

£2



The Stalin Society

BM Box 2521 London WC1N 3XX

Tel/Fax 020 8571 9723

The Fight Against Bureaucracy in the Soviet Union

by Carlos Rule

Presentation to the Stalin Society, September 2001

The Stalin Society

The aim of the Stalin Society is to defend Stalin and his work on the basis of fact and to refute capitalist, revisionist, opportunist and Trotskyist propaganda directed against him.

The activity of the Society includes (a) the study of and research upon his writings and actions; (b) the translation of material on these subjects into and from other languages; (c) the publication of material relating to such study and research; (d) the celebration and commemoration of important occasions in Stalin's life; (e) the establishment of contact with other groups and individuals with a view to taking a common stand on issues and the joint organisation of future activities (f) the establishment of contact with similar societies and groups abroad with a view to mutual benefit from experience and collaboration.

For further information, contact us at:

BM Box 2521, London WC1N 3XX Tel/Fax 020 8571 9723

The Fight Against Bureaucracy in the Soviet Union

by Carlos Rule

STRUCTURE

1. What is Bureaucracy?
2. To what extent did bureaucracy exist in the USSR and how did it manifest itself?
3. What was Stalin's attitude towards bureaucracy?
4. What was the essence of the fight against bureaucracy?
 - a) Education / Cultural Revolution
 - b) Encouraging criticism and self-criticism
 - c) Control from below; relationship of state, party and the masses
 - d) Purging the party
 - e) Inner-party democracy
 - f) Getting rid of various defects of the state and party apparatus
5. Trotsky's accusations of bureaucracy
6. Conclusion

1. What is bureaucracy?

The first question presents the first problem. 'Bureaucracy' is a vague term, with a hundred possible meanings. Herein lies its advantage for critics of the Soviet Union. It leaves the reader with a 'carte blanche' to assume whatever negative things about the Soviet he might like. Lenin and Stalin certainly never hesitated to complain about the state of bureaucracy in the USSR, but presumably they used the term in a completely different way to the average bourgeois historian, for whom the term is nothing less than a convenient blanket dismissal of the Soviet Union and communism. It could imply a lack of democracy; it could imply corruption; it could imply inefficiency through excessive red tape; it could imply excessive centralism; it could imply that the USSR was run by pure paperwork with insufficient 'action'; and so on.

The Cambridge International Dictionary gives us the following:

"Bureaucracy: a system for controlling or managing a country, company or organisation that is operated by a large number of officials who are employed to follow rules carefully, or the officials, or the system of rules." - not particularly helpful.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in their comprehensive study 'Soviet Communism - A New Civilisation' refer to "the great, and, as it is often suggested, the growing evil of bureaucracy. By this it is meant (apart from the increasing number of those paid at a rate considerably above the incomes of the mass of the people) the habit in officials of ignoring or being irritated by the desires or feelings of the public, and even of those of the members of the official's own organisation; together with the multiplication of forms to be filled up, and regulations to be observed, which surround everything with a maze of complications against which the citizen feels helpless." (p.1211-2)

Lenin's concept of 'bureaucracy' was inertia, lack of zeal and dishonesty in the party and state apparatus. For the purposes of this discus-

sion, we shall use Lenin's definition, which is in itself fairly broad.

2. To what extent did bureaucracy exist in the USSR and how did it manifest itself?

Bureaucracy is the torment of nearly all organisations, and something that requires constant vigilance to overcome. As Marxist-Leninists - not anarchists - we have accepted the necessity of organisation, of leadership, of political structure and so on, but these things lend themselves alarmingly easily to any bureaucratic abuse that members, especially leaders, may want to engage in.

The point is that bureaucratic behaviour can occur very easily, and in an organisation comprising hundreds of thousands of people (such as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union), in a country of close to 200 million population, largely uneducated, with thousands of officials and managers, bureaucracy is bound to manifest itself in some way.

As Ludo Martens points out in his excellent book 'Another View of Stalin', "Lenin and the Bolsheviks always led a revolutionary struggle against the bureaucratic deviations that, in a backward country, inevitably occurred within the apparatuses of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They estimated that the dictatorship was menaced 'from inside' by the bureaucratisation of the Soviet state apparatus".

Lenin, in 1919, talking about the problem of bureaucracy, says the following: "We have done what no other state in the world has done in the fight against bureaucracy. The apparatus which was a thoroughly bureaucratic and bourgeois apparatus of oppression, and which remains such even in the freest of bourgeois republics, we have destroyed to its very foundations. Take, for example, the courts. Here, it is true, the task was easier; we did not have to create a new apparatus, because anybody can act as a judge basing himself on the revolutionary sense of justice of the working classes. We have still by no means completed the work in this field but in a number of respects we have made the courts what they should be. We have created bodies on which not only men, but also

women, the most backward and conservative section of the population, can be made to serve without exception.

"The employees in the other spheres of government are more hardened bureaucrats. The task here is more difficult. We cannot live without this apparatus; every branch of government creates a demand for such an apparatus. Here we are suffering from the fact that Russia was not sufficiently developed as a capitalist country. Germany, apparently, will suffer less from this, because her bureaucratic apparatus passed through an extensive school, which sucks people dry but compels them to work and not just wear out armchairs, as happens in our offices. We dispersed these old bureaucrats, shuffled them and then began to place them in new posts.

"The tsarist bureaucrats began to join the Soviet institutions and practise their bureaucratic methods, they began to assume the colouring of Communists and, to succeed better in their careers, to procure membership cards of the Russian Communist Party. And so, they have been thrown out of the door but they creep back in through the window. What makes itself felt here most is the lack of cultured forces. These bureaucrats may be dismissed, but they cannot be re-educated all at once. Here we are confronted chiefly with organisational, cultural and educational problems." (V. I. Lenin, *EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE R.C.P.(B.)*, MARCH 18-23, 1919, From V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965 Vol. 29, pp. 141-225)

Further, he says:

"But impoverished though Russia is, she still has endless resources which we have not yet utilised, and often have shown *no ability* to utilise. There are still many undisclosed or uninspected military stores, plenty of production potentialities which are being overlooked, partly owing to the deliberate sabotage of officials, partly owing to red tape, bureaucracy, inefficiency and incompetence -- all those "sins of the past" which so inevitably and so drastically weigh upon every revolution which makes a "leap" into a new social order." (V. I. Lenin, ALL

OUT FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST DENIKIN!, Written not later than July 3, 1919, From V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Vol. 29, pp. 436-55.)

"We are perfectly aware of the effects of Russia's cultural underdevelopment, of what it is doing to Soviet power -- which in principle has provided an immensely higher proletarian democracy, which has created a model of such democracy for the whole world -- how this lack of culture is reducing the significance of Soviet power and reviving bureaucracy. The Soviet apparatus is accessible to all the working people in word, but actually it is far from being accessible to all of them, as we all know. And not because the laws prevent it from being so, as was the case under the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, our laws assist in this respect. But in this matter laws alone are not enough. A vast amount of educational, organisational and cultural work is required; this cannot be done rapidly by legislation but demands a vast amount of work over a long period. This question of the bourgeois experts must be settled quite definitely at this Congress. The settlement of the question will enable the comrades, who are undoubtedly following this Congress attentively, to lean on its authority and to realise what difficulties we are up against. It will help those comrades who come up against this question at every step to take part at least in propaganda work." (V. I. Lenin, *EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE R.C.P.(B.)*, MARCH 18-23, 1919, From V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965 Vol. 29, pp. 141-225.)

Stalin was also not afraid to address the problem of bureaucracy. He said in 1927:

"Bureaucracy is one of the worst enemies of our progress. It exists in all our organisations -- Party, Y.C.L., trade-union and economic. When people talk of bureaucrats, they usually point to the old non-Party officials, who as a rule are depicted in our cartoons as men wearing spectacles. (*Laughter.*) That is not quite true, comrades. If it were only a question of the old bureaucrats, the fight against bureaucracy would be very easy. The trouble is that it is not a matter of the old bureaucrats. It is a matter of the new bureaucrats, bureaucrats who sympathise with

the Soviet Government, and finally, communist bureaucrats. The communist bureaucrat is the most dangerous type of bureaucrat. Why? Because he masks his bureaucracy with the title of Party member. And, unfortunately, we have quite a number of such communist bureaucrats." (J. V. Stalin SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE ALL-UNION LENINIST YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE May 16, 1927 *Pravda*, No. 113, May 17, 1928, cited in 'Another View of Stalin')

Arch Getty, speaking about the mid-1930s period, wrote: "The party had become bureaucratic, economic, mechanical and administrative to an intolerable degree. Stalin and other leaders at the centre perceived this as an ossification, a breakdown and a perversion of the party's function. Local party and government leaders were no longer political leaders but economic administrators. They resisted political control from both above and below and did not want to be bothered with ideology, education, political mass campaigns, or the individual rights and careers of party members. The logical extension of this process would have been the conversion of the party apparatus into a network of locally despotic economic administrations. The evidence shows that Stalin, Zhdanov and others preferred to revive the educational and agitation functions of the party, to reduce the absolute authority of local satraps, and to encourage certain forms of rank-and-file leadership". (cited in 'Another View of Stalin')

Stalin, THE PARTY'S TASKS

Report Delivered at an Enlarged Meeting of the Krasnaya Presnya District Committee of the R.C.P.(B.) with Group Organisers, members of the Debating Society and of the Bureau of the Party Units, December 2, 1923

"The second cause is that our state apparatus, which is bureaucratic to a considerable degree, exerts a certain amount of pressure on the Party and the Party workers. In 1917, when we were forging ahead, towards October, we imagined that we would have a Commune, a free association of working people, that we would put an end to bureaucracy in

government institutions, and that it would be possible, if not in the immediate period, then within two or three short periods, to transform the state into a free association of working people. Practice has shown, however, that this is still an ideal which is a long way off, that to rid the state of the elements of bureaucracy, to transform Soviet society into a free association of working people, the people must have a high level of culture, peace conditions must be fully guaranteed all around us so as to remove the necessity of maintaining a large standing army, which entails heavy expenditure and cumbersome administrative departments, the very existence of which leaves its impress upon all the other state institutions. Our state apparatus is bureaucratic to a considerable degree, and it will remain so for a long time to come. Our Party comrades work in this apparatus, and the situation -- I might say the atmosphere -- in this bureaucratic apparatus is such that it helps to bureaucratise our Party workers and our Party organisations." (*Pravda*, No. 277, December 6, 1923, From J. V. Stalin, *On the Opposition*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1974 pp. 12-27.)

