priorities and of exploitation*

The industrialization policy, as it was practiced during the 1930s, gave priority to accumulation and to those industries whose products would contribute as directly as possible to the increase of accumulation. This priority meant that it was considered relatively unimportant that the productivity of the *zeki* employed in the mines, forests, or construction sites was less than that of the same men employed "freely" in other sectors, like *agriculture* for example. In fact the "economic logic" of the authorities impelled them to try to obtain above all the increase of certain products, like gold, coal, rare metals, timber, etc. and to give priority to the construction of certain industrial sites, certain railroads and certain canals considered indispensable for economic and industrial "development" as a whole. In these circumstances it was of little importance that the decisions taken toward these priorities entrained a relative lowering of the average social productivity of labor, and a general decline in the living conditions of workers.

In certain cases, the priorities thus imposed were able, thanks to camp labor, to play an *effective* role in the growth of

investment (for example, the extraction of gold from Kolyma permited the purchase abroad of important industrial equipment). In other cases the role of these priorities was more or less illusory, for what was gained was often scarcely used (for example, the White Sea Canal, frozen six months of each year); and certain items of equipment imported in exchange for products obtained through *zeki* labor were quickly put out of action or badly utilized, sometimes even left to rust because the construction of the factories which were to use them was not itself finished. However, these wastages, although frequent, were not foreseen by the authorities, so from the point of view of their "economic logic" it could seem "justified" to give priority development to activities that allowed accumulation to be increased, and to allot to it the "necessary' number of camp workers, whatever might be the cost in human lives or loss of productivity. In any case, the wastage of labor and the inaccurate forecasts were largely felt outside the camp sector (of which we will say more in the fourth part of this volume); however this wastage did not include the same "cost" in human life.

It should be added that to develop on a wage basis the same activities as those which were developed on the basis of penal labor, it would have been necessary to grant to the "free" workers alloted to these activities wages much higher than those paid in the more agreeable regions, and it would have been necessary to guarantee working and living conditions much more "acceptable" than those inflicted on the *zeki*; otherwise nothing would have persuaded them to go to work in sufficient numbers in Siberia, and in the extreme east and north of the country. However, such a policy of wages, and investments in housing, would have been in complete contradiction with the priority given to accumulation. It would have demanded, moreover, that in order that the higher wages thereby paid could be exchanged for products, the production of consumer goods be rapidly developed; this was totally incompatible with the priority given to accumulation. Also, taking to account the volume of output available for manipulation, it would have been necessary, in order to attract workers to migrate towards the Soviet east, to lower still further the real wages of "free" workers in the western regions of the USSR,

which politically would have been very difficult. So, finally, the massive recourse to camp labor was particularly well adapted to the "economic logic" of the system, a system which has led Andre Glucksmann to talk of a "law of replacement of cash by cop."[74]

Here is one of the "advantages" of camp labor, its low monetary cost which allows it to be "profitable" even if its productivity is quite weak.[75] The "profitability" of this work, moreover, was even greater in that it allowed economies to be made in the use of expensive machinery in those sectors where it was practiced. Obviously these observations should not lead to the conclusion that the development of camp labor obeyed a kind of "economic calculation": because this development was largely guided by a dynamic which obeyed essentially political and ideological elements whose effects were far from being "rational." All the same, the authorities were aware of the "virtues" of camp labor and of labor provided by men and women who were underpaid and whose rights had been reduced to a minimum.

In the USSR in the 1930s camp labor was not solely intended to provide an enormous surplus labor; its development was also intended to produce an effect of terror, and thereby contribute to the enlarged reproduction of *exploitation relationships* which characterized the whole of "Soviet" society.

The role of camp labor in the reproduction of the Soviet social and political system evidently continues today, although this type of labor affects a lesser number of people than in the 1930s. Its role in the production of surplus value, however, remains considerable, for the "wages" paid to detainees are minimal (about 4-5 percent of the wages of a "free" worker, the detainees being "housed and fed"). These detainees take part in almost all productive activities: electronics, plastics, automobile spare parts, furniture, clothing, and obviously timber. Arrests continue to take place according to a "plan" conforming to the requirements of production.[76] Part of those in psychiatric hospitals are subjected to the same exploitation.[77] The role of women in this penal labor nowadays is especially great.[78] Bearing in mind all these points, it may be said that labor camps form a sub-system fulfilling important functions of integration and regulation in the Soviet economy and society.[79]

To summarize, the development of mass repression and terror was tightly bound to the policy followed by the leading group, a policy aiming to impose dictatorial power over the workers, peasants, and cadres. This policy was also bound to capital reproduction which took place on a large scale, and which subjected the country to the demands of maximum accumulation. Between 1929 and 1953 it cost the Soviet Union demographic losses which exeeded 20 million people, losses which therefore were higher than those suffered during World War II. The policy passed through the camps tens of millions of men and women. The significance of the economic and political aspects of the 1930s is fully apparent when one analyses the problem of accumulation and the crisis in the Soviet economy.

## Notes

1. E. Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, p. 131.
2. E. Ginzburg cites the case of a peasant woman thus sentenced who, not knowing what Trotskyism was, believed that she had been punished for being a *traktoristka*, having confused the latter word, which she knew, with Trotskyism (see above p. 138).
3. See S. Bialer, *Stalin's Successors*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), pp. 11–12.
4. These methods have often been described. For example, by Solzhenitsyn in Vol. 1 of *The Gulag Archipelago*. Also K. Kaplan's *Process politiques à Prague*, being based on archival documents, permits a close-up look at the self-accusation process. Kaplan shows that, as had long been thought, certain detained Party members had agreed to self-accusation believing that thereby they were doing the Party a "service."
5. Not all those subjected to these methods gave in. According to the case, resistance to these pressures could mean a prompt execution or, sometimes, a less severe punishment than would have been brought by a "confession." Such sentences were pronounced by the special boards of the NKVD or by courts in closed session.
6. This is a concept which A. Zinoviev emphasizes in his various books, especially in *The Yawning Heights*, (New York, 1979), and *Le Communisme comme réalité* (Paris, 1981). At different times this populism corresponded with a certain popularity of Stalin which encouraged a measure of informing (see the same author's article on Stalinism which appeared in Polish in *Kultura*, January 1980, p. 65, quoted by A. Ulam in *Russia's Failed Revolution*, (London, 1981), pp. 404 – 5).
7. M. Fainsod in *Smolensk* notes on several occasions that these archives, though extremely rich in information, give no coherent information

about the number of victims of the repression. The few figures that do appear are very contradictory. It would seem that there were no statistics on this question, except perhaps in the central departments of the NKVD.

8. Among the works that estimate the number of victims of the repression and the population of the camps, or the number attached to penal labor, there should be cited, apart from Conquest's book, the following: A. Avtorkhanov, *Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party*, (New York, 1959); D. Dallin and B. Nicolaevsky, *Forced Labour in the Soviet Union* (London, 1948); P.W. Schulze, *Herrschaft and Klassen in der Sowjetgesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 1977); H. Schwartz, "A critique of Appraisals of Russian Economic Statistics," in *Review of Economic Statistics*, Vol.XXX, 1948, pp. 38–41; M. Jasny, "Labour and Output in Soviet concentration camps," in *Journal of Political Economy*, No. 59, 1952 and No. 60, 1952; R. Tucker and S. Cohen, eds., *The Great Purge Trial* (New York, 1965); A. Solzhenitzyn, *Gulag*; S. Rosefields, "An assessment of the sources and uses of Gulag forced labor, 1929-1956," in *Soviet Studies*, January 1981; P. Wiles, *"Preliminary unfinished draft study of the economics of Soviet Forced Labour"* (1959, unpublished but quoted by S. Wheatcroft).
9. One of the more recent and weighty critical examinations of these estimates is the article by S. Wheatcroft, "On assessing–"
10. Quoted by Dallin and Nicolaevsky in *Forced Labour*, p. 52.
11. See above, p. 153.
12. See for this point Vol. 2 of this work, pp. 299-300, and the reference made there to the juridicial publication *Ezhenedel'nik sovietskoi yustitsii*, No. 46–47, 1928. The decree of March 26, is quoted by A. Solzhenitzyn in Vol. 2 of Gulag, p. 71 which refers top TSGADR, *Fond* 393, inv. 78, No. 65, FF. 369-72.
13. Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag*, Vol. 2, p. 71.
14. See for example the article of I. Gudkov in *Sovietskaya yustitsiya*, No. 34, December 1931.
15. See a quotation from D. Vitkovski's *Polzhizni* in Solzhenitzyn, Vol. 2, p. 99.
16. *Belomorskoye-Baltiiskii kanal imeni Stalina*, (Moscow, 1934).
17. See *Bol'shaya sovietskaya entsiklopediya*, Vol. 29, pp. 600-02, quoted from T. Cliff, Russia, p. 31.
18. Yagoda, born in 1891, joined the Bolshevik Party in 1907. As a member of the Party's military organization in 1917, he was given great responsibilities in the Cheka, later in the GPU. He was chief of the NKVD from its creation. Alongside Vyshinsky, he organized the first "Great Trial." His nomination as head of the NKVD may have been gained by Kirov, who was against the development of repression against Party members. Yagoda had apparently tried to "put a brake" on this repression. Thus from September 26, he was relieved of his NKVD function. It is known that Stalin reproached him for having caused "four years' delay" in the Party purge. Shortly after his elimination from the NKVD he was arrested in his turn. At the beginning of 1938 he was tried and sentenced at the same time as Bukharin, as a member of the "anti-Soviet bloc of rightists and Trotskyists."

19. Yezhov, born in 1895, joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917. Until the Seventeenth Congress he played a relatively insignificant role; he was then placed in charge of the cadres section of the secretariat of the CC and appointed to the Organization Bureau and to the chairmanship of the Party Control Commission (charged with organizing the "Purge" of the Party). In September 1936 he replaced Yagoda as head of the NKVD. Relieved of this function in December 1938, he briefly occupied a lesser post and then "disappeared" in 1939.
20. Beria, born in 1899, joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917 and occupied posts in the Cheka and then the GPU. He entered the CC in 1934. In 1946 he became candidate member the Politburo, then nubmer of the Defence Committee during the war. In 1946 he was became a member of the Politburo and became deputy chairman in 1946. After the death of Stalin he arrested in July 1953. According to the official version, he was then tried in a closed court and shot in December.
21. On these various points, see *Le Proceś des camps de concentration soviétique* (Paris, 1951); D. Rousset, *La Société éclatée* (Paris, 1973); B. Levitsky, *The Uses;* P. Lefort, "La terreur stalinienne" in *Communisme*, No. 1, 3rd Trimester, 1978, pp. 18 ff; and the several items in Solzhenitsyn's trilogy.
22. A. Ciliga, *Dix Ans.*, p. 235.
23. See above, p. 235.
24. This slang word also has a diminutive, *sharashka*. This system is described in L. Felix, *La Science au Goulag* (Paris, 1981).
25. See Dallin and Nicolaevsky, *Forced Labour*.
26. S. Wheatcroft, "On assessing," p. 267.
27. *Itogi vsesoyuznoi perepisi naseleniya 1959g USSR.*
28. S. Wheatcroft, "On assessing," p. 286.
29. The secret economic plan of 1941 is a document captured by the German army in its advance into the USSR. It was later seized by the US army and was then produced in a photographic reproduction in the USA under its Russian title, *Gosudarstvennyi plan razvitiya narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR na 1941g*. There are numerous items in it about the production of NKVD enterprises, but this information is incomplete. As well, it is not always easy to make the jump from knowledge of production to that of the labor force required to obtain it. So this source has given occasion for very different estimates of the labor force employed by the NKVD (see for example, S. Schwarz, "Statistik und Sklaverei" in Ost-Problems, December 15, 1951, and N. Jasny, "Labour and Output in Soviet Concentration Camps," in *The Journal of Political Economy, October 1951).*
30. There is an overall view of this reality in R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 349ff.
31. *Izvestiya*, December 20, 1937, quoted by T. Cliff, *Russia*, p. 32.
32. Several testimonies of former deportees confirm these figures, which moreover may be found in an article by G. Shelest in 1963 (see R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 359-60.
33. For these deportations, see M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants* pp. 495-506; also the second part of Vol. 2 and the first part of this Vol. 3 of the present work.

34. See P. Broué, *Le Parti bolchévique*, p. 354.
35. For the repression of children and youth, see Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag*, vol. 2, pp. 447ff; also the book by M. Zalcman already mentioned, and the following note.
36. R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 142.
37. It has been estimated that one worker died for every cross tie laid in the construction of these railroads (see D. Rousset, *La Société éclatée*, p. 248.
38. For the Kolyma camp, see Shalamov's *Récits de la Kolyma*, by far the fullest account of concentration camp life.
39. See especially R. Conquest, *Kolyma — The Arctic Death Camps* (London, 1978).
40. A. Ciliga, *Dix Ans.*, p. 336.
41. *Gulag*, Vol. 2, p. 52.
42. *See above*, pp. 126–27.
43. *See above*, p. 128.
44. R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 527-29. This author quotes a former NKVD official who spoke of two million "liquidations" (p. 529) and mentions a speech by a Yugoslav leader (of August 6, 1951) which mentioned three million "killed" between 1936 and 1938.
45. R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p.239; according to this author the prison executions reached a thousand daily in some periods in Moscow alone.
46. On these aspects of repression and mass terror, see *Bulletins d'informations*, No. 3, January 1964, of the Commission for the Truth about Stalin's Crimes, quoted by R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 482-83 and 528-29. Solzhenitsyn at various places in his *Gulag* mentions these burial grounds.
47. It will be noted that these latter were used "selectively" not only against the peasants in general, but more specially against certain nationalities. According to L. Plyushch, *History's Carnival: a Dissident's Autobiography*, (New York, 1979), five million Ukranians died as a result of the 1933 famine.
48. Among the older analyses I would mention, especially, the works of F. Lorimer and especially his *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects*, (Geneva, 1946); W. Eason, "Population and Labour Force" in *Soviet Economic Growth*, A. Bergson, ed., (Evanston, 1953), pp. 101ff., S. Prokopowicz, *Histoire economique de l'URSS* (Paris, 1952), especially pp. 53 and 65. The main Soviet sources used by these authors were *Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya, 1926 god* (Moscow, 1930); I. Kravak, "Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1937g." in *PK*, No. 12, 1936; S.I. Sulkevich, *Naseleniye SSSR* (Moscow, 1939); and *Pravda*, March 2, 1938, June 27, 1939, and November 7, 1951. The 1959 census, published later, added much new data about the 1939 demographic situation.
49. See Maksudov's article "Portes subies par la population de l'URSS, 1918-1958," in *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, July- September 1977, pp. 223-65.
50. In the article quoted above, the term "losses" means "premature" disappearances, those which took place" before the time of natural death"

because of repression, war or any other cause of "excess mortality" (famine, for example); the term therefore excludes the effects of a possible low birthrate.

