

ABSTRACT

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WORLD WAR II, NEW COMMUNISTS, AND
PERSISTENT DILEMMAS OF THE SOVIET
PARTY-STATE, 1941-1953

Daniel Stotland, Ph. D., 2010

Directed By: Professor Michael David-Fox, Department of
History

The decision-making paradigm of the Soviet party-state was defined by the persistent shortage of qualified manpower that afflicted the Russian elite. The traditional Russian problems of under administration, combined with the unique features of the Soviet political system, resulted in a dichotomy between practical and ideological demands. The era of WWII provides a microcosm of pressures facing the Kremlin and illustrates the cyclical nature of policy formation forced on it by the paradoxes of the system.

As the party's responsibilities expanded into specialized economic and military areas, political experts increasingly depended on the specialized professionals. These trends grew increased drastically during the war. An unexpected consequence of the party's expansion into economic or military professions was the discovery that co-optation worked both ways and many party members become managers rather than ideological overseers. Throughout the existential crisis of the system - the war and its

aftermath - the party would find itself in a fundamental conflict over its identity, challenged over its role both vis-a-vis the state and its own priorities.

After an abortive attempt by Zhdanov to reverse the wartime trends, a new paradigm was articulated by the party during the last five years of Stalin's reign. This resulted in the emergence of a new elite consensus which envisioned the party as integral and invasive economic actor. This shift in the party's identity was the price of maintaining centralized political power and came at the expense of the focus on ideological purity.

In the long term, however, the diminished role of ideology robbed the party of its core value system and steadily eroded its legitimizing and self-energizing power. Over time, the new consensus would undermine the very foundations of the party-state construct. Yet if the USSR was to survive as a modern, industrialized state, the accommodation with the technocrats was necessary. The contradiction between ideological and pragmatic aims was inherent to the system, and demanded an eventual choice between the long-term health of the state and that of the party.

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DILEMMAS OF THE SOVIET PARTY-STATE, 1941-1953

By

Daniel Stotland

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Advisory Committee:
Professor Michael David-Fox, Chair
Professor Mikhail Dolbilov
Professor John Lampe
Professor Eric Lohr
Professor Vladimir Tismăneanu

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Introduction

Thesis and Summary

This dissertation will explore the evolution of the Communist Party through the years of the Second World War and the end of Stalin's reign. It will show that, at its core, the party's policies have stemmed from the necessity of solving a dual problem that afflicted the Russian Imperial state and continued to persist beyond the cataclysm of 1917. Specifically, the state grappled with the enduring dilemma of an acute shortage of qualified personnel and the poor state of communication and infrastructure combined with "enormous expanses of impassable terrain, the sparseness of settlement, the absence of major urban centers, and the attendant links among them."¹

The same limitations and peculiar aspects of the Russian polity continued into the era of the Soviet regimes and provided a framework for a number of far-reaching processes: influx of the ideologically untested members into the party, concurrent purges, the germination of rivalry between state and party institutions, the necessity of relying on the autonomy of local decision makers while maintaining the appearance of complete centralization, and the tendency to ignore institutional integrity in favor of ad hoc solutions and personalized loyalty. These issues would hardly be unfamiliar to the Imperial policy makers.² Much of this confusion was underwritten by the fundamental

¹ Edwards L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," *Russian Review* 45, no. 2 (1986): 129.

² Elise Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 38–41, 169–70.

problem of a steady intrusion of party into the area of direct administration and a steady move away from a more removed role of ideological oversight.

This situation severely inhibited the command and control capabilities of the central organs over the periphery and, to a lesser extent, had a similar effect on the hierarchy of the party organs in the locales themselves. The problem had been compounded by the Revolution, the Terror, and, later, by World War II, forcing the party into various compromises that mirrored similar attempts by the Imperial state to square the circle. The continuity of the party's core problem forced repeated attempts of solutions similar to those tried by the tsars and grand princes, even as the peculiarities of the new order demanded new modifications to old approaches.

The Soviet state presented a paradoxical combination of what some scholars see as "archaized" features of the traditional society (such as patron-client networks and personalized power structures) with the governing apparatus and ideology that legitimized itself through an unambiguous claim to being Russia's path to modernity. Nor was the claim wholly specious, of course. The Soviet regime relied on a slew of the tools of the modern state, becoming remarkably proficient in mass mobilization techniques, evolving a comprehensive welfare society, utilizing a full spectrum of tools for social engineering and political control.³

In light of such a seemingly contradictory nature of the construct that comprised the Soviet society and the importance of the interaction between the traditional and modern facets of the structure, it would thus be futile to attempt to understand the processes of the Soviet experiment without engaging its historical predecessors. The first

³ Michael David-Fox, "Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55, no. 4 (2006): 538-542.

chapter of this dissertation traces the evolution of the problem of chronic underadministration and the solution adopted by the central administration of the realm. Seen as the only social stratum capable of providing the service class needed to staff the machine of the state and administer the provinces, Moscow essentially outsourced the expenses of education and inculcation of the administrative elite to the gentry.⁴ The structure of indoctrination improvised by the Russian service elite, however, relied of necessity on the system of its own rules, kin, and connections. This, in turn, increased the influence of the informal patronage networks and strengthened the personalized system of running the state. These patron-client networks developed both horizontally and vertically, connecting the center to periphery in ways that allowed for mobilization of local resources with a minimum of central effort.⁵

Yet, the downside of such a structure included the enduring tension between the need of the modernizing state to develop a professionalized bureaucracy and the instinct of the service elite for self-preservation. The connected contradiction within the structure was the unstable nature of the compromise with the attendant tendency for the provincial administrators to seek greater autonomy and for the central administration to search for a way to restore and increase its control.

The state remained shackled to a symbiotic relationship with the gentry, heavily dependent on it to supply the administrative class. The dearth of the managerial class and the autocracy's dependence on the gentry in supplying such a cadre was parlayed by the latter into a variety of privileges—such as toleration of corruption, or increasing power over the peasants. While the aristocracy also needed the monarchy as the ultimate marker

⁴ Donald Ostrowski, "The Facade of Legitimacy: Exchange of Power and Authority in Early Modern Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 3, (2002), 542.

⁵ Alfred J. Rieber, "Bureaucratic Politics in Imperial Russia," *Social Science History* 2, no. 4 (1978): 405.

of systemic stability, the state had few venues to respond to the persistent search for autonomy by the local administrators apart from the mutually suicidal response of the last resort. The widespread purge of the gentry—such as the *Oprichnina* episode under Ivan IV—was effective in restoring central control for a while, yet in the long term simply exacerbated the fundamental problem of lacking adequate numbers for the administrative cadre.⁶

It also provides a context for the impact of the changing political environment on these persistent factors of Russian history. The bedrock of the strategy evolved by the Grand Princes of Moscow and the imperial bureaucracy consisted of reaching a compromise with the gentry and creation of the service state. Yet the substance of the political system, personal role of the ruler, and social circumstances inevitably differentiated the various phases of the relationship between the regime and the elite. In this respect the overarching thesis of this work is at odds with the overtly deterministic structure presented by Richard Hellie in “The Structure of Modern Russian History: Toward a Dynamic Model.” Hellie posited that three service class revolutions of the Muscovite, Imperial, and Soviet period occurred in an environment defined by essential similarities of the hyperdeveloped state, suppressed individualism, the legitimizing ideologies and the role of violence. Ivan III, Peter I, and V. I. Lenin are thus seen not as representatives of the “eras remarkably different from each another, but rather are readjustments and transition points in a common, continuous historical development.”⁷ Although the historical evolution of Russian society was framed by the enduring factors

⁶ B. N. Shaptalov, *Rossiia v poiskakh effektivnosti* (Moscow, 2003), 106.

⁷ Richard Hellie, “The Structure of Modern Russian History: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Russian History* 4, no. 1 (1977): 22.

that elicited a range of similar responses from the successive governing regimes, there were significant differences as well.

As one commentator remarked, Hellie's rubric leaves many questions unanswered.

"Should three "service classes" be subsumed under the same category, simply because they received their commands and support from the state? The middle service class of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a warrior class supported largely by conditional land grants. The *dvorianstvo* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a propertied class with rudimentary personal rights, whose ethos by the middle of the nineteenth century was no longer a simply service ethos. The political and managerial leadership of the Soviet Union serve as technocrats and bureaucrats working to advance an industrial state. . . . A more thorough development of Hellie's sociological analysis of the three elites would be a valuable contribution to our understanding of Russian social change and institutions."⁸

The continuity of the historical process is an important factor within the framework of understanding the Soviet Russia, yet it would be perilous indeed to ignore the very real differences prompted by the divergent social, cultural, and intellectual environments that defined each phase of the continuum. The preceding eras, of course, influenced the conditions that would come after, yet the systems were not identical, nor was the later regime a predetermined tragedy, as Hellie contends.

Pre-Petrine Russia was thus, for example, much more dependent on the compromise between the service gentry and the tsars, while the post-reform state—while still dealing with a flawed system and handicapped by its traditional defects — made

⁸ Richard Wortman, "Remarks on the Service State Interpretation," *Russian History* 4, no. 1 (1977): 40-41.

considerable progress toward resolving them. Much as the service elite resists easy generalization, so did the concept of the state also changed over time, adapting (and influencing) the evolution of Russian political structure. As the Muscovy began to organize itself as a political entity, it was inevitable that an administrative apparatus centered on the dynasty and concerned with foreign policy of the country as well as the internal affairs would emerge. Yet the personalized nature of the power-relationships of the governing class could not help but define the character of the central organs. Thus the weakness of the institutional structure forced the pre-Petrine monarchy to structure the 'state' as simply another patron-client network, organized primarily around personal loyalty centered on the personage of a Tsar. Essentially, much as was the case in Europe, the early state was simply an expanded version of the royal household.⁹

Yet belying simple categorization, the Muscovite apparatus also contained the elements of bureaucratization that co-existed with the patriarchal, traditional system of power.¹⁰ That tendency steadily increased as the monarchy increasingly turned toward the West and began importing foreign experts and their ideas – this trend was especially visible in the military reforms undertaken by the monarchy.¹¹ Peter's "revolution" was, in that respect, a continuation of a certain trends already present within the Russian approach to governance. Yet, as was true for his predecessors, he too lacked the sufficient resources (specifically the social reserve capable of staffing the cameralist bureaucracy of his dreams) to fully professionalize the apparatus. Moreover, the very nature of the

⁹ Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russian and the Russians: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 88.

¹⁰ Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 92; Jarmo Kotilaine and Marchall Poe, eds., *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (London: Routledge, 2004), 57, 78.

¹¹ Paul Dukes, *The Making of Russian Absolutism, 1613-1801* (London: Longman, 1990), 48.

reforms from above, as Alfred Rieber ably argued, forced Peter and his successors to rely on the personalized, autocratic methods of rule that weakened the very drive for professionalization and rationalism that they pursued.¹²

As Marc Raeff and Hughes both point out, in his attempts to implement the reforms he was beset by lack of qualified personnel forcing to rely on a coterie of similar-thinking individuals with personal loyalty to Peter rather than the system.¹³ Thus, in effect, contributing to the continuation of the personalized rather than professional system of patronage that pervaded the Russian system and against which his reforms were aimed. Peter's tendency to breach self-imposed limitations on his authority, i.e. detracting from the power of the Senate matters by taking direct control over matters he considered most important, also contributed to what Marshall Poe refers to as the Krizhanich paradox (named after Iurii Krizhanich, a 17th century political theorist) - in order to 'catch the West' Russia had to limit autocracy and institute a rule based on law and yet if the necessary reforms were to be instituted the autocracy had to break the conservative trends and thus remained uncurtailed.¹⁴ The autocrat was unwilling to accept any threats to his authority - thus the reforms remained incomplete, albeit far-reaching.

As the result the two tendencies (personalized and bureaucratized approaches to governance) continued to coexist within the Russian system, competing and complementing each other at various junctures.¹⁵ The tension was exhibited with

¹² Alfred J. Rieber. "The Reforming Tradition in Russian History," in Alfred J. Rieber and Alvin Z. Rubinstein, eds., *Perestroika at the Crossroads* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 3-28.

¹³ Marc Raeff, *Understanding Imperial Russia: State and Society in the Old Regime* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1984), 65; Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), 113.

¹⁴ Marshall T. Poe, "'A People Born to Slavery': Russian in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748 (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 188.

¹⁵ Richard G. Robbins, Jr., "The Limits of Professionalization: Russian Governors at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," in *Russia's Missing Middle Class: The Professions in Russian History*, ed. Harley D.

increasing clarity as the value of one's pedigree was increasingly challenged by the emerging meritocratic principles. The uneasy relationship between Russian nobles, foreign mercenaries and the crown reflected the changing paradigm.¹⁶ The same issue would arise in a more articulated (and consequential) form in the closing decades of the 19th century as the gentry locked horns with the Imperial bureaucracy.¹⁷

Yet the situation was hardly unique, resembling the modernization dilemma that faced most of the European states throughout their periods of transition. Most such processes resulted in the eventual growth and strengthening of the professionalized bureaucracy that would eventually subsume the traditional patterns of elite association. Similarly, the Russian state also appeared well on its way toward solving the dilemma by the 19th century. The foundation established by Peter's reforms was steadily elaborated upon by his successors and, especially in the wake of the Great Reforms, was beginning to bear fruit.¹⁸

The advent of the October Revolution, however, proved to be a decisively far-reaching redefinition of the extant socio-political structure. The problems of evolving the social stratum necessary to staff the modern state were substantially exacerbated by the demands that the new political "ideocracy" placed on society. This new factor was largely unprecedented, its reach and impact on the socio-political dynamic defying easy parallels with traditional patterns of Russian history. Thus, for example, although the tension between the meritocracy and genealogy can be seen as one of the precursors for

Balzer (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 251-252; M. D. Dolbilov, "Rozhdenie imperatorskikh reshenii: monarch, sovetnik i 'vysochaishaia volia' v Rossii XIX v.," in *Istoricheskie zapiski* ed. B. V. Anan'ich (Moscow, 2006), 5-48.

¹⁶ Brenda Meehan-Waters, *Autocracy and Aristocracy: The Russian Service Elite of 1730* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 9-10.

¹⁷ Roberta T. Manning, *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 43-44.

¹⁸ Malia, 59.

the Pragmatist/Ideologue dynamic, it would be dangerous to draw deeper parallels between the two.

The new Soviet service elite was not simply subject to the dual burden of proving its proficiency in strictly professional capacity, but was also obligated to study and internalize ideological creed of the party-state. As the numbers of the necessary cadre remained limited this increase in educational range inevitably forced compromises and prioritization. Furthermore, the party-state was made unique by its thoroughly modernist aspirations; modernity, at least, the way it was understood by the party. And the guiding feature of that vision was an ever-increasing reach of the state and its control over every scope of social system. The Soviet Project, based on the commitment to planned economy, created unprecedented additional pressure on the state and bureaucracy in the Soviet period, requiring placement of dramatic burdens on the service elite. The goal of the egalitarian, communal, socialist society was thus ever another engine exacerbating and redefining the perennial Russian dilemmas, while delimiting the range of options available for their resolution.

Thus the cyclical nature of this dialogue between the center and the periphery (and between the state and the service class) was reinforced by the emergence of the Communist Party-State. The Revolution exacerbated the shortage of qualified personnel by doubling the educational burden of the administrative elite. Technical expertise was no longer sufficient without equal proficiency in the ideological tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

The old problems of the Imperial state would be recast within the conflict between the party factions of the Reds and the Experts. The Soviet apparatus would

continually vacillate between gravitating toward the pragmatic route of cultivating technical expertise and devolving local autonomy onto the provincial party bosses and the alternative route of insisting on the primacy of ideology and usually attendant uncompromising central control. This problem would grow with time as the party steadily changed its demographic composition and lost its quest to maintain its proletarian identity. The influx of the white collar professionals (the new stratum providing the administrative expertise) redefined the identity of the party, as the new members engaged in a dialogue with the center that paralleled that of the gentry and the Imperial state.¹⁹

The state would also retain the fundamental range of responses to the dilemma developed by the tsarist state. These ranged from accommodation with the social stratum capable of producing the service elite with privileges/autonomy traded for the provision of educated cadres, the attempts to enlarge it and thus dilute its power, and periodic resorts to outright violence against it in order to maintain control. The cyclicity of essentially the same initiatives being applied, discarded, and applied again—as the party-state grappled with the fundamental flaws in the system—would continue throughout the first decades of the USSR. This tendency would be tremendously exacerbated by the unprecedented stress of World War II.

The second chapter engages a rather paradoxically overlooked period in the history of the Soviet Communist Party. The first two years of the Great Patriotic War created a dual effect that incentivized the militarization of the party and the renewed focus on pragmatic results. Despite its cataclysmic nature, the war did not produce a

¹⁹ Vera S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 4.

fundamentally new situation, yet the scale of the events strengthened a number of trends already extant within the structure.

Many of these events occurred within the relatively short period from 1941 to 1942.²⁰ The magnitude of losses on the battlefield combined with the ironic efficiency of the party's system of mobilizing its civilian cadres for frontline service resulted in the practical destruction of the prewar political class. The replacements would be drawn with much less oversight and ideological review. Concurrently the center was forced to indulge the provincial party organizations in increased autonomy in return for the practical economic results.²¹

Yet, as was the case during the previous cycles, the pendulum had to swing back eventually. The Communist Party leadership remained aware that the fundamental root of their legitimacy (and self-identity) drew its strength from its role as the guarantor and guardian of the theoretical purity—both of itself and of the society as the whole. The third chapter examines the pivotal year of the war. During 1943—as the existential threat that the German onslaught presented to the Soviet system began to recede—the center instituted a shift in policy.²²

Throughout the year, as the battlefield successes steadily buttressed the confidence of the regime, the party began to reorient itself toward the prewar goal of an elite body of ideological experts. The wartime relaxations in the admission protocols were quickly revoked and the primacy of Marxism-Leninism as the necessary

²⁰ N. A. Kirsanov, *Partiinye mobilizatsii na front v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1970), 58–59.

²¹ G. V. Eliseev, *Prifrontavaia Kandalaksha: vospominaniia sekretaria gorkoma partii* (Murmansk: Murmanskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo, 1985), 67.

²² Bruce Franklin, ed., *The Essential Stalin: Major Theoretical Writings, 1905–52* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 394–98.

precondition for practical success was reinforced. The reforms entailed a substantial revision of the party structure of the civilian political apparatus as well as the careful re-establishment of the authority and prestige of the party over the experts of the officer corps within the military.

The growth of the army, however, necessitated a continuing transfer of the Communist cadres into the army ranks. This process both exacerbated the shortage of the qualified administrative personnel within the unoccupied/liberated territories and created a situation where more than half of the party members were under arms.²³ The impact of having the new generation of Communists being inducted and indoctrinated within the wartime condition and under military discipline would transcend the conflict and define the character of the party for a generation to come.

The fourth chapter examines the closing years of the war and the immediate postwar situation, tracing the continuing efforts of the center to “re-Bolshevize” the party. This effort—combined with a receding threat—provoked an escalation of the factional rivalry between the pragmatists/technocrats of G. M. Malenkov’s wing of the party and A. A. Zhdanov’s ideologues (the essence of that division forming a vital part of this dissertation in and of itself and addressed throughout). The closing of the decade was characterized by yet another turn of the wheel, a seeming repetition of the traditional pattern as the ideologues achieved the paramount position within the party policy setting organs. The pragmatists appeared to have lost the pre-eminent position they enjoyed throughout the war and the party undertook a concerted effort to implement a wide-

²³ I. P. Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskoï armii i flote* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, 1964), 393.

ranging slate of reforms outlined and signaled in 1943 even as it undertook the gigantic task of transferring the soldier communists into civilian life.²⁴

Yet the changes that took place during the conflict redefined the underlying fundamentals of the system. Thus Zhdanov's ambitious attempts to overhaul the political education system in synchrony with a purging of the party of the unqualified cadres and the restoration of the central control over the provincial organizations met with increasing problems.²⁵ Despite achieving control of the Kremlin, the ideologues were not able to transform that authority into a tangible rollback of the changes that occurred throughout the previous four years. The implementation of their policy repeatedly foundered on the new realities of the society and the party shaped by the wartime compromises. By the time of Zhdanov's death, the new cycle was already beginning as the technocrats under Malenkov returned to power.²⁶

The fifth chapter traces the establishment of the new equilibrium achieved in the last four years of Stalin's rule. By examining the return of Malenkov to power it is possible to deconstruct the new compromise negotiated between the party and the technocrats. On the one hand, the change in leadership was inaugurated by a campaign of terror with the Leningrad and Gosplan Affairs underwriting a thorough purge of the Zhdanovite cohorts from many of the leadership positions.²⁷ On the other hand the pragmatist faction found that although substantially weakened, the ideologues remained

²⁴ Mark Edele, *A "Generation of Victors?": Soviet Second World War Veterans From Demobilization to Organization 1941–1956* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004), 108–10.

²⁵ Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896–1948* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 340–41.

²⁶ Robert Conquest, *Power and Policy in the USSR: The Struggle for Stalin's Succession 1945–1960* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), 93.

²⁷ V. E. Demidov and V. A. Kutuzov, *Leningradskoe delo* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1990), 60–61.

an integral part of the party-state's philosophical and political array.²⁸ The new balance was built on the recognition of common ground between the two wings of the party. Thus the pragmatists were no less interested than their rivals in maintaining the centralized political authority over the periphery.²⁹ Yet, in the wake of the failure of the Zhdanovite reforms and the purges, the ideologues were—under Khrushchev's leadership—forced to concede ground to the technocrats, the managers, and the white collar professionals.³⁰

The latter were assured of their place as the partners of the party within the ruling elite rather than barely trusted servants. The new equilibrium was elaborated and codified by the Nineteenth Party Congress, held in 1952.³¹ The balance remained uneasy and fragile, and the system would continue to be characterized by the traditional cycles of Red-Expert struggle.³² Yet the events of the war strengthened the impetus inherent in the structure moving it off the dead center and beginning the steady process of hollowing out the ideological foundation of the party-state.

Ideologues and Pragmatists

Examination of the party's attempts to adapt to the changing environment of the conflict and the first postwar decade inevitably make central the so-called Reds vs. Experts dichotomy. With its roots in the turbulent decade of the 1920s, the process originated with the attempts by the party to reach an accommodation with the necessary

²⁸ Dmitrii Shepilov, *The Kremlin's Scholar: A Memoir of Soviet Politics under Stalin and Khrushchev* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 196–97.

²⁹ Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 144.

³⁰ John Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1961), 230.

³¹ Uri Ra'anani, ed., *Flawed Succession: Russia's Power Transfer Crises* (New York: Lexington Books, 2006), 12.

³² Carl A. Linden, *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 222–23.

but distrusted nonparty experts. The Soviet state undertook a number of initiatives as they tried to enlarge the pool of recruits through wide-scale promotion of *vydvizhentsy* and various ideologically-tested experts, be they Red Directors or Red Professors. Yet these policies were soon demonstrated as inadequate, necessitating a series of compromises—the first thaw articulated during NEP (New Economic Policy), then again in the wake of the Great Break. The latter, starting with the Shakhty Trial of 1928, encapsulating one of the earliest moments of triumph of the party fundamentalists, reacting against the dilution of revolutionary purity by pragmatism and compromise. Yet, as the industrialization continued, the compromise had to be reached yet again, now primarily (although, of course, not completely) based on co-optation of the bourgeois experts into the party, as well as the formation of the “red specialists.”³³

The attempt to analyze the Soviet political landscape through the lenses of interparty division between the “true believers” committed to the dogma of the Marxist-Leninist theory and the practical results-oriented administrators has a long pedigree. The most comprehensive examination of the issue in the recent years was offered by David Priestland’s *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-War Russia*. His extrapolation traces the divisions within the party to the root cause of the original contradictions inherent in Karl Marx’s conception. The difficulty of reconciling collectivism and modernity ensured an enduring conflict between what Priestland defines as *technicists* and *the populist revivalists*.³⁴

³³ Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 13-15.

³⁴ David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-War Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37.

Within the specific context of the Russian Communists, the tension was enshrined at the very conception. The schism of the Russian Social Democrat Labor Party, precipitated by V. I. Lenin's "What Is to Be Done" essay, occurred at the Second Party Congress in 1903. The principal theoretical issue of contention was the disagreement between Lenin and Julius Martov on the issue of party composition and the admonition by Lenin that "the guardians of theoretical purity must defend the theory against the constant pressure of trade unionist practice and also against intellectual anarchy, lack of discipline, and love of pointless discussion characteristic of the intelligentsia."³⁵ Having been unsuccessful in persuading the majority of the Social Democrats of the necessity of limiting the membership to the professional revolutionaries, fully devoted to the study of Marxism and party organization, Lenin led the split that created VKP(b)—the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

Yet this purity of purpose proved unable to survive the success. In the wake of the Revolution and the Civil War, Lenin was forced to deal with the reality that his party increasingly grew more reminiscent of the concept once championed by Martov and his Mensheviks. It became impossible to keep in place the original restrictions, and the multitude of opportunists and the experts necessary for the successful management of the modern state (and its military) flooded the party.³⁶ The result was an establishment of a structural feature within the Soviet system—a recurring conflict over control of the party's agenda.

³⁵ Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 293.

³⁶ Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 213.

The fundamental disagreement between the two viewpoints—which in this dissertation are identified as the *ideologues* and the *pragmatists*—consisted of the primary focus of the members’ attention. For the ideologues, it remained paramount to make sure the Communists were engaged in a thorough program of theoretical education and familiarization with the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. For the pragmatists, the achievement of the concrete results (increasingly in the area of economics) was paramount.³⁷

These two divergent approaches to governing found their adherents within various parts of the state and party apparatus that coalesced into rival groupings. While the composition of these factions changed over time, the Soviet of People’s Commissars/Ministers, and especially the bureaucracies of heavy industry (and their leaders like G. M. Malenkov or Sergo Ordzhonikidze), could usually be relied upon to be the bastions of the pragmatists. The strongholds of the ideologues like Zhdanov or Lev Mekhlis, on the other hand, were usually specifically within the party apparatus—primarily the Agit-Prop Department or Party Control Commission.

The danger of any analysis of this issue is overemphasizing the differences between the two factions or the consistency and durability of their platforms. Despite often overt and bitter animosity between the various adherents of these blocs, the two shared a fundamental common framework of thought and philosophy. Both were committed to the success of the socialist enterprise, they simply identified different avenues of achieving it, with the pragmatists concentrating on the economic gains, while

³⁷ Werner G. Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946–1953* (London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 11–12.

the ideologues prioritized the political consciousness. Yet both agreed that “socialism was the goal, planning the method.”³⁸

The temptation to search for the “human face” of Communism, for the road not taken, has loomed large in the Soviet historiography since at least the time of Leon Trotsky’s accusation that Stalin represented a betrayal of Leninism. The same thesis has since been thoroughly examined by scholars as divergent as Isaac Deutscher in his monumental three-volume biography of Trotsky: *The Prophet Armed*, *The Prophet Unarmed*, and *The Prophet Outcast*; Stephen F. Cohen in *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938*; and Moshe Lewin in *Lenin’s Last Struggle*. Yet the engagement of the issue in this work rests on the sources that indicate a considerable (and unsurprising) kinship between the rival factional groupings within the Soviet edifice. Priestland’s work—much as Jonathan Harris in *The Split in Stalin’s Secretariat, 1939–1948*, or Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk in *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953*—ably demonstrated the competing currents of the Soviet elite.

Even accounting for the internal contradictions of the original Marxist dogma (which he groups into as many as four distinct trends), Priestland still concluded that these disagreements took place within a rather narrow rubric of an ideological construct. “Bolshevik ideology therefore, had some autonomy, and was not ultimately controlled by those who articulated it. Although Bolsheviks could manipulate its conventions . . . they had to make sure that they remained within limits and observed discursive rules. The ideology structured the political debate and regulated what could and could not be said.

³⁸ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 31.

The ideology also shaped political action. Because the Bolshevik regime derived its legitimacy from its adherence to Marxism-Leninism, Bolsheviks had to act as if they were obeying the rules. ”³⁹

Moreover, the definitions offered above address the fundamental, “normative” value systems as espoused by both groups and may create a mistaken impression of a unified phenomenon of an enduring, unchanging political agenda. Yet, of course, there existed a spectrum of views on the relevance of theory and practice within both groupings and, moreover, even the general consensus of both factions could not help but change to fit the time. Thus the pragmatists of the 1920s reflected a considerably more politicized party and society, while their nominal descendants of the 1950s were a product of a new political equilibrium and a considerably more technocratic elite. The two groups thus differed considerably, yet can be deceptively lumped under the same rubric of the “pragmatist faction.”

The theoretical foundation of the party-state comprised an internally logical, rational whole. Defining the somewhat elusive term, Michael Freeden settled on a rather elegant explanation that presents an ideology as a parameter-setting paradigm. This system, which delimits the freedom of thought and action through an application of approved concepts and language, “pronouncing not on which political values are true or false, but on which conceptual combinations are available to be applied to the understanding and shaping of the political world.”⁴⁰ As the Great Break and the Terror ran their course, the ideology defining the Bolshevik world matured enough to provide

³⁹ Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization*, 17.

⁴⁰ Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 551.

such a framework—with clearly articulated parameters—yet presenting enough inconsistencies to make the internal debates not only possible but also inevitable.