There are abundant examples of the bureaucracy that existed in the Soviet Union at all levels.

Robert W. Thurston, in his relatively honest (for a bourgeois historian) and extremely useful study 'Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia' quotes several incidents like this: "In April 1935, before the Stakhanov movement complicated the picture even more, investigators at the Gorky auto factory found cases in which foremen signed any document put before them. One approved a job order even though the worker's name was falsified... Another supervisor signed an order that bore the name Vodopianov, then a famous pilot; it was for 1,796 rubles. A different foreman approved an order brought to him to 'assemble a good wife on the conveyer'. Yet another authorised a worker to 'grind off his head'. In other instances foremen allowed workers to fill in the details of a job, including pay for it." (p.173)

3. What was Stalin's attitude towards bureaucracy?

Stalin, of course, is such a popular hate figure for bourgeois historians and Trotskyists alike that it would be extremely surprising if he was not considered to be the chief of all the bureaucrats. For that reason it is worth having a quick look at Stalin's comments on bureaucracy - what was his attitude towards it? Did he acknowledge its existence? Did he consider it necessary to fight against it? Reactionaries will no doubt argue that Stalin's words have no meaning, and are entirely divorced from deed, but I don't think anyone would deny that, in the period during which Stalin was General Secretary of the CPSU, Stalin's word counted for a lot - that high party and state officials as well as rank-and-file party members and non-party activists invested great importance in Stalin's words, especially since, by and large, Stalin's speeches and articles always had a practical program - they were never simply a collection of abstract ideas.

"... [O]ne of the most serious obstacles, if not the most serious of all, is the *bureaucracy* of our apparatus. I am referring to the bureaucratic elements to be found in our Party, government, trade-union, co-operative and all other organisations. I am referring to the bureaucratic elements who batten on our weaknesses and errors, who fear like the plague all criticism by the masses, all control by the masses, and who hinder us in developing self-criticism and ridding ourselves of our weaknesses and errors. **Bureaucracy in our organisations must not be regarded merely as routine and red-tape. Bureaucracy is a manifestation of bourgeois influence on our organisations.** [This is especially important, being as Stalin is often accused, even by 'friends', of not having understood the class basis of opposition and degeneration of party members - CR] Lenin was right when he said: "... We must realise that the fight against bureaucracy is an *absolutely essential one*, and that it is just as complicated as the fight against the petty-bourgeois elemental forces. Bureaucracy in our state system has become a malady of such gravity that it is spoken of in our Party programme, and that is

because it is connected with these petty-bourgeois elemental forces and their wide dispersion " (Vol. XXVI, p. 220). With all the more persistence, therefore, must the struggle against bureaucracy in our organisations be waged, if we really want to develop self-criticism and rid ourselves of the maladies in our constructive work." (J. V. Stalin AGAINST VULGARISING THE SLOGAN OF SELF-CRITICISM *Pravda*, No. 146, June 26, 1928 From J. V. Stalin, *Works* Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, Vol. 11, pp. 133-44.)

Stalin elsewhere puts the question thus:

"Does the state apparatus function honestly, or does it indulge in graft; does it exercise economy in expenditure, or does it squander the national wealth; is it guilty of duplicity, or does it serve the state loyally and faithfully; is it a burden on the working people, or an organisation that helps them; does it inculcate respect for proletarian law, or does it corrupt the people's minds by disparaging proletarian law; is it progressing towards transition to a communist society in which there will be no state, or is it retrogressing towards the stagnant bureaucracy of the ordinary bourgeois state -- these are all questions the correct solution of which cannot but be a matter of decisive importance for the Party and for socialism. That our state apparatus is full of defects, that it is cumbersome and expensive and nine-tenths bureaucratic, that its bureaucracy weighs heavily on the Party and its organisations, hampering their efforts to improve the state apparatus -- these are things which hardly anyone will doubt. Yet it should be perfectly clear that, if our state apparatus were to rid itself of at least some of its basic faults, it could, in the hands of the proletariat, serve as a most valuable instrument for the education and re-education of broad sections of the population in the spirit of the proletarian dictatorship and socialism.

"That is why Lenin devoted special attention to improving the state apparatus.

"That is why the Party has set up special organisations of workers and peasants (the reorganised Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and the enlarged Central Control Commission) to combat deficiencies in our

state apparatus.

"The task is to help the Central Control Commission and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection in their difficult work of improving, simplifying, reducing the cost of the state apparatus and bringing a healthier atmosphere into it from top to bottom (see the congress resolution on "Work of the Control Commissions")" (J. V. Stalin, THE RESULTS OF THE THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE R.C.P.(B.), *Report Delivered at the C.C., R.C.P.(B.) Courses for Secretaries of Vyezd Party Committees, June 17, 1924*)

So we can see that Stalin very clearly understood the existence of bureaucracy in the state and party apparatus; he understood the origins of that bureaucracy; he appreciated the need to overcome that bureaucracy and he urged such audiences as the Young Communist League, the readers of Pravda and regional party secretaries to engage in the "absolutely essential" fight against bureaucracy, that the task was to "extirpate with a red-hot iron" this illness (THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.), *December 2-19, 1927.*)

4. What was the essence of the fight against bureaucracy?

The fight against bureaucracy in the party, in the state apparatus, in the factories and the collectives, was characterised by an abundance of methods. It was necessary to wipe out red tape, inactivity, inefficiency, complacency, corruption, nepotism, bookism and so on - all the "sins of the past" that Lenin had referred to. But doing this was not a simple matter. The USSR was still predominantly rural and backward; there were many elements working towards counter-revolution; there were many elements working towards 'diversion' of the revolution in the interests of the rich farmers (kulaks) and small capitalists ('NEP-men'); the working class and the poor peasantry were still very much learning as they went along, having come to power with the most limited experience of running society; in addition to which the USSR was trying to exist as a socialist country in the middle of a hostile capitalist world which, given half a chance, would not hesitate to use

force to overthrow the Soviet system. All these factors meant that bureaucracy could not easily be just thrown out the window. The working class and the collective/state farmers needed to learn how to govern their country; they needed understanding of science and technology, in order to not be reliant solely upon foreigners and intellectuals from tsarist times - by definition a vacillating group, trained in the worst type of bureaucracy; the workers had to develop the confidence to question factory managers, party officials, state officials and so on; party democracy had to be improved; reactionary and bureaucratic elements in the party had to be ousted.

I will go through some of these processes one by one.

a) Education / Cultural Revolution

As Stalin pointed out, "all the ruling classes that have hitherto existed, the working class, as a ruling class, occupies a somewhat special and not altogether favourable position in history. All ruling classes until now -- the slave-owners, the landlords, the capitalists -- were also wealthy classes. They were in a position to train in their sons the knowledge and faculties needed for government. The working class differs from them, among other things, in that it is not a wealthy class, that it was not able formerly to train in its sons the knowledge and faculty of government, and has become able to do so only now, after coming to power.