51. *See above*, p. 235.
52. *See above*., p. 243.
53. These various points will be developed in Vol. 4 of this work.
54. *MEW*, Vol. 33, p. 53.
55. C. Lefort rightly remarks "that in the terror there is a kind of internal logic which causes it to develop to its extreme consequences, irrespective of the real circumstances to which it was summoned to respond originally... The terror is a social phenomenon, it changes the behaviour and mentality of individuals and doubtless of Stalin himself" (C. Lefort, *Elements d'une critique de la bureaucratie* (Paris, p. 71), p. 147, note 5). This observation is as valid for counter-revolutionary as for "revolutionary terror." Incidentally, one might suggest that the development of terror during a revolution is a sign that the future of the revolution is already seriously compromised (modern Iran is an example).
56. See Hannah Arendt, *The Totalitarian System* (New York, 1968), pp. 464-68.
57. See N. Dodge, "Fifty Years of Soviet Labour," in G. Treml, ed., *The Development of the Soviet Economy: Plan and Performance* (New York, 1968); P. Schulze, *Herrschaft und Klassen in der Sowjetgesellschaft* (New York, 1977), p. 204.
58. See K. Lioubarski's contribution in *Chronique des petites gens d'URSS* (Paris, 1981), p. 61.
59. For the problems set by these concepts, see M. Godelier's Preface to the CERM book *Sur les sociefés precapitalistes* (Paris, 1970), especially p. 135. This book contains several passages devoted to these forms of production by Marx, Engels, and Lenin.
60. R. Bahro, *L'Alternative* (Paris, 1979), pp. 51–108 and especially pp. 77, 81, 102 and 108.
61. *See above*, p. 91. For a critical examination of Bahro's arguments see B. Chavance, "Une Alternative existant réellement," in *Les Temps modernes*, November 1980.
62. It was thus with the production plans to be achieved by the detainees of the Justice Commissariat between 1930 and 1935, which showed that in 1935 the total production obtained by the Justice Commissariat of the RSFSR was to be 468 million roubles (1926–27 prices) compared with an actual production in 1930 of 62 million. (The Soviet sources for these figures are in S. Wheatcroft, "On assessing," p. 289). Later, the camps administered by the corresponding commissariates of the different republics were transferred to the NKVD (See Sobraniye zakonov, No. 56, 1934, p. 421, quoted in Wheatcroft, p. 294, note 89).
63. For example, see S. Schwarz, "Statistik und Sklaverei," and N. Jasny, "Labour and Output."
64. See the article by J. Miller, "The 1941 Economic Plan," in *Soviet Studies*, April 1952, especially pp. 380-82.
65. A. Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, p. 351.
66. A. Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag* Vol. 1, (Sob. Sochinenii, Vol. 5), p. 79.

67. *See above*, Vol. 2, pp. 138–39.
68. A partial list of these activities is in Vol. 2 of *Gulag*, pp. 591–93.
69. S. Rosefields, "An assessment of the sources," p. 65.
70. R. Davies and S. Wheatcroft, "*Steven Rosefielde's Kliukva*," in *Slavic Review*, December 1980, p. 598.
71. *N. Kh... 1958g*, pp. 658–59.
72. To those who put the "disappearance of unemployment" among the "assets" of the Soviet policy, it might be observed that the proportion of those who, instead of being wage-earners, entered the camps, is very much greater than that of the unemployment victims of the USA and western Europe in the 1930s.
73. On this point see the article in the December 1980 issue of *Slavic Review* by R. Davies and S. Wheatcroft, and that of the latter in *Soviet Studies* (April 1981).
74. See A. Glucksmann, *La Cuisinière et le Mangeur d'hommes* (Paris, 1975), p. 128.
75. This does not mean that in certain cases the use of concentrations camp labor was carried on in such bad conditions that it could not be profitable" (See the example in Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag*, Vol. 2, pp. 580–87), but these cases were exceptional. In money terms the economic balance of these camps was "globally positive" although they were disastrous from the point of view of human life; but this point of view is foreign to the "logic" that the authorities followed.
76. K. Lioubarski, "Un palliatif au mangue de main d'peuvre et à la faible productivité travail: le travail forcé des camps," in *Chroniques des petites gens d'URSS*, pp. 63–64.
77. *See above*, p. 65.
78. See *Femmes et Russia 1980* (Paris, Editions des Femmes, 1980).
79. R. Brunet, "Géographie du Goulag," in *L'Espace géographique*, No. 3, 1981, pp. 215ff.

PART 4

# Capital and its Crises

The dominant aspect of the development process of production forces during the 1930s in the Soviet Union was industrialization. The latter benefited from maximum investment. The working class grew at an exceptional speed. Soviet industry experienced a particularly fast expansion.

Although there is no doubt that official statistics relating to global industrial production have a tendency to "inflate" the size of the results obtained, and although this "inflation" is due simultaneously to the way in which the statistics were calculated[1] and to the way in which the basic data were collected, it is nevertheless true that in the 1930s there was a real "industrial revolution" on a scale without historical precedent, but which has since had equivalents, particularly in Japan.[2]

The index of industrial production revised by Hodgman (which seems especially typical) moves from a base of 100 in 1928 to 371 in 1937 and 430 in 1940.[3] Other calculations present a picture of an industrial growth a little less rapid but which nevertheless was remarkable.[4]

The exceptional performances, however, should not put into oblivion the social conditions in which they were achieved. Nor must they hide the fact that, according to the official statistics themselves, the rate of development of industrial production fell from one Five-Year plan to the next.[5]

The fall of the industrial production growth rate cannot be separated from another very significant fact: the weak growth rate of industrial labor productivity, which contrasts with the scale of technical change that was accomplished.[6]

The slow growth of labor productivity, the progressive fall of growth rates for industrial production and, above all, the crises that the soviet economy experienced, are manifestations of the *limits of* the successes brought by the industrialization of

the USSR. And this is not the only thing, for the beginnings of this industrialization were accompanied, as has been shown in this volume, by a serious decline in the living standards of the masses and by recourse on a large scale to penal labor.

## Notes

1. This problem has been studied by many writers. These include, especially: D. Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial Production*, 1928-1951 [Cambridge, Mass.,1954]; A. Bergson, *Soviet Economic Growth* [Evanston, 1953]; and the part devoted to the USSR in *Capital Formation and Economic Growth* [Princeton, 1955].
2. In fact if one takes into account technical progress and product quality in Japan, the latter's industry has performed considerably better than Soviet industry did.
3. D. Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial Production*, p. 89.
4. The diversity of recent estimations of Soviet industrial production growth, with copious references, can be seen in *Slavic Review*, December 1980, with its articles by S. Rosefielde, H. Hunter, R.W. Davies, S.G. Wheatcroft.
5. On this point see M. Lewin, "The Disappearance of Planning in the Plan," *Slavic Review*, June 1973, p.283. According to official statistics the annual industrial growth rates for each of the three first plans were respectively, 19.2, 17.1, and 13.2 percent, the latter covering the first three-and-half years of the plan. Of course, if the elements of overestimation included in the official figures are removed, the growth rates appear weaker. Thus N. Kaplan has calculated that for 1933-40 the average annual rate of industrial production growth was 8.8 percent (see his "Retardation in Soviet Growth," in *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, August 1968, p. 297).
6. Thus, taking 1928 as 100, the index of daily productivity per head employed in main industry was 167 in 1940 (that is, the same as in 1937): this index calculated by Hodgmann in *Soviet Industrial Production*, p. 117.

# 1

# Accumulation in 1928-40

BETWEEN 1928 and 1940, the Soviet Union experienced a gigantic accumulation of *material resources* devoted to industry, and especially to heavy industry.

One statistical index reflects the "official accounting" for the material resource accumulation of the Soviet Union. This was the index expressing the volume growth of "*basic capital*" (fixed capital) at the disposition of the productive and non-productive sectors. According to official statistics, the "value" (in "constant prices") of the "basic capital" grew from an index of 100 in 1928 to 312 in 1940.[1]

However, these figures have only a very limited significance. In fact, when one compares them with other Soviet statistics, it is clear that they overestimate very much the growth of material resources accumulated during these Years. This overestimation to a large extent resulted from the method used for the construction of this index, because:

(1) The index does not take into account the greater part of the *destruction* of material resources suffered by the Soviet economy during the 1930s, especially the destruction that struck agriculture following forced "collectivization."[2] To this destruction should be added that connected with the abandonment of most equipment used by private industry and by artisans. In fact, from 1930, almost all this equipment was stopped, because it was usually of no use to the state's large-scale industry.

(2) The official index was calculated in "comparable prices," which means that the investments towards the end of the period have had to be "deflated" in order to eliminate the influence of the price rise between 1928 and 1940. However, it would clearly seem that the size of this rise of prices was underestimated, and therefore the coefficients of deflation that were adopted were too small.

(3) The capital invested continued to be valued at its original cost, and therefore its value at the end of the period was not reduced to take into account the wear and tear of equipment.

Although the index, which claimed thus to "measure" the accumulation of material resources in the period 1928-40, *overestimates the net result,* it all the same has the merit of giving an idea of the size of investment carried out during the three first five-year periods.

## I. Investments made 1928-40

For the years 1928-37 an estimate of the value of investments is as follows:

*Gross investment (1928-37)*

(billion rubles in constant prices)[3]

| | |
|---|---|
| 1928-32 | 67.2 |
| 1933-37 | 151.7 |

Although between 1937 and 1940 the growth of gross investment slackened, its value ("in constant prices") still grew, in total, by 30 percent according to official statistics.[4] Between 1928 and 1940 the growth of gross investment was exceptionally high, on the order of 14 per cent annually.[5]

According to official statistics the investments made during the two first Five-Year Plans and the three and one-half years of the Third Five-Year Plan were divided as follows:

*Distribution of gross investment (kolkhozes excluded) during the first three Five-Year Plans*[a]

(% of total gross investment)

| | |
|---|---|
| Industry | 41.5 |
| Agriculture | 8.0 |
| Transport and communications | 20.5 |
| Housing (excluding individual construction) | 11.5 |
| Trade, communal enterprises, and scientific, cultural, educational and health institutions | 18.5 |
| Total | 100.00 |

It can be seen that industry received more than two fifths of state investment while agriculture was reduced to a beggar's portion (taking into account kolkhoz investments would not change this picture substantially). Housing construction was equally neglected.[7] A very large proportion of investment went to heavy industry (Group A) and to transport and communication; within industry, less than one sixth of investment was devoted to increasing the production potential of consumer goods (or Group B).

In general, the enormous investment effort of these years, which was a heavy burden on the real income of the population, therefore did very little to improve living conditions; the principal exception was the investment made for education and health. However, these investment above all benefited the urban population. Moreover, access to better hospital services was reserved to those who were part of the managing apparatus, and their families.

## II. The economic weight of investment

For most of the 1930s the rapid increase of investment did not bring the expected growth of total income and of production. In fact the brutal and (in practice) chaotic increase of gross accumulation resulted in a veritable *dislocation of production*,

*especially in agriculture.* This for several years entailed a decrease in the availability of consumer goods.

The "economic weight" of the rapid increase of accumulation is difficult to "measure." However, an idea can be gained by comparing the rate of investment recorded in 1928 with that recorded in 1937. Between these two years this rate passed from 7 percent to 21 percent of the national product'[8] almost in nine years, which was an upheaval on an exceptional scale, and it is understandable that it seriously disturbed the reproduction of the material and social conditions of production. The growth recorded for the rate of accumulation is in correlation with the putting into force of the first Five Year Plans.

## Notes

1. Figures calculated From *N.Kh...1958g,* p. 58.
2. For an estimate of the destruction of means of production in agriculture, see N. Jasny in *Soviet Industrialization* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 81ff.
3. *N.Kh...1958g,* p. 618.
4. See above.
5. The figures for *gross* investment evidently do not take into account "disinvestment" accompanying the process of primitive accumulation. Nor do they show fluctuations and regressions of investment which occurred during the crises, as will be seen.
6. Figures calculated from *N.Kh...1958g,* pp. 622-23. The investments of different years are valued in prices said to be "comparable."
7. From 1929 to the war, there were built about 140 million square meters of housing financed by the state or cooperative organizations *(N.Kh...1958g, p. 636).* During the same period the urban population grew by nearly 30 million, while part of the housing stock deteriorated; hence there was a serious decline in housing conditions, that became catastrophic (see A. Kopp, *L'Architecture–).*
8. National product and investment are evaluated at factor cost by G. Grossman in his contribution to *Soviet Economic Growth* (ed. Bergson), p.8.