Thus, as Martin Malia's *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia* and Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism and Civilization* demonstrated, the disagreements over policy had only marginal room for growth since they were firmly bracketed by the unassailable dogmas of building a utopian state based on a non-market model.⁴¹ "The Soviet system had its deepest origins in, and drew its justification from, the moral idea of socialism as the fullness of human equality. This moral idea necessarily leads to instrumental program for the suppression of the prime sources of inequality: private property, profit, and the market, an ensemble of institutions called capitalism."⁴²

Kotkin's materials on the Industrialization also help to buttress the conceptualization of the intra-Soviet ideological divides and their often blurred lines. As he shows in the examination of the Stalin's revolution, "building socialism had come to mean not only the party's monopoly on power but the deployment of Soviet blast furnaces and rolling mills." The view of itself as the harbinger of modernity made it easy even for the ideologues to see the development of the heavy industry as a very political goal, with the factories producing not only material goods but also serving as the foundries of New Soviet Man. Kotkin is also one of the few scholars who illustrated the far-reaching proposition that throughout the first two decades of the party's rule they were still engaged in the "process of searching for socialism," engaging in a monumental

⁴¹ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 2.

⁴² Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan, 1994), 494.

quest to find the limits of their philosophical system and its application to the practice of governing.⁴³

The process of articulating the Red-Expert dichotomy coincided with, and was an integral part of, this dynamic. It was, after all, throughout the 1920s that the issue of the bourgeois specialists and non-Communist technocrats came to the fore. In an echo of the process that played out within the party-military relationship, the state had to grapple with its distrust of the nonparty technical intelligentsia and the realization that it needed their expertise.⁴⁴ The deeply flawed resolution of this dilemma first utilized the terrors of the Great Break to attempt to command into existence a replacement generation of the loyal Experts, and finally attempted an absorption of the specialists into the party.

This solution laid the foundation for the framework of the consequent conflicts over the course of the party-state's policy formation. While it removed the threat of an extra-party nexus of identity that was seen as challenging its role as the engine of modernity, it also internalized the conflict rather than resolving it, making the recurrence of the clash between the pragmatists and ideologues a feature of the regime.⁴⁵ As the "heroic age" of the party drew to a close at the end of the 1930s and its ranks were increasingly drawn from the generation that was fully formed within the Soviet system, the opportunity for any faction within the structure to offer a radically different alternative steadily diminished.⁴⁶

⁴³ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 356.

⁴⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 91–92.

⁴⁵ Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917–1941* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 97, 116.

⁴⁶ Robert G. Wesson, *Lenin's Legacy: The Story of the CPSU* (Stanford: Hoover University Press, 1978), 166.

Neil Robinson's "strategic definition" of ideology, in his groundbreaking *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System: A Critical History of Soviet Ideological Discourse*, conceptualized it primarily as a discourse, enabling a coexistence of heterogeneous beliefs within a single system. "These different beliefs are bound together into a discourse and an ideology by discursive conventions (convention in the Soviet case) which regulate them and keep all the various strands of belief . . . tied together to form an ideology rather than allowing them to develop into different ideologies."⁴⁷

Thus it would be a dangerous misunderstanding to conceptualize the pragmatists as the clique intending in any way to weaken the authority of the party or to de-Bolshevize the society in some way. The managerial caste never seriously threatened the party's position as the most powerful institution of the state, and the army never articulated a serious attempt to subvert the dictatorship of the proletariat into a military junta. Rather the conflict—after the solidification of the system throughout the 1920s—was fought over the soul of the party itself. This conflict was abetted by the fact that, despite the firmly articulated basis of the system, the party itself also prided itself on being an adaptable and flexible institution, willing and able to adjust to the changing environment—with an appropriate ideological justification, of course.⁴⁸

Yet, once again, this rivalry still played out within a rather narrow framework of shared beliefs and principles, and the instances of the same figure trending toward a specific outlook based on his position and responsibilities were hardly unknown. The career of Sergo Ordzhonikidze, for example, serves as a telling illustration of such

⁴⁷ Neil Robinson, *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System: A Critical History of Soviet Ideological Discourse* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995), 19.

⁴⁸ Terry L. Thompson, *Ideology and Policy: The Political Uses of Doctrine in the Soviet Union* (London: Westview Press, 1989), 2–3.

political evolution. As Sheila Fitzpatrick's "Ordzhonikidze's Takeover of Vesenkha: A Case Study in Soviet Bureaucratic Politics" showed, upon being installed as the head of the Supreme Council of the National Economy, Ordzhonikidze's relationship with the bourgeois specialists changed radically. From an ardent supporter of the Stalinist line on the "wreckers" he was transformed into a loyal patron of the specialists whom he now needed in order to fulfill his professional goals.⁴⁹ In his authoritative biography *In Stalin's Shadow: The Career of 'Sergo' Ordzhonikidze*, Khlevniuk concurred.

He showed that after years of engaging in active specialist-baiting fervor instigated by Stalin, "Ordzhonikidze radically altered his earlier position and called for a better thought out economic and political course." Eventually he became one of the biggest defenders of the specialists, risking even Stalin's own ire in this quest to succor them.⁵⁰ The powerful intersection of the bureaucratic pressures and patron-client politics essentially proved a potent enough force to shift Ordzhonikidze from his allegiance to the Reds to the side of the Experts. Thus the factional adherence was a mutable variable, dependent—among other factors—on one's assignment and short-term career goals.

The challenge presented by the pragmatists (or technocrats) to the ideologues was their conviction that the Bolshevik project was served better by the focus of the Communists on technical education, fulfillment of economic plans, and tangible achievements.⁵¹ This thesis was in many ways a product of the party's success in indoctrinating the society. After all, the bedrock assumption underwriting the

⁴⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ordzhonikidze's Takeover of Vesenkha: A Case Study in Soviet Bureaucratic Politics," *Soviet Studies* 37, no. 2 (April 1985): 161, 166.

⁵⁰ Oleg Khlevniuk, *In Stalin's Shadow: The Career of 'Sergo' Ordzhonikidze* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 44–46.

⁵¹ Jonathan Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat, 1939–1948* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 1–2.

technocratic agenda was that the theoretical underpinnings of the regime were strong enough to require only a minimal maintenance.

As the grip of the regime grew stronger, the party experienced steady growth—both in membership and in the range of its responsibilities. Thus in March of 1918 there were fewer than four hundred thousand Bolsheviks in the country. By the end of the 1920s the number had tripled, and then doubled again within the next few years.⁵² On the eve of the war, the party counted 3,872,465 Communists among its ranks.⁵³ Soon it found itself an all-pervasive presence, permeating the increasingly complex structure of a modern and rapidly industrializing state. The Communist now had to be a jack of all trades—ideological as well as a technical expert, capable of monitoring the political health of the nonparty elite as well as being competent enough in their professional area to guard against inefficiency or outright “wrecking.”

The rapid economic growth combined with the persistent shortage of the qualified cadres made an all-inclusive Renaissance man model of a party apparatchik unrealistic, and something had to give. The pragmatists—spurred on by the immediate pressures of industrialization and the war—preferred to limit the ideological education in favor of maintaining the professional competence of the cadres.⁵⁴ As Khlevniuk argues in *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, as early as the closing days of the first Five-Year Plan, “under the pressures created by the socioeconomic realities, pragmatic institutional interests were expressed with a candor that had been unthinkable when the country’s unquestioning ‘unified will’ had been marshaled to fulfill the ambitious plans

⁵² T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR 1917–1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 51–53.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ William O. McCagg, Jr., *Stalin Embattled, 1943–1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 91–94.

set out for the first five years.”⁵⁵ That trend would be brought short by the Terror, yet reappear anew in response to the crises of the war and eventually “a strong technocratic tendency, rooted in the desire to enhance the security and status of the country, found expression in a major rationalization and, to an extent, a delegation of powers at the Council of Ministers.”⁵⁶

With considerable justification, the ideologues viewed such a point of view as fundamentally, if not immediately, corrosive to the very foundations of the Soviet system. From their perspective, the path to modernity and the general success of the Soviet project was rooted essentially in clear understanding of the Marxist theory, that blueprint to history.⁵⁷ Without it, as Stalin himself would put in one of his speeches, any materialist, economic, or industrial successes would be equivalent to castles built on sand—ephemeral, lacking foundation, and ultimately doomed to failure.⁵⁸ Pointing to the fact that “our Party functionaries are overburdened with purely practical work, which deprives them of the opportunity of augmenting their theoretical knowledge,” the Vozhd cautioned that relaxation in political education left the party open to subversion and deviation.⁵⁹

Moreover, in purely practical terms, over the long term, the pragmatist agenda undermined the essential legitimacy of the party-state. The ideologues internalized the role of the party as the guarantor, keeper, and protector of ideological purity in the Russian society they considered to be backwards and sorely in need of guidance by the

⁵⁵ Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 253.

⁵⁶ Yoram Grlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12.

⁵⁷ McCagg, 99–102.

⁵⁸ “Spravka,” PAKO (1945) f.147, op.3, d.2009, l.52.

⁵⁹ V. I. Stalin, “Report to the 17th Congress,” in *The Essential Stalin*, ed. Bruce Franklin (London: Groom Helm, 2006), 276.

“vanguard of the proletariat.” Detraction from the focus of the cadres on the party-political education thus threatened the very identity of the party. By concentrating on professional education, the party members threatened self-marginalization as they became co-opted by the various spheres of the economic and military life they were meant to control and balance out.

Yet the key flaw of the system was that the pragmatism agenda was founded on a logic that was as correct as that of their opponents. The Soviet state needed practical benefits that came from their efforts in order to survive, much less flourish as a modern society. The eras when the ideologues achieved primacy, on the other hand, were usually characterized by destruction of human capital and waste of the material resources on a vast scale—be it the Great Break or the Great Terror. The cyclicity of the system was a corollary to the fact that the health of the state and the health of the party did not always coincide and, in fact, in the long run were inimical to each other. Yet the elite of the party-state, even the pragmatists, was the product of the same ideological value system that precluded them from acting upon or perhaps even simply internalizing this idea.

Thus even as both factions engaged in the attempt to define the core values of the party, they maintained considerable and continuous commonality. Apart from the same fundamental worldview and the foundational precepts of the Soviet experiment, they also employed a shared vocabulary—the famous “Bolshevik speak.”⁶⁰ They were also constrained by the capabilities of the state and of the Kremlin and were often forced into reliance on the same policies and tools in order to achieve their goals. Thus, for example, both sides would periodically reach out to the grassroots—ironically utilizing identical

⁶⁰ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 198–99.

rhetoric and institutions meant to mobilize the rank and file against a certain portion of the elite.

Yet much of the decisive debate and the formation of policy still took place among the upper crust of the party. By the 1940s, this stratum had achieved a certain uniformity of background, shared experiences, and educational levels. And within the Djilas's new class, the authority had to be carefully negotiated, reflecting the uncertainty of the party as a whole. Thus Malenkov, even at the height of his position as the leader of the technocrats, utilized the forms and discourse of the party struggle, ideological necessities, and Marxist imperatives. Conversely, Zhdanov could not derive his legitimacy solely from his reputation as the theoretical purist.

Demonstrated incompetence or the inability to deliver practical results saw Zhdanov's career plummet on the very eve of the war. Similar misfortunes befell other ideologues like Mekhlis. Stature within the elite had to be carefully negotiated and was reliant on overlapping spheres of competence and shared points of reference that spanned theoretical and practical expertise. As Priestland pointed out, while "Marxism-Leninism was not the only discourse of importance . . . its status within the political system as the only legitimate discourse ensured that it had a special influence. . . . Yet ideology, of course, was not the only such force; it interacted with other structural factors, including exigencies of economic development and state-building."⁶¹

Commissars and Colonels

The depth of the scholarship devoted to the political-military dynamic makes it all the more puzzling that there is a surprising dearth of works examining how this

⁶¹ Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization*, 17.

relationship evolved (or devolved) throughout the years of the Great Patriotic War. The majority of Western scholarship tends to take a broad view, attempting to trace the relationship between the party and the military from the inception of the Red Army to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in some cases beyond. Soviet sources are more likely to focus specifically on the war, but suffer from the familiar drawbacks of repetitious sloganeering, combined with useful but often suspect and usually undifferentiated statistics. Most of the pre-perestroika books still remain highly dependant on Iu. P. Petrov's seminal treatise on the political work in the army.⁶²

It is also notable that, in the West, this field of study has also not progressed far beyond the theses articulated by the influential scholars of the 1970s. The discussion remains dominated by the works of Roman Kolkowicz, William Odom, and Timothy J. Colton. Kolkowicz, a pioneer of the field, in his book *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, envisioned the Soviet military as a self-aware corporation with a strong sense of identity, which stood apart from the model offered by the Communist ideology. Using the enduring dichotomy of expertise and ideology, Kolkowicz postulated a constant and bitter conflict between the party and the army.

The severity of this conflict, according to his conceptualization, began to increase progressively as the military professionalized and developed a self-sufficient bureaucratic structure and hierarchy. Such evolution was an anathema to the Communist apparatus. The latter feared the incipient Bonapartism and regarded atomization of any potentially rival center of social and political organization as essential for its own safety.⁶³ As the

⁶² Iu. P. Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskoi armii i flote* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatelstvo Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, 1964).

⁶³ Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 12.

party increased its attempts to penetrate and control the military, the military fought back in defense of its autonomy. Kolkowicz went so far as to state that there is a fundamental incompatibility between “the sole holder of power in the state and one of the main instruments of that power” and the relationship between the two is “essentially conflict prone and thus presents a perennial threat to the political stability of the Soviet state.”⁶⁴ Only the permanent presence of the political watchdogs prevented a direct military intervention.⁶⁵

The weakness of Kolkowicz’s model stemmed from the fact that the bulk of his analysis is based specifically the decade following Stalin’s death. Published in 1967 and based primarily on the examination of the Soviet politics in that tumultuous interregnum, when party, army, and the secret police all jockeyed for power, it is unsurprising that his thesis was dominated by a dynamic of conflict and control. Kolkowicz argued that while the party-state *sought* complete control over an atomized society (including the military forces), the army and other professionalized social entities presented the centers of indirect resistance to that trend. His ideas, thus, in many ways predated the arguments of revisionist historians of the 1980s, who would portray similar processes at play, albeit on a grander social scale. Kolkowicz’s thesis produced two alternative and competing models, as William Odom and Timothy J. Colton challenged his conceptualization.

William Odom’s essay, “The Party-Military Connection: A Critique,” presented a radically different view of the party-military dynamic. Completely discarding the idea of the corporatist nature of the military, Odom was heavily indebted to the traditional schema of the totalitarian approach to the Soviet history. The essay argued that there

⁶⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁵ Brian D. Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148.

could be no conflict between the party and the military, since the party's control was absolute and utterly pervading. The conflict, which Odom concedes did exist during the unsteady days of the civil war, was quickly solved as the Bolsheviks "communized" the army in the late 1920s and 1930s. The party and the military coexisted within the same paradigm of congruent values, equally defined by and ultimately loyal to the system and ideology of Marxism-Leninism.⁶⁶

This, along with other trends of the 1920s, saw a change in the status of the soldiers that catapulted the army Communists into positions of power throughout the apparatus. "By the end of the 1920s those bureaucracies, from the Politburo to rural cells, were populated by hundreds of thousands of men who had undergone a common experience of military service. Increasingly large numbers performed their service obligations in the peacetime army after 1921. Army service became one of the passports to important posts in the post revolutionary political class."⁶⁷

Thus, the military and the party apparatus effectively merged, the army in fact becoming a tool for educating the population and "turning peasants into Communists."

Odom, likewise, conceptualized the officer cadre as little different from the party apparatchiks, casting them simply as a different administrative arm of the same political organization, with little say about policy, the "executants."⁶⁸ The officers, in this view, had as much, if not more, in common with the *raikom* secretaries as they did with their fellow members of the military elite. As Odom argued, the policy debates would have seen the officer cadre split among the broader party factions, rather than constituting a

⁶⁶ William E. Odom, "The Party-Military Connection, A Critique," in *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, eds., Herspring and Volgyes (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978) 42, 48.

⁶⁷ Mark Von Hagen, "Civil-Military Relations and the Evolution of the Soviet Socialist State," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 269.

⁶⁸ Odom, "The Party-Military Connection," 44.

separate political bulwark. The military professionals thus comprised simply another “administrative arm of the party, not something separate from and competing with it.”⁶⁹

Timothy Colton probably came closest to a truly synergistic approach in his analysis of the civil-military relationship in the Soviet Union. He saw the fundamental logic in the Kolkowicz approach, and agreed with considerable parts of the arguments inherent there. Most importantly, Colton saw merit in the conceptualization of the military apparatus as a corporative body, with its own unique self-interests separate from the party apparatus. As he himself put it, it is “necessary to retain a notion of civil-military boundary—a boundary that is permeable, to be sure, but that has a definite shape and location.”⁷⁰ In fact, he argued that compartmentalization of the military was one of the tactics that allowed the regime to limit the army’s involvement in the political process.⁷¹ Inevitably, however, this led to the development of corporation-specific interests and Colton supported Kolkowicz’s suggestion that the military would exert pressure on the party in order to defend and advance those interests.

He agreed with Odom, however, that Kolkowicz overstated the pervasiveness of the conflict. Colton advanced a theory, later ably expanded by Roger Reese, that the struggle that did exist centered primarily on the rather pragmatic and materialistic interests of the military personnel, in addition to their professional pride and desire to be allowed the space to perform competently.⁷² By meeting those demands and by allowing the army the marks of increased social status and better living conditions, the party was

⁶⁹ Odom, “The Party-Military Connection,” 41.

⁷⁰ Timothy J. Colton, “The Party-Military Connection: A Participatory Model,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, eds., Herspring and Volgyes (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), 73.

⁷¹ Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1979), 253.

⁷² Roger R. Reese, *Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925–1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 69.

able to keep the sociopolitical equilibrium. Less sanguine than Odom's view, Colton's model suggested that "despite practical and ideological constraints, the Soviet military has probably been capable of staging a successful intervention."⁷³ The party prevented such an occurrence by essentially buying off the army.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, just as Kolkowicz focused on the narrow sliver of the immediate post-Stalin decade, Colton overemphasized the Brezhnev era to illustrate the quiescence of the military and its connection to the fulfillment of its basic goals of status and living standards. Similarly, Odom also sought to create a unified theory of the Soviet civil-military relationship; this, of necessity, led to a certain simplification of the topic.

Such classification, foregoing the substantial variation, characterized even the overviews of the relatively short period of the Great Patriotic War, much less Stalin's entire tenure as the general secretary. The analysis of the relationship between the party apparatus and the military bureaucracy—which did comprise two distinct entities—is still needed to fill a gap in the period that is often dismissed by the historians as an ill-defined "Stalinist Era." The spectrum of policies enacted by the party throughout the war, and the reactions of the military and civilian cadre to them, highlight that the state-party and political-military dynamics were not immune to the generally cyclical nature of the regime, and depended considerably on the specific context and the situation.

Unlike the above theses, this work does not engage in the ambitious scope of generalizing the army-party dynamic, nor seek to present the era under discussion as an illustration of a universal trend. It is rather an attempt to bring together disparate trends of the existing research and the new material, recently made available by the Russian

⁷³ Colton, *Commissars*, 257.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

archives. It would demonstrate that the dynamic of accommodation and confrontation between the party and military elites was not a static, stable system but one of constant renegotiation and mutability, highly dependent on the changing circumstances. The same argument applies to the study of the Soviet elite as a whole during this period, as it changed in composition and, consequently, in outlook.

Colton's thesis, although presenting an invaluable attempt at bridging pre-existing models of the scholarship, radically overestimates the materialistic facet of the party-military relationship and undervalues the fact that the military caste was steadily becoming a product of the Soviet ideological system, imbued with the same fundamental values. This made their challenges to the regime (such as they were) a product of the approved avenues of protest and resistance—a fact overlooked by much of the existing scholarship, including the school of thought encapsulated by Kolkowicz.

Conversely, however, this work also aims to counterbalance the attempts of historians like Odom and Von Hagen who downplayed the precarious equilibrium between the party and the army and a very real challenge the latter presented to the identity of the former. As this dissertation will show, it was less the danger of coup d'état or a junta that worried the Kremlin but rather the steady lure of the ethos of the military elite and the danger of co-optation of the political cadre into the latter. Furthermore, this work will demonstrate how the rivalry of the pragmatists and the ideologues, and the cyclical pattern of policy-making it engendered, played out in the framework of shortages of the qualified personnel. It will examine how it affected the party-military dynamic—sometimes echoing the processes defining the civilian apparatus, sometimes presenting uniquely specialized challenges. Much like the process of the broader elite

formation, however, it remained in constant flux—bounded by enduring continuities (ideological and material), yet consistently adapting to the changing demographic, political, and social environment of the Soviet state.

The Rearguard: Civilian Party Apparatus

The historiography of the party-political structure during the war presents a similar problem to the one defining the scholarship of the civil-military dynamic. In fact, the range of works dealing with this field is even narrower—at least among Western historians. Even as their works inevitably continued to be dominated by the iron scriptures of the regime’s ideological demands, a number of Soviet historians made invaluable contributions to our understanding of the Soviet system’s performance under, and adjustment to, its ultimate challenge to date.

Buttressed by a strong foundation of the extensive, if not always meticulously accurate, party records and substantial memoir literature penned by the contemporary apparatchiks, a number of Soviet historians delved deeply into the investigation of the wartime relationship between the regime, the state, and the society. A number of such scholars contributed to building a substantial body of scholarship on the basis of the primary sources made available to them.⁷⁵

Unfortunately, here too, much of the important work was done nearly forty years ago and has somewhat stalled since then. The situation is complicated still farther by the fact that the Russian community of historians has had very little in the way of

⁷⁵ M. I. Likhomanov’s *Khozaistvenno-organizatorskaia rabota partii v derevne v pervyi period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1975); I. I. Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS i sovkhozov v gody velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941–1943)* (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1976); V. S. Murmantseva, *Sovetskie zhenshchiny v Velikoi Otechstvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Mysl’, 1974).

interlocutors, successors, or even opponents in the West. Beyond the borders of the Warsaw Pact, the topic of the Soviet home front and the interaction of the wartime ideological and practical trends behind the frontlines remained unaccountably underappreciated. There are, of course, notable exceptions—such as the seminal work by John Barber and Mark Harrison. The thesis of party resorting to an uneasy mix of central control and local autonomy, presented in their *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II*, continues to define the discourse.⁷⁶

Overall, however, the field is divided into two somewhat flawed approaches to the study of the wartime USSR party-civilian relations. One, similar to the defining works of the civil-military dynamic, attempts a comprehensive overview of the party's history from its inception to its demise. Often such doyens of Sovietology as John Armstrong and Leonard Schapiro present an impressively astute grasp of the various factors influencing Kremlin's policy—thus Armstrong, working with rather meager access to the archives, very early pointed to the depoliticizing effect that the war had on the party as “in the first years of war, at least, there seems to have been a tendency for the Party organizations to confine themselves to the secondary tasks.”⁷⁷ Necessarily, however, works of such ambitious scope usually devote only a chapter or two to the topic of war.

Other models strike in the opposite direction and delve deeper into the subject but (akin to the works defining the elite studies) concentrate their focus on a specific aspect of the overall matrix—be it the wartime propaganda ably explored by Richard Brody in *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front During World War II*, or

⁷⁶ John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (New York: Longman, 1991), 50.

⁷⁷ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 139.

Moscow of 1941 exhaustingly portrayed by Rodric Braithwaite's *Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War*. Both approaches cannot help but leave glaring holes in the review of the period and most fail to account for the perplexing fact that, although faced with the deep systemic shock of the invasion, the party introduced remarkably little variance into its procedural strategies.

The argument has been made, both by the defenders of the regime and some of its opponents, that it was uniquely suited for the wartime mobilization of society. In fact, such a thesis holds, it was built precisely for marshalling the masses for heroic deeds, be they of industrialization, collectivization, or war and “mobilizing large numbers of ordinary people for comparatively benign official purposes was, moreover, a normal feature of everyday life.”⁷⁸ Walter S. Dunn, in *Hitler's Nemesis: The Red Army, 1930–1945*, for example, argues that the USSR mobilized and adapted for war more efficiently than either Germany or the West, although paradoxically he finds that the Communist Party had little to do with it.⁷⁹ B. N. Shaptalov's *Rossiia v poiskakh effektivnosti*, no communist *apologia* by any means, holds the Great Patriotic War as a triumph of the party-state mechanism created by Stalin.⁸⁰

In this conceptualization, the idea that no fundamental changes to the system had to be introduced in order to cope with the burdens placed on the USSR by the war is a perfectly logical denouement of the argument that war was the ethos and singular purpose of the party, and the only thing it was good for. Thus no changes, beyond the prearranged and essentially cosmetic, were necessary or desirable. However, the available sources

⁷⁸ Rodric Braithwaite, *Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 115.

⁷⁹ Walter S. Dunn, Jr., *Hitler's Nemesis: The Red Army, 1930-1945* (London: Praeger, 1994), 49, 215.

⁸⁰ Shaptalov, *Rossiia v poiskakh effektivnosti*, 258.

indicate that the reverses of the opening stages of the war resulted in panic and an instinctual lashing out by the party.⁸¹ The remedies tried out by the Kremlin were often an illogical contradiction to the measures it adopted in response to the similar—albeit much milder—failures during the Winter War against Finland. Hardly a reaction of a mechanism responding as planned.

A New Look: The Relevance of this Work

The analysis offered in this work utilizes a synergistic framework, drawing on a combined interpretation of the above models. Despite the cyclical nature of its policies and the enduring problems that provoked it, the Soviet Union was not a perpetually stagnating, unchanging monolith and neither were the factions comprising its elites. Thus the power dynamic of the World War II era was defined primarily by the relationship between the state, party, industrial-economic complex, and the army. On the other hand, the USSR of the late 1980s cannot be examined without analyzing the influence of intelligentsia and consumers.

The Great Patriotic War and its immediate aftermath are not fundamentally superior to the many of the eras picked by previous scholars, in and of themselves. They do, however, present a largely ignored phase in the examination of the Soviet elite formation. By approaching the period of 1940–1953 as an integral historical era, it is possible to examine the factional politics and interparty discourse through a broader lens, reliant on a deeper well of evidence than a specific (and often unique) period of succession struggles or a specific crisis.

⁸¹ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 131.

That phase, despite its relatively short duration, included, in a compressed and thus more noticeable form, the recurring fluctuation of the processes that perennially roiled the Soviet political class. It is, in fact, tempting to see the war and its turning point of 1943 as the foundational marker that engendered and defined much of the postwar order. Yet the available sources would place considerable limits on such a thesis. While the war did articulate the issues that would bedevil the system for decades to come, it was not their crucible *per se*.

Instead, the framework that emerged during the war and the Reconstruction presented a continuation of the previously existing trends. These were simply made more violent and more far-reaching by the stresses of the conflict, which in itself was the biggest test of the system. Thus this period, even lacking the attraction of the foundational epoch, allows an examination of the maturation process as the institutions and factions solidified their identity formation and negotiated the political consensus that would endure until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The pressures of the last thirteen years of Stalin's rule laid bare the governing forces of the regime and their study allows for convergence of the existing themes in the elite studies of the USSR. It illustrates the interaction between institutional rivalries and the personalized client-patron factions as well as illuminating the persistent dilemmas of the system that continued to define the Soviet elite and its political formations.

The scale and the nature of the catastrophe that enveloped VKP(b) in the first years of the war was remarkably representative of the trauma experienced by the country as a whole. As such, it is all the more fascinating how little genuinely new change this shock elicited in the policies of the party. Even as it was faced with the tremendous

challenges of the German invasion, the intellectual landscape of the Communist apparatus remained extremely limited. The strategic options exercised by the leadership and, less consciously, by the rank and file, throughout the darkest time of the war show a remarkable continuity to the “heroic age.” The party would continuously return to the well, disinterring the policies already discarded as suboptimal in the previous stage, re-engaging in the cyclical nature of the decision making process that matured by the end of the 1930s—whether reinstating the commissars and the MTS (Machine Tractor Stations) political departments, before dispersing them yet again, or once again lowering the barriers to party admissions—before growing alarmed at the consequences and reimposing the limits.⁸²

Periodization and Factional Dynamic

The problem of periodization of a historical narrative has been a perpetual challenge for the students of the Soviet polity, and especially of the Communist Party as an institution. The amorphous lines of separation between the state, the society, and the party contribute heavily to the uncertainty. In this somewhat anarchic conception of the post-Revolution period there are only a few readily available markers that seem to stand out as positive symbols of historical phases. Given the tendency of the scholarship to give the war period only a very facile treatment, it is unsurprising that the end of the war presents a commonly accepted event that separates the divergent eras of sociopolitical development within the USSR.

⁸² Roger R. Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience* (London: Routledge, 2000), 101.

A close reading of the available material suggests that although globally climactic, the denouement of the Great Patriotic War was, paradoxically, a rather mundane event when viewed through the narrow prism of the Soviet internal party evolution. Seen from the perspective of the internal dynamics of the party-civilian and even party-military relations within the Soviet Union, the end of the war was much less influential than its start. It did not presage a dramatic turnaround in policy, nor did it mark either the beginning of a new cycle or the end of the old one. While the Fall of Berlin, and shortly thereafter the surrender of Japan, did produce changes in personnel policies of the party and modified some of its focus, the broad thrust of Moscow's intentions and problems remained essentially similar to the outline that had been sketched out in 1943.

It would be ludicrous, of course, to suggest that the defeat of Germany was utterly inconsequential. The issue of maintaining the proper balance between the military and the party that loomed so large for the first period of the war began to quickly recede in significance as the successive waves of the demobilization quickly reduced the twelve million strong juggernaut by an unbelievable 75 percent within a few years. The demobilization of the army meant dealing with the problems of reintegrating the returning veterans (many of them new Communists) into society and into the structure of the civilian party. Their return presented not simply a problem of finding them jobs and acculturating them into the practices of a peacetime organization,⁸³ but also represented

⁸³ From Shikinto to Patolichev: "Report," RGASPI (May 1946) f.17, op. 122, d.190, 1.90–1.94.

the danger of ideologically compromised carriers of possible contamination from the capitalist territories they recently liberated.⁸⁴

Even within the mass of society where few had exposure to the outside influences and fewer yet had actually been outside the borders of the Soviet Union, there was a palpable atmosphere of anticipation. Relaxation of the prewar and wartime strictures was expressed widely among both the elites and the masses.⁸⁵ And since the rapid influx of the new members transformed the party from a Praetorian Guard into an institution that was much closer to a genuine mass movement—similar attitudes were notable among the Communists as well.⁸⁶ For the first time in a very long time—perhaps for the first time—the party was, to an extent, representative of the country.