"That, incidently, is the reason why the question of a cultural revolution is so acute with us. True, in the ten years of its rule the working class of the U.S.S.R. has accomplished far more in this respect than the landlords and capitalists did in hundreds of years. But the international and internal situation is such that the results achieved are far from sufficient. Therefore, every means capable of promoting the development of the cultural powers of the working class, every means capable of facilitating the development in the working class of the faculty and ability to administer the country and industry -- every such means must be utilised by us to the full." (Stalin THE WORK OF THE APRIL JOINT PLENUM OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND CEN-

TRAL CONTROL COMMISSION *Report Delivered at a Meeting of the Active of the Moscow Organisation of the C.P.S.U.(B.) April 13, 1928)*

Stalin again:

"The surest remedy for bureaucracy is raising the cultural level of the workers and peasants. One can curse and denounce bureaucracy in the state apparatus, one can stigmatise and pillory bureaucracy in our practical work, but unless the masses of the workers reach a certain level of culture, which will create the possibility, the desire, the ability to control the state apparatus from below, by the masses of the workers themselves, bureaucracy will continue to exist in spite of everything. Therefore, the cultural development of the working class and of the masses of the working peasantry, not only the development of literacy, although literacy is the basis of all culture, but primarily the cultivation of the ability to take part in the administration of the country, is the chief lever for improving the state and every other apparatus. This is the sense and significance of Lenin's slogan about the cultural revolution." (THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.), *December 2-19, 1927.*)

On 're-education':

"One of the essential tasks confronting the Party in the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat is to re-educate the older generations and educate the new generations in the spirit of the proletarian dictatorship and socialism. The old habits and customs, traditions and prejudices inherited from the old society are most dangerous enemies of socialism. They -- these traditions and habits -- have a firm grip over millions of working people; at times they engulf whole strata of the proletariat; at times they present a great danger to the very existence of the proletarian dictatorship. That is why the struggle against these traditions and habits, their absolute eradication in all spheres of our activity, and, lastly, the education of the younger generations in the spirit of proletarian socialism, represent immediate tasks for our Party without the accomplishment of which socialism cannot triumph. Work to improve the state apparatus, work in the countryside, work among women toilers

and among the youth -- these are the principal spheres of the Party's activity in the fulfilment of these tasks." (J. V. Stalin THE RESULTS OF THE THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE R.C.P.(B.) *Report Delivered at the C.C., R.C.P.(B.) Courses for Secretaries of Vyezd Party Committees June 17, 1924 Pravda*, Nos. 136 and 137, June 19 and 20, 1924 From J. V. Stalin, *Works Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1953*, Vol. 6, pp. 246-273.)

"Our tasks in the sphere of ideological and political work are:

- 1) To raise the theoretical level of the Party to the proper height.
- 2) To intensify ideological work in all the organizations of the Party.
- 3) To carry on unceasing propaganda of Leninism in the ranks of the Party.
- 4) To train the Party organizations and the non-Party active which surrounds them in the spirit of Leninist internationalism.
- 5) Not to gloss over, but boldly to criticize the deviations of certain comrades from Marxism-Leninism.
- 6) Systematically to expose the ideology and the remnants of the ideology of trends that are hostile to Leninism." (THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.), *December 2-19, 1927.*)

The successes of the education drive were visible at every level.

"Between 1930 and 1933, the number of Party schools increased from 52,000 to more than 200,000 and the number of students from one million to 4,500,000. It was a remarkable effort to give a minimum of political coherence to hundreds of thousands who had just entered the Party" (figures from J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.5.)

The Webbs noted that, prior to the October Revolution, 70-80% of the

population of the territories which would later make up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were illiterate. But, wrote Lenin, "Without literacy no politics, but only rumours, small talk and prejudices". Literacy was all but abolished by the early 1930s (90% in 1933, increased from 67% in 1929), by which time schools were accessible to the people of every single village and town. The Webbs comment: "There is no other fragment of the world's surface, at all comparable in extent, in which anything like this concept of an educational service prevails". In 1934 Stalin noted some of the growing achievements of the Soviet education system:

"As regards the cultural development of the country, we have the following to record for the period under review:

a) The introduction of universal compulsory elementary education throughout the U.S.S.R., and an increase in literacy among the population from 67 per cent at the end of 1930 to 90 per cent at the end of 1933.

b) An increase in the number of pupils and students at schools of all grades from 14,358,000 in 1929 to 26,419,000 in 1933, including an increase from 11,697,000 to 19,163,000 in the number receiving *elementary* education, from 2,453,000 to 6,674,000 in the number receiving *secondary* education, and from 207,000 to 491,000 in the number receiving *higher* education.

c) An increase in the number of children receiving pre-school education from 838,000 in 1929 to 5,917,000 in 1933.

d) An increase in the number of higher educational institutions, general and special, from 91 in 1914 to 600 in 1933.

e) An increase in the number of scientific research institutes from 400 in 1929 to 840 in 1933.

f) An increase in the number of clubs and similar institutions from 32,000 in 1929 to 54,000 in 1933.

g) An increase in the number of cinemas, cinema installations in clubs,

and mobile cinemas, from 9,800 in 1929 to 29,200 in 1933.

h) An increase in the circulation of newspapers from 12,500,000 in 1929 to 36,500,000 in 1933.

Perhaps it will not be amiss to point out that the proportion of workers among the students in our higher educational institutions is 51.4 per cent of the total, and that of labouring peasants 16.5 per cent; whereas in Germany, for instance, the proportion of workers among the students in higher educational institutions in 1932-33 was only 3.2 per cent of the total, and that of small peasants only 2.4 per cent."

Pat Sloan's book 'Soviet Democracy' (Left Book Club Edition, Victor Gollancz, 1937) gives an excellent account of the education system in the 1930s USSR and is well worth reading.

b) Encouraging criticism and self-criticism

Stalin considered criticism and self-criticism to be absolutely essential tools for improving the party and the state apparatus. He considered that no-one should consider themselves above criticism from the masses, who will often be able to detect shortcomings in the administration much quicker and more objectively than can the administrators themselves.

"Often we settle questions, not only in the districts, but also at the centre, by the family, domestic-circle method, so to speak. Ivan Ivanovich, a member of the top leadership of such and such an organisation, has, say, made a gross mistake and has messed things up. But Ivan Fyodorovich is reluctant to criticise him, to expose his mistakes and to correct them. He is reluctant to do so because he does not want to "make enemies." He has made a mistake, he has messed things up -- what of it? Who of us does not make mistakes? Today I shall let him, Ivan Fyodorovich, off; tomorrow he will let me, Ivan Ivanovich, off; for what guarantee is there that I, too, shall not make a mistake? Everything in order and satisfactory. Peace and good will. They say that a mistake neglected is detrimental to our great cause?

Never mind! We'll muddle through somehow.

"Such, comrades, is the way some of our responsible workers usually argue.

"But what does that mean? If we Bolsheviks, who criticise the whole world, who, in the words of Marx, are storming heaven, if we, for the sake of this or that comrade's peace of mind, abandon self-criticism, is it not obvious that that can lead only to the doom of our great cause? (*Voices* : "Quite right!" *Applause*.)

"Marx said that what, among other things, distinguishes the proletarian revolution from every other revolution is that it criticises itself and, in criticising itself, strengthens itself. That is an extremely important point of Marx's. If we, the representatives of the proletarian revolution, shut our eyes to our defects, settle questions by the family-circle method, hush up each other's mistakes and drive the ulcers inwards into the organism of the Party, who will correct these mistakes, these defects?

"Is it not obvious that we shall cease to be proletarian revolutionaries, and that we shall certainly perish if we fail to eradicate from our midst this philistinism, this family-circle method of settling highly important questions of our work of construction?

"Is it not obvious that by refraining from honest and straightforward self-criticism, by refraining from honest and open correction of our mistakes, we close our road to progress, to the improvement of our work, to new successes in our work?

"After all, our development does not proceed in the form of a smooth, all-round ascent. No, comrades, we have classes, we have contradictions within the country, we have a past, we have a present and a future, we have contradictions between them, and our onward progress cannot take the form of a smooth rocking on the waves of life. Our advance takes place in the process of struggle, in the process of the development of contradictions, in the process of overcoming these contradictions, in the process of bringing these contradictions to light and eliminating

them.

"As long as classes exist we shall never be in a position to say: Well, thank God, everything is all right now. We shall never be in such a position, comrades." (J. V. Stalin, *THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.)*, December 2-19, 1927)

Again with regard to criticism and self-criticism, Stalin says the following:

"I think, comrades, that self-criticism is as necessary to us as air or water. I think that without it, without self-criticism, our Party could not make any headway, could not disclose our ulcers, could not eliminate our shortcomings. And shortcomings we have in plenty. That must be admitted frankly and honestly.

"The slogan of self-criticism cannot be regarded as a new one. It lies at the very foundation of the Bolshevik Party. It lies at the foundation of the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Since our country is a country with a dictatorship of the proletariat, and since the dictatorship is directed by one party, the Communist Party, which does not, and cannot, share power with other parties, is it not clear that, if we want to make headway, we ourselves must disclose and correct our errors -- is it not clear that there is no one else to disclose and correct them for us? Is it not clear, comrades, that self-criticism must be one of the most important motive forces of our development?

"The slogan of self-criticism has developed especially powerfully since the Fifteenth Congress of our Party. Why? Because after the Fifteenth Congress, which put an end to the opposition, a new situation arose in the Party, one that we have to reckon with.

"In what does the novelty of this situation consist? In the fact that now we have no opposition, or next to none; in the fact that, because of the easy victory over the opposition -- a victory which in itself is a most important gain for the Party -- there may be a danger of the Party resting on its laurels, beginning to take things easy and closing its eyes to the shortcomings in our work.

"It would be strange to fear that our enemies, our internal and external enemies, might exploit the criticism of our shortcomings and raise the shout: Oho! All is not well with those Bolsheviks! It would be strange if we Bolsheviks were to fear that. The strength of Bolshevism lies precisely in the fact that it is not afraid to admit its mistakes. Let the Party, let the Bolsheviks, let all the upright workers and labouring elements in our country bring to light the shortcomings in our work, the shortcomings in our constructive effort, and let them indicate ways of eliminating our shortcomings, so that there may be no stagnation, vegetation, decay in our work and our construction, so that all our work and all our constructive measures may improve from day to day and go from success to success. That is the chief thing just now. As for our enemies, let them rant about our shortcomings -- such trifles cannot and should not disconcert Bolsheviks.