# 2

# The first Five-Year Plans

FROM the end of the 1920s, Soviet planning was an economic, social, and political reality. Plans were elaborated, discussed, adjusted, "applied." A large number of important economic decisions were based on them. The rhythm of development and the structure of the Soviet economy were indubitably influenced by the practice of planning. Nevertheless, this statement must not lead to the conclusion that the Soviet economy was henceforth a "planned economy," in the sense that it was "controlled" or subjected to the plan. The existence of such a control was proclaimed by Soviet ideologues, who talked specifically of the "planned economy" and favorably compared this with the "market economy." Examination of the real movement of industry and agriculture, and comparison of the plan objectives with actual economic development, rejects (we shall come back to this) the myth of a Soviet planned economy. This myth nevertheless has had a long life; this is for various reasons, notably that the concept of the planned economy is bound to the fetish of state and plan which developed on the basis of the dominant social and political relationships in the USSR. It is also because, as we have already said, the existence of the plans had an effective (although not always anticipated) action on the real economic situation.

## I. Contradictions between economic plans and real advance

Taking an overall view of the plans worked out between the late 1920s and World War Two, it may be seen that this period can be divided into two sub-periods, the first from 1927 to 1932 and the second from 1933 up to the war.

During the first sub-period (and especially up to 1931), the plans became more and more detached from reality. The First Five-Year Plan was "revised upwards" in a drastic way without anything, from the point of view of real possibilities, justifying such a revision.[1]

During the course of this first sub-period (1927-32), the current economic policy passed through three phases.[2]

The first stage came to an end toward the end of 1930. It was characterized in particular by the vocal "struggle against inflation" and by the practice of inflation in reality. Thus, while the monetary circulation was rapidly increasing, it was being said that real wages would increase thanks to a lowering of industrial prices. At the beginning of 1930 a series of measures was taken which opened the way for a new wave of inflation; "control by the ruble" *(khozrashchyot)* was then practically abandoned, and a "credit reform" authorized the banks to provide, almost without control, enterprize bank accounts with the necessary money. Once again there arose an illusion about the possibility of immediately abandoning monetary accounting, just as in "war communism."[3] Pyatakov then declared:

> The screen of credit falls and one can see the characteristics of the production and circulation process in physical terms.[4]

At the same period Stalin considered that with the elimination of NEP, it would be possible to organize "direct economic ties between town and country, through the exchange of products without recourse to trade..."[5]

At the end of 1930 a second phase began, in which the accent was again put on *khozrashchyot*. A resolution adopted by the Plenum of December 1930 called for "the strictest financial discipline" and for the "strengthening of the ruble." This second

phase of economic policy was of short duration, because the "objectives" of production and investment which had been proclaimed previously were maintained. In addition, in June 1931, in the name of the struggle against "egalitarianism" and against "leftist levelling" of wages,[6] the highest wages were increased. Economic policy then began a third phase.

This third phase was continued up to the end of 1932. It was marked by the maintenance of very high targets previously announced for the First Five Year Plan, and by the formulation of completely unrealistic targets for the Second Five-Year Plan. It was also characterized by a resumption of high inflation which took the monetary circulation from 4335 million rubles on January 1, 1933,[7] an increase of 93 percent over 18 months. Above all it was marked by the famine of 1932-33 and by real economic chaos. It thus created conditions for a transition to a new period.

This new period (from 1933 to the war) was characterized by a reduction (but not a disappearance) of unreality in the plans, by a slowing down of inflation[8] by a wider acceptance of the "free" operation of peasant markets), and by recourse on a large scale to measures of coercion and repression.[9]

The move from the type of planning and economic policy of the early 1930s to that of the following years was largely imposed by the crisis that matured from the second half of 1931 and openly burst on the scene in 1933. So far as planning was concerned, the situation was so confused from the fall of 1931 that the Gosplan journal *(Planovoye khozyaistvo)* ceased publication for several months (the last number of 1931 was sent to the printer on October 3, the first number of 1932 was put in the presses on May 26). In 1932 there was the legalization on a large scale of the kolkhoz markets, where free prices were used.

The essential features of what for many years would be Soviet economic policy and planning were drawn at this time. These features were not the "expression" of previous theoretical concepts (on the contrary, the "theory" would be transformed in order to justify current practices). They were the product of economic, social and political transformation, of crises and contradiction in the Soviet social structure; these crises and these new social relationships also transformed official ideology.[10]

When the planning of 1927-31 is compared with that of later years, it is seen that the first years were marked by an extraordinary "unreality" while the following years saw a certain (relative) "return to reality." The size of the gaps between plan and real economic change confirms in every case the absence of "control" by the plans over this economic change. To illustrate this fact, we will give some examples.

### (a) *The first five-year period*

It has already been seen that the figures of the First Five-Year Plan on several occasions were revised upwards.[11] In thus adopting more and more ambitious targets, the Soviet leaders turned up their noses at the real possibilities and the warnings, comparatively prudent, of those occupying responsible positions in the planning organizations. The whole picture of the political situation in fact impelled the leading elements of the Party to adopt "objectives" that were higher and higher, and to silence those who reminded them of the dangers of falsely "ambitious" plans. The "objectives" written into the plans were even then imposed against immediate reality under the influence of "abstract requirements." Thus, in 1930, the First Five-Year Plan kept as a "target" an increase of 67 percent in real income for the agricultural population, and of 71 percent for the non-agricultural population, and this at a time when measures had to be taken cope with a real lowering of the standard of life.

#### (1) "Targets" and results of the First Five-year Plan

Plans elaborated in these circumstances could only be mythical. To show this, it is not necessary to compare in detail the "targets" and the results of the different plans.[12] It is sufficient to examine a few figures.

Let us take the First Five-Year Plan. It is known that, according to official declarations, this was to have been "practically achieved" in four years and three months (at the end of 1932

rather than October 1933), at least so far as industry was concerned. Thus, when Stalin presented the balance sheet of the First Five-Year Plan,[13] in his report of January 7, 1933 to the enlarged Plenum of the CC, he affirmed that "the plan for industrial production as a whole" had been achieved "by 93.7 percent," "towards the end of the fourth year" of the five-year period.[14]

If this statement had been correct it could have been said in effect that the industrial plan had been practically "achieved," at least overall. But the facts were very different.

Firstly, between the time when the First Five-Year Plan was adopted (in April 1929) and when its targets were declared to be achieved or "executed," this plan had been modified so often that little was left of the original. So to refer, in 1933, to a programme adopted in 1929 but adandoned during the following years and replaced by more ambitious plans, made little sense.

However, even if one accepts such a referral, a brief examination of the figures reveals that the "plan" of 1929 was in no way "fulfilled."

According to the resolution adopted in April 1929 by the Sixteenth Party Conference, industrial production should have risen from 18.3 billion roubles in 1927-28 to 43.2 billion at the end of the First Plan,[15] an increase of 136 percent. But, according to the estimates of Hodgman, estimates which rest on a firm foundation, the production of main industry rose by 72 percent.[16] However, main industry was developed much more rapidly than industry as a whole. The "achievement rate" of the industrial plan is therefore certainly *very inferior* to the 78 percent calculated for the industry that was examined.

Because of the uncertainty which bears on estimates of production expressed in prices, it is useful to quote a minimum of statistics expressed in physical quantities (tonnage, kilowatt hours, and meters). In fact, the latter reveal "achievement rates" that are very weak, using the official sources themselves. Here are some of these rates: coal 86 percent; electricity 79 percent; pig iron 62 percent; steel 57 percent; sheet metal 54 percent; woollen cloth 34 percent; cotton cloth 58 percent; paper 52 percent; crystalized sugar 32 percent.[17]

One observation could be added: it is misleading to calculate the "achievement rate" of plans by comparing the amount

produced with what should have been produced according to the plan provisions. In fact, the "objective" of the plans was a certain *increase* of production. So it is by comparison with this *increase* that the "achievement rate" should be calculated. In the cases above this gives rates that are much lower. For example, the amount of steel produced annually was to *increase* (according to the initial plan) by 6.1 million tons; the actual increase was 1.6 million tons an "achievement rate" of the target increase of only 26.2 percent.[18] Moreover, for a certain number of industrial products, instead of the *increases* provided by the Five-Year Plan, there were declines to be recorded. Such was the case for most industrial production connected with agriculture: cotton cloth, woollen cloth, linen cloth and sugar.

### (2) "Revision" and actual abandonment of targets of the First Five-Year Plan

The changes made in the First Five-Year Plan after April 1929 in no way helped to lessen the mythical character of the "targets." On the contrary, they exacerbated them. They implied, in fact, *an abandonment of the initial plan*, as more and more "ambitious" and less and less achievable targets were adopted. Here are some examples.

At the beginning of 1930 the target production figures that had to be achieved in the last year of the First Plan "rose" to really fantastic levels. Henceforth it was a question of producing, at the end of the five-year period: 120-150 million tons of coal (in place of the 75 million tons initially set); 17-20 million tons of pig-iron (instead of 10 million); 450,00 tractors (instead of 55,000).[19]

One remark is necessry here. Such "targets" no longer corresponded to what one could reasonably call *"production forecasts."* Rather, they corresponded to a *"forecast of needs"* which were engendered by the race for accumulation and the promises that had been made. Thus there was an upsurge of "abstract requirements" that "imposed themselves" in actual fact on the authorities as well as on the "planners."[20] The latter were summoned by the political leaders to establish new "plans" incorporating "targets" that were more and more elevated.[21] The end result, therefore, were figures that were *incoherent and unconnected with real possibilities.*[22]

In 1930 and 1931 there was no time to prepare a new Five-Year Plan, and the latter would not have been able to "hold together" the figures of all the projects that had been started. The political leadership then gave up the idea of elaborating a new plan. In its eyes, "rhythms decide everything," the "targets" became "challenges that it was necessary to take up" and the "planners" were regarded as hindrances and "old hat," and it was decided to get rid of them. Gosplan was renovated, with men like Krzhizhanovskii and Strumilin – old Party members devoted to the leadership – being cast aside and replaced by more docile men.

On the eve of the Sixteenth Party Congress (June 26 to July 13, 1930), which witnessed the victory of those who supported an industrialization even more rapid than that forecast by the plan adopted in 1929,[23] the only acceptable perspective was one of rhythmic progress and ceaselessly increasing industrial production. Kuibyshev at this time said that it was necessary "to double each year investments in fixed capital, and increase production by 30 percent each year."[24]

Bearing in mind the results actually achieved, it is not surprising that at the beginning of 1933 all these "targets" were "forgotten"; that is why the balance sheet of the First Five-Year Plan, presented by Stalin at this time, referred simply to the figures of the initial plan even though it had been abandoned for almost three years.

### (b) *The second five-year period*

In 1933 and 1934 a Second Plan project and then a definitive plan were elaborated.[25] The "targets" set by these two documents were very close, but the second was more "modest" and more "realistic" than the first. It is this which was adopted by the Seventeenth Party Congress which met in February and March 1934, that is, during the second year of the Plan's course.[26]

Because of this greater "realism" the percentages of "fulfillment" of the second Five-Year Plan were much higher than those of the First. For industry taken as a whole it even reached, *globally*, a "fulfillment" of 102 percent. However, the global

figures are overestimated because they were calculated in prices and are therefore "swollen" by the rise in the latter (although the statisticians claimed to have eliminated the effects of this price rise in their calculations). Moreover, the global figures obscured considerable inequalities in the "fulfillment rate." These inequalities meant that the structure and the proportions of the economy were not in any way transformed "in conformity" with the plan. Here again the idea of a "control" by the plan over economic change seems mythical, this also being revealed by the economic crises, which were obviously not "programmed."

So as not to clutter this exposition by quoting too many figures, we will limit ourselves to indicating the "fulfillment percentage for certain of the targets" of the Second Plan, fixed in quantity rather than prices and comparing the target production with the actual production.

*"Fulfillment" percentage of production targets set by the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-37)*[27]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Electricity | 96 | Cotton cloth | 64 |
| Oil | 61 | Woolen goods | 46 |
| Coal | 89 | Paper | 83 |
| Pig-iron | 91 | Sugar | 104 |
| Leather footwear | 107 | | |

It can be seen that the "fulfillment" percentages here vary between 46 and 107. It also may be seen how enormous was the "lag" in production of industrial consumer goods, which the Second Plan had "anticipated" would increase enough to quickly raise consumption levels.

In agriculture the "fulfillment" of the Plan was very weak, as much in cereal (despite the exceptional harvest of 1937) as in livestock. For the first, the average harvest was only 76 percent of what had been forecast for the average of the annual plans.[28] For the second, the number of cows only represented 78 percent of the targets.[29] Production actually obtained in 1937 was therefore very distant from the "targets" of the plan.

The "targets" fixed in the Second Plan also reflect, essentially, the "abstract requirements" of accelerated accumulation (this in spite of the momentary brake imposed by the 1933 crisis),

and the way in which the Party leadership took care of these "requirements," which to it seemed "possible," "desirable," or "necessary." They were a product of the economic and political situation as it was understood at the top of the Party, seen through the ideological forms which were dominant there. Part of the targets "retained" in this way were only there as "promises" to be followed by no concrete action.[30] Other targets, those which actually seemed to be "essential," were on the other hand the occasion for "priority" action, continued throughout the Five-Year period (such was the case with what was done to increase the output of the main means of production).