Furthermore a different problem re-emerged. The compromises of the war put the party into a precarious position. In the quest for efficiency, the ideological training of the members had been relaxed and the indoctrination of the citizenry neglected. The prevalent assumption held that the danger of the defeat was self-evident and people needed little ideological spurring. In the short term the gamble paid off and the USSR achieved considerable success in mobilizing the society. As the threat slackened, however, the dilemma grew—the ideological foundations of the system needed to be rebuilt if the party's role was to survive. Yet the war served as a graphic lesson that it was, in fact, possible to achieve success in production without the constant undertone of Marxist-Leninist theory. The circle would have to be squared.

⁸⁴ "Informatsiia ob oznakomlenii s pis'mom KR sekretarei partiinykh organizatsii i direktorov promyshlennykh predpriatii," RGASPI (19 July 1947) f.17, op.122, d.273, l.11–l.12.

⁸⁵ Gennadi Bordiugov, "The Popular Mood in the Unoccupied Soviet Union," in *The People's War: Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union*, eds. Robert W. Thurston and Bernd Bonwetsch (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 65, 67.

⁸⁶ From A. Aladzhadov to I. Stalin: "Pis'mo," RGASPI (27 December 1945) f.558, op.11, d.888 l.11–l.17.

These problems were not the result or the consequences of victory specifically. Rather than a defining moment, the end of the war was simply another phase of the cycle that began at Stalingrad and would unfold until Andrei Zhdanov's death in 1948. Zhdanov's demise would not simply mark a convenient moment exemplifying another turn in the Soviet policies. Rather his career track serves to illustrate the futility of the attempt to create an artificial separation between the last sixteen months of the war and the first postwar years. There has long existed a suggestion within the scholarship that the war induced a lull in the politics of the party. Roy D. Laird, in his exhaustive study of the Politburo, characteristically devoted less than five pages to the wartime political continuum, explaining that until the overwhelming and universal threat of the German onslaught had passed "clearly, understandably, all domestic internal problems were placed on hold, including contests for power at the top."⁸⁷

Demonstrating low turnover within the ranks of the Politburo, Laird extrapolated that a certain kind of truce was maintained until the fall of Berlin. This conclusion, in turn, led him toward a wider thesis about the Soviet system. "Politburo politics were suspended for the duration of the war. Thus, perhaps the most important lesson learned from the demographics of that body during the period is that however ruthless and unbending Soviet leaders may be, when faced by a common threat of catastrophic proportions, they are capable of acting in unison for the common good."⁸⁸

Laird's reasoning and assumptions underlying his conclusions present perhaps one of the more frank explanations for the practice of the Western historians of the party dynamics to excise the wartime era from their analysis. Since the politics were put on

⁸⁷ Roy D. Laird, *The Politburo: Demographic Trends, Gorbachev and the Future* (London: Westview, 1986), 56.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

hold—again picking up only in 1946—the preceding period is not so much a *terra incognita* as well-trod ground of little variety or significance. There are a number of problems with this argument, which in turn do much to invalidate the conclusion. From the narrow perspective of Politburo's roster, the thesis is valid. Yet the makeup of the august body presents a very narrow sample from which to draw a universal conclusion about the factional politics of the party.

The pressures of war did not freeze the struggle for power among the various members of the inner circle. The very nature of the factional combat changed—due to the suspension of the democratic façade of the party conferences and plenums, for example, the role of Stalin as the final arbiter of the feuds among the elite grew. On the other hand the increased delegation of authority to the regional bosses constricted the reach of Moscow and its control over the middle management. Yet even with these changes there continued to be a continuous struggle inherently tied to the cyclical nature of the policy formation. This process was inevitably accompanied by the (often dramatic) changes in the fortunes of the representatives of the competing models. The dizzying fall of the ideologues like Zhdanov and Mekhlis and the parallel rise of the technocrats like Malenkov within the first years of the war illustrated this trend with considerable clarity.

The turning point of the war in 1943 signaled the reinstitution of the more traditional vehicles of Soviet internal politics, making it substantially easier to track the interparty rivalries. Specifically it outlines the sure ascent of Zhdanov at the expense of his old rival. The conflict between Malenkov and Zhdanov that flared up again in 1944 illustrated the convoluted back and forth between the Reds and the Experts, the ideologues and the technocrats in their struggle to dominate the policy formation.

Unquestionably the struggle of the above principles was deeply influenced by those motives. The lines were hardly neat, and the easy labels like experts or technocrats are not meant to simplify the devilishly complex process of Soviet identity formation. Certainly, even the most charitable reading of Malenkov's biography would have considerable difficulty minimizing his internalization of the Marxist-Leninist ideology—whatever the strength of his support for giving the priority to the pragmatic goals of the state.

Yet one must note that although Malenkov was a faithful Communist, as were most of his factional supporters, together they presented a constituency that placed itself at odds with the Zhdanovites. Either genuine belief or opportunist instinct made Malenkov and Zhdanov visible representatives for the dominant and competing schools of thought within the party. Although the ideologues continued to steadily increase their power throughout the mid to late 1940s, this came at the expense of a grudging resistance from the technocrats. Often the strength of the faction depended on the seemingly facile fact of its leader's proximity to Moscow and thus the center of power. Yet the presence of the decisionmakers was ultimately the function of Stalin's decisions, which in turn was heavily influenced by the advice of his inner circle.

The struggle between the two factions was never fully resolved—a certain balance was always maintained. Many historians attribute this to Stalin's deliberate policy of consistently preventing a rise of a clear favorite from among his coterie who could evolve into a rival. Yet although such personalized explanations are important, overreliance on them can lead to the underestimation of the broader currents of the Soviet

politics. The two, in fact, functioned in concert and marginalizing either would distort the picture of the postwar formation of the new equilibrium.

The new cycle that began with Zhdanov's ascension in 1943 would conclude with his downfall and death in 1948. That date—along with Stalin's own demise in 1953—brackets one of the most important eras in the Soviet history, an era that saw a resolution, of sorts, of the regime's dilemmas exacerbated so dramatically by the war. Zhdanovite pre-eminence from 1943 to his death, mirrored to a certain extent the system's instinctive reaction of the first months of the war. It represented a desperate attempt by the ideologues to apply their solutions to the problems, to turn back the clock, and to strengthen the party (and the system as a whole) through purification and ideological education. The broad-based slate of reforms attempted by Zhdanov, however, stalled and failed against the newly empowered institutions and attitudes.

The inherent limits of his faction's dominance were thus seized upon by Malenkov in 1948. Armed with a mandate to succeed where Zhdanov failed, the pragmatists would accomplish one of the most far-reaching reforms of the system. Malenkov, with support from Stalin, would create a new political equilibrium that attempted to solve the enduring dilemma of the system by acknowledging the new power of the technocrats. Once again, the paradoxically close ideological worldview of the two models would be revealed as the new balance strove for many of the same goals of centralization and party control. Yet the differences would define the new paradigm as well, as the pragmatists often utilized economic rather than ideological methods of control.

The new balance would be codified during the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952 and demonstrate its durability throughout the factional struggles that followed Stalin's death and the emergence of the collective leadership of the early 1950s. Although it too failed to compensate completely for the congenital flaws of the system and thus its cyclical nature, the new paradigm significantly shifted the rhetoric and policy formation toward the views of the technocrats. This, over time, contributed heavily to the erosion of the ideological foundation of the regime.

Methodology and Sources

The work itself approaches the issue of the history of the party from several directions. In order to understand the contextual framework and the decision making paradigm that defined the period in question, it was necessary to engage the topic vis-à-vis the conventional prism of political history as well as the legal history, historical demography, and institutional history.

The institutions examined here encompass the party as a whole. Yet the task would be impossible and ill-conceived if the Communist Party was not conceptualized as a nexus of several political structures. Thus boundaries are drawn between the central organs and the provincial organizations. Furthermore a broader differentiation has to be drawn between the civilian party apparatus and that of the military forces. The political oversight over the armed forces exerted unique demands upon the party and necessitated specific channels of control and methods of organization. This produced a subculture within the broader system of the party.

The examination of the consequences of that evolution and the great extent to which the military and its demands impacted the Soviet structure throughout the period in question heavily affected the structure of the dissertation. The chapters are organized in a way as to reflect the extent to which the military-political organs inhabited a rather amorphous niche within the greater party system, engaging in constant negotiation with the center for autonomy and necessitating a specifically tailored set of management policies that paralleled those aimed at the civilian apparatus as often as they diverged.

In some ways the relationship between the military and the party, from its very inception, crystallized in a sort of microcosm the dichotomy of expertise and ideology and the compromises (or conflicts) that relationship engendered. As such, the initiatives directed at the army frequently stemmed from the same set of problems and the Kremlin often expected to solve them with the same generalized approach it applied to the civilian apparatus. Yet there were additional complications in the military-political relationship, as the army continued to present a potential focus of a rival identity. The Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, the party organization tasked specifically with overseeing and controlling the military, proved a solution that created its own problems. Rather than eradicating the specter of a rival institutional identity, the Main Political Directorate would itself come to suffer from divided loyalties, vacillating between its identity as part of the party apparatus or that of the officer corps.

Such attitudes would become significantly reinforced by the vagaries of war and, along with the increased prestige and power of the army, require certain flexibility from the central organs. Similar problems of co-optation and identity crises would afflict the civilian apparatus as well, but the complexity of the military-party dynamic would be

considerably more involved. As a result, the Kremlin would at times be forced to engage in the carefully tailored process of control and compromise that had to take into account the unique role of the military and its political branch in the Soviet system, and apply policies that were sometimes at variance with those directed at the rest of the apparatus.

Even within the network of the civilian party organizations there existed clearly delineated divisions. Thus the structure of this dissertation attempts to engage the question of the systemic functionality of the Soviet state. As such it examines the legislative product of the central organs as a representation of the intent of the current ruling faction. That body of data, however, is necessarily juxtaposed with the local sources that allow for the examination of how the Kremlin's policy initiatives played out in actuality and the challenges of implementation and oversight in the situation plagued by the insufficient infrastructure and understaffed political institutions. The sources underwriting the work consist primarily of archival materials, including those of the central organs and the archives of the local party organizations—specifically that of the Tver Oblast'. The latter offers a particularly set of advantages for a study of the period. That region was, in many ways, a perfect microcosm of the broader national trends – having been half occupied, forced to deal with evacuation, partisan movement and reconstruction. The party organizations of Tver were forced to grapple with almost every aspect of the agenda that challenged the Soviet party-state throughout the period. Party statistics, the judicial records, the epistolary documentation, transcripts of the party conferences and discussion, and the *svodki* on the moods of the population of both the provincial and national party organs have provided the bedrock of this dissertation.

Furthermore, I relied on the party press and the rich vein of memoir literature produced by contemporaries. While the works of the veterans have long been an object of interest within the scholarship, there continues to exist a surprising lack of research concerning the memoirs of the various party workers of the time. The so-called middle management of the party, the Communists who spent the war as the secretaries of the local party organizations, were often inveterate diarists and their novels proffer a wealth of material on the era. The secondary literature on the period utilized in this work is reliant both on the Western and the Soviet/Russian scholarship. Often disdained as unreliable or corrupted by the obvious political biases, the Soviet sources still have much to offer both as the mines of material on the daily grind of the party cadres, and as examples of excellent historical research that stands on its own and has been long overlooked by the Western historiography.

Building on both archival and secondary literature, this work thus attempts to recontextualize and problematize a number of issues within the field. What were the depths of the continuities of the policy formation both within the Soviet system and the Russian state? To what degree were the policy initiatives framed by the persistent factors of the Russian historical development? How do the contradictions between the long-term interests of the party and the state contribute to the modernity debate?

Chapter 1: Cadres Decide Everything

Historiographical Contextualization

The themes of continuity and disconnect have been a mainstay of Russian studies as approached by a wide variety of schools for decades. Thus, the traditional model, which sees an almost uninterrupted connection between the Muscovite institutional structure and that of Soviet Russia, is championed in various forms by scholars as diverse as Richard Pipes, Edward Keenan, and Richard Hellie.¹ The more recent “psychoanalytic” approach, articulated among others by Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, ascribes the continuities to the “slave soul of Russia.”² Conversely, scholars like Martin Malia see the Revolution as a sharp break that turned Russia away from its logical evolutionary path of becoming a European state, while Cyril Black and the divergent development model argue that Russia simply went through a modernizing process different from that of the West and defined by its own unique cultural matrix.³ Meanwhile, a number of Russian scholars unsurprisingly take issue with the slave-soul argument as well, and works like that of I. Ia. Froianov attempt to demonstrate a well-

¹ Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Scribner, 1974); Edwards L. Keenan, “Muscovite Political Folkways,” *Russian Review* 45, no. 2 (1986); Richard Hellie, “The Structure of Modern Russian History: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Russian History*, 4, no.1 (1977).

² Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

³ Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Cyril Black, *The Modernization of Japan and Russia: A Comparative Study* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

ingrained tradition of social opposition to the central authorities and society's influence on the policy formation.⁴

The purpose of this work is not to retrace the above arguments of continuities and breaks. Rather the exploration of pre-Revolutionary Russia presented in this chapter offers a context, a prologue of sorts, to the Soviet experiment. The examination of the core problems of the Muscovite and Tsarist state, as well as the remedies applied, allows for articulation of parallels—if not necessarily direct links—between the eras of Russian history separated by the October Revolution. It is not the intention of this work to minimize the cataclysmic significance of that event on Russian history. By transcending it, to a degree, however, the scholarship of the autocracy and the service elite in the earlier periods of Russian history becomes newly relevant to the understanding of the later epoch. Such an understanding is integral to contextualizing the reoccurrence of remarkably similar patterns over the span of almost six centuries as being the logical response of the centralizing impetus toward the core problems faced by the Russian/Soviet state, rather than reducing this process to a simplified single cause of a mysterious Russian soul or even some enduring geopolitical urge.

The Original Sin: Formation of the Russian Paradigm

The examination of this “persistent dilemma” (to borrow a phrase from Alfred Rieber) of the Russian state must start with the incredibly successful centralization process undertaken by the princes of Moscow through the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries. The emerging state dwarfed most of its European contemporaries; however, this territorial expansion came at the price of chronic underadministration, pervasive

⁴ I. Ia. Froianov, *Drevniaia Rus': opyt issledovaniia istorii sotsial'noi i politicheskoi bor'by* (Moscow: Zlatoust, 1995).

parochialism, and the tradition of a patrimonial view of the state. Pipes, echoing Kliuchevskii, argued convincingly that neither the Russian princedoms in general, nor Muscovy specifically, had ever developed feudal institutions.⁵ Lacking the sense of mutual contractual obligations between ruler and subject that arose in medieval Europe, Russia was prevented from developing those mediating sociopolitical constructs that served as the personnel reserves for early-modern European states.

Marshall Poe, ironically arguing from the position of European particularism, argued that Muscovy was a more typical early modern state and that the only viable solution to its dilemma was found in the traditional approach—rigid centralization that would eventually develop into the infamous Russian autocracy. “As repulsive as this form of government was to the visiting Europeans who observed it in action , despotism—or what we should perhaps neutrally call a patrimonial state—in fact provided the Russian elite with a remarkably economical way to stabilize, unify and mobilize their subject peoples and far-flung territories.”⁶ It is indicative of the issue at hand that Poe referenced the elite in his thesis. Even the most autocratic ruler, after all, had to have the cooperation and obedience of a social stratum that could act as his representatives and surrogates in order to carry out the functions of government outside of the tsar’s immediate demesne.

A similar thesis is posited by a number of scholars from the former USSR, like A. P. Tolochko. Tolochko proposed an entire system of ideology that governed the system of authority in Rurikid Russia. Rejecting the thesis of ingrained culture of absolutism and obedience, he argued that Russia of the pre-Mongol period was structured heavily around

⁵ Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, 50–54.

⁶ Marshall Poe, “A People Born to Slavery:” *Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476–1748* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 220.

the ideas of “collective leadership” and power sharing among the appanage princes.⁷

Although Tolochko’s demonstration of an all-inclusive system of political thought governing the administration of Kievan Russia is not entirely convincing, he makes a good case for the trend of cooperation and consensus-building within the Russian political tradition. And that trend entered the Muscovite state along with the former princes and their courts, who became part of the new elite.

The nature of qualifications necessary for entry into this elite and the degree to which the grand princes exercised command over them continue to remain the subjects of fierce historiographical debate. And since a similar issue continued to plague the post-revolutionary Russian state, it befits this work to address it. This is not an attempt to reduce or to simplify the state of Russia’s complexity to a single, overriding cause from which all else has flowed in a neat, Freudian dynamic. The issue of chronic underadministration, however, formed an important aspect of the elite formation that, in turn, informed much of the state-society dialogue.

At the dawn of the Muscovite state, just as the case would be at the dawn of the Soviet Union, there was only a limited pool of individuals who could provide the state with the human resources capable of carrying out the necessary administrative minutiae, e.g., collecting taxes, adjudicating local matters, or leading the army. The core of this social stratum originated as the prince’s *druzhina* (armed coterie) and the rulers of the annexed principalities, along with their own warrior caste. This echelon of society eventually formed the so-called service class of the Russian state, after the immediate impetus of the conquest of Novgorod.

⁷ A. P. Tolochko, *Kniaz’ v drevnei Rusi: vlast’ sobstvennost’, ideologia* (Kiev:Naukova Dumka, 1992), 132–34.

The annexation and co-optation of this large territory by the Muscovite state increased the demand for local administrators and provided the solution. Ivan III used the Novgorod lands' new territory to establish the *pomestie* system, bartering land and peasants for the lifelong service obligation from the nascent gentry.⁸ This service class was not a monolithic entity; it would remain bifurcated by the division among the former appanage princes and great nobles (boyars) and the provincial squires (*dvoriane*).⁹ Yet throughout their existence, the high nobility and the ennobled provincial landholders would retain an overriding commonality in their identity as the service elite, a managerial class defined in a fundamental way by their relationship and duty to the state.

This ruling elite would remain the main supplier of the state's administrators, able to defray the considerable cost of running the country by being inculcated with leadership qualities from birth and intrinsically tied into the informal clientele networks that permeated Muscovy. Supplementing the rather fragile formal institution of the *prikaz* system, these networks of patronage allowed for mobilization of local resources and connected the periphery to the center in intangible but concrete ways. The state was thus run in a personalized manner, formal and informal loyalties coexisting and merging. This parallelism formed another persistent continuity of the Russian governmental structure, an enduring systemic flaw—that of the tension between the personalized and professionalized or bureaucratic systems of rule. This conflict would reoccur with troubling consistency, often cast in terms of center-periphery struggle over control and autonomy.¹⁰

⁸ R. G. Skrynnikov, *Tsarstvo Terrora* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1992), 72–73.

⁹ Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971), 22.

¹⁰ S. O. Schmidt, *Rossia Ivana Groznogo* (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), 204.

The ability to strike a careful balance between managing the service elite, enlarging it, and maintaining its allegiance was key to the tsars' domestic policy. Their success varied considerably. Some historians see the elite as the true power within the arrangement, reducing the role of monarch to little more than a figurehead whose value was only in adjudicating the conflicts among the *boyars* and preventing them from weakening the ruling class. Thus, according to Cyril Black, "What was in theory an autocracy was often for all practical purposes an oligarchy, however, for the princes of Moscow had great difficulty in establishing effective and orderly control over the ruling families whose lands they successively incorporated into the new state."¹¹ Keenan goes farther still and points to aristocracy as the true focal points of the power structure, with the tsar wielding true power only as an exception, when the oligarchy—the de facto state of the system—weakens itself.¹²

The alternative model of Russian absolutism goes equally far in the diametrically opposite direction. It envisions a perfectly obedient service class, thoroughly inculcated with the obligation to serve the throne and utterly dependent on the state.¹³ The freedom of the autocrat offered in the latter model stands in stark contrast with the bargaining position that their role as the predominant supplier of the administrative cadres provided to the service elite. After all, even as late as the nineteenth century, 77 percent of the bureaucracy were members of the hereditary nobility by birth.¹⁴

¹¹ Cyril E. Black, *Understanding Soviet Politics: Perspective of Russian History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 25.

¹² Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," 118, 132.

¹³ Richard Hellie, "Thoughts on the Absence of Elite Resistance in Muscovy," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 1 (2000): 12.

¹⁴ Walter M. Pintner, "The Russian Higher Civil Service on the Eve of the 'Great Reforms'," *Journal of Social History* 8, no. 3 (1975): 57.

Thus, unsurprisingly, neither of the absolute models presented above offers a satisfactory schema of the place of the elite in pre-Petrine Russia. The more recent, synergistic scholarship of historians like Nancy Kollmann and Donald Ostrowski posits a more balanced idea of an absolutist state engaged in a symbiotic relationship with its aristocracy, dependent on but not hostage to it.¹⁵ In turn, the nobility remained dependent on the monarchy to provide a center of stability and a marker of its identity. This mutual dependency served to maintain a functional equilibrium, even with a background of perpetual negotiation of power boundaries. Kollmann's *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* is among the more authoritative recent works tackling the issue of elites in Muscovite state. Although perhaps stressing the similarity with Western political organization too much, Kollmann convincingly demonstrated that Muscovy was a society composed around intricate corporate groups in which social standing was ultimately invested—clan, regiment, village, etc.¹⁶ Furthermore, as elaborated in her earlier work, many of these relationships were defined in personal terms of kinships and personal alliances.¹⁷

Kollmann's thesis of the group identity coalescing among the Russian elite very early in its evolution also has significant bearing on its relationship with the monarchy. Thus the cognizance by the nobility of the commonly shared "aristocratic corporate honor"¹⁸ was a considerable factor motivating their resistance to the state's attempts to enlarge their sociopolitical stratum. This complex system of personalized relationships

¹⁵ Donald Ostrowski, "The Facade of Legitimacy: Exchange of Power and Authority in Early Modern Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 3, (2002): 542.

¹⁶ Nancy Kollmann, *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 58.

¹⁷ Nancy Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics: The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345–1547* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 6.

¹⁸ Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, 250.

and interlocking patron-client networks and corporate interests made the role of a distanced arbiter in the person of the monarch indispensable.¹⁹ The relationship between the two was symbiotic and mutually dependent.

The alternative—i.e., an open conflict between the monarchy and the ruling elite—was not a prospect either side entertained easily. There always loomed, after all, a specter of the macabre precedent—as the experience of Ivan Grozny’s attack on the aristocracy was interpreted. Until Peter’s reforms, the *oprichnina* represented probably the most violent example of open conflict within the ruling elite. The roots of the episode are still in dispute, alternatively attributed either to the *boyarstvo*’s resistance against encroaching absolutism or to the conflict of a progressive monarchy against the reactionary forces of aristocracy.²⁰

Whatever the cause, however, it provided a graphic example of the Muscovite dilemma. The scarcity of administrative professionals and the autocracy’s need for cooperation from the service elite in supplying them gave the latter only very amorphous bargaining power. Certain gains *could* be obtained from the state—such as a tolerance of corruption or increasing power over the peasants. There was a definite limit to the autocracy’s patience, however, as Ivan would demonstrate. Yet his attack on the boyars only exacerbated the problem by further diminishing the very pool of recruits the tsars so desperately needed to enlarge. This destabilization of the system and the atomization of the administrative elite that it entailed contributed substantially to the Time of Troubles.²¹

It would take a considerable period of readjustment for the system to recover. Richard Hellie referred to that era as one of the three great service state revolutions,

¹⁹ Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, 224.

²⁰ Isabel de Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible: First Tsar of Russia* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), 367.

²¹ B. N. Shaptalov, *Rossiia v poiskakh effektivnosti* (Moscow, 2003), 106.

ascribing a certain intentionality to Ivan's assault on the boyars and the consequent development of the "middle service class" or *dvoriane*.²² While still disputed, the scale of the upheaval and the radical changes engendered by Ivan Grozny's policies was indisputable and continued to influence the decision making paradigm of the monarchy, eager to sharpen the conflicts with the service elite unnecessarily and to avoid similar crises in the future.

Thus, the state was in a curiously paradoxical position of lacking any but the most direct methods of controlling the service class. This relative weakness of the state was explored ably by Gregory Freeze. As he pointed out in his examination of the evolution of the estate system in Russia, the state was not the pervasive architect of the body social—rather it was society that often provided the driving impetus in the formation of social bodies, and the "particular social groups—at least those with any semblance of legal or economic privilege—sought to reinforce their separateness as distinct social categories."²³

The landed aristocracy, which was indisputably one of those social groups, would show itself impervious to attempts at enlarging their numbers in any meaningful way through the influx of newcomers, in effect diluting their bargaining power. Thus an outright assault on this entire social stratum, a wholesale purge of the entire administrative elite, was practically the only tool that the monarchy could employ against them—with terrible effectiveness. Such methods, however, represented a dramatic departure from the normal dialogue between the elite and the monarchy and, while telling

²² Richard Hellie, "The Structure of Modern Russian History," 4.

²³ Gregory L. Freeze, "The Soslovie Paradigm and Russian Social History," *The American Historical Review*, 91, no. 1, (1986): 20.

in the short term, were ultimately counterproductive, disrupting and reducing the very social stratum the monarchy wanted to grow in the long term.

The fragile compromise resulting from this dilemma was ably explored by Valerie Kivelson's *Autocracy in the Provinces: The Muscovite Gentry and Political Culture in the Seventeenth Century*. The framework proposed by Kivelson's research underscores the cooperative (albeit volatile) nature of the balancing dynamic between the throne and the nobility. Echoing Kollmann's thesis of a corporate identity shared by the Muscovite nobility, Kivelson traced the implications of that thesis with special emphasis on the provincial aristocracy. The latter's recognition of its own interests and goals sometimes placed them at odds with the long-term aims of the throne.²⁴

Yet, as Kivelson demonstrates, the state was once again limited in its responses. The attempts to strengthen central control seemed invariably stymied by the ability of the local gentry to subvert and co-opt royal appointees. The resulting dynamic was thus a complex process of negotiation between the autocrat and the local gentry, where privileges and benign neglect were exchanged for service and mobilization of the local resources.²⁵ The fundamental source of the nobility's bargaining power—that is, the problem of scarcity of qualified personnel defining the Russian state—was not unclear to the tsars, as their persistent attempts to enlarge the service elite demonstrate.

In times of crisis, which, given the thin margins of the administrative manpower reserves, came with disturbing frequency during wars or plagues, the state would make its wishes unequivocally clear—as in 1656, when the throne ordered forcefully that the *prikazy* were “to hire as *pod'iachie* (clerks) anyone able to perform, *regardless of social*

²⁴ Valerie Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces: The Muscovite Gentry and Political Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 265–67.

²⁵ Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces*, 276–78.

origin.”²⁶ Any attempt to widen the base of the service class, however, was ultimately hindered and stalled by peculiarities within the Russian body social and political system.

Even with the co-optation of the Church, the state simply lacked the resources to attempt the mass indoctrination and training program necessary to turn the largely peasant population into functional members of the service elite, such as the one later undertaken by the Communists. And, until the nineteenth century, there were no sufficiently numerous intermediary *soslovie* (estates) between the peasantry and the nobility that could supply the recruits. As Freeze demonstrated, even the attempts to conceptualize those estates as formed or distinct in any way before the nineteenth century run into significant problems, due to the “peculiar, fragmented structure of medieval Russian society.”²⁷

This dilemma was not ameliorated by the fact that, until the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, formal education was not a prerequisite for becoming a member of the administrative caste. Instead, the somewhat intangible requirement of having informal connections within the elite (the *blat* of the later era) was necessary for a successful career.²⁸ And the contribution of these civil servants to the governmental structure was, as Robert Crummey pointed out, less in the formal training they lacked, but in the leadership qualities, family ties, and social links they possessed as the result of

²⁶ Borivoj Plavsic, “Seventeenth-Century Chanceries,” in *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Walter McKenzie Pintner and Don Karl Rowney (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 28.

²⁷ Freeze, “The Soslovie Paradigm,” 14.

²⁸ John P. LeDonne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class: The Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700–1825* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7, 9, 24, 94.

their upbringing.²⁹ In the highly personalized network that comprised the Russian state, it was these qualities that allowed necessary tasks to be accomplished.

This was not a knowledge matrix that could have been easily or cheaply replicated by the state. The administrative caste further complicated the issue with attempts to safeguard its integrity as it coalesced into a self-aware class with a commonly shared sense of identity. With increasing frequency, the managerial elite began to resist the tsars' efforts to dilute the purity of the aristocracy through increasing the social mobility of the outsiders.³⁰ "Members of the upper service class protected their positions against outsiders by the *mestnichestvo* system, a device which regulated the inheritance of service relationships among families in the network. Parvenues were effectively barred from the top service posts because they had no position in the network of the relationships, which was jealously preserved by the status-conscious Muscovites."³¹

The *dvoriane* became a self-perpetuating caste, producing enough civil servants to fulfill the minimum requirements necessary for the government of the polity. It even began the process of bureaucratization.³² With the memory of the *oprichnina* firmly in mind, both the elite and the Romanovs tried to respect the emergent consensus.

Yet the primary goal of the state was not to safeguard the rights and privileges of the service elite per se; rather, it desperately needed to create an adequately staffed administrative apparatus. This conflict between the modernizing agenda of the state and the more narrow goals of the interest group represented by the nobility would slowly grow and eventually become unbridgeable. This divergence of interests would remain

²⁹ Robert O. Crummey, "Origins of the Noble Official," in *Russian Officialdom*, ed. Walter Pintner and Don Rowney, 75.