"Lastly, there is yet another circumstance that impels us to self-criticism. I am referring to the question of the masses and the leaders. A peculiar sort of relation has lately begun to arise between the leaders and the masses. On the one hand there was formed, there came into being historically, a group of leaders among us whose prestige is rising and rising, and who are becoming almost unapproachable for the masses. On the other hand the working-class masses in the first place, and the mass of the working people in general are rising extremely slowly, are beginning to look up at the leaders from below with blinking eyes, and not infrequently are afraid to criticise them.

"Of course, the fact that we have a group of leaders who have risen excessively high and enjoy great prestige is in itself a great achievement for our Party. Obviously, the direction of a big country would be unthinkable without such an authoritative group of leaders. But the fact that as these leaders rise they get further away from the masses, and the masses begin to look up at them from below and do not venture to criticise them, cannot but give rise to a certain danger of the leaders losing contact with the masses and the masses getting out of touch with the leaders.

"This danger may result in the leaders becoming conceited and regard-

ing themselves as infallible. And what good can be expected when the top leaders become self-conceited and begin to look down on the masses? Clearly, nothing can come of this but the ruin of the Party. But what we want is not to ruin the Party, but to move forward and improve our work. And precisely in order that we may move forward and improve the relations between the masses and the leaders, we must keep the valve of self-criticism open all the time, we must make it possible for Soviet people to "go for" their leaders, to criticise their mistakes, so that the leaders may not grow conceited, and the masses may not get out of touch with the leaders.

"The question of the masses and the leaders is sometimes identified with the question of promotion. That is wrong, comrades. It is not a question of bringing new leaders to the fore, although this deserves the Party's most serious attention. It is a question of preserving the leaders who have already come to the fore and possess the greatest prestige by organising permanent and indissoluble contact between them and the masses. It is a question of organising, along the lines of self-criticism and criticism of our shortcomings, the broad public opinion of the Party, the broad public opinion of the working class, as an instrument of keen and vigilant moral control, to which the most authoritative leaders must lend an attentive ear if they want to retain the confidence of the Party and the confidence of the working class.

"From this standpoint, the value of the press, of our Party and Soviet press, is truly inestimable. From this standpoint, we cannot but welcome the initiative shown by *Pravda* in publishing the *Bulletin of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection*, which conducts systematic criticism of shortcomings in our work. Only we must see to it that the criticism is serious and penetrating, and does not just skate on the surface. From this standpoint, too, we have to welcome the initiative shown by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in vigorously and spiritedly attacking shortcomings in our work...

"You must know that workers are sometimes afraid to tell the truth about shortcomings in our work. They are afraid not only because they might get into "hot water" for it, but also because they might be made

into a "laughing-stock" on account of their imperfect criticism. How can you expect an ordinary worker or an ordinary peasant, with his own painful experience of shortcomings in our work and in our planning, to frame his criticism according to all the rules of the art? If you demand that their criticism should be 100 per cent correct, you will be killing all possibility of criticism from below, all possibility of self-criticism. That is why I think that if criticism is even only 5 or 10 per cent true, such criticism should be welcomed, should be listened to attentively, and the sound core in it taken into account. Otherwise, I repeat, you would be gagging all those hundreds and thousands of people who are devoted to the cause of the Soviets, who are not yet skilled enough in the art of criticism, but through whose lips speaks truth itself.

"Precisely in order to develop self-criticism and not extinguish it, we must listen attentively to all criticism coming from Soviet people, even if sometimes it may not be correct to the full and in all details. Only then can the masses have the assurance that they will not get into "hot water" if their criticism is not perfect, that they will not be made a "laughing-stock" if there should be errors in their criticism. Only then can self-criticism acquire a truly mass character and meet with a truly mass response." (J. V. Stalin, REPORT TO THE SEVENTEENTH PARTY CONGRESS ON THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.) *Pravda*, No. 27, January 28, 1934 From J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976 pp. 671-765. Based on J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1955 Vol. 13, pp. 288-388)

As to the successes in the field of self-criticism, Stalin notes in 1928 that "as a result of self-criticism, our press has become more lively and vigorous, while such detachments of our press workers as the organisations of worker and village correspondents are already becoming a weighty political force.

"True, our press still continues at times to skate on the surface; it has not yet learned to pass from individual critical remarks to deeper criticism, and from deep criticism to drawing general conclusions from the results of criticism and making plain what *achievements* have been

attained in our constructive work as a result of criticism. But it can scarcely be doubted that advances will be made in this field as the campaign goes on." (J. V. Stalin, AGAINST VULGARISING THE SLOGAN OF SELF-CRITICISM *Pravda*, No. 146, June 26, 1928 From J. V. Stalin, *Works* Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, Vol. 11, pp. 133-44.)

Thurston gives an example of worker's criticism in action:

"In September 1936 the worker M. A. Panov wrote an angry letter to I. P. Rumiantsev, then first secretary of Smolensk oblast. Panov had been "without a party card" for two years and had lately been out of work, too. After complaining to the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, he had learned that his case had been referred to by Rumiantsev. Ten days had gone by, but "you are still fooling around," Panov wrote to this local chieftain; "it's time to end this red tape and get down to work." Declaring, "You speak beautifully, but in fact it must be said that that's hot air", the worker announced that he would give Rumiantsev three days to act or he would complain to the party Central Committee. He was sure to add that he was not an "opportunist, Trotskyite or Zinovievite, but one of our own". Panov, like many other workers, thought that he had a right to criticise a high party official, then a member of the Central Committee, and to demand attention from him. Stalin had said, "Listen to the voice of the people," and his regime favoured such positive elements in the system, for they encouraged productivity, satisfaction, and commitment to the state".

For a bourgeois historian, hostile to communism from the beginning, to write such a thing, implying that popular democracy was prevalent in the Soviet Union, says a great deal.

c) Control from below; drawing the masses into political activity; learning from the masses

You may have thought that the slogan of 'socialism from below' was the invention of one or other Trotskyist groupings, whose claim it is that

the Soviet Union under Stalin was 'socialism from above' - i.e. Stalin was a dictator and there was no democracy for the working class. But the fact is that both Lenin and Stalin understood perfectly well the need for implementing the greatest 'control from below' - they fully appreciated the danger that bureaucracy could undermine the dictatorship of the proletariat, and they did all they could to eliminate this danger by making leaders accountable to the people and by drawing the greatest number of people possible into political activity.

Said Lenin in 1919:

"Bureaucracy has been defeated. The exploiters have been eliminated. But the cultural level has not been raised, and therefore the bureaucrats are occupying their old positions. They can be forced to retreat only if the proletariat and the peasants are organised far more extensively than has been the case up to now, and only if real measures are taken to enlist the workers in government." (Lenin, *EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE R.C.P.(B.)*, MARCH 18-23, 1919)

"If we want to combat bureaucracy, we must enlist the co-operation of the rank and file ... what other way is there of putting an end to bureaucracy than by enlisting the co-operation of the workers and peasants?" (Lenin, vol. XXV, pp 496, 495)

Stalin explains the essential nature of the close relationship of people and party:

"It may be taken as a rule that so long as Bolsheviks keep contacts with the broad masses of the people, they will be invincible. And, contrariwise, it is sufficient for Bolsheviks to break away from the masses and lose contact with them, to become covered with bureaucratic rash, for them to lose all their strength and become converted into nonentities.

"In the system of mythology of the ancient Greeks there was one famous hero, Antaeus, who, as mythology declares, was the son of Poseidon, the God of the Sea, and Gaea, the Goddess of the Earth. He was particularly attached to his mother, who bore him, fed him and brought him up so that there was no hero whom this Antaeus did not

vanquish. He was considered to be an invincible hero. Wherein lay his strength? It lay in the fact that every time he was hard-pushed in a struggle with an opponent, he touched the earth, his mother, who had borne him and fed him, and thus regained new strength.

"But, nevertheless, he had a weak spot -- the danger of being separated, in some way, from the earth. His enemies took account of this weakness of his, and waited for him. And an enemy was found who took advantage of this weakness and vanquished him. This was Hercules. But how did Hercules defeat him? He tore him from the earth, raised him into the air, deprived him of the possibility of touching the earth, and thus throttled him in the air.

"I think that Bolsheviks remind us of Antaeus, the hero of Greek mythology. Like Antaeus, they are strong in keeping contact with their mother, with the masses, who bore them, fed them and educated them. And as long as they keep contact with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible.

"This is the key to the invincibility of Bolshevik leadership." (J. V. STALIN, *MASTERING BOLSHEVISM*, WORKERS LIBRARY PUBLISHERS, New York City, 1937)

Towards the aim of establishing workers' control, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection was set up by Lenin to combat deficiencies in the state apparatus. "The task is to help the Central Control Commission and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection in their difficult work of improving, simplifying, reducing the cost of the state apparatus and bringing a healthier atmosphere into it from top to bottom" (Stalin)

"Some comrades think that people can only be checked up on from above, when the leaders check up on subordinates, on the results of their work. This is not true. Check-up from above is necessary, of course, as one of the effective measures for verifying people and checking up the fulfilment of tasks. But verification from above does not exhaust by far the whole business of verification. There is still another kind of verification, the check-up from below, in which the masses, the subordinates, verify the leaders, point out their mistakes,

and show the way of correcting them. This kind of verification is one of the most effective methods of checking up on people. The rank-and-file members verify their leaders at meetings of active Party workers, at conferences and congresses, by listening to their reports, by criticising defects, and finally by electing or not electing some or other leading comrades to the leading Party organs. Precise operation of democratic centralism in the Party as demanded by our Party statutes, unconditional electiveness of Party organs, the right to put forward and to withdraw candidates, the secret ballot and freedom of criticism and self-criticism -- all these and similar measures must be carried into life, in order to facilitate the check-up on, and control over, the leaders of the Party by the rank-and-file Party members.