### (c) *The third five-year period*

The working out of the Third Five-Year Plan took place in a period of extreme political tension, of mass repression and of the physical elimination of most of the old Party leadership. In these circumstances, the Third Plan was presented for the ratification by a Party Congress only in March 1939 (at the Eighteenth Congress), more than two years after the beginning of the five-year period. More exactly, the Congress was summoned to ratify only the "main tasks" of the Third Plan.[31] A definitive version of the latter would never be published; the document published in 1939 is much less detailed than those of the two previous plans.[32]

A comparison of actual economic change with the "targets" written in this document show once more the mythical nature of these "targets." One can see this by examining the following figures, which express in percentages the increases forecast by the Third Five-Year Plan and the increases actually obtained in 1940, when three-fifths of the five-year period had passed.

*Actual increases of production as percentages of the increases anticipated for 1942 by the Third Five-Year Plan*[33]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Electricity | 32.7 | Woolen goods | 13.0 |
| Coal | 37.2 | | |
| Coke | 12.7 | Sugar | (production decline of 319,000 tons instead of planned 1,079,000 ton increase) |
| Oil | 11.7 | | |
| Steel | 5.8 | | |
| Cotton cloth | 32.8 | | |

As may be seen, not only was the 1940 level far from the 50 to 60 percent of the production increase forecast for 1942 but, in addition, the inequalities of gross rates (compared to those forecast) are considerable. Leaving on one side the falls in production, the above percentages vary in their relationship by a ratio of 1 to 6.4.[34]

There is something more serious: in a period when war threatened, the production plans of oil, coal, and steel have only miserable "fulfillment rates." In fact, during the first three years of the Third Plan, the production of petrol, coke, and steel almost stagnated compared to 1937.

The figures show simultaneously the scale of the disorganization which then reigned in essential industries, and the absence of "control" exercised by the Plan over real economic development.[35]

## II. The effects of the development of contradictions between plans and realities

The inadequacy of the plans in relation to reality and, more generally, to the objective economic possibilities, gave rise to a series of consequences. The latter concerned especially the aggravation of the contradictions in the sphere of production and exchange.

### (a) *The cycle of shortages and the "target inflation" of the plans*

Putting into action plans that were partly unrealizable, because sufficient material and human means were not available, inevitably brought shortages.

During the 1930s and especially during the first five-year period, the appearance of shortages, as is known, led the Soviet leaders to raise rather than lower the plan "targets," by establishing task for the production of "deficit" products that were progressively bigger. It was in this way, for example, that the "targets" of production fixed for metallurgy showed an extraordinary growth between 1929 and 1932.

Far from reducing the shortages, recourse to such plan revisions obviously only made the shortages worse. In fact, the fixing of supplementary "targets" required the construction of extra factories, which made necessary the provision of additional means. For example, the starting of new industrial construction sites required still more steel, so much so that it became more and more scarce.

In concrete terms, one could say that the list of some 1200 industrial construction sites – contained in the third volume presenting the First Five-Year Plan – was virtually doubled during the months which followed the adoption of the Plan. Consequently, against the 22 billion rubles which, according to the Five-Year Plan, had to be invested in industry, construction and transport, there was in the end an actual sum for investment of 41.6 billion.[36]

Such a growth of investment weighed heavily on the resources available for consumption. It also brought about a tremendous disequilibrium between the available material resources and the needs of the different construction sites.

### (b) *Production anarchy and the slow-down of growth*

During the 1930s attempts, aiming to "resolve" the problems posed by the development of shortages by "inflating the targets" of the plans, led to the hasty adoption of industrial projects which often did not rest on any serious preliminary studies. This helped to intensify the *anarchy of production*, which was in any case engendered by the setting up of construction sites and factories which could not receive the necessary amounts of raw materials, fuel, or labor to function regularly.

However, the atmosphere of "urgency" fostered by the political leadership, wishing to push the rhythm of growth higher and higher (even when its decisions disorganized production and ended up by hindering the long-term maintenance of high levels made it quite exceptional for those on the ground who saw the unrealizable nature of a large part of the "targets" imposed by the upper political levels—to make a protest.

So warnings like the following formulated by an old expert entrusted with putting into operation an unrealizable program of increased oil production were quite rare. He addressed the CC in the following terms:

> I cease to be responsible for the planning department. I consider the target fixed at 40 million tons as purely arbitrary. More than one third of the oil must come from unexplored regions, which is like sharing the skin of the bear before trapping him and even before knowing where he is. In addition, the present three cracking plants must become 120 before the end of the five-year period. This in spite of the acute lack of metal and the fact that the highly complex technique of cracking has still not been mastered by us...[37]

The multiplication of such "programs" at the beginning of the First Five Year Plan meant that the share of the total industrial investment represented by investment frozen in uncompleted programs rose to about 40 percent in 1931. Thus these programs immobilized enormous amounts of steel, which was in deficit anyway. This in turn hindered the full utilization of existing factories and *slowed down* the development of production in these factories and industrial production in general.

Improvised and badly coordinated programs, surging up on the wave of an accumulation which sharply increased, were equally numerous in the construction of new industrial centers. These new centers were to be established in coordination with the creation of new factories. Thus the Soviet planner N. Efreimov said that "a whole series of towns have been built without their plans having been approved,"[38] in other words, in an anarchic way. Consequently, the inhabitants of these towns were often without elementary conveniences (water, drains, etc.) necessary for urban life.

Without exception the contradictions which developed during the 1930s were of such a size that almost all people doubtless few who allowed themselves to point out the unrealizable character of the "targets" of the plans (initial or revised) were dismissed or severely condemned without their arguments being discussed.

The political power thus acted as an agent for the constraints directed toward accumulation. It raged more and more sharply against those who thought they could illuminate the contradictions between plan and reality, and the economic anarchy which resulted from them. Such people were usually considered "traitors" because, in the eyes of the leaders, they at least demonstrated a "lack of confidence" in the possibilities of the system, or revealed their "outdated concepts."

The production anarchy which developed in these circumstances helped to *slow down* the development of industry and to *lower* agricultural production. In fact, as has been seen, a large proportion of the material resources (available in insufficient quantity) was *immobilized in equipment or machines which were not working* or which were badly used. Thus current production was *lower* than it could have been with different targets.

The adoption of unrealizable "targets" had also "cumulative effects": the impossibility of realizing certain anticipated targets blocked the achievement of other targets which could be achieved only if the first were achieved. For example, a low "fulfillment rate" of steel production entrained a fulfillment rate *even lower* for other plans of production or investment which required steel. Thus during the First Five-Year Plan certain factories could not be built because of lack of steel, hence the derisory "fulfillment rates" for certain products like fertilizers.[39]

Production anarchy showed itself also in the distribution of production. Thus the fluctuation in the output of numerous factories, and the more-or-less long stoppages in activity at various construction sites, meant that part of the output of the new factories, which should have been sent to nearby consumers, had to be sent thousands of kilometers, which overloaded the railroads and caused real chaos in transportation.

Finally, the stock of agricultural machines and tractors usually functioned only to the extent of about half of its capacity, because of shortage of necessary spare parts.

Production anarchy and the unrealizable nature of some of the "targets" of the plan nurtured other contradictions which manifested themselves in the existence of an *inflationary pressure* that was almost permanent. The non-realization of

many production "targets," while sustained expenses reached or exceeded the forecast, resulted, almost permanently, in an excess of distributed monetary incomes over the availability of products for consumers. Thus in spite of "controls" and regulations, prices had a tendency to rise and this even affected the "planned prices," above all those for consumer goods.[40]

The insufficiencies and the irregularities of supplies also had the consequence that part of the products were diverted towards "illegal channels" where black market prices ruled; hence the existence of a "parallel economic world" which made What happened in the "official world" particularly fictitious.

### (c) *The application of priorities and the development of day-to-day administrative management*

Anarchy of production and incoherence of plans from the beginning of the 1930s put enterprises into a chaotic situation. Most often, they could not obtain the quantities of raw materials, fuel, equipment, means of transport, etc. which they needed to have in order to attempt to "fulfil" the plans which were fixed for them by the Plan and/or *to avoid interrupting their production*. In these circumstances, enterprises were equally incapable of coping with all the delivery obligations to which the plan had pledged them. The situation was all the more entangled because enterprises were usually provided with financial means allowing them to negotiate for volumes of purchases greater than were actually obtainable, taking into account the quantities of available products and the prices at which they had to be handed over.

To cope with the chaos which was developing in this way, *the supply of enterprises* with raw materials, fuel, equipment, etc. was *more and more concentrated within the administrative organs*. These latter had to ensure a *centralized sharing of the main products necessary for industry*. Such a division could not really be "guided" by the plans, because the products necessary for the achievement of the latter existed only in insufficient quantity. The distribution was therefore subject

to *"orders of priority,"* by virtue of which certain enterprises were supplied before others.

Henceforward, *the effective activity* of production units depended in a large measure on *an application of "priority" allocations,* carried out *day-by-day.* This had only a distant relationship with the quantitative "targets" of the plans. Thus not only did planning tend to be submerged under an avalanche of plans, with their corrections and variations, *but the plans themselves tended to be replaced by the application by the administrative management of "priorities."*

For organizations which distributed the means of production, economic plans were only reference points among others. This was true even for relatively secondary points of reference, for the plans, not being "achievable," could not be utilized to share out the "deficit" products. Also, administrative sharing strove above all to respect the order of priority ordered by the political power and by the central planning organs. *The modus operandi* of the Soviet economy which was imposed in this way was very far removed from the "ideal" image of a "planned" economy. It helped to reduce still more the impact of the plan "targets" on real economic change.[41]

At the time when the system of priorities was introduced in 1930 it aimed, at first, to ensure the best operation possible for 112 enterprises, called "shock" enterprises, which were to set an example for the country.[42] The priorities enjoyed by the enterprise benefiting from the system concerned not only the supply of *material* but also the supply of *labor force* and the *financial means.*

In 1931 the system was extended to new enterprises, especially to the metallurgical combine of Kuznetsk and Magnitogorsk, the tractor factories at Chelyabinsk and Kharkov, the car factories of Moscow and Nizhnii Novgorod, etc.[43] The decision to grant priority to supplies for these factories meant that the factories, mines, and construction sites which were to supply them also had to be regarded as subjects for priority. In their turn, the railroads had to give priority to the *transport* necessary for the priority factories, and the Labor Commissariat had to provide them, before all others, with *cadres* and *workers.* As shortages became more general, so the list of priority enterprises became longer. It included in the course of 1931 metallurgy,

mining equipment, certain railroad construction, transport enterprises, etc.[44]

Very quickly the priorities thus established came into conflict with each other, and it was necessary on a day-by-day basis to impose "priorities for priorities" or "urgency orders." Thus at certain times the oil industry saw itself deprived of pipes diverted to the automobile industry;[45] similarly, "agreements" had to be made between the railroads and the mines.

In these circumstances, it was necessary, continuosuly to adopt orders of priority in the form of delivery decisons taken on the spur of the moment and designed to avoid the collapse (because of insufficient supplies) of one or another industry, or one or another enterprise. According to the situation of the moment, the priorities that were put into force benefited either certain enterprises of heavy industry (which was usually the case) or certain enterprises of light industry, or (exceptionally) housing.[47]

The relationship which this sytem had with the "targets" of the plan are extremely vague. At most, delivery decisions, or the opening of credits, were within the "limits" of the plans; more exactly, within the limits of the last version of the current plan (annual or quarterly.) These "limits" were rarely reached, and therefore exercized little influence on the actual distribution of means of production, of financial means, and of labor force. Even the proportions in which the different activities had to grow were not respected.

In fact, the development of the "Priority system" obeyed no stable principle. It was the result of a series of improvised responses. While being indispensible in the given conditions, it increased economic disorder and the anarchy which characterized the activity of non-priority enterprises. Thus the field for planning was reduced still more, for it was substituted by a centralized administrative management operating from day to day.

In spite of everything, such administrative management had the merit of allowing industries, construction sites and means of transport judged to be "most important" to avoid paralysis by the ever-extending shortages. In the absence of such a system, the launching of plans, in large parts unrealizable and including "planned deficits" of essential products, would have led to

even more disastrous chaos. Thanks to "priorities," complete chaos was avoided, and some industries were able to develop exceptionally fast, at least during certain periods. Nevertheless all this was only a palliative which could only reduce the most immediate consequences of the contradictions between economic plans and real possibilities. Over a long period, priority industries which were not supported by sufficiently coherent economic development also experienced a slowing down of their growth. Such was the case – notably, during the Third Five-Year Plan – in the metallurgical and oil industries. Generally speaking, recourse to a "system of priorities" was obviously incapable of preventing the tendency towards a slowing down of economic growth due to surplus accumulation, and the production anarchy which the latter brought along with it; hence a collapse of the relationship between increase of production and the sum of accumulated funds. This collapse meant enormous wastage and substantial underutilization of the funds of accumulation.[48]

An important point also deserves to be underlined: it appears from the available information that the actual functioning of the priority system was far from allowing different industries to develop in conformity with the requirements of harmonious economic growth, and with the needs for a rapid strengthening of the country's independence. The "weight" already acquired by the different industries – that of the persons who managed them and the administrative status of the different industrial branches – often played a decisive role in determining the size of material, financial and human means distributed between the branches of industry, whatever the situation might be "on paper" (at the level of decisions of principle), or in actuality.

A particularly significant example is that of the machine tool industry. This was to occupy a central place in the plan because it produced machines that produced other machines. From the Fourteenth Party Congress (1925) an appeal was launched for the building up of an independent machine-tool industry. But this appeal had practically no result. At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the machine-tool industry hardly supplied 2 percent of the total production of the engineering and metal-working industry.