³⁰ Shaptalov, *Rossiiia*, 173.

³¹ Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy*, 24.

³² Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy*, 64–67.

subsumed and largely controlled for as long as the traditional sociopolitical organization of the Muscovite state remained militarily competitive against its rivals. Yet this caveat proved increasingly more fragile.

The Modernity Trap and the Petrine Attempt to Escape It

In the late seventeenth century, however, Russia came into conflict with its Western neighbors and was drawn into the European-wide military revolution that necessitated a development of the fiscal-military state able to compete with its rivals. The minimum level of administrative capability that proved adequate against the nomads and Siberian tribes was no longer acceptable. In order to correct that, Russia, under Peter I, embarked on a program designed to replicate the ideal *Polizeistaat*—the well-ordered police state defined by the German cameralism—a rational system of rule based on a code of standardized law and an estate structure cooperating with the state in a bureaucratic decision making process.³³

As Marc Raeff argued, however, due to the old problem of having failed to develop guilds, estates, or commensurate intermediary social constructs, the Russian state was forced to fill the vacuum to a much greater extent than Peter's German models. As Raeff points out, "the Russian sovereigns could not rely on those social resources that were available to their European models. . . . They had to create the social matrix, which already existed in the West, as well as the instruments, as did their models, in order to make their reforms stick."³⁴ Consequently the state—now burdened with progressively

³³ Marc Raeff, "The Well Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Europe: An Attempt at Comparative Approach," *The American Historical Review* 80, no. 5 (1975): 1224, 1230.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1234

bigger responsibilities—was forced to utilize essentially the same resources as before, obligating the elite to serve and imposing professional standards on it through coercive legislation.

The most revolutionary of the latter was the introduction of a philosophy that attempted to radically devalue the traditional foundation of heredity in favor of meritocracy as the main qualification for the membership in the elite. It found its most graphic outlet in the Table of Ranks, which “was designed to provide a steady flow of eligible recruits into the imperial military and civil bureaucracies, and to establish the principle that rank was in all cases dependent upon service to the state rather than upon ancestry.”³⁵

Another institution heavily affected by the monarchy’s drive toward professionalism was inevitably the military. It was, after all, the quest to ensure the security of the state that underwrote much of the reforms in the first place. Building upon the foundation created by his predecessors, Peter expanded substantially the practice of utilizing foreign experts as officers and training cadre. The promising native human resources were also exposed to increased education and indoctrination in the new values. Inevitably, acting out the traditional pattern, the service elite resisted.

Peter’s reign saw another conflict dividing the privileged social stratum along the lines that would later be labeled as the Reds and the Experts. Once again the state and the aristocracy clashed over the earlier attempts to engage in what the latter perceived as the quest to undermine their status in society and bargaining power. Unlike the confrontations that would occur periodically after the Revolution, the standoff was defined by the factions based around pedigree and professionalism, rather than ideology

³⁵ Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 44.

and expertise.³⁶ Yet the dynamic and the fundamental terms of the debate remained eerily familiar. In the short run, Peter proved remarkably successful. Yet even his gains were in many ways ephemeral and depended on the continuing accommodation of the managerial class. “In retrospect, it is clear that Peter’s reign included many changes in institutions but considerable continuity of personnel.”³⁷

As a result of this continuing dependence on the nobility and the attendant need for compromise politics, Peter’s reforms were built on sand and proved ultimately unsustainable. Much like Grozny before him, Peter was able to exert direct and awesome pressure on the service elite. Yet, also like Ivan, the effort was short-lived. The state simply could not maintain such an adversarial relationship with the most important social stratum. Thus under Peter III and Catherine the Great, the aristocracy was already emancipated from the service requirements placed on them by Peter.³⁸ The monarchy also conferred an affirmation of the aristocracy’s position and privileges through the Charter of Nobility. As a consequence of this new compromise, as Isabel de Madariaga contends, there was a substantial migration by the nobility to the countryside, where they once again undertook the burden of local administration.³⁹

The empire, transformed by Peter’s zeal, still lacked that infamous Third Estate that formed the backbone of the European police state and retained a number of handicapping continuities from the preceding era.⁴⁰ The state, lacking any alternative pool of recruits for the administrative caste, remained shackled to the nobility, with the

³⁶ Brenda Meehan-Waters, *Autocracy and Aristocracy: The Russian Service Elite of 1730* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 9–10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁸ Hellie, “The Structure of Modern Russian History,” 6.

³⁹ Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 658.

⁴⁰ Alexandr Kamenskii, *Rossiiskaiia, Imperiia v XVIII veke: traditsii i modernizatsiia* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 1999), 303.

consequently “considerably greater influence on the monarchy of the interests and goals of the aristocracy, than was the case in Western Europe.”⁴¹ The nobility was still the only class able to supply the cogs of the administrative apparatus, although now its predominance was decided as much by the ability to afford Western education as by blood-ties.⁴² Wealth had subsumed heredity as the price of admission into the ruling elite. Peter was able to instill in the service elite the tradition of professionalization and succeeded at marginally increasing upward social mobility. Nevertheless, his internal revolution was aimed primarily at the symptom rather than the core cause of the dilemma. The latter would take generations to correct, as the class of white collar professionals began to painstakingly emerge. The non-noble Lomonosovs were the exception that proved the rule—the nobility still remained the social stratum monopolizing the supply of the recruits into the administrative caste.

The Enduring Cyclicality and Peculiarities of the Model

Meanwhile, the state was forced to engage in a cyclical pattern of similar solutions tried and discarded in a macabre carousel, eerily prescient of the process that would take place in the 1920s and 1930s. Starting almost immediately with Peter’s death, his heirs had to once again come to an accommodation with the nobility.⁴³ The process was prompted primarily by the self-same enduring problem of the limited pool of qualified personnel and the need for the cooperation of the service elite in administration of the country. “Reaching consensus with the ruling class, which Muscovite rulers

⁴¹ N. V. Kozlova, *Rossiiskii absoliutizm i kupechestvo v XVIII veke* (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1999), 365.

⁴² Pintner, “The Russian Higher Civil Service,” 55.

⁴³ LeDonne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class*, 304.

practiced in the 16th and 17th century, continued to be the ‘secret’ of successful rulers in 18th century Russia.”⁴⁴

Elise Wirtschafter argued that the limited pool of qualified recruits for bureaucracy also restricted the tendency for the professionalization instilled by Peter’s reforms and the bureaucracy to remain heavily familial/clientele based.⁴⁵ Poor communications and the empire’s size forced the autocracy to rely on individual discretion in regional administration. In fact, Kivelson goes so far as to postulate a tacit compromise between provincial aristocracy engaged in regional administration and the center. This compromise amounted to the latter ceding local autonomy in return for a free hand in military and foreign policy—the “high politics.”⁴⁶

The enduring weakness of the infrastructure and communication net, along with the fact that the goals of regularized administration (efficiency and results above all else) required violation of a legal prescription because of economic and social limitations, turned the local administrators into de facto lawmakers and near absolute rulers of their demesne (or, to use an anachronistic term, *little Stalins*).⁴⁷ “It remained a cardinal principle of Russian provincial administration that the local agent of the central government must possess a universal jurisdiction over all the public business conducted in the territory to which he was appointed.”⁴⁸

The decrees of the local administrators could themselves, in turn, be overturned by their superiors in search of similar momentary gain at any cost. This somewhat

⁴⁴ Ostrowski, “The Facade of Legitimacy,” 550.

⁴⁵ Elise Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 37–39.

⁴⁶ Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces*, 208–9.

⁴⁷ M. O. Akishin “Gubernskaiia reforma Ekateriny II v Sibiri: osobennosti upravleniia okrainnoi imperii,” in *Rossiiskoe samoderzhavie i biurokratiia*, ed., A. A. Preobrazhenskii (Moscow-Novosibirsk: Drevlekhramilishche, 2000), 276.

⁴⁸ LeDonne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class*, 97.

schizophrenic dynamic inexorably led to an atomized institutional structure with weak societal links. In the environment of such volatility and unpredictability, the original foundation of the Muscovite administrative matrix—the informal networks based on kinship and patronage—continued to flourish, offering a degree of stability and continuity the formal institutions could not match.⁴⁹ To a certain extent, the entire governmental structure became riven with them, the monarchy itself becoming simply one among many such networks based on personal rather than institutional loyalty.

It is no accident—to use Marxist parlance—that every new monarch began his reign by replacing regional administrators, be they *voevodas* of Catherine’s reign or the governors of Alexander II. These periodic shakeups did not, however, challenge the basic structure of the system. The previous patronage-clientele hierarchy was simply replaced by a new one, once again extending all the way to the throne, due to the nature of autocracy itself. As Hughes points out, “the workings of Russian government cannot be grasped without taking account of the personal, non-institutional aspects.”⁵⁰

Periodic attempts to reform the system and extirpate the familial-clientele relationship in favor of the professional bureaucratic structure failed with singular consistency. The distance from the center, exacerbated by the poor infrastructure, and the persistent dependency of the center on the periphery for the results—no matter the means or the costs—inevitably resulted in the same accommodation and compromise being struck again and again. The aristocracy and the state remained locked in a paradoxical relationship defined both by codependence and divergent interests. Only the emergence

⁴⁹ Alfred J. Rieber, “Bureaucratic Politics in Imperial Russia,” *Social Science History* 2, no. 4 (1978): 405.

⁵⁰ Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), 113.

of the nascent Third Estate, the creation of intelligentsia and the influx of the *raznochintsy* could finally break the pattern.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel: The Nineteenth Century and its Promise

By the nineteenth century, an alternative to the nobility-dominated administrative elite finally emerged. This process occurred in tandem with the long-festered break between the gentry and the state, which culminated in the wake of the Great Reforms. The traditional conflict between the monarchy's goals of enlarging and professionalizing the administrative class, and the service elite's quest to maintain its structural integrity was already simmering as the nineteenth century wore on. "The government's basic conception of the gentry class in the pre-emancipation period was that of an open-ended administrative class."⁵¹ Meanwhile, as the *dvorianstvo*, having finished the process of coalescing into a *soslovie*, saw *their* primary goal as the defense of their interests as a class. This resulted in a growing conflict of interests. Their eventual alienation from the throne was the inevitable outcome.⁵²

The new impetus given by the Crimean War to the modernizing drive of the monarchy resulted in the inevitable escalation of the tensions between the throne and the aristocracy. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the traditional ruling stratum of the Russian state perceived itself to be under sustained assault, not only through the state's recruitment of new members into the service elite, but also—most

⁵¹ Thomas Stewart Hause, *State and Gentry in Russia 1861–1917* (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1975), 248.

⁵² A. B. Kamenskii, *Ot Petra I do Pavla I* (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), 214.

visibly—through the Emancipation Reform of 1861. The two had been inextricably linked, of course.

The new economic system significantly undermined the power and the status of the old landed nobility. Their ability to supply members of the service elite steadily diminished, even as new social strata began to slowly fill the gap. The process was reflective of a contradiction inherent in the modernization from above. Even as the monarchy was forced to embark on the reforms that weakened its support structure among the landholding nobility, it was creating a professionalized bureaucracy—necessary for the modernization of the state—yet the process was arguably destructive to the very foundation of *ancien regime*. Many among the old gentry class became radicalized even as the members of the new service elite—disillusioned by the reforms process—would come to see the monarchy itself as an impediment to modernization.⁵³

The bureaucracy that came out of the Great Reforms was very much a product of the pan-European process. The traditional importance of family ties, on-the-job training for civil service, and wealth were replaced by emphasis on objective criteria like formal education, with civil service becoming a lifelong career.⁵⁴ The process started by Peter finally began to bear fruit, putting the state in the position of control, of being able to grow its own administrative elite.

The nineteenth century saw the civil service becoming a distinct professional career requiring specialized training prior to entry. The bureaucracy now became a

⁵³ Terence Emmons, *The Russian Landed Gentry and the Peasant Emancipation of 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Roberta T. Manning, *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); E. W. Clowes, S. D. Kassow, J. L. West, eds., *Between Tsar And People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); James C. McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture, and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁵⁴ Pintner and Rowney, eds., *Russian Officialdom*, 374.

professional organization, staffed mainly by people that entered it at the bottom rung, possessing a universalized education, and had spent their lives climbing the career ladder, garnering status, and economic support from the process.⁵⁵ The cost of instituting formalized preparatory education as the prerequisite for entry into the new administrative class was still prohibitive, but in no way beyond the reach of Imperial Russia. And the slowly industrializing country was gradually creating the ever-widening pool of recruits—outside of the nobility—able to either finance their own education or take advantage of growing opportunities within the governmental educational system.

By the end of the century the new administrative caste had become self-sustaining and self-perpetuating, with a continuing influx of new recruits.⁵⁶ In the years that followed, “what may be loosely called Russia's elite, for want of a better term, has grown in size from perhaps two or three million to some fifteen million and has changed substantially in composition. These changes began in the latter part of the nineteenth century when a rising generation of professional men and technicians was added to the traditional elite of noble landowners and state officials.”⁵⁷ Between 1913 and the fall of the monarchy alone, the ratio of the civil servants in the workforce almost doubled, jumping from 6.4 percent to 13.5 percent.⁵⁸

It would seem that Russia was well on its way to solving its administrative dilemma when the Revolution interrupted the process. According to Daniel Orlowsky's study of the ministerial bureaucracy on the eve of the Revolution, it was an increasingly

⁵⁵ Walter M. Pintner, “The Social Characteristics of the Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Bureaucracy,” *Slavic Review* 29, no. 3 (1970): 442.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Black, *Understanding Soviet Politics: Perspective of Russian History*, 29.

⁵⁸ Karl W. Ryavec, *Russian Bureaucracy: Power and Pathology* (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 29.

professional organization, the personalized connection forced by the manpower dilemmas of the earliest era giving way to “highly specialized skills based upon extensive training, competence . . . , self regulation of ethical behavior, association, and commitment to public service.”⁵⁹

The Revolution and the Retrenchment of the Traditional Patterns

The Revolution and the ascension of the Communist Party to power stopped and reversed the process, giving a new lease on life to the ancient dilemmas—at least in the short term, before entire generations could be educated and indoctrinated and a consensus reached with the professional class. The persistent lack of qualified personnel, however, forced the state into the same patterns that predated the Revolution. Thus, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick’s thesis of scarcity making distributor networks the primary institutions of power and Graeme Gill’s examination of patron-client cliques in the regional party apparatus put in stark perspective the continuity of the personalized power relations that survived even the cataclysm of the Revolution.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the rapprochement with the intelligentsia and white collar professionals—in what many perceived as retreat from the pure form of the Leninist model—would prove to be an eerie parallel of the earlier compromise made by the Romanov monarchy and the nobility. The scarcity of the qualified personnel, combined with the new demands placed on it due to the unique nature of the state, would also present the regime with a new variation of the old dilemmas, such as the Reds vs. Experts dichotomy.

⁵⁹ Daniel T. Orlowsky, “Ministerial Bureaucracy,” in *Russia’s Missing Middle Class: The Professions in Russian History*, ed. Harley D. Balzer (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 286.

⁶⁰ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 62–65.

The period between the civil war and Operation Barbarossa would be an integral phase of experimentation by the Bolsheviks in an attempt to deal with these problems. And the problems the regime faced would not have seemed unfamiliar to either a functionary of the tsarist bureaucracy or to a service noble of the Muscovite principedom. The same pattern would emerge—seemingly schizophrenic vacillation between discarding a solution and reapplying a slightly changed version of it a few years later in interminable attempts at structural, lasting reforms. And it would persist well into the Great Patriotic War and beyond.

The decade and a half of Josef Stalin's rule since 1938, by comparison, would present little innovation, with no truly original ideas being proffered as solutions to the enduring problems; rather the party would consistently turn to the limited range of ideas they had tried during the 1920s and 1930s. As Robert Wesson pointed out, by the end of the 1930s, "the heroic age of the party ended with the recession of the Great Terror, which was heroic in its proportions, however macabre. . . . The Eighteenth Congress which occurred in March 1939 was dedicated to consolidation."⁶¹

By the early 1920s, the Soviet state finally emerged out of a seven-year-long "continuum of crisis" that profoundly changed the structure of society and the economy, leaving the imprint of aggression on almost every institution.⁶² Moshe Lewin judged the destruction to have been so profound that even by the closing years of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the USSR was still less developed than Tsarist Russia on the eve of World

⁶¹ Robert G. Wesson, *Lenin's Legacy: The Story of the CPSU* (Stanford: Hoover University Press, 1978), 166.

⁶² Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3, 287.

War I.⁶³ The long-predicted and feared primordial flood of the *bunt* (jacquerie) had washed away the results of the costly industrialization borne by the previous generation, the infrastructure was in terrible shape, urban population had escaped into the countryside to avoid the famine, and much of the old elite was either destroyed or driven out of the country. In a very real sense the new state had to solve the very same problems that shaped the old Muscovy and, unsurprisingly, turned toward many of the same solutions.

The first problem for the rulers was the exertion of control over the country and the attendant issue of new elite formation. This task was simultaneously easier and more complex for the Bolsheviks than it was for their predecessors. Despite the “archaization” of the society, the rebuilding process was, after all, not starting from scratch. “A census of the state bureaucracy in 1928 showed that holdovers accounted for 27.8% of administrative personnel.”⁶⁴ This figure, not seriously disputed by historians, indicates that while the kernel of the new service class was inherited from Tsarist Russia, the overwhelming majority was the product of the new order.

The old bureaucrats were of necessity promoted in order to utilize their skills—and as such probably exercised a disproportionate influence on the new elite and its governing mechanism. The ultimate authority, however, lay with the party and it was its leadership that charted the new course. The similarities between the new apparatus and the old system are due as much to the fact that, faced with the ancient and enduring set of dilemmas—vast distances, poor communication net, limited governance class, and a largely peasant population—the new state had only a limited range of practical answers, often the same solutions that were available to the tsarist state. It was logical that the new

⁶³ Moshe Lewin, *Russia/USSR/Russia: The Drive and Drift of a Superstate* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 15.

⁶⁴ Kenneth C. Farmer, *The Soviet Administrative Elite* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 105.

regime would, subconsciously to an extent, turn toward historical models of its forebears on a wide scale. As Robert Tucker pointed out, the archaization of the society led to the archaization of the political system and “resurrection of the historic Tsarist pattern.”⁶⁵ In times of fluid social and political processes, the people turned to older, cruder, and more durable mechanisms of association and cooperation.

Of course, one must be careful of pressing the analogies and continuities too far. The thesis of archaization in particular, and of the similarities transcending the events of 1917 in general, remains highly contested. Certainly, there had never been anything comparable to the Communist Party in Russia’s history—even the dreaded *oprichnina* presents only a fragile parallel. This unique feature of the new regime, among others, necessitated duplication of the governing apparatus, exponentially increasing the demand for the qualified personnel to staff not simply the state bureaucracy but also that of the party. Furthermore, as mentioned above, another of its consequences was the germination of the famous conflict between Reds and Experts within the pool of the qualified personnel.

The demands on an aspiring apparatchik were no longer limited to, or even primarily focused on, technical education. Ideological literacy was now a significant factor, and this new aspect significantly influenced the negotiation process between the state and the administrative elite, making it infinitely more complex than the similar process of pre-Revolutionary Russia. The subsequent problem of the quest to find an appropriate balance between the ideological and technical professionals was never fully resolved by the Soviet system and became yet another endemic condition.

⁶⁵ Robert C. Tucker, “A New Stage in the Revolution,” in *The Stalin Revolution*, ed. Robert V Daniels (Toronto: D. C. Heath, 1990), 206.

The conflict simmered and would, with metronomic regularity, boil to a surface, its cyclical nature becoming a typical feature of the regime. The state would be consistently forced into having to choose between technical competence and ideological purity. Furthermore, as the party relentlessly expanded its power throughout the rapidly modernizing state, the technocratic tendency would often win. This in turn would lead to push-back from the political purists, beginning the cycle anew.

The turbulent decade that followed the civil war was a sort of incubation period for much of the party-state's later methods. As the war drew to a close, yet the prospect of the international Revolution appeared dim, the new Soviet State had to come to terms with the immediate goals of its continued existence. The country was brought to the brink of collapse by World War I, the internecine conflict, and the War Communism.⁶⁶ Taking stock, the Communist leadership came to the reluctant conclusion that "the stability of the regime and its defense against external enemies depended on economic reconstruction and the attention understandably turned to the question of long-term economic development and industrialization."⁶⁷

Two schools of thought quickly emerged that would remain in existence throughout the existence of the Soviet polity, eventually coalescing into the so-called Reds and Experts. While both were defined by the fundamental precepts of the ideological commitment of building a socialist, nonmarket society, their approaches quickly diverged. The core of the original debate concerned the fate of the nonparty

⁶⁶ A. A. Igolkin, "Voennoyi kommunizm: politika protiv ekonomiki" in *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii*, ed., S. V. Karpenko (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Ippolitova, 2006), 300–1.

⁶⁷ David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-war Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 137

specialists.⁶⁸ While the proto-ideologues mistrusted their loyalty and vehemently argued for mobilizing the revolutionary fervor of the proletariat/working class, pragmatists increasingly saw the utility of bringing bourgeois experts into the fold and making use of their skills.⁶⁹ The NEP encapsulated the conditional victory of the pragmatic point of view. Yet, it was a policy that never sat easy with the party as a whole, many seeing the alliance with the material creators of the bourgeois culture as betrayal of the Revolution's collectivist principals.⁷⁰

As the country, driven to the brink of collapse, came to a compromise, the technical elite of the army and the industry were reluctantly courted by the Party. It was the end to the revolutionary upheavals that had driven as many as two million people (most of them from the educated social strata) into exile, with only one teacher for every 704 rural inhabitants remaining.⁷¹ In his seminal work, Kendall Bailes examined this process in minute detail, and articulated the immensely precarious place of the old elite in a largely hostile society. The state played the role of the protector, shielding the remnants of the old order against the proletariat and much of the rank and file of the party whose passions had been aroused by the Revolution.⁷² The later scholarship, most notably of Sheila Fitzpatrick and David Priestland, also confirmed this revision of Adam Ulam's thesis that Lenin and the leadership of the party were "anti-intellectual intellectuals."

⁶⁸ Loren R. Graham, *Science in the Soviet Union: A Short History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 88.

⁶⁹ Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization*, 137.

⁷⁰ Graham, *Science*, 88.

⁷¹ William G. Rosenberg, "Introduction: NEP Russia as a 'Transitional' Society," in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 6.

⁷² Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917–1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 45–46.

Whether the policy was driven by pure pragmatism as Fitzpatrick argued, or due to the sympathy Lenin had for co-members of the intelligentsia (the view Bailes seemingly leaned toward), remains an issue of debate, but—reluctantly and with constant worry about being corrupted—the party-state downplayed the grassroots’ tendency toward class war and came to the necessary accommodation with the technical intelligentsia. “Cultural policy in the 1920s rested on the premise that the Soviet state needed the services of bourgeois specialists and would have to pay for them.”⁷³

While the drastically diminished size of the service elite made its embrace by the state almost inevitable, it also gave an added impetus to the party to redress the problem. Never easy about the loyalty of the specialists and inherently rooted in the ideological commitment to a technical modernization, throughout the 1920s, the regime worked feverishly to promote literacy and to build an educational infrastructure. While restraining the “specialist-baiting”—the harassment of the bourgeois experts—by the rank and file, the state invested incredible effort in creating its own educated class who could replace them.

The newly emergent bureaucracy co-opted many members of the underprivileged classes that were already socially mobile, but discontented, before the Revolution.⁷⁴ Throughout NEP, the degree to which the Soviet state made education accessible to the proletariat and the peasantry had no ready parallel in Russian history. Between 1923 and 1925, enrollment in colleges and universities from among these classes rose rapidly from 24.2 to 49.6 percent. And the admission rate of the *rabfak* (so called Workers’ Faculty, a

⁷³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 91–92.

⁷⁴ T. H. Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Worcester: Billings and Sons, 1990), 37.

transition institution for the proletarians seeking to enter academia) members in the mid 1920s was consistently between 88.3 and 99.4 percent.⁷⁵

Yet, as Fitzpatrick demonstrated, the nature of the educational infrastructure and policies throughout the 1920s reflected the divide between the two approaches to governing evolving within the party. Thus, even as monumental efforts were made to develop vocational schools and technical institutions of learning, a considerable investment was also being made into social sciences, creating an educational structure aimed at producing a new elite.⁷⁶ Emblematically, the Socialist Academy was established as a rival to the “bourgeois” Academy of Sciences, and proudly focused on producing Marxist philosophers rather than natural scientists.⁷⁷ It was soon emulated by a variety of similar institutions. In that branch of the system, social origins and educational indoctrination took clear precedence over technical aspects.

The influx of a large number of people with the most rudimentary education had the predictable consequences of overwhelming the still-fragile educational infrastructure and provoking a backlash not only from the remnants of the old technical elite but also from the factions of the party apparatus tasked with running the economy. While the former resented the dilution of their status and the lack of strict standards, the latter found themselves with newly minted managerial cadres that were simply not up to the job.

Not for the first or the last time, the delicate balance between ideological and practical demands had to be renegotiated. As a consequence, that era was defined by the

⁷⁵ Farmer, *The Soviet Administrative Elite*, 39–40.

⁷⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front*, 41.

⁷⁷ Graham, *Science*, 86; Michael David-Fox, “Symbiosis to Synthesis: The Communist Academy and the Bolshevization of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1918-1929,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 46, no. 2 (1998): 219-243.

conflict between the radicals and the moderates.⁷⁸ Thus, 1926 saw the peak and the crisis of the experiment, with moderates getting the upper hand. Educational standards won over the demands to increase the socially acceptable base of the educational elite and a purge of the inadequate representatives of the first wave of the new elite was undertaken.

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The victory was short-lived, however. The advent of the *velikii perelom* (the Great Break) in 1928 signaled yet another swing of the pendulum.⁸⁰ Stalin's decision to champion the reawakening of the simmering embers of the class war was widely supported by the party, which—as most recent scholarship agrees—was never easy with the “temporary retreat” of NEP.⁸¹ The ideology would now be the primary focus, as the attacks on the old intelligentsia coincided with the attempt to once again promote their replacements, the Red Experts who would combine ideological purity and technical expertise.

Bailes argued convincingly that the increased fervor in the regime's attack on the technical intelligentsia was not due simply to Stalin's attempt to ride the anti-intellectual resentment to power. Rather he placed the Shakhty Trial of 1928 and the Industrial Party affair of 1930—the show trials that bracketed the Great Break—in the context of the totalitarian model of historiography. Bailes saw it as a result of conscious evaluation by the regime of the growing threat of the formation of a rival nexus of social ideology—

⁷⁸ J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 13–15.

⁷⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front*, 96–99.

⁸⁰ Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks, 1918–1929* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 254–255.

⁸¹ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 16–17.

technocracy.⁸² The state had heavily propagandized technical education as a mark of status in the new regime. By the end of the 1920s, the Party had grown wary of having created a rival center of power and moved decisively against the technical intelligentsia that was becoming socially conscious as a separate social class, presenting a rival and depoliticized vision of modernization and showing a tendency to strive for a greater political role. Some among the technical intelligentsia began advancing the vision of engineers as the pragmatic, rational, and apolitical architects of society.⁸³ As Loren Graham argued, “most engineers from the old regime were enthusiastic about the potential offered by a planned socialist economy, and spoke out only against irrational choices by the Stalinist leadership.”⁸⁴

What they saw as objections against irrationality, the regime saw as an assault on the ideological foundations of the system and a threat to party’s legitimacy. Whether or not the threat-assessment was realistic, or a product of the siege mentality of the party, the assault on the Experts was tremendously destructive. And although it did not result in the achievement of the party’s goal of enthronement of the completely ideologically and socially loyal service elite, the mixed results produced by the Great Break came very close. The old elite could not be completely discarded and once again an accommodation had to be reached. A turn in the educational priority was one of the concessions made, as the practical—primarily engineering—education was now made a priority, with the social sciences losing their prominence.⁸⁵

⁸² Bailes, *Technology and Society*, 97, 116.

⁸³ Loren R. Graham, *Ghost of the Executed Engineer: Technology and the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993), 34.

⁸⁴ Graham, *Ghost*, 50.

⁸⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and the Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 129.

Unlike the previous armistice of 1926, however, the character of the administrative class was wholly changed by 1931. As the revisionist school demonstrated, the *vydvizhentsy* (the workers promoted into higher education) made tremendous inroads into the upper strata of the Soviet society that could not be rolled back.⁸⁶ While not a pure Red Elite, the result of the Great Break was an amalgam of old and new, where the elements loyal to the new order predominated.

In that respect, despite the cost to the society, the Great Break could have been called a success—had it, in actuality, moved the equilibrium from the dead center. That was, however, not the case—it did not solve the fundamental problem of Ideology vs. Expertise, but rather recast it into different terms, internalizing it to the party itself. The problems of finding a balance between compromised standards and compromised ideological purity remained, as *vydvizhentsy* struggled with the duties that often overwhelmed their inadequate preparation and the old elite was slow in accepting them as equals.⁸⁷ Yet, notably, the influence of the pragmatists in the party was slowly growing, as the evolving bureaucratic apparatus of the industry and the state grew cognizant of the need for the technocratic expertise. Thus, lobbying by the Vesenkha (Supreme Council for National Economy) and various regional party organizations was extremely influential in drawing the pogrom of the nonparty experts to a close.⁸⁸

The upheaval of the late 1920s would be replayed again, but in its future incarnations it would take place primarily within the context of the intraparty conflict. In fact, the foreshadowing of these processes was clear in the immediate aftermath of the

⁸⁶ Vadim Volkov, “The Concept of Kul’turnost’: Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process,” in *Stalinism: the New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), 215.