The non-Party masses check their economic, trade union and other leaders at meetings of non-Party active workers, at all kinds of mass conferences, where they hear reports of their leaders, criticize defects and indicate ways or correcting them. Finally, the people check leaders of the country during the elections to the Soviet Union organs of power, through universal, equal, direct and secret ballot.

The task is to link up the check from above with that from below." (J. V. STALIN, MASTERING BOLSHEVISM, WORKERS LIBRARY PUBLISHERS, New York City, 1937)

The Webbs describe the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection thus: "Under the system of 'workers' and peasants' inspection' every office was periodically visited, sometimes without notice, by a sort of jury, drawn from the common people, who insisted on having demonstrated to them the practical utility of every piece of 'red tape'. Stalin, who was placed at the head of what became an extensive organisation extending all over the USSR, fortified these indiscriminate juries of inspection by a staff of officials trained in administrative routine, who tactfully directed the juryman's eyes to matters needing reform and put into useful shape the jury's criticism and suggestions." The Webbs point out that the WPI worked in conjunction with the "chistka", or cleansing, process to which all public departments were subjected occasionally. The Webbs cite a Mr. Calvin B. Hoover, describing these chistkas:

"When hearings are held before the cleaning commission, all the workers of the industry are invited and expected to be present. As a matter of fact, anyone can be present, and anyone can ask questions of the person who is being 'cleaned'. The process is not a pleasant one for the person 'at the bar', for every possible criticism that can be raked up is usually fired at his unlucky head. Every questionable act that he may have done, any indiscreet conversation, any part of his private life may be hauled out into the pitiless light of publicity. The janitor may accuse the director of having a bourgeois taste in neckties or of not providing proper safeguards for workmen in dangerous occupations. The ancestry of the victim is particularly examined into, and happy is he who can answer that his mother 'came from the wooden plough' and his father 'came from the loom', and thrice damned is he whose ancestry includes either kulak, bourgeois or landlord... Nevertheless, this institution gives a sense of power even to the individual workman. And it does serve to lessen any tendency on the part of the administrative personnel to be tyrannical in any special personal cases, lest the victim attain his revenge at the next chistka."

The Webbs also cite Ms Barbara Wootton, writing in 1934, on the WPI: "Undoubtedly the price of this meddlesome interference of the rank and file into affairs of which they must, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, understand nothing at all, is a considerable sacrifice of efficiency. But, even at that price, it may be argued that the safeguard which this affords against the odious vulgarities of class distinctions is well worth having. For those who are accustomed by the nature of their work to give commands, or are divorced from the crude physical realities of farm and mine and factory, what can be more salutary than some such direct personal reminder that they are no better than their fellows? The official intrusion of those who perform the simplest, the dirtiest or the most tedious jobs into the secret places of those whose work is skilled, responsible and interesting (and paid for as such) provides a means of contact between the one group and the other that might never be established in any other way; and it makes at the same time a magnificent assertion that none shall judge the one superior to the other.

In 1934 the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection was superseded, as many were complaining that it was creating the need for even more paperwork than was already required. Also as the educational and cultural level had improved considerably since the WPI was set up, and there were hundreds of thousands of trained, experienced workers, it was possible for inspections to be carried out by people with expertise and experience in particular fields. The work of inspection was handed over to the All-Union Central Committee of Trade Unions.

Production Conferences were an excellent method of involving workers in organising production themselves and getting them to discuss difficulties and air criticisms. Stalin wrote: "Can [the country's] tasks be accomplished without the direct assistance and support of the working class? No, they cannot. Advancing our industry, raising its productivity, creating new cadres of builders of industry, correctly conducting socialist accumulation, sensibly using accumulations for the needs of industry, establishing a regime of the strictest economy, tightening up the state apparatus, making it operate cheaply and honestly, purging it of the dross and filth which have adhered to it during the period of our work of construction, waging a systematic struggle against stealers and squanderers of state property -- all these are tasks which no party can cope with without the direct and systematic support of the vast masses of the working class. Hence the task is to draw the vast masses of non-Party workers into all our constructive work. Every worker, every honest peasant must assist the Party and the Government in putting into effect a regime of economy, in combating the misappropriation and dissipation of state reserves, in getting rid of thieves and swindlers, no matter what disguise they assume, and in making our state apparatus healthier and cheaper. Inestimable service in this respect could be rendered by production conferences. There was a time when production conferences were very much in vogue. Now, somehow, we don't hear about them. That is a great mistake, comrades. The production conferences must be revived at all costs. It is not only minor questions, for instance of hygiene, that must be put before them. Their programme must be made broader and more comprehensive. The principal questions of the building of industry must be placed before them. Only in

that way is it possible to raise the activity of the vast masses of the working class and to make them conscious participants in the building of industry." (J. V. Stalin *THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE POLICY OF THE PARTY* *Leningradskaya Pravda*, No. 89, April 18, 1926 From J. V. Stalin, *Works* Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, Vol. 8, pp. 123-56.

Thurston notes that production conferences were revived, and is forced to admit that they were highly successful in providing an arena for workers to exercise their control (p.180). He also notes that those managers in industry who were well-known for being good listeners, who were attentive to workers and their suggestions, problems and grievances, who kept their doors open to the workers, were very well regarded by the higher authorities and were able to keep their positions for lengthy periods of time. Thurston also points out two other institutions that were open to workers to help exercise control: firstly the people's courts; secondly the newspapers. He cites a Soviet émigré, interviewed by J. K. Zawodny in the early 1950s, as saying: "Honestly, I have to say that the People's Court usually rendered just sentences favouring the workers, particularly with regard to housing cases". Another interviewee said: "anyone could complain in a formal way, especially when he had the law behind him. He could even write to a paper, and in this way let the higher officials know about his complaint." (p.185) Thurston's narrative continues: "This often happened: for example, in the first half of 1935 workers sent two thousand letters to the newspaper of the Voroshilov factory in Vladivostok".

Another method of workers' exerting their control was the comprehensive system of elections that was in place in the Soviet Union, at every level of state functioning. Stalin, in his famous interview with Roy Howard, of the Howard-Scripps Press on March 1st, 1936, "It seems to you that there will not be an electoral struggle. But there will be, and I foresee a very lively electoral struggle. We have not a few institutions which work badly. It sometimes happens that one or another local organ of power does not know how to satisfy one or another of the many-sided and ever-growing needs of toilers of city and country. Did

you construct a good school or not? Did you better living conditions? Are you not a bureaucrat? Did you help make our work more effective, our life more cultured? Such will be the criteria with which millions of electors will approach candidates, discarding the unfit, crossing them out of the lists, putting forward the best and nominating them as candidates."

Stalin commented on the level of democracy in Soviet elections in a radio broadcast on the eve of the elections, December 12th 1937. He said: "Never in the history of the world has there been such a really free and democratic election, never! ... Only within socialist society can there be such a democratic election..."

"In capitalist states there exist some odd and, I would say, wholly eccentric relations between deputies and voters. Before the elections deputies entice and frolic with the voters, are obliging before them, wail and whimper about loyalty, give heaps of promises ... [but afterward] the deputy can shift from one camp to another, he can change from the correct to the incorrect road, he can even embroil himself in unnecessary machinations, he can overturn somersaults at his pleasure: he is independent. But here voters have the right to recall their deputies at any time if they begin to evade, if they shift from the line, if they forget about their dependence on the people, on the voters. That is a wonderful law, comrades. The deputy must know that he is a servant of the people, its messenger to the Supreme Soviet and he must conduct himself along the line which the people have ordered him to follow." (cited in Frederick Schuman, 'Soviet Politics At Home And Abroad, Robert Hale Ltd, 1948; p320)

The success in bringing workers into control of society is well documented in such books as Pat Sloan's 'Soviet Democracy', Hewlett Johnson's 'The Socialist Sixth of the World' and the Webb's 'Soviet Communism - A New Civilisation'. It is quite clear that working class people became predominant at every level of administration of the country. Stalin, reporting to the 15th Congress of the CPSU(B) in 1927 says this:

"I would like to deal with three appointments that are significant. You know that Lobov has been appointed Chairman of the Supreme Council of National Economy of the R.S.F.S.R. He is a metalworker. You know that Ukhanov, a metalworker, has been elected Chairman of the Moscow Soviet in place of Kamenev. You know also that Komarov, also a metalworker, has been elected Chairman of the Leningrad Soviet in place of Zinoviev. Thus the "Lord Mayors" of our two capitals are metalworkers. (*Applause.*) It is true that they are not of the nobility, but they are managing the affairs of our capitals better than any member of the nobility. (*Applause.*) You may say that this is a tendency towards metallisation, but I don't think there is anything bad about that. (*Voices* : "On the contrary, it is very good.")