At the beginning of 1929, a measure was introduced which increased the administrative "weight" of this industry. It was promoted to the rank of an individual trust, following intervention by Kaganovich.[49]

In 1930 the *"targets"* of the *plans* of this industry were substantially increased, which reflected its change of status. However, the *effective allocations of resources did not follow*, and the industry could not achieve its investment plan. As things turned out, priority was given to the more "prestigious" industries, which had the advantage of a greater political economic weight (like the truck and tractor industries.)[50]

During the second five-year period, the machine-tool industry again saw its "status" improved (partly following the increased demand for machine tools coming from industries using these machines). Nevertheless, again, the *effective allocations of resources did not follow the forecasts of the plans* and the utilizing industries had to develop their own machine-tool workshops. Such a practice did not allow full treatment for the global industrial requirements and, more particularly, for the needs of the armament industry, which required heavy and also precision machine-tools. It was only in the course of the Third Five-Year Plan that *urgent measures* were taken aimed at making up, partially, the *accumulated* lag of the industry. In fact these measures were not enough; when the war broke out the ambitious plans adopted in September 1939 and December 1940 had only been partially achieved.[51]

The preceding observations show how the anarchy in production and the development of the "priority system" brought consequences which were in contradiction not only with the "forecasts" of the plans but also with the *formally proclaimed priorities*. The same phenomenon also resulted in serious political consequences. They increased even more the role of the central offices of state entrusted with "managing the shortages" and taking repressive measures against those who did not observe the sharing-out measures taken centrally. Consequently there was an extension of a state apparatus that was more and more hierarchical and swollen.

## Notes

1. Thus between December 1927 and April 1928 the forecast coefficeint off Five-Year growth for main industry grew from 37 to 60 percent, according to each version; at about the same time the *forecasts* of gross investment in fixed capital to operate in five years were multiplied by four. (See Vol. 2 of this work, p. 447)
2. R. Davies, *The Emergence of the Soviet Economic System* (CREES discussion paper, SIPS no. 9, University of Birmingham, 1977) gives a very instructive analysis of economic policy and Soviet planning in 1927-34.
3. Details of how the theme of "disappearance of money" developed during War Communism may be found in the thesis of R. Tartarin, *"Le Blé,* le Temps, l'Energie. Théorie soviétique de l'abolition de la monnaie 1917-1921," (University of Paris 1, 1980). See also, by the same author, "Les conceptions soviétiques de l'abolitionde la monnaie de 1917 à 1921," a peper to the colloquium "Utopie et économie" at Toulouse, September 19-21, 1980.
4. *Pravda*, February 14, 1930.
5. *Pravda* February 10, 1930. After the war, when these works were published, this phrase of Stalin would be altered and it would be a matter of exchanges organized "by our commercial organizations," (Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. XII, P. 187).
6. See above Vol. XIII, p. 62.
7. *Bulletin mensuel de statistique de la SDN* (monthly statistical bulletin of the League of Nations) and the *Monthly Review* of the Moscow Narodny Bank in London.
8. Thus between January 1, 1933 and January 1, 1937 monetary circulation rose from 8.4 to 11.3 bullion rubles, an increase of 34 percent. (See S. Prokopowicz, *Histoire economque*, p. 550).
9. See the first three parts of this volume.
10. R. W. Davies emphasizes, for example, that the system of wage differentiation put into operation after June 1931 does not seem to have been established because the previous system had been proved to have caused the low labor productivity. He observes that in this area, as elsewhere, the "Soviet economic system" was storngly influenced by "the ethos of the dominant group in the Party," that is by its ideology (R. Davies, *The Emergence*, p. 23).
11. Some other examples will follow later in this section.
12. Such a comparison, clear and detailed appears in E. Zaleski's *Planification;* see also in *Slavic Review*, June 1973, articles by H. Hunter, "The overambitious first Soviet Five Year Plan," pp. 237ff, and M. Lewin, "The "The Disappearance of Planning in the Plan," pp. 271ff. Also, R. Davies and S. Wheatcroft in *Slavic Review*, December, 1973, "Further Thoughts on the First Soviet Five Year Plan," pp. 790ff.
13. Stalin *Works*, Vol. 13, 163-219. This is the report "The Results of the First Five Year Plan", and has been published in several formats.
14. Stalin *Works*, Vol. 13, p. 182.
15. *KPSS* (1953), Vol. 2, p. 449.

16. D. Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial*, p. 73.
17. C. Bettelheim, *La Plainfication*, pp. 288 and 290. Reaching and passing the initial targets was exceptional.
18. R. Dunayevskaya has rightly emphasized this point in her booklet *Russia as a State-capitalist Society* (Detroit, 1973), P. S.
19. See M. Lewin, "The Disappearance", p. 274. It will be noted that if one compares the *increases* of production thus given with the *effective increases*, the "execution rates" are derisory (which is not to say that the results obtained by industry were not remarkable). These rates emerge as 25-35 percent for coal, 17-21 percent for pig-iron, and 11.7 percent for tractors.
20. The pressure of such "requirements" was felt from the start of the elaboration of the First Five-Year Plan, especially on the "targets" fixed for agriculture. Thus in March 1929 at the Fifth Planning Congress Grinko announced that Gosplan did not agree with the "expectation of public opinion in the country" which "demands an increase of 30-35 percent in cereals by the end of the Five-year period" (See *Ekonomicheskaya zhizn'*, March 9, 1929). Grinko designated as "expectation of public opinion" the "demands" given birth by the process of accumulation which was then in train. In March 1929 resistance by Gosplan again permitted the retention (in the adopted "optimal" version of the plan) at 25 percent of the growth forecast for cereal output. Taking into account the forecasts for increase of sown area, the forecast increase for harvests was fixed at 44.7 percent (!). This was to allow an increase of 1,016–1,745 percent in grain exports, and 34 percent in livestock exports. (See *Pyatiletnii plan harodno-khozyaistvennogo stroitel' stva SSSR*, Vol. 1, p. 144 and Vol. 2, pp. 324-25, 332-33, quoted by R. Davies and S. Wheatcroft in "Further Thoughts," pp: 792-93. How agriculture developed in reality is well known (See Part One of this volume).
21. M. Lewin, "The Disappearance," pp. 274-75, quoting *PK*, No. 2, 1930, p. 32.
22. "On paper" the version of the Five-Year Plan adopted in 1929 was still relatively "coherent" but it included some quite implausible "forecasts," notably those concerning increases of labor productivity. (110 percent increase in the optimal variant) and industrial costs reductions (30-35 percent decreases). As R. Davies and S. Wheatcroft point out, these "forecasts" were obtained as "residues." The "planners" first "forecast" the figures for production and investment, then they "calculated" what "should be" the increases of productivity and the reductions of costs to bring the physical and financial plants into equilibrium. (See p. 992 of this article.)
23. Those who triumphed in this way were the supporters of an *industrialization which was "faster" only on paper*, because indifference to the coherence of targets and the *attempt* to speed up the rhythm resulted, as is known, in *crisis, famine*, and a *deep disorganization of industry*.
24. M. Lewin, "The Dissappearance," p. 283, which quotes *Saratovskaya partiinaya organizatsiya v period nastupleniya sotsializma po vsemu frontu* (Saratov, 1961, p. 155).

25. See *Vtoroi pyatiletnii plan razvitiya narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR (1933-1937)*l 2 vols., (Moscow, 1934).
26. *KPSS* (1953), pp. 744FF.
27. C. Bettelheim, *La Planification*, pp. 288-90.
28. Calculated for the plans from source above p. 278 and for the results from A. Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 186.
29. Calculated for the plans from Bettelheim, *La Planification*, p. 281 and for the results from A. Nove, An Economic History, pp. 186 and 238.
30. This is what happened to what was said to be the "essential social and political aim of the Second Five-Year Plan." According to official declarations, the aim of the Second Plan was to eliminate the differences between town and country and between physical and intellectual work (for example, see the speech on May 11, 1931 by Kuibyshev; see V. Kuibyshev, *Izbranniye proizvedeniya* Moscow, 1958). In reality these differences were accentuated in the Second Plan's course. Concrete measures taken between 1933 and 1937 largely contributed to this development.
31. KPSS (1953), pp. 879ff.
32. See *Tretii pyatilentii plan razvitiya narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR (1938-1942gg)* (Moscow, 1939).
33. Figures calculated from sources of notes 24 and 25; see also *Industriya SSSR*, 1957,and for more detailed figures, N. Jasny, *Soviet Industrialization*, p. 199.
34. See note 19 of the next chapter.
35. It should be pointed out that the plans did no better at controlling the spatial distribution of productive forces. Thus the regional distribution of investment and production had only a very distant resemblance to the "targets" fixed by the plants. During 1928-34, for example, the old industrial regions experienced in relative terms a capital accumulation much higher than that forecast by the plans (See H. Hunter, *Soviet Transport Experience* (Washington,, 1968), especially p. 142; also H. Chambre, *L'Aménagement*.
36. V. Kuzmin, *Istor icheskii opyt sovietskoi industrializatsii* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 71-72.
37. I Babel, *Izbrannoye* (Moscow, 1966), p. 281. An alternative English translation appears in A. Nove. *An Economic History*, p. 189. In the case in question it seems that this engineer was not punished, but the central authorities rejected his conclusions and continued to put into operation their "plan," which could not be carried out for the reasons given by the engineer. Consequently enormous funds were "frozen" in construction sites that were paralyzed for long periods, and the production of oil was a long way from the figure "set" by the Plan.
38. N. Efreimov in *Sotsialisticheskaya rekonstruktsiya gorodov*, Moscow, No. 1, 1933, quoted by A. Kopp in L' Architecture, p. 139.
39. The First Plan provided that at its completion 6 – 8.5 million tons of fertilizers would be produced. In 1932 only 920,000 tons were produced (see R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 106. Many other figures are on pp. 104-106 of this book).

40. Some figures illustrate the scale of the price rise endured by consumers between 1929 and 1940:

*Retail prices for products sold in Moscow*
*(roubles)*

| | *1929* | *1940* |
|---|---|---|
| Rye bread; 1 kg. | 0.08 | 1.00 |
| Wheat bread; 1 kg. | 0.35 | 2.80 |
| Potatoes: 1 kg. | 0.08 | 0.90 |
| Beef; 1 kg. top quality | 0.85 | 14.00 |
| Fresh milk; 1 litre | 0.25 | 2.20 |
| Refined sugar; 1 kg. | 0.70 | 5.50 |
| Cotton cloth: 1 metre | 0.40 | 4.10 |

(*Source:* Sovnarkom price committee, qutoted in *Economie et Politique*, November-December 1957, p. 85.)

41. For more than thirty years one of the characteristics of the Soviet economy has been the day-by-day administrative management of resources. This has still not disappeared today, but its role is substantially reduced from what it was in the 1930s. In fact, in present conditions the economic plans are less "ambitious" and more "realistic," and this allows a more limited place to be occupied by centralized direction of resources.
42. See the article by Reznik in *PK*, No. 1 1931 quoted by E. Zaleski in *Planification*, p. 169. Zaleski rightly points out that a "priority system" had already been established during War Communism.
43. See above p. 170.
44. Between February and June 1931 several decrees lengthened the list of priority enterprises. See *Sobraniye zakonov* of this period.
45. See S. Ordzhonikidze, *Stati i rechi*, Vol. 2 pp. 311 and 315. See also *Sobraniye zakonov*, No. 12, 1931, Art. 126; and E. Zaleski, *Planification*, p. 170.
46. *Direktivy KPSS i sovietskogo pravitel'stva*, Vol. 2 p. 308.
47. These last priorities came to the fore especially in 1932 and 1933; see Zaleski, *Planification*, p. 217.
48. An approximate idea of the size of these phenomena can be gained from the following figures between 1928 and 1940 the "value in constant prices" of the fixed capital of industry was multiplied by 8.2 (*N.Kh...1958g.* p. 58), but the revised index of industrial production was far from being increased by the same proportion; it multiplied by a coefficient of from 3.3 to 4.3, according to estimates (Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial*, p. 91). But in most other countries Industrial production increased faster than the accumulated industrial capital. In the USA, for example, between 1919-29 and 1929-48 industrial production (on average for each period) rose by 4.7 and 3.1 percent respectively whereas industry's fixed capital increased by 3 and 0.9 percent (see the article by A. Arzumanyan, "Present problems in the development of our industry," in *Pravda*, February 24 and 25 1964).

49. These facts, and those which follow, are from the thesis of J. Cooper, *The Development of the Soviet Machine-Tool Industry*, 1917-1941 (University of Birmingham, 1975), especially pp. 428 ff.
50. See above p. 429.
51. See above p. 430. J. Cooper rightly remarks that the delay suffered by the machine-tool industry toward the end of the Second Plan is partly explicable by its loss at this time of Kaganovich, very powerful in the Party leadership, who was transferred from its commissariat to the aircraft industry.

# 3

# The economic crises of the 1930s

A major characteristic of the industrial development and, more generally, of the enlarged reproduction of the material conditions of production in the Soviet Union was its very irregular and jerky aspect. As we have just seen in examining the "putting into operation" of the Five-Year Plans, economic reality was very far removed from the 'harmonious development" about which official ideology boasted.

In fact the Soviet economy experienced phases of rapid expansion and phases of near-total stagnation, or even decline: these fluctuations affected particularly the rates of accumulation, and revealed that the enlarged reproduction was effective in a cyclic manner and underwent crises.

## I. The 1933 crises

The increase in the rate of accumulation, in terms of the relationship between gross investment and national income, was extremely rapid in 1931. According to an official statistic, this rate then reached 36 percent of the national income against 27.3 percent in 1930.[1] *This increase absorbed the total increase of national income.* The poverty and incoherence of the available statistical data for 1932 make it difficult to calculate the accumulation rate of this year. Nevertheless, it seems that in 1932 the rate again increased.