⁸⁷ Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 59.

⁸⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Education*, 147.

Great Break, as the new elite was tested in the cauldron of the first five-year plan and what Lewin referred to as the “quicksand society.” The results were not encouraging as the regime’s intent to control the course of events it set in motion far outstripped its ability to do so and the Plan became trapped by unrealistic goals and inadequate cadres.⁸⁹

Emergence of the Party-State and its Internalization of the Core Problems

It was also throughout the same era that the Bolshevization of the educated classes occurred, as they made the decision that they could live, coexist, and work with the regime and within the party. As Bailes argued, it was not a great departure, since the modernizing program of the largely urban party coincided readily with the ideals that have defined the technical intelligentsia of Russia since the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ By cutting short the excesses of the Great Break, the state signaled its willingness to compromise on the cultural values of the emergent professional class; by adopting the campaign for *kul’turnost’* it signaled its willingness to accommodate the strata it so desperately needed to form the new administrative class.⁹¹

The tirades of the Soviet leadership against the crassness and corruptibility of the materialist culture and its trappings gave way to the permissiveness and even encouragement of the new class of consumers.⁹² Consumerism, in fact, was now redefined as a pathway to achieving the prized level of cultural development. It is within that framework that the Soviet variation on the social entity resembling the Western middle class was germinated. And the members of that—still very amorphous and yet

⁸⁹ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 73.

⁹⁰ Bailes, *Technology and Society*, 409–10.

⁹¹ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, 218.

⁹² Catriona Kelly and Vadim Volkov, “Directed Desires: *Kul’turnost’* and Consumption” in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolutions, 1881–1940*, ed. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 291–93.

growing caste—were all too eager to take the regime up on its offer, offering loyalty, cooperation and, expertise. Yet, much like NEP as a whole, the *kul'turnost'* campaign rested on an uncertain foundation of theoretical conflict and could not last. “The idea of material acquisition as a perfectly justifiable reward for honest toil cut across a key tenet of Soviet labor ideology: that work should be its own reward.”⁹³ This contradiction would eventually form the background for Stalin’s triumph and the end the NEP. The reassessment of the New Economic Policy would not occur in isolation, but rather as part of a systemic re-evaluation of what the new accommodation with the service elite meant for the party.

Specifically, the regime became increasingly concerned about the social composition of the party that was being rapidly affected by the new compromise with the white collar professionals. The traditional policy of the party from its inception had been an unrelenting focus on maintaining its identity as the vanguard of the proletariat. As soon as the civil war ended, the pressure began to mount, expressed most forcefully by Alexander Shliapnikov and Alexandra Kollontai during the Tenth Party Congress in March of 1921. Representing the Workers’ Opposition, in one of the most savage of the factional fights, Kollontai demanded that the party reassert its identity as the representative of the workers and require the immediate “expulsion from the party of all non-proletarian elements . . . and the elimination of all non-workers’ elements from all administrative positions.”⁹⁴ But the crowning encapsulation of the Opposition’s argument was delivered by Shliapnikov at the Eleventh Party Congress, when answering Lenin’s pragmatic rhetoric, he rejoined acidly, “Vladimir Ilich said yesterday that the proletariat

⁹³ Ibid., 312.

⁹⁴ Robert V. Daniels, ed., *A Documentary History of Communism*. Volume I: Communism in Russia, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1984), 135.

as a class, in the sense that Marx meant, does not exist. Permit me to congratulate you on being the vanguard of a non-existent class.”⁹⁵

The Opposition was resoundingly defeated, but their thesis was fundamentally correct, reflecting the needs asserted by the very ideology that gave the party its purpose. Despite the fact that Lenin’s assertion was literally true, and in the wake of the civil war the nascent Russian working class had disintegrated, the idea of admitting that they were a militant party with no substantial social roots was anathema to the Bolsheviks. The attempts to create such a connection, sometimes through the flimsiest of bureaucratic maneuvers and definitions, would persist throughout the prewar era.

Even a decade later in 1929, the echo of that need to maintain the constant and overwhelming influx of the proletariat in order to remain ideologically pure was echoed by the Central Committee Resolution of 7 January 1921, which “required that 90% of all recruits in industrial areas and 70% in rural areas should be workers in production.”⁹⁶ By 1927, almost half of the party claimed working-class roots, and that claim was of incalculable value in speeding one’s progress up the career ladder within the apparatus.

The trends in the social composition of the party from 1925 to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War are readily traceable in the party’s statistics.⁹⁷ The percentage of the proletariat in the party grew sporadically but steadily through the 1920s and 1930s, reaching the ceiling of 46.3 percent in 1930. And when the party arranged the data by social position rather than current occupation, the trend was even more dramatic. It showed workers clearly in the ascendance throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. Starting with 41 percent in 1921, their percentage within the party grew rapidly, and soon

⁹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, 32.

⁹⁶ Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1959), 437.

⁹⁷ “Rost i sostav partii,” RGANI (1 February 1941) f. 77, op. 1, d. 15, l.25.

plateaued at approximately 60 percent. In fact, in the decade between 1929 and 1938 it never dropped never below 61.4 percent, fluctuating for most of that time period between that number and reaching the high mark of 66.4 percent in 1931.⁹⁸

Whichever classification or definition one uses, the end of the civil war clearly marked the start of the, sometimes slow but always sure, rise of the workers within the ranks of the party. By 1933 the “toilers of industry” reached their apogee in assuming the clear majority within the party through the sometimes murky definition of their social origin, while the representatives of petty bourgeoisie and various professionals were reduced to 7.6 percent. The reversal came shockingly quickly as the Great Break ran its course and the white collar professionals began flooding the party in numbers that took the regime by surprise and forced it into another cycle of futile attempts to resolve the old issue of finding the proper balance between ideology and expertise.

It was Stalin’s speech in February 1931 that, judging by the statistical data, marked the real turn in policy. It was then that he rehabilitated “the specialists of the old school” and informed a convention of economic managers and industrial leaders that class struggle alone was not at fault for the extent of wrecking uncovered by the Shakhty trial. “We are to blame,” Stalin proclaimed. “Had we handled the business of industrial management differently, had we started much earlier to learn the technique of business, to master technique, had we more frequently and efficiently intervened in the management of production, the wreckers could not have done so much damage.”⁹⁹

Closing the door on class warfare, Stalin pointed the party toward technical education, implicitly signaling the temporary lessening of political literacy. When, a few

⁹⁸ “Spravka,” RGANI (18 August 1953) f.5, op. 15, d.409, l.47.

⁹⁹ I. V. Stalin, “O zadachakh khozaistvennikov,” *Pravda* February 5, 1931.

years later, Stalin proclaimed that “cadres decide everything,” he, in some ways, simply recognized the *fait accompli*—the composition of the party already reflected the slogan, with the professionals forming the majority strata of the party for the first time.¹⁰⁰ The improvements in the industrial and agricultural spheres swiftly followed, paralleled by a more positive reaction toward the regime from the intelligentsia.¹⁰¹ Yet this change in course and demographics—arguably inevitable due to the onset of the first Five-Year Plan and all that it represented—would mark an enduring feature of the new party. Although the tug of war between “puritans and pragmatists” would continue—the party that would enter and endure the war would be an organism composed primarily of the clerical personnel, salaried professionals employed for the most part directly by the state and party institutions.

Their growth would eventually reach the tempo that would evoke alarm and prompt measures aimed at curtailing the dominance of that class within the party ranks, but throughout the 1930s, the influx of white collar workers into the party continued to increase precipitously, reaching the unprecedented figure of 62.5 percent by 1941. Thus their proportion essentially doubled in one decade.¹⁰² The 1930s represented the triumph of the technocrats within the party, just as the 1920s culminated in their muzzling as an outside force.

The task set by Stalin in 1931 was deceptively simple—to forever free themselves from dependence on the uncertain loyalty of the intelligentsia, the Communists had to educate and involve themselves in the every aspect of industry and economy. “We must

¹⁰⁰ “Rost i sostav partii,” RGANI (1 February 1941) f. 77, op. 1, d. 15, l.25.

¹⁰¹ R. Balandin, S. Mironov, *Zagovory i bor'ba za vlast': ot Lenina do Khrushcheva* (Moscow: Veche, 2003), 138–39.

¹⁰² “Rost i sostav partii,” RGANI (1 February 1941) f. 77, op. 1, d. 15, l.25.

ourselves become the experts, masters of the business; we must turn to technical science—such was the lesson life itself was teaching us.”¹⁰³ The problem in this call for the Communists to become technocrats occurred when the path of the least resistance was taken through the speedy and mass co-optation of the non-Communists already possessing the necessary skills to run the increasingly complex industrial state.

If in 1928 only 1.2 percent of the specialists and professionals were Communists, by the start of the Great Patriotic War that proportion reached 20.5 percent.¹⁰⁴ The unforeseen consequence of this massive infusion of white collar workers into the party ranks was that, while it indisputably assisted the Communists in achieving a higher level of general education, the new candidates and members brought with them a considerably lighter focus on the ideological literacy and political learning.

This should not be construed as a suggestion that the new generation was less loyal—but the new wave of Communists and *vydvizhentsy* defined their loyalty differently. Less concerned with the minutiae and arcana of the Marxist debates, they instead concentrated on achieving practical, technological expertise.¹⁰⁵ This was a necessary compromise for a party increasingly composed of young professionals and concerned with digesting and consolidating the gains of almost fifteen years of intensive efforts that utterly exhausted the party as well as the society. The revolutionaries were becoming managers and increasingly experiencing mission creep, extending the party’s authority into the everyday management of industry, agriculture, and the entire economy, rather than limiting it to political oversight.

¹⁰³ Stalin, “O zadachakh...”

¹⁰⁴ T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR 1917–1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 409.

¹⁰⁵ V. Z. Rogovin, *Stalinskii neonep* (Moscow, 1994), 351.

As the insatiable demand of the industrializing Soviet Union demanded the expansion of managerial class, expediency demanded the melding of the party with the technocracy. The impact of this synergetic process of amalgamation can be readily seen in the changing level of political literacy. If in 1937, 5.5 percent of the secretaries had higher party-political education and 11.6 percent of them completed the secondary level of their ideological studies, by 1941 these proportions suffered a dramatic and sharp drop.¹⁰⁶ Only 1.2 percent had higher political education and less than 8 percent could claim secondary.¹⁰⁷ The revolutionaries had become managers.

The party was not blind to the process and attempted to counter it. Thus the 1920s and 1930s saw a substantial investment in party education. By 1934 there were already more than four million students in the vast network of the party schools, courses, night universities, etc. The white collar professionals entering the party, however, swamped its system for ideological indoctrination, proving it inadequate for the task.

This, in fact, occasioned yet another cycle in the 1932–1933 purge that attempted to stem the tide, to purge the most egregious of politically illiterate Communists out of the party and to heavily increase investment in political education.¹⁰⁸ That impetus, however, petered out very quickly, and as most scholars agree, the Terror that would follow a few years later would once again see a regime heavily favoring the *vydvizhentsy* and technocrats.¹⁰⁹ Between 1934 and 1939 more than five hundred thousand Communists were promoted to leading party positions. A large portion of these party

¹⁰⁶ “O sostave sekretarei pervichnykh organizatsii ne osvobozhdennykh ot osnovnoi raboty,” RGANI (1 January 1937) f.77, op.1, d.1, l.10–l.11ob.

¹⁰⁷ “Sostav sekretarei pervichnykh partiinykh organizatsii,” RGANI (1 January 1941) f.77, op.1, d.2, l.115.

¹⁰⁸ Roi Medvedev and Zhores Medvedev, *Neizvestnyi Stalin* (Moscow: Vremia, 2007), 498; Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 21.

¹⁰⁹ Farmer, *The Soviet Administrative Elite*, 60

members moved into the newly created positions of the rapidly expanding party apparatus that was growing even as hundreds of thousands of Communists were being expelled, convicted, and executed.¹¹⁰

The new elite, the *vydvizhentsy* and the white collar professionals, the Communists who had acquired the prerequisite skills for running the rapidly modernizing Soviet Union, filled their niche. Stalin himself referenced the timing of the purge and its connection to the emergence of the new Communist technocracy, in the same terms, in his speech to the 1937 Plenum of the VKP(b). He remarked that the grand process of cleansing the party had to be delayed until the new wave of loyal professionals was educated and made ready to step into the breach.

Inevitably, however, the Terror itself had to be brought short, as the party began to be concerned over the technocrats within its ranks rapidly outnumbering the ideological core. The emphasis of the education of the new Communists pouring into the party now shifted slightly, with the focus primarily, yet again, on the political rather than technical education, on the expansion of the qualified Bolshevik cadres.¹¹¹

Yet another signal that the priority was once again shifting toward the ideological quality of the Communists was a series of directives from the center excoriating the party apparatus for compromising the individual vetting standards of party admission. These were, of course, structured primarily to ascertain the would-be Communist's political purity. Such procedures, however, were increasingly abandoned by the local organizations in favor of mass admissions. Thus, in 1939, the Altai region party organization expanded through the admission of the candidates by 58.9 percent, the

¹¹⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front*, 176–78.

¹¹¹ *Pravda*, 29 March 1937.

Krasnoiarsk region party organization by 57.3 percent, the organization of the Chernigovsk *oblast* by 54.1 percent, and that of the Irkutsk *oblast* by 74.5 percent.¹¹²

The Central Committee resolutions decried the facts of mass admission by the *pervichnye* (or the primary) party organizations, *raikoms*, and *gorkoms*. These organizations, the Kremlin complained, were admitting practically anyone who wished to join the party, with 90–95 percent of the applicants being admitted. And this flood of new members underwent only the barest of vetting, with a dozen or more applications being reviewed at a single party meeting.¹¹³ Worse yet, far from fulfilling their oversight function, the *obkoms* and *kraikoms* were plagued by the same bad habits.

In a memo to Stalin on 29 October 1937, Georgii Malenkov outlined the rough blueprint of the shifting political landscape. Examining the ongoing process, he complained that “while the great work of purging Trotskyite-Fascist agents is being done, some party organizations and their leaders make serious errors, which complicate the process. . . . Despite the repeated orders from the TsK, local party organizations often take incorrect and lighthearted approach to expulsion of the communists.”¹¹⁴ He went on to outline specific faults of the overly enthusiastic party cleansers, noting the collective, overly bureaucratic, and soulless approach to the review of the expulsion cases, instead of the needed individual work with every Communist.

Malenkov pointed out the deficient reviews of the cases, often conducted with no interviews of the accused, and very poor review of the attached documentation. He noted that mass expulsions had become the norm, in a flagrant violation of the party principles.

¹¹² “Ob ustranении недостатков руководства в местных партийных организациях в деле приема новых членов в партию,” RGASPI (10 July 1940) f.17, op.3, d.1025, l.135.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “Проект закрытого письма ЦК ВКП(б) об ошибках парторганизации при исключении коммунистов,” RGASPI (29 October 1937) f.83, op.1, d.9, l.11–1.25.

Meanwhile the reviews of appeals had also suffered, individual case review had given way to mass work, with sometimes hundreds of appeals being sorted through at one bureau session by *obkoms* and *kraikoms*, with the inevitable consequences of inattention to details and a propensity for one-size-fits-all solutions.¹¹⁵ In the winter of 1938, the Central Committee Plenum mirrored Malenkov's memorandum from the previous year almost to the letter.

Among other reasons accounting for this aspect of the party work was the same trait that inculcated the flaws decried in Malenkov's letter and later in the Central Committee's Resolution. In fact it was the same reason that prompted those documents to begin with. The enduring shortages of the qualified personnel drove the local organizations toward a myriad of practices that allowed them to save the time of their overburdened and undermanned personnel, but a vicious circle was thus created. Until the shortfalls in the manpower could be replenished, the party principles of the individual admissions, expulsions, and appeals would continue to be routinely violated, abandoned instead in favor of the mass, collective reviews and hearings.

Thus the Resolution adopted by the Eighteenth Congress called on the party to abandon the mass work-habits of the Terror that eschewed the individualized approach toward each Communist and often resulted in the abridgement of the party members' rights.¹¹⁶ Yet the call fell on deaf ears. Until the methods being decried by the Congress succeeded in reinforcing the party ranks, they simply could not be abandoned. The relative and absolute scarcity of the trained Bolshevik cadre precluded the application of

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. III* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1954), 368, 375.

the individualized and thorough vetting of the new members that characterized the pre-Revolutionary party and still remained the ideal.

Pressed for reinforcements and constrained by the lack of professional cadres, the party was, once again, being swamped by the “opportunists, random people and wreckers.” When the war came, the trends were clearly visible—with four years of growth following the end of the Terror, the Kremlin was once again straining to slow down the explosive growth of the party and searching for the way to communicate the urgency of this shift of policy to the seemingly oblivious periphery.

Throughout the same era, lacking a credible check on their power, the reach of the party continued to spread steadily, only exacerbating the problem. As the Five-Year Plans began to take effect, the strain became all the greater—leading to the sequence of institutional reforms of the 1930s that mirrored the hurried improvisation of the personnel policies. The acute shortage of cadres was publicly admitted at the Sixteenth Party Congress. Apart from other measures, this resulted in structural changes within the Secretariat of the Central Committee. What followed was a focus on the specific management of the cadres and creation of two departments to deal specifically with cadres throughout the party: the Department of Organization and Instruction, and the Department of Assignment.¹¹⁷

The Cyclical of the Party Reforms

These changes, however, simply could not cope with the fundamental problems of the personnel shortage and in 1934 another program of reform was unveiled. This time the party attempted to organize its work by the branches of economy rather than by the

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat, 1939–1948* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 16.

party functions, resulting in nine new industrial departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Planning, etc. Each Department was responsible for all party work within its area of responsibility—be it agitation or organization and instruction.¹¹⁸

The by now familiar sequence of events unfolded as the interminable argument raged between the ideologues and technocrats—now all ensconced within the party. The former argued, justly, that the reorientation toward industrial-branch departments would result in the de-emphasis of ideological expertise. They were trying to fight the rising tide, however. As industrialization picked up speed it resulted in increased focus and the spread of direct party influence over the economic functions of the state. In practice, this inevitably meant the diffusion of the party's focus as they encroached on the supposed functions of the state (soviet) organs and industrial or economic institutions.¹¹⁹

In 1934, Stalin, speaking for the victorious technocrats, reported to the Seventeenth Party Congress that: “The bureaucrats have long become past masters in the art of demonstrating their loyalty to party and government decisions in words and pigeon holing them in deed. In order to overcome these difficulties it was necessary to raise the level to put an end to the disparity between our organizational work and the requirements of the political line of the party; it was necessary to raise the level of organizational leadership in all spheres of the national economy to the level of political leadership; it was necessary to see to it that our organizational work guarantees the practical realizations of the political slogans and decisions of the party.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 289.

¹¹⁹ Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat*, 17–20.

¹²⁰ Stalin, *Leninism*, 352.

The industrial departments were in many ways a direct result of these directives, since the party was the institution that ultimately had to be responsible for overseeing the implementation of its orders, of raising the level of the economic leadership. But put in this position, the party inevitably usurped more and more the direct duties of the industrial managers. Paralleling the trend that was playing out within the dynamic of the party organs and the soviets, the party was inexorably moving deeper into the spheres of responsibility it originally meant simply to oversee and mobilize.

Moreover, distributing the responsibility of the personnel allocation to the industrial branches once again de-emphasized the demands on ideological preparedness. And so, at the end of the Great Terror, in concert with a greater effort to renew the political purity of the party, the apparatus was reformed yet again. In 1939, the Eighteenth Party Congress dissolved the industrial departments.¹²¹ Among the cited harmful effects were their competition for qualified cadres and their lost focus, neglecting the political and party-organizational work and concerning themselves with the concrete job of economic management, and, as a consequence, progressively undercutting the managers' autonomy and sense of responsibility.¹²²

The Cadre Department presided over by Malenkov now controlled all the issues pertaining to personnel allocation and organization, while Andrei Zhdanov's Department of Propaganda and Agitation oversaw the education and ideological instruction. In macabre irony, the entire sequence of reforms brought the party back exactly to the status

¹²¹ Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896–1948* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 181, 186–87.

¹²² A. A. Zhdanov, *Izmeneniia v ustave VKP(b). Tezisy doklada tov A. Zhdanova na XVIII s'ezde VKP(b), odobrenie v osnovnom Politburo TsK VKP(b)* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1939).

quo ante of 1934. Moreover, yet again, this amounted largely to cosmetic changes, while the Great Terror exacerbated the underlying problem of understaffing.¹²³

Predictably, the somewhat frenetic and schizophrenic series of reforms threw the party apparatus into confusion as each change reverberated and had to be adapted throughout the system. By 1941, the latest slate of reforms was again a failure and Malenkov successfully advocated formal recognition of the spontaneous reassertion of greater party control over the economic life of the country that had taken place in the interim. The Eighteenth Party Conference recognized the process officially, ordering the local party organs to create the post of a secretary specifically tasked with oversight and management of the agricultural and industrial matters of their district or region.¹²⁴ The sequence was beginning anew.

Again and again, the interminable need of the state for qualified cadres emerges as a fundamental feature of the sociopolitical environment, driving the regime to its repeated willingness to tolerate not simply questionable educational standards, but also the dilution of ideological literacy. The compromise in the qualitative level of the *vydvizhentsy* was an acceptable trade-off for the rapid quantitative expansion of the new administrative elite. And the compromised political education was worth the professionalization of the party, which was quickly becoming synonymous with the managerial class as its role grew, inexorably attempting to regulate every aspect of the economy.¹²⁵ Unsurprisingly, the manpower shortages continued to plague, and in no small measure, define the policies of the party-state, intensified by the still-fragile infrastructure.

¹²³ Gill, *The Origins*, 290.

¹²⁴ *KPSS v Resoliutsiiakh*, Volume 5, (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), 463.

¹²⁵ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 292, 293.

Neil Weissman's research into the new regime's attempts to police the countryside is invaluable in terms of outlining the problems that ring eerily familiar. He shows step by step how the first revolutionary impetus of the Bolsheviks to do away with the traditional policing methods fell by the wayside, victim to an endemic and profound manpower shortage. In fact, the Soviet militia was almost 30 percent smaller than the Imperial police.¹²⁶ The recruitment of unqualified personnel soon followed—underpaid and overworked, effectively out of the center's control for long periods of time due to a poor communication net—these policemen with only the barest links to the tsarist police soon recreated the same arbitrary and violent style of rule.¹²⁷ The Great Terror was, in many respects, a logical outgrowth of these enduring features.

The Great Purges in Context: Cadres Decide Everything

The historiographical discourse over the roots, processes, and consequences of the Purges is still far from resolved, with the latest reassessment being offered in the wake of the declassification of the Soviet archives. In many ways, the Terror has become the test case of the entire Stalinist order, used by scholars as an illustration of how the system functioned, or did not. The totalitarian model advanced by early Western scholars of the Great Purges, like Conquest, Rigby, and Brzezinski, envisioned a rigidly disciplined and seamlessly efficient terror apparatus operating according to a detailed plan sketched out and directed by Stalin, "an operation planned in Moscow and carried into effect by missions from the center almost everywhere destroyed the old Party, raising up instead

¹²⁶ Neil Weissman, "Policing the NEP Countryside," in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 178.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

from the rank and file a special selection of enthusiasts for a new organization of terrorists and denouncers.”¹²⁸ This thesis was also supported by the post-Khrushchev Russian scholars—represented most notably by Roy Medvedev.

After a long dominance, this school was challenged by the revisionist model of the 1980s. J. Arch Getty, most preeminently, argued that the party as a whole, and the Terror itself, were much more of a ramshackle affair than previously envisioned. Most famously, Getty conceptualized the Terror in the context of the center-periphery power conflict between Moscow and the regional leadership. This thesis was supported and elaborated by the concurrent works of authors like Fitzpatrick, Gabor Rittersporn, and Lewin. Their scholarship articulated a vision of the party with severe command and control problems where the center was often driven by the demands of the grassroots rather than the opposite, a chaotic ever-shifting society controlled by the party-state only in the most general sense.

The revisionist scholarship also challenged its predecessors on a more fundamental approach to studying the Terror as a social dynamic. Thus an enduring criticism of Conquest’s work, for example, was its neglect of the social components of the Terror. As Stephen Kotkin put it, “Conquest’s study pays virtually no attention to the language of accusations and indictments, the international context, the regime’s problems of administration, or of institutional dynamics.”¹²⁹ The revisionists set out specifically to redress that omission, examining the system from the bottom up. However, in a conscious attempt to counter the totalitarian model, this attempt to re-envision history often engaged in interpretation that also proved too radical. Rittersporn’s portrayal of the USSR in the

¹²⁸ Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 277.

¹²⁹ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 284.

1930s sketched out an anarchical and chaotic society, negating almost any role of the party-state as a controlling institution.¹³⁰

As the Russian archival material began to appear in the 1990s, these excesses of the revisionist model allowed Conquest and some of his adherents like David Norlander, fairly legitimately, to claim vindication for their conception of the events in view of the primary sources that show Stalin's direct involvement in the planning and execution of the Terror.¹³¹ The new data has certainly dealt a severe blow to the thesis of the purges driven primarily by the rank and file and the central leadership caught by the events out of their control. Yet the recent scholarship, specifically the seminal work by Kotkin, presents a more balanced view, charting a middle ground between the two schools.

As Kotkin argues, while the center maintained control, its reach was not absolute, and both the population and the factions of the apparatus were able to carve out autonomous niches within the system and negotiate their place within the society.¹³² Conceding that the Terror was ultimately both rational and centrally directed, Kotkin pointed to the Party riven by the factional struggle, consistently overestimating its capacity to exercise direct control and acting as an agent of turmoil rather than stability.¹³³ These fundamental contradictions, in his view, laid the foundations of the Great Purges.

The dilemmas of the Soviet state found their expression in the early, heady days of the victorious Revolution. As early as 1918, the Communist government was

¹³⁰ Gabor Tamas Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR 1933–1953* (Paris: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), 170.

¹³¹ David J. Norlander, "Origins of a Gulag Capital: Magadan and Stalinist Control in the Early 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 4 (1998): 798–801.

¹³² Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 199–201.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 57, 103–4, 291.

confronted with a body politic and state apparatus that were seemingly disintegrating before their very eyes. The early years of the USSR were defined in many ways by the attempt of the Moscow regime to curb the localism of the provincial power centers, be they the Soviets or the partisan commanders.

Thus, very early on, Lenin carefully triangulated the utopian dream of eventually doing away with the tsarist state. He began distinguishing the necessary destruction of the repressive and reactionary features of that edifice from the modern, regulatory aspects of the bureaucratic apparatus that the new regime needed in order to maintain even the most basic grasp on the state.¹³⁴ With time, this theoretical tendency would reach its logical apogee and, in a radically open departure from classical Marxism, the idea of the state “withering away” was loudly and repeatedly repudiated.

At the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930, the new party line held that the state had not yet developed to the pinnacle of its evolution and thus was not yet at the phase of withering. By 1939, a more secure Stalin put the matter even more blandly in his report to the Eighteenth Party Congress. Those Communists waiting for the state to die away were scorned as formalists clinging to the letter rather than the spirit of classical Marxism, betraying their “underestimation of the role and significance of our socialist state and of its military, punitive and intelligence organs, which are essential for the defense of the socialist land from foreign attack.”¹³⁵

This evolution of the theoretical and rhetorical superstructure went on against the backdrop of two decades of constant negotiation of power between the center and the periphery. The danger of localism was predictable, given the history of Russia, and the

¹³⁴ T. H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom 1917–1922* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 13.

¹³⁵ Stalin, *Leninism*, 469.

party attempted to guard against it by maintaining a dual structure of authority. The extent of the powers and responsibilities of the local governmental and state institutions remained unclear and vague. Merle Fainsod argued that this lack of definition was purposeful, part of the strategy by the party to limit the historical tendency of the local authorities to develop illusions of autonomy.

“While they were required to adopt “all appropriate measures for developing the cultural and economic life of the territory” and to solve “all questions of purely local importance,” they were also subject to the control of superior organs in the Soviet hierarchy and were required to execute “all instructions issues by the appropriate higher organs of the Soviet authority.”¹³⁶

Besides the vague delineation of their powers, the soviets were also hobbled by the tight control over their budgets, decided and outlined by the central organs. The role of the party was envisioned primarily as that of the guardian of the proletarian values, an organ of oversight that was to control the morale and subsequently productivity, and to serve as a mechanism of ensuring the loyalty of the state organs, where the danger of “wreckers” could never be discounted. The state would act as the manager of a separate, “neutral” bureaucratic structure responsible for the implementation of the broad policies sketched out by the party. It was the business of the state to govern, it was the duty of the party to keep the state ideologically honest, and Lenin railed against the mixing of the two as early as 1922.¹³⁷ Nor was it simply a convenient fiction or empty rhetoric.

In a country dominated by peasantry with little or no education and where the party remained a select institution of radically outnumbered, enlightened minority, the

¹³⁶ Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 355.

¹³⁷ G. Gimpelson, *Stanovlenie i evoliutsiia sovetskogo gosudarstvennogo apparata upravleniia 1917–1930* (Moscow, 2003), 63.

tedious business of implementing policies, of overseeing the nuts and bolts of governance, had to be at least partially outsourced to the non-Communists and institutions other than the party. Any attempt by the party to do everything would inevitably result in the diffusion of its core identity and purpose as the ideological pathfinder.¹³⁸ In effect, the party would dilute its core strength as the ideological experts in order to become second-rate managers.