"Let us wish the capitalist countries, let us wish London, let us wish Paris, success in catching up with us at last and in putting up their own metalworkers as "Lord Mayors." (*Applause.*)" (J. V. Stalin, THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.), *December 2-19, 1927*)

"In the same report, Stalin adds: "It is indisputable that during the past few years the old cadres of our Party have been permeated with new, rising cadres, consisting mainly of workers. Formerly, we counted our cadres in hundreds and thousands, but now we have to count them in tens of thousands. I think that if we begin from the lowest organisations, the shop and team organisations, and proceed to the top, all over the Union, we shall find that our Party cadres, the overwhelming majority of whom are workers, now number not less than 100,000. This indicates the immense growth of our Party. It indicates the immense growth of our cadres, the growth of their ideological and organisational experience, the growth of their communist culture."

What other methods of combating bureaucracy were used there? One important method was purging:

d) Purging

I will not dwell on this subject, as other presentations to this society have dealt with the purges in some detail. Suffice to say that bureaucracy was not just a problem of the state but also of the party, at all levels. Those who were found by the Central Control Commission of being corrupt or bureaucratic were purged from the party without much in the way of ceremony. Ludo Martens points out in 'Another View of Stalin' that "after each massive recruitment wave, the leadership had to sort". The first purge was carried out in 1921, where 25% of party members were excluded - 45% of all members in the countryside. Another purge in 1929 resulted in the exclusion of 11% of the membership; another purge in 1933 resulted in the exclusion of 18% of the membership, which had grown from 30,000 in 1917 to 600,000 in 1921 to 1,500,000 in 1929, to 2,500,000 in 1932 (All figures from Ludo's book).

According to the Webbs, the features of the 1933 purge were as follows:

- attention paid to ensuring that every member should have a competent knowledge of the Party program and the most important decisions, so as to be able to explain them to the non-Party masses;
- the strict examination, in "the nuclei attached to the non-productive undertakings" of the conduct of those who "abuse the Party position for personal ends, embezzlement, nepotism, careerism, bureaucratic attitude towards the masses";
- in the rural districts, the sharp scrutiny of the way each member "is fighting for the ... fulfilling of obligations of the collective farms ... against the kulak and his agents" and how he is "protecting the socialist common property" (all quotes from Pravda).

Ludo notes that "during the May 1937 electoral campaign, for the 54,000 Party rank and file organisations for which we have data, 55% of the directing committees were replaced. In the Leningrad region, 48% of the members of the local committees were replaced. Getty [J. Arch Getty, in 'Origins of the Great Purges'] noted that this was the most important, most general and most effective antibureaucratic campaign

that the party had ever effected."

Stalin talked often about the necessity to rid the party of bureaucrats and egoists: In his Report to the 17th Congress he says the following:

"Besides the incorrigible bureaucrats and red-tapists, as to whose removal there are no differences of opinion among us, there are two other types of executive who retard our work, hinder our work, and hold up our advance.

"One of these types of executive consists of people who rendered certain services in the past, people who have become big-wigs, who consider that Party decisions and Soviet laws are not written for them, but for fools. These are the people who do not consider it their duty to fulfil the decisions of the Party and of the Government, and who thus destroy the foundations of Party and state discipline. What do they count upon when they violate Party decisions and Soviet laws? They presume that the Soviet government will not venture to touch them, because of their past services. These overconceited big-wigs think that they are irreplaceable, and that they can violate the decisions of the leading bodies with impunity. What is to be done with executives of this kind? They must unhesitatingly be removed from their leading posts, irrespective of past services. (*Voices* : "Quite right!") They must be demoted to lower positions and this must be announced in the press. (*Voices* : "Quite right!") This is essential in order to bring those conceited big-wig bureaucrats down a peg or two, and to put them in their proper place. This is essential in order to strengthen Party and Soviet discipline in the whole of our work. (*Voices* : "Quite right!" Applause.)

"And now about the second type of executive. I have in mind the windbags, I would say honest windbags (*laughter*), people who are honest and loyal to the Soviet power, but who are incapable of leadership, incapable of organizing anything. Last year I had a conversation with one such comrade, a very respected comrade, but an incorrigible windbag, capable of drowning any live undertaking in a flood of talk. Here is the conversation:

I : How are you getting on with the sowing?

He : With the sowing, Comrade Stalin? We have mobilized ourselves.
(*Laughter.*)

I : Well, and what then?

He : We have put the question squarely. (*Laughter.*)

I : And what next?

He : There is a turn, Comrade Stalin; soon there will be a turn.
(*Laughter.*)

I : But still?

He : We can see an indication of some improvement. (*Laughter.*)

I : But still, how are you getting on with the sowing?

He : So far, Comrade Stalin, we have not made any headway with the sowing. (*General laughter.*)

"There you have the portrait of the windbag. They have mobilized themselves, they have put the question squarely, they have a turn and some improvement, but things remain as they were.

"This is exactly how a Ukrainian worker recently described the state of a certain organization when he was asked whether that organization had any definite line: "Well," he said, "as to a line . . . they have a line all right, but they don't seem to be doing any work." (*General laughter.*) Evidently that organization also has its honest windbags.

"And when such windbags are dismissed from their posts and are given jobs far removed from operative work, they shrug their shoulders in perplexity and ask: "Why have we been dismissed? Did we not do all that was necessary to get the work done? Did we not organize a rally of shock brigaders? Did we not proclaim the slogans of the Party and of the Government at the conference of shock brigaders? Did we not elect the whole of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee to the Honorary Presidium? (*General laughter.*) Did we not send greetings to Comrade Stalin -- what more do you want of us?" (*General laughter.*)

"What is to be done with these incorrigible windbags? Why, if they were allowed to remain on operative work they are capable of drowning every live undertaking in a flood of watery and endless speeches. Obviously, they must be removed from leading posts and given work other than operative work. There is no place for windbags on operative work. (*Voices : "Quite right!" Applause.*)"

With regard to purges, the Webbs wrote: "Collectivists themselves do well to overhaul, from time to time, the social apparatus they are driven to construct. The leaders of the Soviet Union have repeatedly insisted on such an overhaul. During the present year (1937) strenuous efforts have been made, both in the trade union organisation and in the Communist Party, to cut out the dead wood. The officials of every grade are told to remember that their first duty is to serve the public. The rank and file of their membership, in these organisations, and also those in the consumers' co-operative movement and the collective farms, are scolded for not insisting on more frequent meetings, and for failing at such meetings to complain of every shortcoming. To the student familiar with the bureaucracy of the American joint-stock monopolies, French government offices, or Italian identity papers, what is remarkable in the Soviet Union is, not the amount of its bureaucracy in this sense, but the sustained effort that is made to suppress it, and to lessen its inconveniences to the public" (Sidney and Beatrice Webb, 'Soviet Communism - A New Civilisation', 1937, p.1212)

e) Inner-Party Democracy

Said Stalin in his pamphlet 'The Economic Situation Of The Soviet Union And The Policy Of The Party', published in Pravda in 1926, "The Party ... must firmly and resolutely adopt the course of inner-Party democracy; **our organisations must draw the broad mass of the Party membership, which determines the fate of our Party, into discussing the questions of our constructive work. Without this, there can be no question of raising the activity of the working class.**" Stalin pointed out in his writings and speeches that discussion

was a sign of the party's strength, of its political maturity and the high quality of its membership (see his speech 'The Party's Tasks', published in Pravda on December 6, 1923). But he was also not afraid to point out that the Party was not a talking shop, a debating society; the Party was a party of action, where discussion took place in order to guide action; and that action, once the discussion was closed, was to be united action, regardless of the positions taken in the debate.

One reflection of an increasingly democratic party, one which was increasingly representative of the masses, is the fact that the party grew to an enormous extent in the Stalin era, starting with what is known as the Lenin Enrolment, where 250,000 people, realising the need to cement the roots of the party after Lenin's death, joined. Nikolai Ostrovsky's famous novel 'How The Steel Was Tempered' contains a beautiful passage about the Lenin Enrolment: Artem, brother of the story's hero Pavel, explains his decision to join the party: "...now that our Comrade Lenin is gone and the Party has issued its call, I have looked back at my life and seen what was lacking. It's not enough to defend your own power, we have to stick together like one big family, in Lenin's place, so that the Soviet power should stand solid like a mountain of steel. We must become Bolsheviks. It's our Party, isn't it?". The narrative continues: "The death of Lenin brought many thousands of workers into the Bolshevik Party. The leader was gone but the Party's ranks were unshaken. A tree that has thrust its mighty roots deep into the ground does not perish if its crown is severed".

But Stalin was very careful to point out that simply increasing numbers did not automatically strengthen the party or make it more democratic: The biggest parties can perish if they yield to infatuation, seize too much and then prove incapable of embracing, digesting what they have captured. Judge for yourselves. Political illiteracy in our Party is as high as 60 per cent -- 60 per cent prior to the Lenin Enrolment, and I am afraid that with the Lenin Enrolment it will be brought up to 80 per cent. Is it not time to call a halt, comrades? Is it not time to confine ourselves to 800,000 members and put the question squarely and sharply of improving the *quality* of the membership, of *teaching* the

Lenin Enrolment the foundations of Leninism, of converting the new members into conscious Leninists? I think it is time to do that. (J. V. Stalin, THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.), *December 2-19, 1927*)

Stalin was also very careful that party posts should be filled not by co-option and appointment but by electoral methods. He wrote in the speech cited above on 'The Party's Tasks' that: "the principle of election must be applied in practice to all Party bodies and official posts, if there are no insuperable obstacles to this such as lack of the necessary Party standing, and so forth. We must eliminate the practice of ignoring the will of the majority of the organisations in promoting comrades to responsible Party posts, and we must see to it that the principle of election is actually applied."