Although accumulation was above all oriented towards industry, its increase was accompanied by a rapid fall in the growth rate of industrial production.[2] This fall indicates that the material and social conditions were such that the increase in investment was less and less capable of maintaining the desired rhythm of growth of industrial production.

The fall in the rates of increase was even more marked in the production of industrial consumer goods.[3] In reality, taking account of the collapse of artisan production and village industry which occurred at the beginning of the 1930s there was a serious decline in the level of consumption of the masses.

The fall in growth rates of industrial production, the decline in the availability of consumer goods (in the first place food items), the repercussions of these phenomena on labor productivity and on the volume of the labor force that construction could have at its disposal, constituted the material bases for the crisis of 1933 and the decline in investment which was one of its manifestations.

Thus, whereas net investments in fixed capital (estimated in constant prices of 1928) had rapidly increased between 1930 and 1932,[4] these same investments diminished by approximately 12 percent in 1933.[5]

The same phenomenon of *regression* can be observed in the field of employment: whereas the latter had substantially increased between 1930 and 1932, it declined in 1933. Globally, the decline was quite small (minus 3 percent approximately), but it was none the less significant. Especially striking was the decline of employment in basic construction (construction of new factories, big construction sites, new mines, etc.); in fact, in this sector the number of workers employed fell by more than one million, more than 31 percent between June 1932 and June 1933.[6]

The crisis of 1933 had the essential feature of a crisis of over-accumulation, characterized by an expansion of investment which ended by exceeding the limits imposed by existing resources, notably resources of labor.

At first sight, the crisis of 1933 seems to have been due to the agricultural crisis which broke out at that time.[7] However, looking at things more closely, it appears that the crisis was due fundamentally to the scale attained by the process of accumulation during the years 1929-32. The sharp rise in

accumulation was such that there resulted an exacerbation of the contradictions within the industrial sector and even more between industry and agriculture. The latter thereby found itself deprived of essential resources. It was not capable of maintaining a level of production corresponding to the needs of industry, or of continuing to provide it with the labor force required for the pursuit of an expansion corresponding to the volume of the investments made up to them in industry. In addition, the undernourishment which severely struck several rural regions between 1932 and 1934 reduced the productive capacity of agriculture.

On the other hand, the fall in the level of consumption in the towns badly affected labor productivity and reduced to nil, partly and momentarily, the productive effects expected from industrial investment.

Up to a certain point, this situation was recognized at the beginning of 1933, when it was admitted that the decline of agricultural production and the migration towards the cities had reached such a scale that it was essential to momentarily restrain accumulation, and also to try to put a brake on overdevelopment. As *Izvestiya* wrote:

> The towns have been extended too much. The food supply of urban agglomerations, the supplying of new construction sites and providing big centers with the products that are necessary for them, pose problems which are complicated and difficult to solve... The migrations of great masses of population seriously hinder the provisioning of the country, overpopulate the towns and provoke an insoluble housing crisis... [8]

These lines present in summary, and not without euphemism, some of the effects of overaccumultion in the preceeding years. They illuminate the limits against which continuation of the process of accumulation collided.

## II. The economic recovery of 1934

During 1933 and 1934 there again developed conditions for an increased yield from capital and for an increase of investment.

These conditions resulted, in particular, from the entry into production of equipment installed during previous years and which allowed greater production at a smaller real cost. Thanks to this equipment it was possible to "liberate" part of the labor force from its previous occupation and to transfer it to activities which were more "profitable"; in addition, there was an improvement in urban food supply as regards cereals (following an increase in procurements achieved in spite of a catastrophic harvest); this last improvement also allowed an increase in labor productivity.

On the whole, therefore, there was a better functioning of industry and a reduction of shortages, which allowed rapid growth of investment.[9]

Increase of investment was due not only to the increase of labor productivity,[10] but also to the increase in the number of workers in industry.[11]

These developments allowed an increase in the mass of surplus value and in accumulation, all the stronger because real wages did not follow the advance in labor productivity.

The growth of labor productivity and employment was made possible by the continuation of a relative improvement in the supply of grain to the towns, allowing a better a recuperation of the labor forces. This improvement itself was based (in 1935) on a recovery of agricultural production (which was beginning to benefit from mechanization), and on a reduction of grain exports.

During the period 1933-36, the increase of labor productivity was not solely due to the "mechanical effect" of better food supplies. It was also based more and more on the putting into operation, progressively, of new equipment (domestic or imported). It also resulted from a progressive mastery of this equipment by workers and cadres. In the final analysis, it resulted from a policy which put a strong accent on labor output.[12]

However, the very size of the increase of accumulation in 1934-36 carried with it the preconditions of a new economic crisis.

In fact, because of the high rate of accumulation, the current limits on new increases in employment and industrial productivity were quickly reached. The continuation of the improvement in

labor productivity met a series of obstacles: in particular there was worker resistance. Consequently, industrial production and the size of the surplus grew more and more slowly. In 1937-38 a surplus production of capital situation had been in practice, reached. The circumstances were ripe for the economic crisis of 1937.

## III. The 1937 crisis

The 1937 crisis differed from that of 1933 in several ways. The main differences was its *duration*. In fact, whereas in 1934 the amount of gross investment (in constant prices) exceeded that of 1932, 1937 was again characterized by a lower volume of investment, being 7.9 percent less than that of 1936.[14] Morever, in 1939 investment in construction and installed equipment (called investment in "construction and installation") was lower by about 5 percent than that of 1936, whose level was not exceeded until 1940. There was accordingly an investment crisis of relatively long duration. Even in 1940 the accumulation percentage of the GNP was smaller than in 1937.[15]

This time, agricultural difficulties did not explain the investment stagnation. In fact only the 1936 harvest was exceptionally bad, whereas the harvests of the following years were good, and in 1937 even excellent.

Stagnation of investment was, basically, bound to the slow increase of production, employment[16] and industrial labor productivity.[17] This low increase hindered the continuation of a rapid increase of accumulation and showed that the consequences of the previous surplus production of capital had only very partially been overcome.[18]

The near-stagnation of employment and of labor productivity in industry was not in accord with the massive "maturing" in 1937-40 of the enormous fixed capital invested in industry in previous years. This contradiction was due to the fact that unilateral priority development of investment, intended for the production of material elements of constant capital, had a bad effect on the improvement of the conditions of reproduction of labor forces and on a productivity increase. These were

important obstacles to the acceleration of industrial development during the years 1937-40. Such obstacles reveal the scale of the previous surplus accumulation of capital and the subordination of investment to the requirements of increases in Section 1 (which produced the means of production).

Surplus accumulation of capital produced counter-productive effects which even affected strategically-important industries like metallurgy and oil.[19]

Generally speaking, the pressure which was exercised to increase the intensity of labor and production norms led to deterioration in working conditions and lowered the quality of output.

Thus the surplus accumulation which characterized the years of expanding investment reduced the consumption of the workers and contributed to unbalanced production growth. Moreover, production increased in an irregular way at the same time as its quality fell. All this laid the ground for the 1937 crisis, which would be followed by a period of serious economic difficulties lasting up to the eve of the Nazi aggression.

## Notes

1. See *Materialy po balansu narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR* (Moscow, 1932), p. 54.
2. According to official figures, this rate fell from 22.2 percent in 1930 to 20.7 in 1931, 14.5 in 1932, and 5.2 percent in 1933 (see *N.Kh., 1958g* p. 60). As has been seen, these statistics show an overvalued growth rate.
3. According to official statistics this rate was 9.3 percent in 1932 and 4.8 percent in 1933 (see above, p. 60). Comparison with the development of physical production shows, moreover, that the global growth rates are more substantially over estimated for consumer goods than for industrial production as a whole.
4. The change was from 20.7 percent in 1931 and 16.2 percent in 1932 (see R. Moorsteen and R. Powell, *The Soviet Capital Stock, 1928 - 1962* (Homewood, 1966), pp. 358-59).
5. See above.
6. *Trud v SSSR* (1936), pp. 10-11 and 244.
7. On this point see the first part of this book.
8. *Izvestiya*, February 2, 1993.
9. In 1934 gross investment in the state and cooperative sector rose from nearly 30 percent in current prices and 13 percent in constant 1928 prices

(see R. Moorsteen and R. Powell, *The Soviet Capital Stock*, pp. 390-91). Investment growth continued up to 1936 (see above).

10. Between 1932 and 1937 the index of hourly labor productivity in main industry grew by 66 percent, according to Hodgman's estimate (*Soviet Industrial*, p. 117), and even by 80 percent on an annual basis, according to official statistics which, however, do not submit the index of industrial production to the necessary deflation.
11. Between 1932 and 1937 the number of industrial workers grew by 32 percent (See J. Barber, *The Composition of the Soviet Working Class, 1928-1941*, SIPS No. 16, (CREES, University of Birmingham, 1978), p. 5.
12. See above, Part 2 of this volume.
13. Retaining the "revised" index of industrial production calculated by Hodgman, it can be seen that this production, having risen from about 29 percent in 1935 and 16.6 in 1936, only grew by 7.8 percent in 1937 (figures calculated from Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial*, p. 89).
14. See *N.Kh... 1956g*, p. 172.
15. On this point see the contribution of N. Kaplan, "Capital Formation and Allocation" in *Soviet Economic Growth*. (Ed. A. Bergson), especially p. 41.
16. Between 1936 and 1940 industrial employment only increased in total by about 5.8 percent compared to 28 percent between 1933.
17. See above, p. 117.
18. The internal contradictions in the industrial sector are emphasized by the following figures: After 1937 total industrial production increased at only a realtively weak pace (contrasting with the situation after the 1933 crisis). Thus the "revised" index of total industrial production (including military production) shows an increase of 30 percent between 1937 and 1941 (plan figures – see Hodgman, *Soviet Industrial* p. 89); that is, less than 7 percent annually. And this evaluation seems too "optimistic." In fact an index calculated from production in physical terms of 22 industries produces only a growth 15 percent between 1937 and 1941, an annual growth of less than 3.5 percent.
19. Between 1937 and 1940 steel production grew only by 3.3 percent and rolled steel by 1.1 percent (See *N.Kh...1958g*, p. 145). Production of pig-iron rose by only 2.6 percent. In these circumstances the development of the engineering and armament industries could take place only at the expense of other output requiring metallurgical products. Petroleum output increased during these three years by only 8.9 percent.

# 4

# Crisis of overaccumulation and domination of capital

The economic crises which have just been described were the result of an accumulation which was an end of itself and which did not aim at satisfying concrete needs for consumption and production. Such crises are capitalist crises: they are tied to the reproduction, specific circumstances, of relationship of exploitation that take the basic form of the wage relationship.

In the circumstances of the Soviet economy in the 1930s the contradictions engendered by the class struggle in production and distribution gave rise to open crises of surplus accumulation of capital, taking the inverted shape of surplus production crises of Western capitalism, namely the shape of a shortage of goods which becomes a situation of general shortage.

The 1933 crisis is a very good illustration of the particular features of this type of crisis, because it was marked by extremely serious shortages which involved certain means of production, consumer goods, and particularly food items, above all grains; this latter shortage resulted in the famine of 1933. The famine was simultaneously the result of a policy and the manifestation of a crisis tied to surplus accumulation, which led to an excessive procurement of grain intended to be sold on a world market to pay for equipment. This same surplus accumulation led to a substantial drainage of labor from agriculture and to many other charges on the material resources of the countryside for the benefit of accumulation and industrialization.[1]

From the concrete analysis of the crises of the 1930s, an attempt can be made at producing a general model for the crises of the Soviet economy. Under Stalin, accumulation for the sake of accumulation benefited those sectors where the capitalist relationships were most developed and those industries producing new equipment (that is new means of exploitation). It developed to the point of preventing the enlarged reproduction of agriculture, of reducing the production of the latter and, finally of blocking for a period the stable continuation of industrial accumulation. The surplus accumulation of the years 1928-32 for a time made increased production of surplus value impossible, because it temporarily prohibited an increase of employment and of labor productivity. The increase of the rate of accumulation that was supposed to permit the accumulation process to continue on a larger scale resulted, contrarily, in prohibiting the continuation of this process. The *"means" that were set to work thus came into contradiction with their own ends*, this being a characteristic process of surplus accumulation.

In 1933 the surplus production of capital had a definite "absolute" character (in the sense that Marx gave to this term): it was at that time impossible to obtain a greater mass of surplus value, either by an immediate increase in the number of wage-earners, or by raising still more the exploitation rate of those already occupied in production. As has been seen, the various "shortages" prevented the immediate continuation of the process of draining away designated labor forces from the countryside, and were an obstacle to a rapid growth of labor productivity. Consequently the process of industrialization was temporarily held back. The construction sites and factories could not receive sufficient workers, equipment and means of production. Delays in construction and operation were, consequently, substantially lengthened and *part of capital previously accumulated was "put to sleep."* Circumstances were such that certain factories had to slow down their operations so that others, serving more directly the accumulation of new means of work, could continue to function.

"Putting to sleep" some of the factories and construction sites increased the shortages which were hitting consumers. It did this directly when it entailed the non-supply of products

necessary to cover the needs of the latter. It did it indirectly, with a multiplier effect, by causing (by the poor supplying of production units) irregular operation of factories. Thus the shortages became general, and an increasing slice of investment was frozen, while the velocity of social capital circulation was slowed down. From 1934 the intensity of the crisis eased, little by little. The crisis disappeared thanks to a progressive clearing of bottlenecks, resulting from a re-allocation of labor forces. This allowed certain factories to increase production and certain construction works to be completed. The 1937 crisis developed basically in the same conditions as the preceding crisis, with the relative importance of shortages moving from agriculture to industry to such an extent that during more than three years, from 1937 to 1940, productive investment was below the level of 1936.