The blueprint outlined by a succession of the Bolshevik theorists and leaders sought to prevent that trend. The reality of running the country, however, proved to be more complicated and the tendency toward growth and incursion into the ever-widening circle of duties and responsibilities of the state and society by the party proved to be an irresistible temptation.¹³⁹

The spheres of power refused to stay rigidly separate, due in no small part to the fundamental problem of understaffing of that administrative apparatus and the fragility of the communication and infrastructure network between the center and the periphery. Much like the *voevodes* of Peter's time and the officers of the nineteenth century *zemstvas*, the *obkom* secretaries inevitably found themselves with an increasing degree of autonomy and power within their bailiwicks as their tenure lengthened. Just as in the earlier eras, the lack of qualified personnel was made good through the construction by the local potentates of a coterie of similar-thinking individuals with personal loyalty to the local party apparatus boss rather than the system, in effect contributing to the continuation of the personalized system of patronage rather than professional bureaucracy.

¹³⁸ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 292–94.

¹³⁹ Moshe Lewin, *Stalinism and the Seeds of Soviet Reform: The Debates of the 1960s* (London: Pluto Press, 1974), 295–96.

The soviet organs proved a very tenuous counterweight to their analogues among the party organizations in practice. Since both the state and party institutions were drawing on the common and very limited pool of the educated elite capable of serving as administrators it was only inevitable that they would combine and link their resources. And “as the authority of the party apparatus over other official agencies grew . . . these local cliques took on more and more of clientelist character with the provincial party secretary as patron.”¹⁴⁰ This tendency was further strengthened by the unpredictable nature of Soviet politics, which made the cruder personalized networks more secure and dependable than formal bonds of professional association.

The pressure on the regional party bosses to fulfill and overfull the economic plans also fostered an endemic willingness to turn toward informal channels in order to achieve required results. As a result of these trends, the institutional integrity of the party-state remained irrevocably compromised even as the personalized power networks and systems of favor trading or *blat* crept ever upwards, eventually including the TsK secretaries who engaged in building up factions throughout the party system in their rivalries.¹⁴¹ As Khlevniuk articulated in his biography of Ordzhonikidze, in a system where purges were an acceptable tool of discourse, while their rationale was often a mystery, it became absolutely necessary to acquire a powerful patron who could shield his people through his own personal connection to Stalin.¹⁴²

Thus, throughout the prewar period the term *semeistvennost'* or “familyness” became an integral term of interparty jargon, often cited as a common flaw of the local

¹⁴⁰ Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR*, 69.

¹⁴¹ Gill, *The Origins*, 102.

¹⁴² Oleg Khlevniuk, *In Stalin's Shadow: The Career of Sergo Ordzhonikidze* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 54, 176–77.

organizations and their leaders. More worryingly, the personalized networks spread horizontally as well, including not simply the party apparatchiks but also state functionaries and industrial managers. The often bandied about comparison of the party to the church was coming true in an unforeseen way; the society was corrupting its spiritual guardian faster than the latter could redeem (or re-educate) it. Under the constant pressure to produce results, the ideological overseers often became accomplices of the economic professionals, running interference for them, seeing it “as their function to cope with bureaucratic and political impediments, while the experts handled the business.”¹⁴³

The purges served as a periodic quick fix to the accumulating problems, but the flaws were not a problem but rather a condition of the system. Much as Grozny’s successors, the Soviet state had to discover that while it could always liquidate a regional magnate (or an entire slew of them), the purges did little to solve the underlying social trends. Furthermore the loyal adherents sent out by Moscow to replace the repressed apparatchiks quickly replicated the latter’s behavioral and organizational patterns.¹⁴⁴ Wholesale terror provided only a brief respite from the conundrum, simply exacerbating the preconditions that led to the crisis.

As always, lack of qualified replacements also played a part, limiting the range of options available to the state—often the incompetent leaders were simply transferred to a different locale.¹⁴⁵ In pre-Terror era especially, the latitude was wide and “in cases where Moscow detected any kind of local abuse of power, the republican and provincial party

¹⁴³ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, 164.

¹⁴⁴ Gill, *The Origins*, 315.

¹⁴⁵ Oleg Khlevniuk, “The Stalinist Party ‘Generals’,” in *Centre-Local Relations in the Stalinist State, 1929–1941*, ed. E. A. Rees (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 43, 47.

secretaries generally managed to escape criticism.”¹⁴⁶ The center consistently pushed back against these local fiefs and attempted to maintain control through a variety of channels, the primary attempt being stationing a representative of the Party Control Commission (KPK) as an observer.¹⁴⁷

These modern equivalents of Louis XIV’s *intendants* were sometimes permanently stationed in a certain *oblast*, others acted as roving agents and troubleshooters for the Central Committee, directly presenting data and recommendations to them. In a drawn-out struggle, however, the regional elite usually managed to co-opt these people or force the center to recall those who became too disruptive. The power of the local party grandees was such that the Kremlin’s emissaries were often reluctant to chance their retribution with any real investigation of wrongdoing.¹⁴⁸ The situation was not unique. Thus the KPK’s predecessor-agency (Central Control Commission) had to be shut down in the 1920s, because it became part of the milieu it was supposed to police.¹⁴⁹ The same cycle of fervor fading into complicity would also play out throughout the KPK’s history, eventually leading to its demise.

As James Harris demonstrated, the regional power networks possessed a wide range of tools with which they could influence the center—subversion of the oversight channels was one, another was indefinite delay in the implementation of the central directives even as the provincial party organizations engaged in the ritualized process of

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴⁷ James R. Harris, “Purging Local Cliques in the Urals Region,” in *Stalinism: The New Directions*, ed., Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), 270.

¹⁴⁸ James R. Harris, *The Great Urals: Regionalism and the Evolution of the Soviet System* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 167.

¹⁴⁹ J. Arch Getty, “Pragmatists and Puritans: The Rise and Fall of the Party Control Commission,” *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1208: 3.

promising to fulfill them.¹⁵⁰ “Regional leaders had no power to compel the center to given policy decisions, but taken together their actions created pressured that substantially influenced those decisions.”¹⁵¹

This dynamic would not be unfamiliar to the regime, since it paralleled the complexities plaguing the Kremlin’s attempt to conceptualize its relationship with the armed forces. As the Stalinist state matured in the 1920s and 1930s, its stability would come to rest on the unsteady tripod of the power centers located in the party itself, the security apparatus, and the military. Of these, only the army presented a significant rival to the party, because it was a nexus of its own identity that could exist independently from the Bolshevik idea—if allowed. According to Bailes, the state had faced the emergence of a similar threat vis-à-vis the incipient technocracy and eventually solved it by absorption. The army would present a more complex challenge.

Warrior Priests and Professional Soldiers: Search for Compromise

The party was always uneasy at best in their relationship with the military. The Ancient Regime that reached its apogee in the “long nineteenth century” demonstrated, with seemingly conclusive clarity, that the armies inevitably represented the most reactionary and conservative interests of the society. Classical Marxism saw any army, and the Russian army particularly, as tools of repression and envisioned them withering away (much like the state), giving way to the general arming of the people.¹⁵²

The distrust of the professional military was farther buttressed by the two trends that seemed bound to endure in the long term. For one—lacking the cache of the trained

¹⁵⁰ Harris, *The Great Urals*, 166.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 210.

¹⁵² Yosef Avidar, *The Party and the Army in the Soviet Union* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1985), 9.

military specialists—the Red Army had to rely on the tsarist officers that deigned to cooperate with them. Secondly, the bulk of the Soviet Union’s population was composed of peasants and would remain so for the foreseeable future.¹⁵³ As a consequence, the alternative of the People’s Militia proved stubbornly unwilling to be consigned to the dustbin of history.

The hopes placed into the Red Guard volunteers, however, were dashed outside of Petrograd by the German troops. The party turned to Leon Trotsky, who, within the next few years, created the army that would win the civil war. But success did not bring the legitimization that might have rightfully been expected. In fact, Trotsky himself was far from being a devoted defender of its existence, envisioning the professional army as being an expedient and temporary phenomenon, not a permanent fixture. As early as 1919, he entreated the Seventh Congress of the Soviets that “it is necessary to begin a transition to the realization of the militia system of arming the Soviet Republic.”¹⁵⁴

The argument over these options would persist through most of the 1920s, becoming linked to the party’s factional struggles, but also due to the fact that it would mirror the identical processes taking place through the rest of society. A decentralized, territorial militia formed on the pattern of the guerilla units of the civil war and closely tied to the regional party organization was an expression of localism, just as the professional military directed and controlled from Moscow was the sign of the strengthening, central regime.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Mark von Hagen, “Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship,” in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed., Fitzpatrick, Rabinowitch, and Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 158.

¹⁵⁴ Leon Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed Itself*. Vol. II, Book I (Moscow, 1924), 16.

¹⁵⁵ Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 42.

The apogee of that facet of this conflict came at the Ninth Party Congress in 1920. Marking the victory of the civil war and lack of any immediate threat, the Congress was a qualified triumph for the opponents of the professional military. It decreed “to begin a very gradual transition to a militia army, while it cautioned that any change in the international situation that threatened the security of Soviet Russia would suspend the implementation of the reform.”¹⁵⁶ Such a change was not slow in coming. Following the Polish invasion of the same year, the tide turned inexorably, resulting first in the compromise system where a territorial militia supplemented the army, and eventually a full transition to a professional military.

Stalin, who paradoxically was Trotsky’s main opponent in the latter’s quest to dismantle his own creation, was no less suspicious of the professional military establishment than the Military Opposition he defeated. And thus the maintenance of ideological and practical control over the Red Army became a paramount issue. It would also become the new battlefield of the old dilemmas as the parochialist tendency fought the centralizing impetus. The latter—as always—was farther hampered by the fragile infrastructure of the country that made speedy collection of data and transmission of orders problematic.

The prize of the conflict was a redefined but still familiar goal of controlling the military, now no longer cast in the rhetoric of army vs. militia, but rather in the struggle over the political control system foisted on the army. The system for exerting such oversight emerged haphazardly during the course of the civil war and would be codified and refined in the following decades. The most controversial feature of the emergent

¹⁵⁶ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 120.

system would be rigid separation of the civilian party structure from the political system entrenched within the military. The two existed in parallel to each other and the military party network answered directly to the Central Committee, not to its civilian counterparts.

This was not an easy or the most logical decision and, as this arrangement emerged, it faced persistent challenges. The impetus for such a challenge was twofold. The prospect of eliminating a separate party branch tasked specifically with the oversight of the military and answerable directly to the center would result in that task devolving into a regional civilian party organization that would take the responsibilities of overseeing the locally stationed forces.¹⁵⁷ It would also eliminate the danger of co-optation and corruption of the party functionaries by the rival ethos of the army. This was no idle fear—in time the military would be brazen enough to offer itself as an alternative to the factory as a model of disciplining the populace and as a more efficient tool for producing a New Soviet Man.¹⁵⁸

It is significant to remember the origin of the party networks that eventually would go on to form the nuclei of the Soldiers' Committees and the party organizations tasked with controlling the Red Army. Originally this system was established for the purpose of subversion within the tsarist military machine.¹⁵⁹ These organizations attracted some of the most radical Communists, whose distrust of the authority sometimes verged on anarchistic. Most were devoted to the task of fully democratizing the reactionary institution of the army and equally committed to maintaining their own independence from the center. Their zeal in this regard often plunged Trotsky into

¹⁵⁷ Avidar, *The Party and the Army*, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 250.

¹⁵⁹ John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History 1918-1941* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1962), 3-5.

helpless rage, causing him to send a despairing request to Lenin in 1918: “Send me communists who know how to obey.”¹⁶⁰

He did not remain helpless or despairing for long, however, and in remarkably short time the army and the Communists within it were subject to the most exacting standard of discipline in the Soviet Union. Throughout the civil war and its immediate aftermath, the haphazard party structure of the spontaneously established and stubbornly autonomous cells was centralized and structured under the command of PURKKA—the Political Administration of Worker-Peasant Red Army. That achievement was not accomplished without a fight.

In 1918, at the height of the party’s distrust of the military, there were as many as five party agencies charged with directing the political work within the armed forces. As the authority slowly coalesced under a single entity of PURKKA, the civilian party bureaucracy revolted and, in 1922, demanded that the control over the political education within the army and the navy be placed under the jurisdiction of the civilian party authority—the Main Political Enlightenment Council.¹⁶¹ The military Communists, maintaining the autonomy of party structure within the armed forces, resoundingly defeated the challenge.

This was an important landmark. Education was never underestimated as the tool of power in the Soviet Union, and the army would eventually come to be seen as an important tool, a school for taking peasants and nationalists and remaking them into Communists, inculcated with the necessary skills of Russian language and the basics of

¹⁶⁰ Schapiro, 258–59.

¹⁶¹ Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders and the Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 10.

the state's governing ideology.¹⁶² Another attack was beaten back in 1924 when the civilian party organs demanded the revocation of an earlier decree that granted the military party apparatus extraterritoriality, placing the party cells of the garrisons and field forces outside the control and oversight of the local district-based party structure. As a result, not only did PURKKA maintain its independence, but it also managed to wrest away control of the political work within the territorial militia. For a while it seemed that the question had been finally settled, as the 1920s ended with resounding victories for the military-political apparatus.

But the unique place occupied by the military in the Soviet order did not free it from the cyclical nature of the Stalinist society. And as the Great Terror would decimate the army, it would also bring with it a rollback of the privileges won painstakingly by the military-political administration. Thus, in the wake of 1937, the civilian party structure would make significant inroads into the hard-won autonomy of its military equivalent by securing a seat on the Military Councils—a composite structure consisting of, besides the political officer himself, the highest-ranking representatives of the military hierarchy—for the secretaries of the local party committees.¹⁶³ The resurrection of this recently defunct organ was due to the same trends that trapped the civilian party apparatus within a paradox of attempting to strike a careful balance between ideological purity and professionalism, while hampered by the lack of qualified cadres.

As the military-political complex established its bona fides as an autonomous bureaucratic organism, it began its inevitable, inexorable growth, paralleling the similar phenomenon taking place on a grander scale throughout the entire society. In fact, Kotkin

¹⁶² Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers* 297.

¹⁶³ Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*, 58.

explicitly traces the process of the party apparatus co-optation of the duties of industrial and economic managers to the origins of the commissar system.¹⁶⁴ After the initial centralization, the PURKKA had been organized in rough equivalence to a scaled-down version of the Central Committee, with subservient departments and compartments structured around a specific task—propaganda and agitation, organizational-party work, personnel resources, or media distribution.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, however, the structure grew, adding specialized branch bureaus tasked with the political work within specific types of military arms—armor, infantry, navy, or air force. An equivalent of the industrial departments being instituted throughout the civilian party structure was thus established within the military system as well. The consequences were, unsurprisingly, identical, as the party had to expand its focus from its core strength of maintaining ideological purity to administrative minutiae. As a later head of PURKAA, A. Epishev put it, “The political administrations and departments are, in terms of content and character of their work, party organs. But in the same time they carry out the functions of a military-political apparatus, and in connection with this they are provided with defined administrative rights.”¹⁶⁵

The conflict between the military and ideological experts characterized the Red Army from the moment of its very inception due to the ideological unreliability of the tsarist “military specialists.” Once again it contextualized how handicapped the party-state was by the lack of suitable recruits for its service elite and how shackled it was to a very limited range of remedies, each successively coming short of providing a real solution.

¹⁶⁴ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 292.

¹⁶⁵ Colton, *Commissars*, 23.

At first the party simply occupied the “commanding heights” within the army by establishing a tight network of cells and political officers capable of controlling the officer cadre. This dual structure of command was originally envisioned as a stopgap measure, theoretically serving as a system of checks and balances until a generation of the loyal soldiers and officers could be educated and brought in to replace the leftovers of the tsarist order. These new Red Commanders would need no ideological supervision.¹⁶⁶ The reality proved to be more complicated, however. The military specialists rapidly became an overwhelming minority within the army. By 1920 forty thousand Red Commanders were graduated by the Soviet schools and the proportion of the officers trained before the Revolution dropped to 15.5 percent.¹⁶⁷ The trend only intensified as the time went on.

The upper ranks of the military structure were saturated with party members and candidates as Mikhail Frunze embarked on the openly articulated policy of “Communizing” the military bureaucracy. The percentage of Communists in the central military administration rose quickly from 12 to 25 percent, and this twofold increase was achieved in only one year.¹⁶⁸ By 1924, Frunze was well on his way in his goal to free up positions occupied by the military specialists for the younger generation of the Soviet military leaders. Within a decade “the proportion of the Red Army Officers who were party members or candidates . . . reached 68 percent.”¹⁶⁹

Yet these new entrants to the party and innumerable Communists that would follow them presented a problem to the regime. These new Bolsheviks tended to

¹⁶⁶ Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, 42.

¹⁶⁷ Colton, *Commissars*, 40

¹⁶⁸ Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, 175

¹⁶⁹ Rigby, *Communist Party Membership*, 247.

compromise their political expertise in favor of their military profession, some being described by their commissars as politically indifferent.¹⁷⁰ The need to “address the problem of inadequate officer political preparation” resulted in substantial investment into a military program of ideological indoctrination throughout the mid 1920s.¹⁷¹

Due to such troublesome signs, and the fact that the suspicion previously incurred by the holdovers of the Imperial army was now transferred to non-Communist cadres, the institution of political supervision remained highly relevant as the bulwark and check on the still distrusted army. The balance of power between the commissars and the commanders reflected the vacillating policy of the party, as it veered from a focus on the professional performance to political supervision. Thus if the 1917–1925 cycle was defined by the dominance of the political apparatus, the subsequent decade would see the tide turn as the threat of “capitalist encirclement” would force another reassessment and the need for professionalization would make temporary inroads into the power of political oversight.

Already in June of 1924, the Central Committee ratified the principle of unified command, advocating eventual investiture of the commander with military and political authority. Cautioned by the Kremlin to introduce this innovation gradually and carefully, the directive was never more than partially implemented. Yet it still represented a significant marker and would define the next ten years. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, the political officers would find their powers progressively curtailed even as the military professionals won entrance into the party-state’s elite, and could be assured

¹⁷⁰ Sergei Minakov, *Voennaia Elita 20-30kh godov XX veka* (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 2004), 193–94.

¹⁷¹ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers*, 213.

of the economic and social status commensurate with their new role.¹⁷² By 1927, the military commanders were freed from having all of their directives cosigned by their commissar, and the purges of the early 1930s left the army remarkably unscathed.¹⁷³

Such renegotiation of the spheres of authority could not go unchallenged, of course, and the more radical proponents of strict political control over the military staged what amounted to a revolt in 1928, when the head of Tolmachev Academy (an institution devoted specifically to training military party workers) publicly demanded a thorough review of the orders to forcibly implement unified command and was heartily supported by similar resolutions in a number of garrisons, including Byelorussia, Ukraine, and Leningrad.¹⁷⁴

The regime's response was quick and efficient—nothing could be allowed to interfere with the rapid industrialization of the army, where Mikhail Tuchachevsky was being given free rein to create a truly professional and modern force.¹⁷⁵ The investment in technical arms required command personnel possessing the necessary education and free to exercise it.¹⁷⁶ Once again the central regime was forced to come to an accommodation with the technocratic wing of its administrative class while compromising its ideological component.

As the enormous investment continued, the military elite did not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity. With the tacit support of the center, political education increasingly took a backseat to inculcation of the troops and the officer cadre with

¹⁷² Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*, 47.

¹⁷³ Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, 204, 374.

¹⁷⁴ Kolton, 87.

¹⁷⁵ Earl F. Ziemke, *The Red Army 1918–1941: From Vanguard of World Revolution to US Ally* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 188.

¹⁷⁶ Kenneth Charles Taylor “The Reorganization of the Soviet Command System for Total War: 1939–1941” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1972), 44, 56

technical expertise.¹⁷⁷ Under pressure for results, the relationship between political and military cadres replicated the dynamic playing out in the regional party organizations and industrial institutions. Faced with stiff penalties in case of failure, the branches that were meant to balance each other began to meld instead, in the face of the common interest and through the ubiquitous personalized cliques.

As in the civilian political organizations, the brunt of the challenge fell on the party apparatus that was being forced by events into the increased expansion of its competency. No longer was it enough for the commissars to be politically reliable, now they were facing demands to help the military professionals in raising the proficiency of the army. Starting in 1932, there was a concerted effort to educate commissars in military matters, thus putting them in an inferior position to commanders, on whose professional ground the political officers could never compete equally.

The consequences were twofold. Firstly, the aforementioned creation of the military elite that included political officers nominally supervising them proceeded apace. Already by the mid 1920s, the military party apparatchik evolved into a unique profession, with demands and features that set it apart (in a complementary fashion) from its civilian counterpart. Separate preparatory institutions like the Tolmachev Academy simply reinforced the point, placing the military party men and women apart.

Throughout the same period, they were being increasingly pushed toward associating with the officer cadre, learning their craft. Starting with Frunze, they were being promised compensations for the de-emphasis of their core purpose and faster promotions as a reward for acquisition of the military education.¹⁷⁸ The allure of the

¹⁷⁷ Avidar, *The Party and the Army*, 46.

¹⁷⁸ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers*, 218.

military rank within a society as militarized as the USSR was immense and continued to rise as the institutional integrity of the army continued to stabilize—its rise in status marked by consistent investment, welfare measures given to the soldiers and officers as well as their rising status.¹⁷⁹

In fact, considerable numbers of the political officers did make the transition, entering military academies and becoming officers outright.¹⁸⁰ Unwittingly or not, the state itself assisted this trend of co-optation as they tried to prevent the repeat of the Tolmachev crisis and attempted to ease friction between the commissars and the commanders. It is indicative of this that many of the military-political officers perished in the purges of the armed forces, rather than those of the party. By the 1930s they had become a breed apart, a fact recognized by themselves and by Stalin.

Similar trends would reveal themselves among the party apparatchiks placed within industry and even agriculture, but they were much more pronounced in the strata of the “military elite.” Throughout this era, the party workers were increasingly being subverted by the military apparatus and co-opted as second-class citizens. Shifting focus from their own area of expertise, and unable to fully focus on acquiring military education, they were filling the niche of administrative and logistical officers and assistants to the military professionals. In 1929 this shift toward the administrative role was officially denied by a statement that the political organs “have the right to cut themselves off from routine operational tasks, which [they] are obliged to facilitate and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 329.

¹⁸⁰ Colton, *Commissars*, 90–91.

serve.”¹⁸¹ As was the case with the KPK, the institution tasked with keeping its target in check was steadily losing its core purpose and being subverted.

Of course such a situation could not endure indefinitely. A number of aborted attempts to limit the damage were made. Thus when the armed forces were granted permission to use military ranks again in 1935, the political officers were left conspicuously out of this privilege, in a quest by the party to bolster their separate identity. Yet the true reversal of the process would come only in 1937.

There are innumerable theories as to the impetus of Stalin’s decision to purge the military establishment, and it is probable that the redress of the balance between the ideological and military experts was part of the framework. The structural reforms of the PURKKA apparatus throughout the late 1930s indicate that the party-state was willing to go only so far in compromising political oversight to the pragmatic needs of efficiency. The gains of the military complex, acquired with painstaking effort throughout the last decade, dissipated within one bloody year.

An entire generation of the officers was destroyed and a new wave took their place. Between January 1937 and November 1938 alone, fifty thousand new officers were promoted to the recently vacated posts.¹⁸² Even if it was not one of the goals of the Terror, the consequent composition of the armed forces included two strata—military and political—with fewer ties to each other than their predecessors. The political structure predating the Terror was seen as failed in the most grotesque fashion, having “permitted the command structure to develop in a direction inimical with the current needs and policies of the Soviet Party-State, adopting too freely the aims and professional solidarity

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁸² A. A. Pechenkin, *Voennaia Elita SSSR v 1935–1939 gg.: Repressii i Obnovlenie* (Moscow, 2003), 121.

of those over whom they were supposed to exercise Marxist-Leninist watchfulness.”¹⁸³ In addition, as mentioned above, the composition of the revived Military Councils was expanded to include representatives of the civilian party apparatus, creating an additional level of control.

This reversal of the “corrupting” influence of the military ethos was accompanied by the significant erosion of the military sphere of authority, and concurrent expansion of the party’s reach into their bailiwick. On 10 May 1937, the principle of the unified command was abandoned and the institution of the commissars made a triumphant return, dual command reinstated and their civil war role of surveillance and control reaffirmed throughout the entire military edifice.¹⁸⁴ The commissar was once again the nominal equal of the commander, in practical terms his superior, again endowed with the responsibility to cosign every order given by the commander and to oversee every aspect of his job performance.¹⁸⁵ In the long term this, of course, much akin to the Terror’s consequences in the civilian sphere, simply exacerbated the preconditions that led to the Terror, and established the foundation for the next crisis.

But in the short term it allowed the state to reset the situation nearly twenty years, regaining a monopoly on the organizational ethos—even if it meant fatally damaging the cohesion of its armed forces.¹⁸⁶ The full cost of that decision would become apparent during the debacle of the invasion of Finland. Inevitably it occasioned a reassessment of the commissar-commander dynamic, as the principle of the unified command was again

¹⁸³ Taylor, “The Reorganization,” 81–82.

¹⁸⁴ Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, 460.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 478.

¹⁸⁶ Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*, 343.

reaffirmed and the institution of the military commissar abolished.¹⁸⁷ The change, however, would not last long and within a year, under the shock of the German invasion, the pendulum would swing back again.

The Bolshevization of the army demanded by the central leadership was also reflected in the personnel policies of the military party organizations as the Terror inevitably inhibited recruitment and policies were radically tightened up for the course of the purges. There were few organizations willing to take the risk of admitting an unworthy or unready candidate, only to suffer the consequences of that decision along with him. The purges in tandem with debilitated recruitment had far-reaching consequences for the network of military party organs. By the late 1930s there were simply not enough Communists within the army to maintain the extensive system built up in the previous decade—if in 1930 there were 6,760 primary party organizations, then in 1939 there were only 5,000.¹⁸⁸

Unsurprisingly, the Central Committee eventually had to act, adopting a 1938 resolution “On Admitting Red Army Men into the Party,” which made it incumbent on the military party organization to increase admissions through relaxing the standards and requirements for the prospective Communists. This edict was supported by a variety of letters, articles, and directives that continued throughout the following years. Thus on 8 September 1939, the directive from Lev Mekhlis to the military party organizations still emphasized the necessity of easing the way for the new party members.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Ziemke, *The Red Army*, 239.

¹⁸⁸ Colton, *Commissars*, 17

¹⁸⁹ “Vypiska iz direktivy Nachal’nika Politupravleniia RKKA, tov Mekhlisa, #14830/14865 ot 8/9/1939 voennym sovetam,” RGASPI (8 September 1939) f.17, op.122, d.2.

Presumably, the order to relax the requirements for party admissions for those soldiers who had shown their bravery in battle referred to the veterans of the disastrous and only recently concluded Russo-Finnish war. Certainly that was the aim of the 1939 measure, which gave the Leningrad Military District garrison troops (bearing the brunt of the fighting in Winter War) a much wider opportunity to join the party, with the barriers to admission substantially lowered.¹⁹⁰

In this respect, the personnel tribulations of the 1930s provided a comprehensive blueprint for the Kremlin. Tested once during the civil war and dusted off anew for the Russo-Finnish war, the policies of cadre management within the military would be readily available, tested, and (apparently) found useful. Unfortunately, as would be the case with most policies tried out during the 1920s and 1930s, the solutions offered would prove merely a mirage.

Conclusion

Josef Stalin, in an infamous rhetorical flourish, once compared the Communist Party to a Militant Order of Warrior Priests (*orden mechenoststsev*), ideally limited to about fifty thousand members and acting as the spiritual guide of the state organs.¹⁹¹ It was an incredibly apt parallel for a number of reasons, not least among them that it was the perfect encapsulation of the fundamental contradiction at the core of the Soviet party-state. The primary task of the Communist Party, its core mission and primary area of expertise, was the ideological education of the society. This task was the lodestone from whence it drew its fundamental claim to legitimacy.

¹⁹⁰ *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, no 11 (1963), 65.

¹⁹¹ "O politicheskoi strategii i taktike russkikh kommunistov," (written in 1921) in I.V. Stalin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow, 1952), 5: 16.

As the party's responsibilities expanded into the specialized areas of industry, agriculture, and military fields, however, the political professionals would inevitably lag behind in their competence compared to the professionals of those areas. Perhaps if their tasks were limited to supervision, the problem would remain marginal. But in a system where they were held personally responsible for every failure or underperformance, they had a vested interest in delving deeper and deeper into the economic issues of their regions. This was compounded by two concurrent processes—the influx of the white collar professionals into the party and the outbreak of the war.

The two events reinforced each other, placing an ever-growing premium on pragmatism and on the ability to produce results and resulting in a new generation of Communist technocrats. An unexpected consequence of the party's expansion into the economic or military professions was the unwelcome discovery that co-optation worked both ways and many of its members were becoming more warriors than priests. Thus, throughout the coming crisis, the war, and its aftermath, the party would find itself in a fundamental conflict over its identity, challenged over its role both vis-à-vis the state and its own priorities.

As the Soviet party-state neared the great challenge of the Great Patriotic War, it was still dealing with the contradictory nature of its foundational circumstances. A society founded by a party whose legitimizing claim was tied inextricably to its identity as a modernizing force, it was still grappling with the same fundamental problems that plagued its predecessors. Specifically, the persistent inability to adequately staff its managerial class continued to act as a sharp limit on its ambitions. In fact, the unique features of the regime, such as its ideological character, and its utilization of such tools of

modernity as mass mobilization or wide-scale industrialization, actually reinforced and exacerbated the ancient conundrum.

As a result, the “vanguard of the proletariat” was forced back toward the framework of compromise and negotiation with the service elite that characterized the pre-Revolutionary Russian state. The process had, of course, undergone a necessary adaptation to the radically changed social and political structure, yet the fundamental imperative of reaching a consensus between the state and the service elite remained central to the Kremlin’s ability of governing successfully. In fact, with the pressures of maintaining its credibility as the modernizing force, the pressure was greater than ever—even before it was increased yet again by the threat of the regime’s annihilation at the hands of Nazi Germany.