There was considerable progress in terms of developing inner-party democracy:

"Only the blind fail to see that inner-Party democracy, genuine inner-Party democracy, an actual upsurge of activity on the part of the mass of the Party membership, is growing and developing in our Party. There is talk about democracy. But what is democracy in the Party? Democracy for whom? If by democracy is meant freedom for a couple or so of intellectuals divorced from the revolution to engage in endless chatter, to have their own press organ, etc., then we have no use for such "democracy," because it is democracy for an insignificant minority that sets at naught the will of the overwhelming majority. If, however, by democracy is meant freedom for the mass of the Party membership to decide questions connected with our work of construction, an upsurge of activity of the Party membership, drawing them into the work of Party leadership, developing in them the feeling that they are the masters in the Party, then we have such democracy, that is the democracy we need, and we shall steadily develop it in spite of everything. (*Applause.*)

...[P]arallel with inner-Party democracy, collective leadership is growing, step by step, in our Party. Take our Central Committee and the

Central Control Commission. Together they constitute a leading centre of 200-250 comrades, which meets regularly and decides highly important questions connected with our work of construction. It is one of the most democratic and collectively functioning centres our Party has ever had. Well? Is it not a fact that the settlement of highly important questions concerning our work is passing more and more from the hands of a narrow upper group into the hands of this broad centre, which is most closely connected with all branches of our work of construction and with all the districts of our vast country?" (J. V. Stalin, THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.), *December 2-19, 1927*)

It is worth saying a few words here about the distinction between inner-party democracy and factionalism. Lenin and Stalin were both very clear that the establishment of blocs and factions within the party did not serve to strengthen inner-party democracy; rather they destroyed inner-party democracy by undermining party unity, by abolishing free discussion with the fight for an 'alternative' program by one particular group or faction. In the words of Stalin, in his Theses for the All-Union Conference of the CPSU(B), 1926, "The Party takes as its starting point that "whoever weakens in the least the iron discipline of the Party of the proletariat (especially during the time of its dictatorship), actually aids the bourgeoisie against the proletariat" (Lenin, Vol. XXV, p. 190); that inner-Party democracy is necessary not in order to weaken and shatter proletarian discipline in the Party, but in order to strengthen and consolidate it, and that without iron discipline in the Party, without a firm regime in the Party, backed by the sympathy and support of the vast masses of the proletariat, the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible.

"The opposition bloc, on the other hand, starts out by counter-posing inner-Party democracy to Party discipline, confuses freedom of groups and factions with inner-Party democracy, and tries to make use of such democracy to shatter Party discipline and undermine the unity of the Party. It is natural that the opposition bloc's call for a fight against the

"regime" in the Party, which leads in practice to advocacy of freedom of groups and factions in the Party, should be a call that is taken up with fervour by the anti-proletarian elements in our country as a means of salvation from the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"The conference considers that the fight of the opposition bloc against the "regime" in the Party, a fight which has nothing in common with the organisational principles of Leninism, can only result in undermining the unity of the Party, weakening the dictatorship of the proletariat and unleashing the anti-proletarian forces in the country that are striving to undermine and shatter the dictatorship."

This question of freedom of factions and opposition is one which has caused much confusion, and one that has caused many to label the Soviet Union and the CPSU(B) under Stalin as 'undemocratic' (the fact that this party discipline originated in fact with Lenin is neither here nor there!). Pat Sloan gives an excellent summary of the complicated relationship between democracy and dictatorship in the Soviet Union in his book 'Soviet Democracy': "The truth of the matter is that under all conditions a struggle by a democratic organisation for its freedom is a limitation on the democratic rights of the opponents of that freedom. And once, in a critical situation, a minority continues to oppose the interests of the majority, such a minority becomes, consciously or not, a weapon of the enemy against the bureaucracy concerned ... [D]emocracy and dictatorship are not mutually exclusive". With the Party and the state under constant threat from internal and external enemies, there could be no question of a 'talking shop' type of party, where members were free from organisational discipline.

f) Addressing various defects in the party and state apparatus

There were of course a thousand and one different types of bureaucratic defect in the party and in the Soviet administration. Stalin gives some very vivid examples in his report to the 17th Congress of the CPSU(B) on the work of the Central Committee:

"I shall not dilate on those defects in our state apparatus that are glaring enough as it is. I have in mind, primarily, "Mother Red Tape." I have at hand a heap of materials on the matter of red tape, exposing the criminal negligence of a number of judicial, administrative, insurance, co-operative and other organisations.

"Here is a peasant who went to a certain insurance office twenty-one times to get some matter put right, and even then failed to get any result. Here is another peasant, an old man of sixty-six, who walked 600 versts to get his case cleared up at an Uyezd Social Maintenance Office, and even then failed to get any result.

"Here is an old peasant woman, fifty-six years old, who, in response to a summons by a people's court, walked 500 versts and travelled over 600 versts by horse and cart, and even then failed to get justice done.

"A multitude of such facts could be quoted. It is not worth while enumerating them. But this is a disgrace to us, comrades! How can such outrageous things be tolerated?

"Lastly, facts about "demoting." It appears, that in addition to workers who are promoted, there are also such as are "demoted," who are pushed into the background by their own comrades, not because they are incapable or inefficient, but because they are conscientious and honest in their work.

"Here is a worker, a tool-maker, who was promoted to a managerial post at his plant because he was a capable and incorruptible man. He worked for a couple of years, worked honestly, introduced order, put a stop to inefficiency and waste. But, working in this way, he trod on the toes of a gang of so-called "Communists," he disturbed their peace and quiet. And what happened? This gang of "Communists" put a spoke in his wheel and thus compelled him to "demote himself," as much as to say: "You wanted to be smarter than us, you won't let us live and make a bit in quiet -- so take a back seat, brother."

"Here is another worker, also a tool-maker, an adjuster of bolt-cutting machines, who was promoted to a managerial post at his factory. He

worked zealously and honestly. But, working in this way, he disturbed somebody's peace and quiet. And what happened? A pretext was found and they got rid of this "troublesome" comrade. How did this promoted comrade leave, what were his feelings? Like this: "In whatever post I was appointed to I tried to justify the confidence that was placed in me. But this promotion played a dirty trick on me and I shall never forget it. They threw mud at me. My wish to bring everything into the light of day remained a mere wish. Neither the works committee, nor the management, nor the Party unit would listen to me. I am finished with promotion, I would not take another managerial post even if offered my weight in gold" .

"But this is a disgrace to us, comrades! How can such outrageous things be tolerated?

"The Party's task is, in fighting against bureaucracy and for the improvement of the state apparatus, to extirpate with a red-hot iron such outrageous things in our practical work as those I have just spoken about".

Stalin goes onto talk about another shortcoming in the work of the Party:

"A second shortcoming. It consists in introducing administrative methods in the Party, in replacing the method of persuasion, which is of decisive importance for the Party, by the method of administration. This shortcoming is a danger no less serious than the first one. Why? Because it creates the danger of our Party organisations, which are independently acting organisations, being converted into mere bureaucratic institutions. If we take into account that we have not less than 60,000 of the most active officials distributed among all sorts of economic, co-operative and state institutions, where they are fighting bureaucracy, it must be admitted that some of them, while fighting bureaucracy in those institutions, sometimes become infected with bureaucracy themselves and carry that infection into the Party organisation. And this is not our fault, comrades, but our misfortune, for that process will continue to a greater or lesser degree as long as the state

exists. And precisely because that process has some roots in life, we must arm ourselves for the struggle against this shortcoming, we must raise the activity of the mass of the Party membership, draw them into the decision of questions concerning our Party leadership, systematically implant inner-Party democracy and prevent the method of persuasion in our Party practice being replaced by the method of administration."

"A third shortcoming. This consists in the desire of a number of our comrades to swim with the stream, smoothly and calmly, without perspective, without looking into the future, in such a way that a festive and holiday atmosphere should be felt all around, that we should have celebration meetings every day, with applause everywhere, and that all of us should be elected in turn as honorary members of all sorts of presidiums. (*Laughter, applause.*)

"Now it is this irresistible desire to see a festive atmosphere everywhere, this longing for decoration, for all sorts of anniversaries, necessary and unnecessary, this desire to swim with the stream without noticing where it is taking us (*laughter, applause*) -- it is all this that forms the substance of the third shortcoming in our Party practice, the basis of the defects in our Party life."

In the same speech, comrade Stalin addresses yet another element of bureaucracy - the failure to implement in reality a line agreed by the Party:

"Some people think that it is sufficient to draw up a correct Party line, proclaim it for all to hear, state it in the form of general theses and resolutions, and have it voted for unanimously, for victory to come of itself, automatically, as it were. That, of course, is wrong. It is a gross delusion. Only incorrigible bureaucrats and red-tapists can think so. As a matter of fact, these successes and victories did not come automatically, but as the result of a fierce struggle for the application of the Party line. Victory never comes of itself -- it is usually won by effort. Good resolutions and declarations in favour of the general line of the Party are only a beginning; they merely express the desire for victory,

but not the victory itself. After the correct line has been laid down, after a correct solution of the problem has been found, success depends on how the work is organised; on the organisation of the struggle for carrying out the Party line; on the proper selection of personnel; on checking upon the fulfilment of the decisions of the leading bodies. Otherwise the correct line of the Party and the correct solutions are in danger of being seriously prejudiced. More than that, after the correct political line has been laid down, organisational work decides everything, including the fate of the political line itself, its success or failure". Stalin continues this theme by suggesting that it is necessary to implement a far-reaching system of checking of fulfilment of decisions in order to weed out the bureaucrats and red-tapists.