## I. The specific nature of the "Soviet" economic crises of the 1930s

There can be no question, within the framework of the present study, of attempting to present a detailed analysis of capitalist crises and their various sepecific forms. On the other hand it is necessary to make several observations about the crises experienced by "Western" countries so as to better illuminate the capitalist character of the "Soviet" crises of the 1930s, as well as their specific features.

At first it must be underlined that the economic crises of "Western" capitalism[2] themselves took several different forms. For example, during the 19th century economic crises manifested themselves predominantly by *falls in prices*, and only affected *the volume of production* to a small extent. On the other hand, in the 20th century (with the development of monopolies and oligopolies), these characteristics were reversed: the main aspect of a crisis is the *collapse of production, investment and employment* while prices do not fall or, since World War Two may even rise substantially, engendering the phenomenon known as *stagflation*.

Pointing out these particular features of the different economic crises of "Western" capitalism does not exhaust the subject of

their specific forms. In a way which here can only be descriptive, a distinction should in fact be made between crises whose apparently decisive element is "market saturation" for consumer goods (and which therefore begin with an "overproduction" of these goods), paralyzing part of the productive structure and leading to a "general overproduction," and crises whose apparently decisive element is the fall of profit rates, which brings about a reduction of investment, the closing of a growing number of factories, unemployment, "underconsumption," etc. In reality these two manifestations of the crisis are inseparable, for the "tendency toward a lower profit rate" and the "tendency towards overproduction" are intimately linked.[3] These crises mark "the crash of normal conditions of reproduction, a temporary failure of regulation by the law of value."

More deeply, another distinction must be made between two types of crisis: on the one hand there are those from which it is possible to "emerge" while returning to the same regime of accumulation and the same mode of regulation as before the crisis – these are the *"small crises"*; on the other hand there are those from which it is not possible to emerge except by a change of the regime of accumulation and the mode of regulation: these are the "great crises," marked by especially acute manifestation of resistance to capital exploitation by those subjected to it.[4]

Here we are interested only in the "small crises"[5] which manifest themselves as crises of "underconsumption," because the "Soviet" crises of 1933 and 1937 were also "small crises."

During the phase which precedes and prepares the ground for such crises in "Western" capitalism, those who direct the process of production and reproduction struggle to obtain the maximum value from the part of capital that they control, and to accumulate as much as possible within the limits imposed on them by the global reproduction of the conditions of production. This tendency toward maximum accumulation is the form taken by the class struggle in production. It tends to bring an increasing subjection of living labor to dead labor, and to lead to the expropriation of the workers, whose knowledge is more and more incorporated into the automatic system of machines. In the short term, the class struggle in production

is portrayed as "the requirements of competition." In reality this latter, according to Marx's formula, only "carried out the immanent laws of capital," laws which are imposed on individual capital.[6]

The struggle in which the agents of capital are engaged in this way has as a consequence, at certain times an increase of accumulation and employment at such a rhythm that the demand for labor power grows rapidly, leading to a certain raising of nominal wages and of real wages. This contributes especially to increase the demand for consumer goods more rapidly than their supply increases, and brings a rise of prices for these goods, allowing capital operating in Section 2 (which produces consumer goods) to take a relatively larger fraction than previously of surplus value; consequently, investment in this Section increases more rapidly. However, the raising of wages impels capitalists as a group to adopt techniques characterized by a higher capital content, which tends to reduce the average rate of profit and the rhythms at which the invested capital and employment increase. These tendencies make themselves felt more or less at the same time that an increase in the supply of consumer goods occurs, thanks to the accumulation previously achieved in Section 2. In such conditions, part of the consumer goods arriving on the market have more difficulty finding a taker. This is a sign of "overproduction of goods." The latter, and the reduction of the profit rate bring about a fall in accumulation and thereby a fall in demand for means of production, and hence a slackening of activity in Section 1, which produces the means of production. From this point the crisis spreads and takes the form of general overproduction.

Let us now see what happens in "Soviet" conditions, where state ownership and state planning occupy a privileged position. In these conditions, the class struggle in production is strengthened by the action of state departments intervening so as to bring about maximal accumulation and priority development of Section 1.[7] This form of imposition of the immanent laws of capital brings about deep changes in the process of the maturing and bursting out of crises. Here we shall look at just a few of the transformations, those which involve important consequences and which seemed especially noticeable during the 1930s.

Firstly, we note that during these years the periods of rising accumulation are marked by a rise of nominal wages, but also by a *stagnation* and sometimes even a *lowering of real wages*. In fact, in the absence of an increase in the supply of consumer goods (an increase blocked by state intervention), the increase of employment and of nominal wages makes retail prices rise substantially and this in spite of all the talk about price stability. We also note that the measures taken concerning wholesale prices are, on the other hand, sufficient to ensure that sales made by production units in Section 2 are at a relatively low price. In these circumstances, rises of retail prices do not increase the financial resources available to Section 2, but increase the fiscal receipts of the budget. These increased receipts then serve to increase investment in Section 1. This is an important difference (compared to "Western" capitalism) in the distribution of accumulation funds during the period of upward movement. This change has remarkable effects: the relative slowing down of accumulation of Section 2 puts a brake on an increase of production of goods from this Section; consequently, there is not a tendency towards overproduction of consumer goods but, on the contrary a tendency towards shortage of this kind of goods. This tendency is strongly manifested under the particular form it adopts in Soviet conditions, the tendency of capital to accumulate for the sake of accumulation.

If the "efficiency" of a given form of capitalism is evaluated not according to the improvement it allows in the living conditions of workers (such an improvement not being the goal of capitalist accumulation), but according to its capacity to increase the rate of accumulation, it can be said that Soviet-type capitalism is more "efficient" than any other.[8]

This efficiency, moreover, has nothing to do with "planning" (since the plans are far from being strictly followed): it results above all from a domination—almost unlimited—of capital. This domination is achieved through a number of circumstances, in particular by a firm centralization of the administration of capital by the state, and by the paralysis inflicted on the social forces that might attempt to limit the exacerbation of the accumulation process. This paralysis results from the destruction, pushed as far as possible in the Stalin epoch, of all

forms of organization and expression which would allow these forces to intervene in a coherent way in the life of society.

The essential role played by the practice that has just been mentioned in the exacerbation of the process of accumulation is corroborated by the fact that even when the plans "forecast," as happened several times after World War Two, a faster development of Section 2 than Section 1, in practice they were not observed. The *priority in fact* remained with accumulation in Section 1, and it was only exceptionally that Section 2 developed as fast as had been "forecast" by the plans. Only economic and social crises can temporarily interrupt the priority development of accumulation and of Section 1. In this way the unprecedented objective force favouring accumulation of capital manifests itself, unprecedented as soon as the power of capital merges with the power of the state and the workers are deprived of the possibility of organizing themselves in an autonomous way to put up resistance to the tendency towards maximal accumulation.

Secondly, it will be noted that the specific forms of economic crises which characterize "Soviet" captialism are connected with the fact that the priority given to accumulation in Section 1 creates obstacles to the adoption by Section 2 of techniques which would allow that Section to experience a rapid increase of labor productivity; hence there is an aggravation of the manpower shortage.

In the circumstances that have just been described, the pursuit during a certain period of substantial accumulation inevitably brings on a combination of two shortages: that of consumer goods and that of means of production.

At an early moment the development of these shortages tends to exacerbate (and one can see this especially at the beginning of the 1930s) the accumulation effort, because the authorities, the planners and the administrators strive to "overcome the shortages by investing even more." The supplementary investment effort only makes shortages worse, multiplies bottlenecks, paralyzes factories and construction sites. Thus in 1932 the movement toward extension of accumulation was held back, and this coincided with the beginning of a crisis. The slowdown of accumulation continued until part of the investment made previously came to maturity; at this point, the putting

into operation of more productive means of production, installed thanks to those investments, permitted the "liberation" of labor forces, the easing of shortages, and the resumed increase of the mass of surplus value obtained and invested.

Such are, briefly, some of the specific features of the "Soviet" economic cirises which took place during the 1930s. In the main these features are also found in the postwar crises, because the social and political relationships that were established in the 1930s still remain fundamentally the same.[9]

As a last remark on these questions, it should be emphasized that the real specificity of "Soviet" economic crises is the fact that the blockage of the reproduction process results from an *absolute overproduction of capital,* whose particular features we shall analyze shortly. As for the generalization of shortages, this results not only from overaccumulation bringing such crises to maturity but also from the *relative* efficiency of the control exercised on prices. In fact, thanks to this control, the generalization of shortages does not provoke an open, brutal, and global price inrcrease that could reduce or wages and of the monetary receipts of enterprises. In this matter, the particularities of "Soviet" crises seem to be tied to a specific combination of overaccumulation and "repressed" inflation.

One other feature must also be noted: state ownership and planning permit the continuation of what Marx called "bourgeois ownership" (even though in a formal sense this has been abolished). The ownership in fact has nothing in common with what is usually called "private ownership" of means of production, which is only legal private ownership. Now bourgeois or capitalist ownership is constituted by the sum of social relationships which allow the exploitation of wage labor. Marx rightly condemned the juridical, abstract usage of the category of ownership when he criticized the way in which Proudhon had recourse to this category. Thus he wrote:

> Ownership constitutes finally the supreme category in M. Proudhon's system. In the real world the division of labor and all the other categories of M. Proudhon are social relationships, whose total forms what today is called *ownership;* outside these relationships, bourgeois ownership is only a metaphysical

> and juridical illusion... When M. Proudhon presents ownership as an independent relationship, he commits more than an error of method: he clearly proves that he has not grasped the chain which binds all the forms of bourgeois production...[10]

State ownership leaves intact the wage relationship of exploitation and simply creates a *specific form of capitalist ownership* which develops thoroughly with state planning. This development creates conditions that permit the explosion of new forms of crises of overproduction of capital.

From the end of the 1920s in the USSR the conditions which enable an unleashing of economic crisis due to relative overproduction of capital, typical of Western capitalism, were largely eliminated, which made possible and inevitable the unleashing of another form of crisis: *the crisis of absolute overproduction of capital.* This was characterized by the fact that after a certain period of rising investment the continuation of the accumulation process no longer led to an increase in the mass of surplus value, so much so that the very aim of capitalist production, the putting to good use ("valorization") of capital, was frustrated; this made it impossible to continue increasing accumulation.

In Book 3 of *Capital,* Marx deals with this absolute overproduction. In his own terms, the latter takes place when the increased capital produces only a mass of surplus value more or less equal, to or even less than, it was before its increase. He explains this hypothesis by referring to the case where capital increases in relation to the working population in such proportions that the *absolute labor* that the population provides cannot be protracted, nor can the relative hours of work be extended.[11] He then shows the principal effect of such absolute overproduction of capital.

In the circumstances of "Western" capitalism of the 19th century, the absolute form of overproduction of capital constitutes a *limiting case,* since economic crises burst forth well before the realization of its condition of appearance because, in particular, of the *disproportions* which appear in the different productions, and/or of the chain effect of the decrease in profits which strikes certain enterprises. Later, other elements help to

ensure that "Western" capitalism does not experience crises due to absolute overproduction of capital; in fact the industrialized capitalist countries have recourse more and more to the export of capital to countries where capitalism is less developed, or they import manpower from these same countries.[12]

In the Soviet Union in the 1930s the limiting case of absolute overproduction of capital became the "normal form" of the crisis, which explains why it manifested itself by a generalization of shortages, because accumulation was pushed to extremes, as already seen, to the detriment and the disregard of the satisfaction of consumer needs.

This type of crisis, which pushes to extremes the tendency toward accumulation for the sake of accumulation, carries to the very limit: one of the features of capitalism: the domination of exchange-value over use-value.

Thus there manifests itself in Soviet capitalism an "indifference to use-value" which tends to spread to the whole economy, with the exception of the military sector and sectors tied to the military sector (for there the survival of the authorities is involved).

Indifference to use-value is in some way incorporated in the plan indices, insofar as the latter give prime importance to "gross" value of production, that is, to the *quantity of money* which this production is held to represent. "The race for quantity" therefore becomes basic.

## II. The substitution of the apparent domination of the plan for the apparent domination of competition

Examination of Soviet economic crises illuminates the circumstance that neither state intervention through the plans, nor the extension of state ownership, nor the claimed "new class content" of the authorities after they had been taken over by the Bolshevik Party, "abolished" the laws of capital movement which result from the dominant role played by the wage relationship of exploitation and the forms of class struggle that are engendered by the reproduction of that relationship.

These laws were still those of capitalism. However, the way in which they manifested themselves was transformed, thanks to the upheavals affecting the "forms of competition."[13]

To grasp the permanence of the competition which hides behind the variety of its forms, it is necessary to put aside superficial concepts that lead to a purely negative definition of competition, making it the equivalent of a collection of "absences": absence of monopoly, absence of regulation, absence of state intervention, etc. The negative definitions must therefore be replaced by a positive definition[14] which shows that competition is a *product of struggle between the different fragments of social capital.*

Several points must be emphasized here:

(1) The struggle relationship between the different fragments of social capital is inherent in the very existence of this latter, which always takes the form of separated capitals. This separation of the different fragments of capital necessarily stems from the wage relationship, from the *fundamental separation* of the direct producers from their means of production. The latter entails the separation of the different processes of production through which operates the reproduction of social capital, which therefore takes the form of the reproduction of multiple conflicting capitals. In the Soviet economy, the separation of the different processes of production and of the different fragments of social capital manifests itself by the multiplicity of enterprises, which in no way constitute a "unique state trust," as was imagined at first by various Soviet theoreticians, including Bukharin. The necessary separation of the different fragments of social capital had the consequence that despite state ownership and planning there exists commodity production, and accordingly the contradictions and the illusions inseparable from this form of production.