Chapter 2: The Irony of the Inferno

Introduction

It is difficult to overestimate or overstate the shock delivered to the Red Army, the Communist party, or the Soviet system as a whole by the unexpected reverses that took place following the Soviet “day of infamy” on 22 June 1941. Within the first six months of the war, the Red Army painstakingly built up since the 1920s was, for all intents and purposes, completely destroyed. By December, the Soviet losses reached more than 4,473,000 soldiers dead or captured.¹ In addition, during that time the Soviet Union had lost seventeen thousand pieces of armor and nearly eight thousand planes.² To put it in perspective, on the eve of the invasion the party had at its disposal 5.5 million troops, 23,000 tanks, and 15,559 combat aircraft.³ By March 1942, Roger Reese reasonably concluded, the old Red Army ceased to exist.⁴

While some remnant of the prewar military cadre survived, Roger Reese, David Glantz, and Elena Seniiasvkaia articulated the wide-ranging consensus when they argued that “within three months after war began, Hitler’s invading force virtually destroyed the peacetime Red Army, shattering its force structure . . . destroying or damaging most of its weapons and equipment and seriously undermining its political and military leaders’ faith

¹ Walter S. Dunn, Jr., *Hitler’s Nemesis: The Red Army, 1930–1945* (London: Praeger, 1994), 56.

² Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 19.

³ David M. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941–1943* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 135, 217, 314.

⁴ Roger R. Reese, *Stalin’s Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army 1925–1941* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1996), 208.

that they could ever achieve victory.”⁵ While the military presents arguably the most graphic illustration of the reverses inflicted on the USSR, its plight was echoed throughout the entire system.

What is remarkable then is that, despite this crisis, no fundamental innovations were introduced into the procedural arsenal of the party-state. The enduring dilemmas of poor communications, lack of qualified cadres, and tension between ideological purity and demands for professionalism continued to force the Bolshevik sociopolitical planning into a narrow range of options that inevitably produced remarkably similar and similarly suboptimal results, forcing eventual and reluctant reversals. Thus, as was the case during the industrialization drive (or the collectivization era), the party’s responsibilities would inexorably widen over an ever-increasing sphere of economic and public life. Simultaneously, however, it would be faced with a rapidly shrinking pool of qualified personnel—exacerbating the endemic conflict of technocrats and ideologues, of Reds and Experts, of party and the state. The same “bureaucratic Leviathan”—where every aspect of authority was perennially contested—that developed on the eve of the Terror would swiftly re-emerge.⁶

In the wake of the old methods being tried again, the endemic flaws of the system were given fresh and powerful impetus. Some issues harkening back to the problems faced by the Muscovite state, such as the personalized networks and regional cliques, took precedence over the professional apparatus in the center’s quest for short-term efficiency. Or as the attempts to enlarge the pool of qualified cadres failed, the existing

⁵ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 609.

⁶ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 297.

service elite retreated into the narrow patron-client networks, shutting out the new recruits and retaining its bargaining power with the state.

The response by the regime simply involved yet another sharp reversal of policy and readoption of the methods discarded shortly before, as the successes of 1943 and the slacking of pressure allowed the apparatus to catch its breath and begin to reassess the situation, even as the internal contradictions reached their apogee. The opening phase of the disaster, as sudden and lightning quick as it may seem in retrospect, unfolded over six agonizing months. That first half year of the war showcased the tremendous wartime organizational capacity of the Soviet system.

Model's Efficiency as the Necessary Precondition to the Destruction of the Old Party

The mobilization feats achieved by the Kremlin during that time go a long way toward justifying Peter Holquist's thesis of a state and the party forged by the civil war into a politico-military hybrid that adopted wartime methods of organizations for peacetime existence.⁷ Amir Weiner asserted that the party from the start dedicated itself to preparing for the inevitability of the next imperialist conflagration: "the war was universally perceived as the Armageddon of the Revolution, the ultimate clash dreaded, yet expected by the first generation to live in a socialist society."⁸ The exact nature and timing of the Nazi assault did take Stalin by surprise, despite numerous forewarnings. Similarly, the society and the military institutions, inculcated with propaganda of a war to be fought with "little blood and on enemy soil," were ill prepared to cope with

⁷ Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 287.

⁸ Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 17.

catastrophic reverses and the seemingly unstoppable Nazi onslaught. The effects on morale were predictably depressing.⁹

Yet this was exactly the crisis for which the apparatus of the party was carefully honed, and it proved itself remarkably efficient in mobilizing both itself and the society for battle—albeit not always through the institutions or in the ways the party originally envisioned. Thus, many of the centralized and the official channels were once again quickly subsumed and marginalized by the informal networks and local foci of authority, repeating the ancient pattern of sacrificing consistent structure in favor of short-term efficiency. Still the regime was able to maintain control and achieve its primary goals. The plummeting morale of the army was quickly squelched with savage repression and dire antidesertion policies. In fact, the response was so quick and brutal that within a month there were already complaints from the party that the army was overindulging in the application of the death penalty.¹⁰ Concurrently the mechanism of channeling experienced party cadres into the military institution began to gather speed at a startling rate.

On the morning of 22 June 1941, the army had within its ranks 560,800 Communists, meaning roughly 15 percent of the party's overall strength was in uniform.¹¹ By December the number had doubled and continued to grow. Yet that dramatic increase does not tell the whole story. Within the same grim six months, as the battles on the borders were chewing up the Red Army, the prewar party was, in a very real sense, also being destroyed. Ironically, the biggest damage to the party was being

⁹ Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80, 112.

¹¹ T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR: 1917–1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 241.

done because the system worked, achieving the goals demanded of it. Starting in late June, all party workers at every level were mobilized to serve as the political cadre within the army.

The *raikom* and *gorkom* secretaries attending Moscow and Leningrad Central Committee party courses had their curriculum changed within days to the topics that would prepare them for their duties as new commissars. The students of the Higher School of Party organizers were turned over to the army's political administration¹² and twenty-five thousand apparatchiks attending various party schools would find themselves in the army, serving as political officers by the end of October.¹³ All party members were called upon to join the army and between 1 July 1941 and 1 July 1942, 1,344,430 Communists were mobilized into the army, an awe-inspiring transfer of more than 40 percent of the entire apparatus as it existed at the start of the war.¹⁴

The speed of transformation from the peacetime into the warmaking party only increased throughout 1942, which was almost equally disastrous for the Soviet Union on the battlefield. Most of the Communists, many high-ranking and middle-management apparatchiks among them, would join the doomed units that continued to try to stem the German advance and perish in the great encirclement battles, the cauldrons of Kiev, Kharkov, and Smolensk. Yet inexorably the system continued to feed new victims into the grinder. In a macabre paradox, the very efficacy with which the Party was able to achieve its prewar mobilization policy was the source of its greatest and enduring

¹² I. P. Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskoï armii i flote* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, 1964), 349.

¹³ Dale R. Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains: Civil-Military Relations since Cromwell* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 167.

¹⁴ "Statisticheskii otchet," RGANI (1 July 1942) f.77, op.1, d. 3, l.117.

weaknesses, which would exacerbate the prewar trends of endemic understaffing and worsen them yet further.

Even as the numbers of Communists within the army grew by leaps and bounds, the overall strength of the party dropped precipitously for the first time since the Great Terror. By the start of 1942, total party membership had plummeted to 2,742,361,¹⁵ having fallen from the heights of nearly 4,000,000 full members and candidates at the start of the year.¹⁶ The civilian party organizations were hardest hit, with the cream of the crop of their membership being diverted into the army and experiencing the corresponding drop in training, professionalism, and reach. Yet their military equivalents were not immune, due to the continually high turnover rate brought about by the devastating casualties.

This drop took place at the same time as the party, in accordance with the precedents of the civil war, the Terror, and the Russo-Finnish War, threw open the doors to new recruits. The negative aspects of those policies and their eventual reassessments were ignored in the rush to do *something* in the face of the crisis. No innovations presented themselves as an acceptable solution and so, yet again, the Kremlin took their cues from the tried (and failed) playbook of the previous decade. Thus, from July 1941 to July 1942 there were 862,606 new recruits admitted into the ranks of the party.¹⁷

In another macabre parallel with the purges, however, the Germans were killing Communists faster than the USSR could replace them. By the spring of 1942 the party lost around four hundred thousand members and candidates among the dead, with

¹⁵ “Sotsial’nyi sostav chlenov i kandidatov partii,” RGANI (1 January 1942) f.77, op.1, d.3, l.55.

¹⁶ Ibid., l.103.

¹⁷ Calculated from data in “Sotsial’nyi sostav chlenov i kandidatov partii,” RGANI (1 January 1942) f.77, op.1, d.3, l.55–l.4 and “Sostav partii,” RGANI (1 January 1941) f.77, op.1, d.3, l.1–l.12.

unknown numbers captured or missing in action.¹⁸ Worse yet, these losses came from the capital of the party's human materiel, while the replacements needed enormous investments of inadequate and dwindling resources—in addition to time the regime did not have to spare—to bring them up to the level of the departing cadres. The war was purging the best and the brightest (and the most loyal—for these would often volunteer first for the front)¹⁹ of the post-Terror apparatus at astonishing rate.

The short-term and future costs of these policies were not lost on the party. The contemporary apparatchiks understood the problem as early as the end of 1941, as the elite of the prewar Communists was conscripted en masse into the army and almost immediately wiped out. By August of 1941, the political cadre of some units experienced a turnover of 70–90 percent.²⁰ By February of 1942, faint echoes of near panic were already spreading through the rear areas about the exodus of the Communist competence into the army.²¹ In 1946, Lev Mekhlis himself would admit as much, when he advocated using the surviving veterans to replace the new breed of managers that arose during the war, hoping that surviving Communists among the soldiers would prove more useful than the second-string left in charge of the civilian apparatus.²²

¹⁸ T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR*, 251.

¹⁹ From Paltsev (Secretary of Ivanovskii Obkom): "Informatsiia o meropriiatiakh v Ivanovskoi oblastnoi partiinoi organizatsii po vypolneniiu zadach' postavlennykh Tov. Stalinym v doklade na torzhestvennom zasedanii MosSoveta v noiabre, 1941," RGASPI (3 December 1941) f.17, op.88, d.44, l.96. A. Z. Chulkov, *O tovarishchakh na fronte i posle voiny* (Moscow: Olita, 2005), 146.

²⁰ N. A. Kirsanov, *Partiinye mobilizatsii na front v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1970), 58–59.

²¹ "Doklad zav org-inst otдела Ivanovskogo obkoma partii, tov. Zelianova 'O roste Partii'," RGASPI (13 February 1942) f.17, op.88, d.44, l.119–l.140.

²² "Request to Amend the TsK Resolution about the Party Growth and Work with New Communists," RGASPI (14 June 1946) f.17, op. 122, d.189, l.114–l.116.

Safety in Purity: Early Gamble on the Reds within the Army

Yet even in the midst of this crisis, the fundamental range of responses worked out during the civil war and codified by the succession of reforms in 1930s remained largely the same. The first, instinctual policies enacted within weeks of the invasion exemplify the party caught within the confines of a narrow range of options and unsure of the right course. The ever-present concern over loyalty prompted the immediate reintroduction of the dual command, the resurgent commissars serving as the brake on the presumably unreliable officer cadre. This edict was a sharp break with the *edinochalie* or unified command policies instituted after the manifest failure of the double-tier command system in the Russo-Finnish war. These new-old policies rolled back the modest gains made by the proponents of the military's professional autonomy in a familiar schizophrenic return to the policies tried out in mid 1930s.²³

The Central Committee Resolution announcing the return of the commissars was made public on 16 July 1941, the counterpart for the Navy coming a mere four days later.²⁴ The timing is telling—the resolution was among the first war-specific reforms, introduced just as the Kremlin had processed the scale of the disaster that had befallen the party. In parallel with the reintroduction of the dual command, the party also reformed the very structure of the military-political organs, once again abandoning the post-Finland reforms in favor of the previously tried (and abandoned) model.

The party edict of 16 July 1941 also replaced the barely established departments and directorates of political propaganda with their predecessors—political departments and political directorates. The miniscule difference in the terminology graphically

²³ N. I. Savinkov and K. M. Bogolyubov, eds., *KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soiuza. Dokumenty 1917–1981* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1981), 289–90.

²⁴ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 354.

reflected the improvisational nature of the changes, an instinctual reaction to reject the most recent reforms that must have been to blame for the war's reverses and to go back to the older model—the memory of the flaws of the latter having dimmed with time. The resurrected political organs were instructed to widen the scope of their work, not neglect the party-organizational activities, and generally improve the management of the military party organizations.²⁵

The reintroduction of the institution of the commissars, the reimposition of the dual authority, and the concurrent changes in the structure of the military party organizations present an interesting test case of the main historiographical models discussed earlier in this work. The very fact of their re-emergence certainly undercuts Odom's thesis, implying that the party apparatus, at the very least, still considered the military to be a separate and ultimately unreliable institution in need of outside supervision. Schapiro, whose view closely parallels that of Kolkowicz, saw the shift in policy and an implicit rejection of both the "progressive" policies of the 1920s and the reforms of the 1940 as a panic response.²⁶ Yet this is too facile an explanation.

As Kolkowicz himself pointed out, the edicts were detailed and precise, addressing most of the issues connected with the new policies.²⁷ Nor should that be surprising, since these administrative changes did not represent anything shockingly new, but rather were a reversion to old and tried (and eventually discarded) methods. In the general sense, both the reintroduction of the commissars and the organizational reforms were part of a broader systemic recycling of the old solutions—a focus on ideological

²⁵ Ibid., 357–58.

²⁶ Leonard Bertram Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1959), 501–2.

²⁷ Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 65.

purity and reliability at the expense of professionalism and military expertise. The old issue of Red vs. Expert, inexorably tied into the thesis of military corporatism, could not help but rear its head within the first months of the greatest crisis of the system to date.

The reassessment that came in the wake of the purges and the Winter War resulted in the diminution of the party's focus on the political indoctrination of the troops, increasing instead the time devoted to practical training and military readiness.²⁸ That was the predominant concern of the party throughout the closing years of the 1930s. However, as the Red Army appeared on the verge of complete collapse in 1941, that consensus had disintegrated. The newly empowered commissars had a clear mandate to concentrate on improvement of the plummeting morale, inculcation of faithfulness, and clarifying the ideological underpinnings of the conflict taking place.²⁹

These activities, perforce, took time away from the more pragmatic training exercises. The argument can be, and has been, made that the commissars provided an invaluable service. Certainly, Hitler considered them a useful feature, and paid them a peculiar compliment by issuing the infamous Commissar Order, instructing them to be killed on sight. According to Dale R. Herspring, such enmity was prompted by the fact that German analysis had given them considerable credit for maintaining the Red Army's unit cohesion.³⁰ Walter S. Dunn concurred, pointing out that the Wehrmacht would eventually imitate its opponents and institute its own corps of political officers.³¹

The evidence from Soviet contemporaries is slightly murkier. Concurrent with the army's desperate trial by fire, the qualified cadres of political officers continued to go

²⁸ John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918–1941* (London: St. Martin's, 1962), 554.

²⁹ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 354–55.

³⁰ Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains*, 171–72.

³¹ Dunn, *Hitler's Nemesis*, 65.

through intense attrition. The remaining commissars were less and less able to engage in the personalized and intensive political work demanded of them.³² Instead, the commissars were forced back into a replay of the accommodations and compromises forced upon the party as a whole during the 1930s. Trapped in a microcosm of the interminable dilemma facing the entire party and defined by the dearth of qualified cadres combined with poor infrastructure, the political officers found themselves forced into the familiar shortcuts. They tried to paper over the flaws in the foundation with the mouthing of official press releases, management through general application of one-size-fits-all methods, and propaganda through corporal punishment.³³

The brutality, both toward the recruits and toward the subordinates, was a constant background to operation of the political apparatus as it is portrayed in Vassily Grossman's reports: "Pesochin punches commissars and divisional commissar Serafim Snitser punches his own *politruks* (political officers). Each of them has his own chain of command of punching. They are both huge, massive men, with fat meaty fists. Actions have been brought against both of them in Army Party Commission, but they aren't deterred. They give promises, but are unable to keep them, like drunkards. They blow their top every time. Spitser punched a tankist yesterday in an argument about "trophies" (loot)."³⁴

The steady influx of increasingly underqualified personnel and declining supply of agitation materials like newspapers and journals only worsened the situation.³⁵

³² Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains*, 169.

³³ *Izvestia TsK KPSS*, #10, October 10, 1990: 208; Vasolii Bykov, "Partiia voevala s kem?" *Rodina*, no. 6–7 (1991): 46.

³⁴ Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova, eds., *A Writer at War: Vassily Grossman with the Red Army* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), 70.

³⁵ I. K. Shirokorad, *Tsentralnaia pechat' v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny 1941–1945* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta Pechati, 2002), 33–36.

Furthermore the conceptualization of the unfolding events by the commissars had little effect on the morale of the soldiers due to a surprisingly effective yet informal communication network that spread rumors and gossip about the actual course of the war.³⁶ The reception of such treatment—that is to say violence and deception—by the troops was predictable. Gabriel Temkin’s experience as a bored recruit watching the commissar rush through his speech, the troops detesting the waste of time, was not an exception.³⁷ Another account has the political instructors reduced to ordering the exhausted recruits to stand and sit unexpectedly, in order to prevent them from falling asleep in the midst of propaganda sessions.³⁸

The same writer, however, who recorded an atmosphere of brutalization also conveys an anecdote of the same methods producing tangible results. “Soldiers started running away from the battlefield. A battalion commissar, armed with two revolvers began shouting: ‘Where are you running, you whores, where? Go forward, for our Motherland, for Jesus Christ, motherfuckers! For Stalin, you whores!’ They turned around and occupied their defensive positions again.”³⁹ The question of the utility of these secular chaplains in maintaining the fighting spirit of the troops thus remains uncertain.

The fact is that the military cadre was also unconcerned about physical abuse. Konstantin Rokossovskii, a survivor of the Gulag, was an odd exception among his peers for his refusal to beat his subordinates, while Zhukov’s propensity for epic rages was

³⁶ Gabriel Temkin, *My Just War: The Memoir of a Jewish Red Army Soldier in World War II* (Novato: Presidion Press, 1998), 43.

³⁷ Temkin, *My Just War*, 46.

³⁸ Marius Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians and Their War 1941–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 185.

³⁹ Beevor and Vinogradova, *A Writer at War*, 102.

almost legendary—even driving Zhdanov to interfere on one occasion.⁴⁰ The general atmosphere of desperation and of the palpable attitude of grasping at every straw in order to eke out another day all contributed to a volatile mix, making it difficult to determine the overall value of the political officers for troop morale. As the memoirs seem to demonstrate, the effects probably varied; neither the commissars nor the soldiers formed a monolithic block with identical reactions to the unique circumstances.

Yet, even if the value of the commissars is conceded, the powers allotted to them were very intrusive, justifying considerable interference into military matters.⁴¹ Many of them did not hesitate to utilize that right to interfere with the decision of the commanders. The joint responsibility of the dual command, after all, implied the potential of lethal consequences to the commissar as well as to the commander if the retreat was judged too fast or a maneuver badly executed.

Marshal Bagramian recollected a tense scene playing out within the Southwestern Army's headquarters. In response to a plan of action proposed by General Pukarev, the corps commissar, Vashugin, offered an unanswerable rebuttal: "Everything you say, Maksim Alekseevich, may be correct from the military viewpoint, but, in my opinion, it is absolutely wrong politically! You are thinking purely as a military specialist."⁴² The member of the military council genially supported the commissar. The latter worthy "almost gently" implied that if he did not know him for "a tried and true Bolshevik," he would be tempted to think that the general's tactics were a product of panic, rather than dispassionate reading of fact.

⁴⁰ Seweryn Bialer, ed., *Stalin and his Generals: Soviet Military Memoirs of World War II* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 437.

⁴¹ A. S. Zheltov, "Printsipy partiinogo rukovodstva Vooruzhennymi Silami v gody voyny" in *Vsemirno-istoricheskaiia pobeda sovetskogo naroda 1941–1945 gg.*, ed. A. A. Grechko (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 450.

⁴² Bialer. *Stalin and his Generals*, 252–53.

The author remembers muscles tightening in Pukarev's face, but the general swallowed the insult and the accusation. The final battle plans included the commissar's political corrections to the strategy outlined by a simple military professional. That tableau was already playing out on the very first day of the war, still weeks away from the dramatic expansion of the commissars' reach. Neither the scope of their new powers, nor their clear role as the political inquisition looking over the commanders' shoulders and charged with "signaling to the Supreme Command and government" about the "shirkers" could have endeared the political workers to the officer cadre.⁴³

Yet paradoxically, the army's reaction to the reinstitution of the dual command by the party in 1941 and early 1942 appears to have been surprisingly mild, the friction according to Schapiro growing only toward the end of the war.⁴⁴ Roger Reese largely concurred.⁴⁵ This comes close to supporting the view that the gap between ideological and military professional corporations was either very narrow, as Colton suggested, or practically nonexistent, as Odom argued. The explanation for the muted response of the army, however, suggests that the lack of immediate pushback by the military was more the result of unique circumstances of the moment, rather than the lack of a sense of identity, or desire to protect its structural integrity. Among the primary reasons for the lack of outcry were, of course, the still-fresh memories of the purges and the sheer shock of the invasion.⁴⁶

From the very start of the war, the Kremlin implicitly shifted the blame for the early defeats onto the shoulders of the army. Certainly, the return of the commissars to

⁴³ Nikolai Kirsanov, "Zampolity, politruki..." *Rodina*, 6–7 (1991): 47–48.

⁴⁴ Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 502.

⁴⁵ Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience*, 89.

⁴⁶ Yosef Avidar, *The Party and the Army in the Soviet Union* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1985), 126–27.

preeminence heavily implied lack of trust in the military.⁴⁷ The failures were still punished by summary disappearances and executions. There was also undoubtedly a sublimated desire by the military cadre—as there was during the Terror—to avoid personal responsibility and share it with a supposedly unimpeachable and politically vetted apparatchik, who was now equally responsible for any major decision.⁴⁸ That was not a universally successful measure of protection, of course, and when the commander of Western front, Pavlov, was executed in 1942, his commissar was shot as well.⁴⁹

Nor was there any manifestation of the Communist leadership's desire to placate the soldiers with increased pay or status. Such things would come, but later in the war, thus providing a less than comprehensive explanation for the army's political quiescence during the early stages, when both its reputation and its professional autonomy seemed to be under direct assault. Neither Colton's nor Kolkowicz's model seem able to provide a clear explanation that fits their overall schema of a civil-military relationship. Odom's thesis, although clearly not shared by the contemporary party elite, would seem to fit that specific stage in the party-military dynamic the best. Yet even that explanation proves facile upon closer examination.

As discussed above, much of the army's reticence stemmed from fear inculcated by the purges—a process that never truly stopped—and its shock at the early collapse. While such attitudes were widely shared by the party apparatchiks, it hardly constitutes the unified value system that Odom posited, nor would the army's reticence to protest last. As the hemorrhaging was staunch and at least a modicum of stabilization of the

⁴⁷ Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*, 65.

⁴⁸ Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience*, 89.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

front lines was achieved, the few victories of 1942 would be leveraged by the military into muted but persistent attempts to regain its position within the system.⁵⁰

The Lure of the Myrmidon: The Issues of Co-optation and Control

The friction between army professionals and political officers would only grow with time. It would eventually lead to the inevitable retrenchment as early as the closing months of 1942, reaching its apogee after the battle of Stalingrad in 1943, the year of the party's great reassessment. Yet, here too, the evolution of the dynamic between the commanders and the commissars defies easy definition. Colton came closest to capturing the complexity of the interaction between the two corporate monopolies within the Soviet society, but even he underplayed the enduring fascination the professional military exerted on its ideological guards, and the advantage that conferred upon the supposedly junior partner within the system.

Even within the first year of the war, there was a perceptible process of assimilation of the political officers into the surrounding milieu of professional soldiers. This sublimation of the party apparatchik into the competing paradigm of the military was not a new phenomenon. A specific parallel to the process that occurred during World War II could be found as recently as the 1920s, as the lure of the military ethos overtook the political overseers of the army during the civil war and throughout the rearmament of the 1930s. What took place in 1941–1942 should be seen more as a resumption, rather than a continuation, of the traditional patterns, since the continuity of that process had been dramatically interrupted by the Terror. However, the party elite observed a similar

⁵⁰ Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, 660.

phenomenon in the early 1930s. It was even encouraged in the party's contemporary quest for the professionalization of the armed forces—up to a point.

On the eve of the Terror, the Kremlin spoke with alarm of the extent to which the nominal watchdogs had become imbued with the aims of their charges. The danger of “separatism” by the military party structure was after all an old concern, dating back to the very inception of the system.⁵¹ Before the war, a similar process was slowly taking place in the civilian party structure as the regional cliques reasserted themselves. The *obkom* secretaries, finding themselves in a region far from the center and with the barest communication links, collaborated and subverted the members of the agricultural, state, and security organs that were nominally loyal to the party-state, but in effect became members of the local party boss's personal coterie. Yet in the process the party bosses themselves were increasingly prey to the ethos of the economic administrators. In industry, a similar process took place—the managers converted the party men into their administrative aides, serving as political guides through the labyrinths of the ideological bureaucracy, instead of checks on the managerial elite's power and corruption.

Yet the situation in the army was always more precarious due to the autonomous and specialized nature of the party organs overseeing it. The steady co-optation of the Communists by the military elite was one of the vocalized reasons for the bloody redress of balance during the purges. In the wake of the Terror, the Main Political Administration (MPA) of the Red Army was staffed with completely new personnel. The turnover, and the fact that the new staff was heavily implicated in the bloodletting, ensured a complete lack of ties to the military establishment and the distrust sown by the Terror ensured

⁵¹ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 82, 84.

certain separation between the two strata. The appointment of Mekhlis as the head of the MPA was emblematic in that respect and Mekhlis would continue to be cordially despised by the army well into the post-war era.⁵²

The strain of total war, however, forced an abandonment of the new course and a return to the policies of M. Frunze and M. Tuchachevkii. The new crisis required the party to tie itself firmly to the army, prompting a certain degree of permissiveness toward practical compromises made by the commanders and the commissars in order to forge a working relationship. This served as a mild sop given to the military, to prevent the worst of the tension that traditionally accompanied introduction of the dual command. The official codification of this shift in attitude by the party establishment was rather slow in coming, the first indication being the Central Committee resolution in December 1941 that allowed commissars to become line officers.

The response this edict elicited indicated that the process of integrating the political apparatus into the military elite was already well underway. By October of 1942, more than 4,500 political workers had become “real” officers.⁵³ The speed with which the process of amalgamation took place should not be surprising considering the circumstances. Even discounting the indelible stamp of militarization branded into the party’s identity by its formative experience in the civil war, the extraordinary events of 1941 created a considerable impetus toward adopting the identity of the military society within which they found themselves.

Even by the bloody standards of the first year of the war, however, attrition of the political workers within the ranks of the Red Army was prodigious. In some units the

⁵² Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 399.

⁵³ Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplain*, 173.

turnover reached a mind-boggling 300 percent, or even 400 percent, in just a few months.⁵⁴ The ethos inculcated into them, and ruthlessly enforced, created a “lead by example and from the front” mentality.⁵⁵ This is a generalization, of course, since the commissars were no more monolithic than the soldiers and there were cowards, hypocrites, and faint hearts among them.⁵⁶ Yet the party habitually called on the Communists for the particularly risky assignments.⁵⁷ Even allowing for the bias of the Soviet sources, the statistics and memoirs of their contemporaries point to disproportionate losses among the political officers.⁵⁸

The party was successful in replenishing their ranks (to a degree) but the turnover was rapid enough to prevent any sort of institutional memory or identity from coalescing. It was exacerbated by the fact that the party organs in the army were understaffed even on the eve of the war by as much as 20 percent.⁵⁹ As the military expanded and the supply of political officers contracted, the commissars’ sense of isolation must have grown exponentially. In the pressure cooker of the frontlines, moreover, the sense of community was a tempting and precious commodity, and the desire to maintain the cohesion of that community was almost universal.

Cherniaev, a university student who found himself in the army in 1941, remembered a startling conversation with a new commissar of their unit. Challenged by the political officer concerning his “defeatist” attitude, Cherniaev shot back, asking how the commissar became aware of his attitude. With the response to that question,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 172.

⁵⁵ K. V. Sergeev, “Vokruzhenii,” in *Shli v boi kommunistami*, ed., N. Chernyshev (Leningrad: Leninzdat, 1987), 107.

⁵⁶ Beevor and Vinogradova, *A Writer at War*, 13.

⁵⁷ Broekmeyer, 197.

⁵⁸ I. P. Iakovenko, *Vo glave atakiushchikh rot* (Kiev: Politizdat, 1983), 30.

⁵⁹ A. Kisilev and G. V. Sredin, eds., *Ideologicheskaiia rabota KPSS v Deistvuiushchei Armii 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1985), 17.

Cherniaev wrote, the political officer won him completely over. “Very simple. You guys picked up a piece of scum. He reads letters—including yours, the ones you are sending to Moscow.” The commissar went as far as to identify the informer by name before leaving.⁶⁰ It is difficult to imagine the same sort of dialogue happening in 1937.

Thus, the allure of military society, its values, and habits, which were after all suited best for survival in the war zone, proved considerable. The officially permitted exchange of personnel between the party organs and the military contributed to the blurring of the identity of a “commissar.” Simultaneously, the unintended consequences of the reintroduction of the dual command and co-responsibility for command decisions began to make themselves known as well. While the party intended these expanded powers to help the commissars ensure the loyalty of the military caste, in effect it made both commander and commissar culpable for failure.