Stalin points out more weaknesses in the work of the Party in his report to the plenum of the CC of the CPSU(B) in 1937 on 'Mastering Bolshevism':

"Can it be said that this Bolshevik rule is carried out by our Party comrades? Unfortunately, it cannot be said. It has already been spoken of here at the plenum. But not everything was said. The fact is that this well-tried rule is violated right and left in our practice and, moreover, in the grossest way. Most frequently, workers are selected not according to objective criteria, but according to accidental, subjective, narrow and provincial criteria. Most frequently so-called acquaintances are chosen, personal friends, fellow townsmen, people who have shown personal devotion, masters of eulogies to their patrons, irrespective of whether they are suitable from a political and a business-like standpoint.

"Naturally, instead of a leading group of responsible workers, a family group, a company, is formed, the members of which try to live peacefully, not to offend each other, not to wash their dirty linen in public, to eulogize each other and from time to time to send inane and nauseating reports to the center about successes.

"It is not difficult to understand that in such conditions of kinship there can be no place either for criticism of the shortcomings of the work, or for self-criticism by the leaders of the work.

"Naturally, such conditions of kinship create a favorable environment for generating bootlickers, people without any sense of dignity, and therefore having nothing in common with Bolshevism.

"Take, for example, Comrades Mirzoyan and Vainov. The former is secretary of the regional Party organization in Kazakhstan; the latter is secretary of the Yaroslav regional Party organization. These people are not the most backward workers in our midst. And how do they select workers?

"The former dragged along with him from Azerbaijan and the Urals, where he formerly worked, into Kazakhstan thirty or forty of his "own" people, and placed them in responsible positions in Kazakhstan. The latter dragged along with him from the Donbas, where he formerly worked, to Yaroslav a dozen or so of his "own" people also, and also placed them in responsible positions. Consequently, Comrade Mirzoyan has his own crew. Comrade Vainov also has his.

"Was it really impossible to select workers from the local people, being guided by the well-known Bolshevik rule on the selection and placing of people? Of course, it was possible. Why then did they not do so? Because the Bolshevik rule for the selection of workers excludes the possibility of a narrow parochial approach, excludes the possibility of workers being selected according to criteria of kinship and being "one of the gang". In addition, when selecting personally devoted people as workers, these comrades evidently have wanted to create for themselves conditions which give them a certain independence both of the local people and of the Central Committee of the Party.

"Let us suppose that Comrades Mirzoyan and Vainov, owing to some circumstances or other, are transferred from their present place of work to some other place. How should they act in such a case regarding their "tails"? Will they really have to drag them along once more to their new place of work?

"This is the absurdity resulting from the violation of the Bolshevik rule on the correct selection and distribution of workers."

So it can be seen that Stalin initiated several campaigns against each level of bureaucracy.

5. Trotsky's accusations of bureaucracy

We have seen that Lenin, Stalin and the main stream of the CPSU led a determined struggle against all forms of bureaucracy. But for some reason the accusations of Trotsky and the 'opposition' in its various forms - the so-called Workers' Opposition, the New Opposition, etc - that the Soviet Union was run by bureaucrats with Stalin as the chief bureaucrat never stopped.

But it is interesting to see that the accusation of bureaucracy was an old favourite of Trotsky's - he had used it against Lenin also. The following passage is from Ludo's book:

"In 1904, Trotsky accused Lenin of being a bureaucrat making the party degenerate into a revolutionary-bourgeois organisation. Lenin was blinded by the 'bureaucratic logic of such and such "organisational plan"', but 'the fiasco of organisational fetishism' was certain...

"In 1923, Trotsky wrote the same thing about Stalin, but using a more moderate tone: 'bureaucratisation threatens to ... provoke a more or less opportunistic degeneration of the Old Guard'" (p.44)

What is most notable about Trotsky's accusations of bureaucracy and degeneration of party democracy is that they were very rarely accompanied by practical suggestions (other than implications in favour of factionalism). Stalin also made sweeping attacks against bureaucracy in his writings and speeches, but the difference between them is that Stalin made these problems real, tangible, and hence solvable, by discussing exactly what the party and the state bodies could do to tackle these problems. Trotsky, on the other hand, made his vague, demagogic criticisms (many of which did contain an element of truth, and which were also made by Stalin) which were designed only to bring about a distrust of the leadership, to encourage disagreement.

As Stalin said, this is not the sort of criticism we need:

"It goes without saying that what we have in mind is not just "any sort" of criticism. Criticism by a counter-revolutionary is also criticism. But its object is to discredit the Soviet regime, to undermine our industry, to disrupt our Party work. Obviously, it is not such criticism we have in mind. It is not of such criticism I am speaking, but of criticism that comes from Soviet people, and which has the aim of improving the organs of Soviet rule, of improving our industry, of improving our Party and trade-union work. We need criticism in order to strengthen the Soviet regime, not to weaken it. And it is precisely with a view to strengthening and improving our work that the Party proclaims the slogan of criticism and self-criticism." (Stalin THE WORK OF THE APRIL JOINT PLENUM OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND CENTRAL CONTROL COMMISSION *Report Delivered at a Meeting of the Active of the Moscow Organisation of the C.P.S.U.(B.) April 13, 1928*)

Lenin pointed out, in response to Trotsky's accusations of bureaucracy in the trade unions: "It will take decades to overcome the evils of bureaucracy. It is a very difficult struggle, and anyone who says we can rid ourselves of bureaucratic practices overnight by adopting anti-bureaucratic platforms is nothing but a quack with a bent for fine words." (Address to the 8th Congress of the RCP(B), March 18-23, 1919) Lenin continues: "Comrade Trotsky says that Comrades Tomsy and Lozovsky - trade unionists both - are guilty of cultivating in their midst a spirit of hostility for the new men. But this is monstrous. Only someone in the lunatic fringe can say a thing like that.

"This haste leads to arguments, platforms and accusations, and eventually creates the impression that everything is rotten" - precisely what Trotsky was trying to do with his incessant slurs of bureaucracy.

Trotsky's true meaning when he refers to bureaucracy comes out in his famous work 'The Revolution Betrayed', written in 1936 (as the USSR was preparing itself for impending war):

"There is no peaceful outcome for the crisis. No devil ever yet voluntar-

ily cut off his own claws. The soviet bureaucracy will not give up its position without a fight. The development leads obviously to the road of revolution ... The bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force. And, as always, there will be fewer victims the more bold and decisive is the attack. To prepare this and stand at the head of the masses in a favourable historic situation - that is the task of the Soviet section of the Fourth International.

"Healthy young lungs find it intolerable to breathe in the atmosphere of hypocrisy inseparable from a Thermidor ... the more impatient, hot-blooded, unbalanced, injured in their interests and feelings, are turning their thoughts in the direction of terrorist revenge. ... Although completely impotent to solve the problems which it sets itself, this individual terror has nevertheless an extremely important symptomatic significance. It characterises the sharp contradiction between the bureaucracy and the broad masses of the people!"

I think that sums up Trotsky's line on bureaucracy...

6. Conclusion

We have looked at the intense struggle that was waged in the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin against bureaucracy, and we have seen that significant successes were gained in this struggle. You could very easily argue that the very survival of the revolution, and the defeat of Nazi Germany in the world war, would not have been possible had it not been for the fight waged against bureaucracy. On the other hand, some may argue that the fight against bureaucracy was too harsh, too intense; that there was no need to impinge on the individual freedoms so much as for them to be constantly 'checked'; that the organisations did not need to be frequently 'cleansed'; that cultural revolution was not really necessary; that red tape and corruption would naturally die out in the due course of time; that such levels of discipline in the party were not called for; that the real danger was much smaller than the estimated danger.

History shows us that this reasoning, whatever its intention, is flawed. This is exactly the line taken by Khrushchev - one of complacency, one of easing up on checks and inspections, one of a reduction in harshness. Khrushchev demagogically used the idea that classes had been abolished in the USSR, that the building of socialism was complete and that the Soviet Union could move on to building the higher stage of communism to justify his policies of collaboration, of toning down inner-party discussion, of 'individual freedoms'. With his attack on Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU(B) - which has been dealt with in other presentations to this society - Khrushchev prepared the ground for reversing the fight waged by Stalin against bureaucracy. The purged were all of a sudden rehabilitated, even such treacherous people as Tukhachevsky, whose complicity with Nazi Germany is becoming increasingly acknowledged by bourgeois historians; political education of the masses, vital for bringing the working people into the running of the country, was dumbed down and eventually done away with altogether.

Such policies led to the complete degeneration of the Party and resultingly to the Soviet Union as a whole. Thirty-five years later the Soviet Union ceased to exist, and looking at the situation today in the territories that used to make up the Soviet Union, you can't help but draw the conclusion that the vehement, unwavering fight against bureaucracy and against the enemies of the people was crucial to the survival of socialism in the Soviet Union and should never have been done away with. Our lesson is that until socialism has a world-wide grip, until capital becomes an insignificant force in the world, the relentless struggle against bureaucracy is imperative.