(2) The struggle between different fragments of social capital was essentially a struggle for the appropriation and accumulation of the largest possible fraction of surplus–value. In the Soviet economy this shows itself especially by the demand for investment credit and allocations of means of production which ceaselessly emanate from the various "Soviet" enterprises and trusts. The accumulation of these demands constantly confuses the plans and contributes to the "inflation" of their targets.[15]

(3) The struggle between the different fragments of social capital (competition therefore) is none other than that which Marx called "the relationship that capital maintains with itself as much as with other capital."[16]

(4) In abstract terms, competition is nothing but an internal relationship of capital which looks like an exterior relationship. It is the forms of this external relationship which are transformed by the action of changes affecting the concrete relationships between the different fragments of capital. These modifications give rise to different faces: "free competition," monopolies, state intervention, economic plan, etc. The rise of these forms gives birth to a series of illusions which are taken as "truths."

Thus the dominance of the form of the plan gives birth to the illusion of a possible "control" over the economy, and gives body to a new fetishism, that of the plan which comes to be added to the fetishism of the state and the fetishism of money. These fetishisms help to hide the concrete requirements of reproduction and feed the myth of the omnipotence of planning carried out by a state which centralizes and distributes the monetary means of accumulation.

The different forms that competition takes are themselves the result of a historic process: the history of the development of productive forces and of class struggle.

In the Soviet Union, from the end of the 1920s, competition took mainly the form of planning. This form predominated under the joint action of a series of elements of which, in particular, the massive development of primitive accumulation, strongly centralized following class struggles which favored a certain form of state ownership and of the dominance of ideological images (themselves tied to the form of conflicts between capital and the working class) which portrayed state ownership and planning as "the abolition of capitalism."

In these circumstances the predominance of state ownership and planning complete the domination of capital because they tend to eliminate what Marx called "the legal or extra-economic obstacles restricting the freedom (of capital) to move between different branches of production."[17] Thus the constraint on accumulation, the immanent law of capital, acts mainly through the plan, which pushes forward maximum accumulation and the priority development of Section 1.

The predominance of the form of state planning transforms the concrete conditions in which are established prices, wages, the rate of surplus value and the distribution of the latter, and it tends to hide the conflicts between the different fragments of social capital. Because of this poor visibility, competition is represented objectively (in the sense of a "staging," or of a *Darstellung*) in the guise of its imaginary opposite, of the unity of social capital.

The appearance of the unity of social capital is also that of its "abolition" in asmuch as it is an antagonistic social relationship bearing specific contradictions[18] of the illusion that the state can ensure a "rational distribution" of the labor force and means of production, and a regular growth of productive forces and consumption, an illusion constantly demolished by the real movement, which is that of the contradictions inherent in capitalist production. Hence also, the concealment of the objective conditions of price and wage-fixing, and the tendency to reduce these social relationships to simple forms that can be "utilized" as instruments. By "manipulating," as it does, prices and salaries, Soviet power only makes the economic system more opaque and exacerbates the contradictions of capital.

To finish with these remarks, it should be noted firstly how much the development of state planning (as it took the form at the end of the 1920s) strengthened the fetishism of money that dominated those at the top of the state apparatus. The monetary illusion thus impelled the Party leadership to pay attention only to the sums of money which were to be invested, taking no account of material shortages. At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, money fetishism led to anticipatory acceptance of the fact that material resources were insufficient for concrete needs. Such an acceptance is explained by a real faith in the "power of money." As Bukharin said, the Party leadership was thus encouraged to believe "that if one had money, one will also have everything else."[19]

Also to be noted are the extraordinary illusions which were born at the same time from the combination of money fetishism, state fetishism, and plan fetishism. It was this combination which led the Soviet economist Strumilin to declare:

> We are not bound by any (objective) law... the question of rhythm is decided by the will of human beings.[20]

It was again this combination of fetishism which led another Soviet economist, Veissberg, to claim:

> We are introducing enormous changes in all aspects of human life and, in a revolutionary way, *we shall penetrate the forces of nature.*[21]

This is the enchanted world which also gave birth to the idea of a curve of economic growth moving upwards *and accelerating,* with Stalin talking about *"rising* Bolshevik curves" as opposed to *"falling* Trotskyist curves."[22]

The economic crises reveal the illusory character of all these declarations. However, they are not enough to cause the disappearance of the fetishisms of money, state and plan, for the latter are the product of dominant economic, social and political relationships.

## Notes

1. Thus the Soviet industrialization of the 1930s brought to the peasants of the USSR dramatic consequences analogous to those that a British industrialization, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, brought to Irish and Indian peasants who were also condemned, by the million, to famine.
2. The term "western capitalism" conventionally designates the various forms of capitalism characterized by the predominance of legal private ownership of the means of production and relatively limited state interference with the process of accumulation, the distribution of investment, and the fixing of prices and wages.
3. See A Lipietz, "La double complexit'e de la crise" in *Les Temps modernes,* June 1980, pp. 2212ff, especially 2224.
4. On these various points see above, pp. 2222-2228 and, by the same author, *Crise et Inflation, pourquoi?* (Paris, 1979). Also see the Introduction by this author to the CEPREMAP text on "Le redeploiement," (pp. 6-8).
5. The crises that the Soviet economy is presently experiencing is, on the contrary, a "great crisis" marked by a long-term decrease of the production growth rate; this crisis indicates the growing inadequacy of the regime of accumulation and of the method of control to the requirements of an increase of general labor productivity.
6. K. Marx, "Principles for a critique of political economy," in *Oeuvres-Economie,* Vol. 2, (Paris, 1968), pp. 294-95.

7. Concrete analysis of the process of accumulation illuminates how in the Soviet economy the process of reproduction had always been governed by the immanent laws of capitalism. Thus it is of little importance that at the level of the "consciousness" of the agents of reproduction the decisions taken seem to be dictated not by these laws (which act independently of individuals' consciousness) but by a mixture of empirically identified objective constraints and "requirements" labeled by official ideology as "requirements for the building of socialism." In Vol. 4 we shall examine what, in Soviet conditions, are the ideological forms under which the process of enlarged reproduction is "grasped," and through which take place some of the interventions by various state departments.
8. According to the estimates of G. Grossman, net investment in 1937 was 21 percent of the national product and military expenses. (appearing in the budget) 9 percent (see the contribution by that author to A. Bergson (ed.), *Soviet Economic Growth*, p. 21). It will be noted that according to N. Kaplan the investment rate as a proportion of GNP was for the USA in 1937 and 1940 respectively 14.2 and 15 percent (see above, p 42, table 2.2, col. 5), a rate clearly lower than that of the USSR.
9. It will be noted that on each occasion when social and political relationships like those in the USSR from 1930 are dominant, there are economic crises of the same type, marked by a very substantial rise in accumulation and general shortages of products. Poland in the 1970s is an outstanding example; here accumulation reached a rate of 30-35 percent of the national income (this last figure could well be a "world record") while serious shortages developed. On these various points, the interview given by the Polish economist C. Bobrovski to *Le Nouvel Observature* of July 11, 1981 is very useful.
10. *MEW*, Vol. 4, pp. 551-52.
11. K. Marx, *Le Capital* (Paris, 1967-69), Vol. 6, pp. 264-65.
12. It will be noted that these operations of capital export or labor import require that the countries having recourse to them enjoy a sufficiently powerful situation in the world market. Lacking this, they cannot succeed in developing their exports sufficiently, which may impel them to win by force a more advantageous place in the world. This is what happened with Nazi Germany from 1933, as I tried to show in *L'Economie allemande sous is nazisme* (Paris, 1971).
13. In a paper delivered in Tokyo in 1979 Paul Sweezy advanced formulations that are very close to those expressed here, although he was not discussing the Soviet economy. In fact, after having noted that under capitalism the specific form for extracting surplus labor is the capital wage labor relationship, he added that the transformation of competitive capitalism into monopoly capitalism not only does not abolish the relationship, but refines and perfects it (*Monthly Review*, May 1981, p. 11). Paul Sweezy follows this remark with other very interesting observations on the *changing forms of competition* (italics by C.B.), on the action these changing forms bear on the process of accumulation, the amount of surplus value extracted and its utilization (see above, pp. 11-15). In my opinion these observations apply very pertinently to the Soviet economy.

14. In a strict sense, competition thus defined positively is, firstly, that of capital, but the latter necessarily engenders particular forms of competition or combines with forms of competition inherent in simple market relationships. Thus it is possible to distinguish competition between producers, between buyers, between workers, between lenders, lessors, tenants, landed proprietors, etc. In the present text it is not possible to analyze these different forms of competition which in any case are themselves dominated by the competition of capital. In S. Kuruma (ed.), *Marx Lexikon zur Politscheng Okonomie*, Vol. 1 *(Konkurrenz)*, (Berlin, 1973), may be found a collection of different texts by Marx and Engels covering competition and its different forms.
15. The struggle that different enterprises have to put up for investment credit allocations still characterize "Soviet" planning. They also characterize countries that have the same kind of planning. Thus, C. Bobrovski says that the Polish plan of the 1970s was "the result of a permanent struggle of the different lobbies for credits, with no consideration for overall cohesion" (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, July 11, 1981, p. 41).
16. See K. Marx, "Principles for a critique" (above, note 6), p. 294. In the same text a little earlier Marx writes "By definition, competition is only the interior nature of capital, its essential resolution, manifesting itself and being realized as the interaction between numerous capitals, as an external tendency of an internal necessity (capital not existing nor able to exist except as a plurality of capitals, it is in their interraction that its own movement appears)" (see above, p. 264; also see K. Marx, *Fondements*, Vol. 2, p. 167).
17. Marx deals with this topic in *Un chapitre inedit du Capital* (Paris, 1971), p. 180.
18. B. Chavance has analyzed relevantly and carefully the different ideological forms assumed by this imaginary abolition of capital in his book *Le capital socialiste* (Paris, 1980).
19. N. Bukhar in *et al. La Question paysanne en URSS* (Paris, 1973), p. 235.
20. Quoted in Vol. 2, of this work, p. 389.
21. *PK*, No. 1, 1930, pp. 21ff, quoted by E. Zaleski, *Planification*. 69, Note 1 (italics are by C.B.).
22. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. XII, pp. 359-60 (Report to Sixteenth Party Congress, June 27, 1930).

# Conclusion

## A capitalism of a new type

If one wanted to summarize as briefly as possible certain of the conclusions that result from the preceding pages, one might say that during the 1930s the Soviet Union experienced radical economic and social changes whose essential consequences are as follows: The crushing of the peasants, whose means of production were expropriated, and their transformation into kolkhozniks or state farmworkers, when they were not obliged to exile themselves to the towns or were not deported; expropriation of the artisans, of small trade and small industry for the benefit of the state sector; the destruction of what was left of the independence (already very restricted in the 1920s) of the workers' trade-union organizations and the transformation of the latter into mere appendices of enterprise managements; the subjection of wage-earners to a factory despotism of an extreme brutality; the putting into practice of "labor legislation" which in reality was penal legislation; the development of mass repression enabling the imposition of penal and concentration camp labor on a large scale; state centralization of capital and efforts to subordinate the accumulation of the latter and economic growth to a state plan.

The process of social and economic transformation of the 1930s did not in any way eliminate capitalist social relationships; on the contrary it reinforced them. It increasingly made the wage relationship into a relationship of fundamental exploitation.

By favoring the extension and deepening of capitalist social relationships, the process of transformation which marks the 1930s in the USSR pushed to extremes the contradictions of capital and led to crises of absolute overaccumulation which manifested themselves through general shortages.

The process which has just been summarized permitted rapid growth of some industries, which helped to alter the place of the Soviet Union in international economic and political relationships. At the same time this process increased the internal economic imbalances in the Soviet Union and the inequalities of its development; it turned agriculture into a sector that was structurally weak but from which the state could extract a relatively high surplus product. It permitted an increase of labor productivity, although the advance of the latter did not correspond with the intensification of work and the scale of material accumulation, and there was a deterioration of the quality of production.

The growing place occupied by the wage relationship of exploitation and by the capitalist division of labor, and the shape of the movement of economic contradictions (which governed the cyclic nature of growth and crises) throw light on the nature of the social and economic system which developed during the 1930s. It was a capitalism that had eliminated, more than any other, the precapitalist forms of production and which tended to subject to an exceptional degree the totality of workers to the requirements of accumulation for accumulation. These features of "Soviet" capitalism, and the preeminent role allotted to the state and the Party, make it a *capitalism of a new type.*

This latter was germinating in the October Revolution, with its concept of a socialism for which state capitalism would be the immediate antechamber. In this sense, if a revolutionary character is recognized in the economic and social transformations of the 1930s, it can be said that they completed the capitalist work of the October Revolution, whilst that completion had been checked up to then by the peasant revolution and by the relative egalitarianism that had been imposed by the ambiguous relationships that the Bolshevik Party maintained with the working class between October and the end of the 1920s.

It seems to me that by talking of a capitalism of a new type one is describing much better the fundamental social relationships of the Soviet economic and social system, better than by talking of bureaucratic collectivism, or of the state mode of production or of state socialism. However, the use of this term obviously cannot suffice, for it does not allow certain characteristics of "Soviet" capitalism to be grasped, and it leaves others in the shadows; first among these others is political totalitarianism. To show up this latter it is necessary to establish an explicit relationship between the capitalism of new type born in the USSR and the political conditions of class domination which made possible its emergence. These are the problems which must be tackled in Volume 4 of the present work.

# Bibliography

AN index and a general bibliography for the period, including just the essential titles, references, and sources, will be provided in the next volume, *The Dominators*, which will also be devoted to the third period 1930-41. This will be the final volume of *Class Struggles in the USSR*.