The pressure on the political workers to learn at least the fundamentals of the trade of their charges began to increase steadily. Without understanding the basics, judgment on the validity of the proposed tactical plans could not be made. Often enough the commissars would simply sign off on the commander’s orders, trusting him not to put either of them in jeopardy.⁶¹

Yet that could not last, nor was this the universal attitude—not everyone would be comfortable putting their life and career in someone else’s hands.

The attempts to rely only on ideological rhetoric likely isolated the commissars from the military professionals surrounding them. Finally, as the pool of experienced Communists that the army was able to shift from civilian occupations into the army

⁶⁰ A. S. Cherniaev, *Moia zhizn' i moe vremia* (Moscow: Mezhdunaradnye otnoshenia, 1995), 119.

⁶¹ Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience*, 89.

began to run dry, the reinforcements came in with an increasingly shallow knowledge of Marxist-Leninist dogma, and had to find other ways to be an effective cog in the military machine.⁶² In another parallel to the previous cycle, many began to assume logistical duties, becoming in essence glorified supply officers.⁶³ More disturbing yet, the ideological certainty of some was undermined by their experiences on the frontlines.⁶⁴

The New Cycle and the Resurgence of the Experts

By October of 1942, the party had executed a radical about-face, once again forced to go back to the beginning. The principle of unified command was once again reaffirmed, the institution of the commissars retroactively labeled as a temporary measure of expedience, brought on by the unique circumstances.⁶⁵ Simultaneously the party conferred on the commissars the privilege it held back even in the heady days of the previous cycle of military's dominance—the commissars and their coterie of political workers could now qualify for the grant of a genuine military rank, provided they could convince the examination board that they had a suitable command of military expertise.⁶⁶

The return to the unified command, and the changes in the MPA's work and personnel, were in many ways also a reluctant recognition by the civilian leadership of the creeping process at the grassroots level transforming the political officers into part of the military bureaucracy. Mekhlis, the architect of the haplessly tragic Crimean defense,

⁶² Zheltov, "Printsipy partiinogo rukovodstva," 450.

⁶³ Iakovenko, *Vo glave atakiushchikh rot*, 27.

⁶⁴ Frank Ellis, "Army and Party in Conflict: Soldiers and Commissars in the Prose of Vassily Grossman" in *World War II and the Soviet People: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies* ed. John Garranad and Carol Garrard (London: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 186.

⁶⁵ "Protocol reshenia Politburo TsK VKP(b) 'Ob ustanovlenii edinochalia i uprazhneniia instituta voennykh komissarov v Krasnoi Armii,'" RGASPI (9 October 1942) f.17, op. 3, d.1045, l.55.

⁶⁶ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 381.

became once again a symbol and a scapegoat of the changing policy. He was demoted, replaced with A. S. Shcherbakov as the head of the MPA, in an illustration of the changing times. Below the surface, however, the pressure to maintain the political control remained strong.

The change was intended to be cosmetic and the party was intent on retaining full oversight and control over the officers, and some, like Glantz, argued that they were in fact successful in that regard.⁶⁷ Z. Brzezinski concurred, pointing out that some officers felt that the reform was simply a form of bait-and-switch that burdened them with sole responsibility but not control for the military decisions.⁶⁸ Yet, while the structure of the party organs remained all-pervasive, and the upper tier of the MPA remained committed to the “permanent purge” of the officer cadre, it is hard to overlook the extent to which the army was able to inculcate its supposed overseers with its own corporate values.⁶⁹ The effect was bidirectional of course, the consequences of thirty years of propaganda could not help but produce a Sovietized military, although not quite to the extent posited by Odom’s model. Yet the military clearly seemed to have the upper hand.

The balance of forces was changing rapidly enough that by the end of 1942, a corps commander felt comfortable enough to take his political officers to task, ordering them to spend less time engaging in ideological discussions and more in making sure of the troops’ living conditions and hygiene, because “that too is party-political work.”⁷⁰ A similar situation occurred involving a platoon commander in Stalingrad. While he could not be as brazen, and did not explain to the *politruk* what party-political work entailed, he

⁶⁷ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 124, 565.

⁶⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Party Controls in the Soviet Army,” *The Journal of Politics* 14, no. 4 (Nov. 1952): 585.

⁶⁹ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 400.

⁷⁰ Iakovenko, *Vo glave atakiushchikh rot*, 84–85.

did feel comfortable correcting a political activist. The former instructed the soldiers that the Motherland demanded that they die in the name of victory. The officer clarified that it would be much preferable that they kill the enemy and survive.⁷¹

For a Soviet military officer to dare this conversation with one of Stalin's warrior-priests barely five years after the Terror is almost unthinkable. Yet it happened. Almost to the year after the invasion and the seeming triumph of the commissars of the commanders and Reds over the Experts, the MPA was forced to issue an order expressly decrying the frontline commanders who had been taking the liberty of reassigning the political officers sent to them by the Main Political Administration, often not bothering to notify them.⁷²

The matters were made worse by the compliance of the political officers, who seemed ready to go along with their changing role and to assume the duties of supply officers or tactics instructors.⁷³ As was the case in the 1930s, the party was corrupted by the society it set out to change, faster than it could redeem it. Worse yet, in the quest for short-term efficiency, the Communist leadership was forced to sanctify the profane. The MPA under the new management had clear instructions to pair off the political officers with commanders who had battlefield experience and could share and educate their "partners."⁷⁴ The political assistants to the commander "were now, however, men in uniform, no longer members of the party organs of the Central Committee, but of the Red Army."⁷⁵

⁷¹ I. I. Liudnikov, *Skvoz' Grozy* (Donetsk: Donbass, 1973) 64–65.

⁷² N. V. Pupyshchev, *V pamiati i v serdtse* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), 22.

⁷³ A. A. Enishev, ed., *Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Vooruzhennykh Silakh SSSR 1918–1973: Istoricheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 249, 256, 260–261; Pupyshchev, *V pamiati*, 30–31.

⁷⁴ Pupyshchev, *V pamiati*, 18.

⁷⁵ David J. Dallin, "Inside the Red Army," *Russian Review* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1943): 27.

The official injunctions now blessed the policy of sidelining the ideological education of the troops in favor of increasingly pragmatic and practical topics. The commissars spent the prebattle hours instructing the troops how best to combat tanks, or how to clean the machine guns or operate a mortar.⁷⁶ The *politruks* were officially enjoined to educate themselves in the technical arcana of the military profession, perforce devoting less time to the study of the party canon.

A battalion commissar encapsulated the situation in a speech to his subordinates in April of 1942: “Roll up your sleeves and immediately start learning a military specialty. You must know perfectly the technology and armaments of the military branch where you serve. Then you will be more respected, by soldiers and commanders both, and your opinions weightier. . . . Do not hesitate to learn from the subordinates.”⁷⁷

The Demographic Revolution

That change in focus could not have come at a less opportune time, considering the vast demographic changes in the party’s makeup that were happening. From its very inception, the Red Army was envisioned by its builders not simply as a standing army analogous to similar institutions in the West, but also as a powerful educational tool in the party’s struggle to inculcate the largely peasant and sullen population of Russia with the appropriate ideological values. In fact, Mark von Hagen argues, the military emerged

⁷⁶ G. S. Abramian, *Moshchnoe oruzhie Sovetskikh voisk v boiakh za Krym 1941–1942* (Yerevan: Izdatelstvo Yerevanskogo Universiteta, 1975), 47; Iakovenko, *Vo glave atakiushchikh rot*, 62–63; Enishev, 249.

⁷⁷ S. N. Martynov, *Vedushchie v boi: zapiski partorga polka* (Omsk: Omskoe Knizhnoe izdatelstvo, 1987), 60.

as an alternative to the factory as a school capable of instilling socialist ideals into population.⁷⁸

The Soviet army, a microcosm of the larger political entity in many ways, was to make Communists as well as soldiers; the two concepts were indeed inseparable. In fact, the former task of the army—the making of Communists—became increasingly more urgent. As the strain of the total war continued to grow, the party grew increasingly concerned with welding the army to the regime, and the quickest way of doing so was to expand its membership among the frontline soldiers. The rigorous prewar requirements of acquiring the prestigious title of a Communist were discarded, and multitudes of conscripts were admitted into the party at astounding rates during the war, based primarily on their valor and military abilities, rather than the meticulous political and ideological vetting that was the norm before the war.

By the end of the war, 3,296,148 Communists (or roughly 56 percent of the party) were in the military, and the lion's share of those were new members, admitted during the war.⁷⁹ Underwritten by the same basic task of welding the army to the regime as the strategy driving the Commissar Policy, a dramatic expansion of Communist membership among the frontline soldiers was undertaken within the first months of the war. The trend toward selectivity and rebranding of the Communist membership as a reward conferred on the few, the select, and the very best, was adopted in the late 1930s, itself a reversal of the feverish attempts to replenish the party depleted to dangerous levels by the Terror.

⁷⁸ Mark von Hagen. "Soviet Soldiers and Officers on the Eve of the German Invasion: Towards a Description of Social Psychology and Political Attitudes," *Soviet Union/Union Sovetique* 18, No. 1–3 (1991): 87–90.

⁷⁹ "Chislennyi sostav chlenov i kandidatov partii," RGANI (1 July 1945) f.77, op.1, d.4, l.150.

Once again, similar problems invited similar solutions and the party threw open its doors to the veterans, the cycle returning to the starting point.

The pattern of building an instant party in the army through mass admissions at the moments of crisis can be readily traced to the precedents of the civil war,⁸⁰ and the more recent example of the ease of party admission standards among the troops of the Leningrad Military District, which bore the brunt of the fighting in Finland.⁸¹ Unlike the carefully focused measures of that war, however, the disasters of 1941 required grander measures. As a result, the stringent prewar requirements of membership were relaxed and hundreds of thousands of soldiers were admitted into the party, with little regard given to their political reliability or education. The Central Committee resolution made it incumbent on the military party organizations to admit soldiers who had become the *Stakhanovites* of war, who exhibited an uncommon degree of gallantry. The letters from the commanders or commissar stressing the capacity of the applicant as a *soldier* replaced the old requirements of long selection and ideological education.⁸²

The response from the rank and file was dramatic, and the party—already understaffed and struggling to manage its duties with the few qualified cadres remaining—found itself inundated with a flood of new and enthusiastic members whose ideological and political literacy could be classified as functionally nonexistent. One agitator answering the question about the possibility of the second front at first refused to answer at all, citing the danger of spies, then proceeded to calm the audience by

⁸⁰ Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*, 85.

⁸¹ Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR*, 249–50.

⁸² *KPSS v Resoliutsiakh v Resheniakh s'yezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Volume 7: 1938–1945) (Moscow: Politizdat, 1985), 238.

forecasting the second front opening somewhere near Kalinin or Moscow.⁸³ Another stole *kolkhoz* property and when confronted by the peasants, simply told them to steal as well.⁸⁴ And these were the agitators, the situation was worse yet among the rank and file—one candidate when pressed identified Romania as an ally of the USSR in the war, and thought that Kalinin was the chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars.⁸⁵

Yet instead of devoting more attention and spending greater time on educating these new party men and women, the political officers were forced to spend less. Party meetings and bureau conferences were wrapped up as quickly as possible due to the pressure of time and the place of the meeting depended on the vagaries on the battlefield.⁸⁶ And always there was the curse of understaffing.⁸⁷ The tide of events and the exigencies of war forced even greater relaxation of the vetting procedures.

The Central Committee resolution promulgated on 19 August 1941 allowed aspiring Communists to skip the requirement of serving alongside older, already tested Communists for a year, upon recommendation from the experienced Communists. Yet those Communists still had to have their own credentials, to prove that they were qualified to recommend new entrants.⁸⁸ The Edict dropped the requirement of having been in the party for a year. By the end of 1942, the turnover that had taken place was so dramatic that most of the “old” Communists in the army were gone. Even many of the new Communists who were admitted in the first months were also killed.

⁸³ “Stennogramma zasedaniia plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma ot 21–22 noiabria 1942,” RGASPI (21, 22 November 1942) f.17, op.43, d.741, l.118.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, l.117.

⁸⁵ “Spravka o vospitanii kommunistov,” PAKO (1 October 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1205, l.30–31.

⁸⁶ Martynov, *Vedushchie v boi*, 50; Iakovenko, *Vo glave atakiushchikh rot*, 55.

⁸⁷ Iakovenko, *Vo glave atakiushchikh rot*, 30.

⁸⁸ “Protocol #98 Zasedaniia Sekretariata TsK VKP(b): Vopros GlavPURKKA,” RGASPI (19 August 1941), f.17, op.116, d.99, l.53.

There were few Communists available and fewer yet of those who would have been eligible to provide recommendations to any prospective member. Thus, before the reform, the 81st Tank Regiment of the 10th Mechanized Corps could produce only two party members with the three-year seniority necessary.⁸⁹ This too would soon prove inadequate, and by winter of 1941, the Kremlin would further ease the restrictions, allowing the candidates to become full members after only three months—thus, in turn, increasing the speed with which they could become eligible to recommend yet more candidates.⁹⁰ More resolutions followed, attempting to streamline the procedure of admission, doing away with ever more checks on the process.⁹¹

The slow-motion disaster unfolded in a sequence of events that probably were anything but unfamiliar to the party apparatus of the army, now staffed primarily with the same *raikom* and *gorkom* secretaries who presided over the similar vicious circle in their civilian positions throughout the previous decade. Faced with the unprecedented attrition of the party stratum within the ranks, the party organizations increasingly admitted new applicants en masse. Bureaucratization and a generalized approach toward vetting and instruction of the new Communists was once again an inevitable and predictable result, the personal attention and individualized approach falling prey to lack of time and resources.⁹²

The center loudly denounced such practices, correctly citing the party by-laws and warning against sacrificing the propagandist and ideological duties of the political

⁸⁹ M. G. Sobolev, *Organizatsionnoe ukreplenie armeiskikh and frontovykh partiynykh organizatsii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny* (Moscow: Znanie, 1975), 11.

⁹⁰ *Partiinoe Stroitelstvo* 2 (1942): 16.

⁹¹ “Voprosy o prieme v partiiu v chiastiakh PVO,” RGASPI (15 July 1941) f.17, op.116, d.99, l.25–26.

⁹² Pupyshev, *V pamiati*, 31–32, 42.

workers to the short-term needs of practical military education.⁹³ Yet their demand and the practical requirements of the environment ensured the growing burden of duties of the outnumbered political officers. The MPA was reduced to the repeated, and apparently unheeded, injunctions to spend less time on paperwork and more on “live work,” to devote more attention to “oral agitation and propaganda.”⁹⁴

There were no good options—until the crisis passed, the party could not reverse itself yet again and return its personnel to its core expertise of ideological indoctrination. Thus the creeping expansion of their duties continued—when ordered to draft a new mission statement for the MPA, one of its functionaries summarized the problem succinctly: “We are a party organ, and thus everything matters to us.”⁹⁵ This tendency of the party organs to be responsible for everything, while having a dearth of qualified cadres to be competent in either ideological or military professions, was indicative of the core flaw in the organizational matrix. The situation created an unbearable pressure, both consciously and due to the structural deficiencies of the organization, to induct more and more Communists into the ranks to ease the crippling burden on individual officers. Yet this simply compounded the problem, since what was needed were qualified cadres, not simply a quantitative increase.

The number of party schools and courses expanded dramatically, but in effect simply replicated the problem in a different incarnation.⁹⁶ Their standards also fell—the length of instruction shortened at Lenin’s Military-Political Academy from three years to one, for example, and concurrently the focus shifted toward giving the political officers a

⁹³ N. I. Kondakova, *Ideologicheskaiia pobeda nad fashismom 1941–1945* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1982), 48.

⁹⁴ Kisilev and Sredin, *Ideologicheskaiia rabota KPSS*, 20; Pupyshev, *V pamiati*, 30–31.

⁹⁵ Pupyshev, *V pamiati*, 26.

⁹⁶ Herspring, *Soldiers*, 172.

solid grounding in military fundamentals.⁹⁷ The face of the party was changing rapidly, the majority of its recruits coming increasingly from the ranks, even as the older members, those who could instruct and transform the reinforcements, were disappearing. Those who survived were spread ever thinner across the hungrily expanding army, where new formations were created almost daily.⁹⁸ On the eve of 1943, the calls were for further dilution of the admission standards, doing away with yet more requirements. As Zolotukhin, assistant to the head of the organizational-instructional department of MPA wrote to his boss:

“The analysis of the composition of the RKKA’s party organizations shows that 45-55% of all VKP(b) members currently in the active army—are members since 1942, and not having a requisite year’s length of service cannot recommend new entrants into the party.” He went on to propose doing away with the above requirements, letting party members with less than a year’s service provide recommendations to the aspirants.⁹⁹ However, the party finally balked, realizing that the probationary period for the candidates has already been reduced to a bare three months and that the entirety of new regulations that relaxed the admission procedures had put it on the cusp of rendering the title of Communist a largely meaningless label.¹⁰⁰

Through the Mirror Darkly: The Transformation of the Civilian Apparatus

A roughly parallel trajectory of reforms, retrenchment, and counter-reforms is discernible in the party’s approach to civilian, economic, and interorganizational

⁹⁷ Pupyshev, *V pamiati*, 19.

⁹⁸ F. S. Stepanov, “Mobilizatsiia kommunistov na fronty Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny” in *Vsemirno-istoricheskaiia pobeda sovetskogo naroda 1941–1945 gg*, ed., A. A. Grechko (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 488.

⁹⁹ From V. Zolotukhin (zam nachalnika organizatsionno-instrukorskogo otdela GlavPURKKA) to Shcherbakov (Nachalnik GlavPURKKA): “Report in regards to implementation of the TsK resolution,” RGASPI (end of 1942) f. 17, op. 122, d. 17, l.177–178.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, l.180.

challenges brought on by the stresses of war. The party was gripped by panic and seemed overtaken by the events.¹⁰¹ Instances of the local Communists redistributing *kolkhoz* cattle between the peasants and reading Nazi leaflets at meetings present a dramatic illustration of a trend that could be dismissed as local color, if the apparatus as whole had not been gripped by surprise, adopting ad hoc measures and unable to control their consequences.¹⁰² Ironically, the system often functioned as it was intended to, despite the inherent inefficiencies and waste, but even when it lurched in the ordered direction and with proscribed speed, its own momentary efficiency worked against it. The instance of party mobilizations into the army and the meat grinder of the front presents one of the most significant examples—having far reaching implications throughout the system.

The familiar tendency to reel from one inadequate solution to the other was sped up during the war. The old patterns were temporally compressed, providing a clear indication of the urgency and desperation that were gripping the party. The frenetic cycling through the familiarly narrow range of tried and available solutions does not present a picture of a strained but fundamentally prepared and sound system dealing with a long-forecast situation. Rather, once again, the party found itself at a loss as to how to deal with its perennial dilemmas.

It has to be noted, of course, that the scale of the ancient conundrums during the conflict dwarfed anything the Soviet regime had ever experienced. Still, there was nothing fundamentally new facing the party leadership in the years of the war on the domestic front, just as the problems of the military echoed old trends. At the root of the

¹⁰¹ John Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1961), 131.

¹⁰² “Dokladnaia zapiska o sostoianii khozaistvennykh rabot i agit-massovoi raboty v Goritskom raikome,” PAKO (25 Nov 1941) f.147, op.3, d. 42, l.116.

system's problems there were still the original sins of the scarcity of qualified personnel, and the inadequate communication network and infrastructure. These core weaknesses grew into wider systemic contradictions. The enduring trap of ideological competency versus technical expertise contributed to, and fed off, the constant centrifugal process that compounded the atomization of the political and bureaucratic institutions. Local cliques, coalescing around the personalized power networks of the local party bosses, in turn reinforced the struggle for professionalization and rationalization of the governing structures. The picture painted by some historians of the neotraditionalist school is thus misleading.¹⁰³ Although the personalistic aspects of administration were pervasive and permeated the Soviet apparatus, they did not crowd out the professional and bureaucratic structures. Rather, the two coexisted in an uneasy and complex balance that—in many ways—was emblematic of the Soviet state as a whole.

Within the regional organization, the struggle to chart a course between a focus on ideological and economic goals was constant and bitterly frustrating. It would do a disservice to the regime to give the impression that the problems facing them were simple or that they missed the obvious solutions. Nothing could be further from the truth. As the documents show, both the local party workers and the leadership identified the symptoms of the problems within the first year, sometimes the first months, of the war and there was a chorus of voices raised in warning. In fact some problems predated the war and were an old and familiar danger.

One Grishin, a representative of the Party Control Commission, started the fateful year of 1941 with a wearily familiar report to the Central Committee that the first

¹⁰³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions* (London: Routledge, 2000), 180–82, 350, 361; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russian in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 226.

secretary of Novosibirsk Obkom had his organization firmly under his thumb, and the members of the local *nomenklatura* were too thoroughly terrified of his displeasure to protest.¹⁰⁴ On the plenum of the Kalinin *obkom* in the summer of 1942, the apparatchik responsible for party education thundered that those who were chasing after quantitative increases in the party membership were missing the point and that this tendency foreshadowed considerable danger to the party.¹⁰⁵ Shchamberg, the head of the Central Committee's organizational-instructional department, was warning about the same problem as early as August of 1941. He proposed a resolution that would remind the local party organizations that individual vetting of the new members, rather than mass (*ogulnyi*) admission was the goal.¹⁰⁶ The problem, however, despite its seeming simplicity, was insoluble within the ideological matrix that defined the party.

And as the party vacillated between these two poles of its identity, the precious resources of the educated proto-middle class were squandered in the parallelism of the system that demanded they serve both in the state and the party institutions, and be versed in ideological as well as technological matters. Some of that somewhat schizophrenic approach is reflected in the party documentation. Even as Shchamberg was warning against mass admission, for example, he was blaming the local party organizations for misunderstanding how vital the growth of the party ranks was in such dangerous time.¹⁰⁷ In June of 1942, the Kalinin *obkom* duly noted all the recommendations of the center in its resolution—the first four points of the document calling on the party organization to

¹⁰⁴ From Grishin (Upolnomochennyi KPK pri TsK VKP(b) po Novosibirskoi oblasti) to Andreev (Secretar' TsK VKP(b)): "Doklad," RGASPI (January 1941) f.17, op.122, d.5, l.6–l.9.

¹⁰⁵ "Stennogramma plenuma obkoma," PAKO (27, 28 June 1942) f.147, op.3. d.275, l. 84.

¹⁰⁶ From Shchamberg to Andreev, Malenkov, Shcherbakov: "Report on changes in party work," RGASPI (August 1941) f.17, op.122, d.15, l.132–l.133.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

correct the flaws in admission process and to avoid substituting the economic or state organs, remembering their commitment to party work. Yet the fifth paragraph firmly directed them to delve deeper into economy of the enterprises and make sure the production goals were fulfilled as per Stalin's orders.¹⁰⁸

Adapt and Overcome: The System in Transition

During the war and its immediate aftermath, this contradiction was far from settled, and the very first response of the USSR to the invasion revealed the party-state's terrible predicament with brilliant clarity. Within the first week, the old machinery of the party that had been preparing for the conflict with the forces of the hostile capitalist world since its inception were judged inadequate and on 30 June 1941, the creation of the State Defense Committee (GKO) was announced.¹⁰⁹ The GKO, comprised of the five members of the Politburo, was endowed with extraordinary powers and given the purview of any and all organizations and issues within the state. Considering the membership of this dictatorial group, the GKO's significance might be overlooked. After all Stalin, Molotov, Beria, Malenkov, and Voroshilov were very much the face of the party. Yet appearances mattered and so did the implications of an ad hoc adjunct to the existing system of governance appearing in the midst of the crisis.

The GKO was emblematic—run informally and comprising a clique of loyal retainers personally bound to Stalin—and it was neither a party organ nor that of the

¹⁰⁸ "Protokol zasedaniia plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma ot 27, 28 June 1942," RGASPI (27-28 June 1942) f.17, op. 43, d.741, l.6.

¹⁰⁹ *Kommunisticheskaia partiia v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine: Dokumenty i matrialy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), 43.

state.¹¹⁰ It existed in the nebulous space between the two, a necessarily ambiguous role considering the delicate balance of the dual system.¹¹¹ The GKO was to function as a coordinator of the war effort as a whole, crossing the boundaries between institutional bailiwicks of the government and the party. In crossing these boundaries, however, it also blurred them. Concerned with results rather than the minutiae of governmental regulations, the GKO was a visible example of yet another course reversal.

The focus on the ideological education of the post-Terror party was brought to an abrupt halt as the exigencies of the war made themselves felt. It's not an accident that the technocrats like Malenkov and Beria were both charter members of the GKO, while Zhdanov was sent off to the besieged northern capital, the Red faction following him into obscurity until 1943. In an almost painfully symbolic illustration of the reversal of the cycle, the edict forming the GKO was followed on the very next day by the resolution widening the rights of the People's Commissars—the heads of the ministries responsible for the state and economic functions.¹¹² In those first chaotic years of the war, the quest for efficiency trumped all.

Furthermore, the GKO, lacking its own system for implementing its directives, worked, perforce, through the existing party and state institutions, bringing them closer together.¹¹³ Its will was usually transmitted through a number of representatives, or plenipotentiaries, detached toward the area of the front or the economy that was seen as

¹¹⁰ John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (New York: Longman, 1991), 46–49.

¹¹¹ Robert G. Wesson, *Lenin's Legacy: The Story of the CPSU* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978) 170–71.

¹¹² *Kommunisticheskaia partiia v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), 43–44.

¹¹³ Viktor Cherpanov, *Vlast' i voina: Stalinskii mekhanizm gosudarstvennogo upravleniia v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Izvestiia, 2006), 233.

flagging.¹¹⁴ This process engendered entangled loyalties, confused jurisdictions, and prioritization of efficiency at the cost of formal channels. All of these, and the underlying reliance on coercion, were replicated throughout the hierarchy of the Soviet institutions with remarkable speed.

The imitation took place in several guises. There were more than sixty direct copies of the GKO—the GoKOs, formed on a city level throughout the country.¹¹⁵ They too lacked their own institutional structure and dedicated personnel. In essence this resulted in additional duties for the local party organizations whose leaders and cadres doubled as the staff of the GoKOs. A slew of local committees tasked with evacuation and answerable to a subgroup within the GKO (as well as the local party committee) were also formed, with similar results. Yet again, none of this was procedurally innovative—similar methods (with similar results) having been tried during the civil war through troikas, or the Moscow emissaries of the collectivization days sent out to oversee the grain procurement.

The nominal lines between the government and its ideological watchdogs began to disappear with bewildering speed, just as the ties between the political elite and the industrial management cadre strengthened. The GKO once again provides an interesting microcosm of the causes and effects. As John Barber and Mark Harrison argued, the State Defense Committee's role as a coordinator of the different aspects of the party-state became crucial due to the sudden vacuum within the political infrastructure. This was

¹¹⁴ Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2007), 229.

¹¹⁵ V. S. Papin, *Organizatsionno-partiinaia rabota v gody Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow: Znanie, 1990), 10.

prompted by “the exodus of much of the central Party and government apparatus from the capital in October 1941.”¹¹⁶

As above, so below—or rather the opposite, since the lower party organizations (already understaffed and strained by the influx of new and untested members in the wake of the purges) found themselves hemorrhaging cadres at a prodigious rate to the front from the first days of the war. And, once again, it was the best and the brightest that were sent, or often volunteered, for the army service. The scope of this transfer was already addressed above, but it bears noting once again just how much of a gaping hole this process left within the territorial party organizations. The contemporary party statistics put the average loss at 40-60 percent of the party organizations’ strength by the end of 1942.¹¹⁷ Yet the loss was neither uniform across the board, nor limited—some regional collectives experienced almost complete turnover throughout the war, seeing as much as 85 percent of their prewar strength drawn to the front.¹¹⁸

Even in isolation, such a process would have had a tremendous impact on the party—but in the midst of war, there were numerous complicating factors. Thus, even as the numbers of the civilian party members dwindled, their duties grew exponentially, almost in inverse proportion to their strength. Overwork became the norm as Borisov, the secretary of Sevastopol *gorkom*, remembered almost two decades later. Sacrifices had to be made under the pressures and ideological work was among them. “The . . . days were filled to the brim with the worries about mobilization restructuring of the industry’s work, of the transport, of all organizations, of all our lives into the wartime model. . . . And yet

¹¹⁶ Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945*, 47.

¹¹⁷ *Partiinoe Stroitelstvo* No. 2 (1942): 3.

¹¹⁸ M. E. Zvereva, A. F. Kosarykov, N. A. Maksimov, V. S. Platov, V. I. Smirnov, V. S. Turkin, eds., *Ocherki istorii Kalininskoi organizatsii KPSS* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1971), 507.

more new people left for the front every day. Their place was filled by the people without any experience of management work.”¹¹⁹

The familiar duties of economic oversight grew in importance even by the metrics of the 1930s. Compounding the demands of the familiar pressures, however, were the new headaches. The front had to be supplied, which among other things meant that the turnover of the cadres would become a continuous process. Many party organizations found themselves on the frontlines and had to assume relevant responsibilities, as was the case for Eliseev, the secretary of Kandalaksha *gorkom*. “Apparatus of the *gorkom* worked with huge overload. The least time was spent in their offices. Most frequently the *gorkomers* could be found at the enterprises, with the levy recruits, in the hospitals, the anti-aircraft units, etc.”¹²⁰

Concurrently, many of the party organizations found themselves responsible for the evacuation of the local industrial plants to the safe Eastern provinces. Once there, the duty of rebuilding and putting the factories and plants back on line would fall also on the shoulders of the Communist networks.¹²¹ The evacuated factories and the lost suppliers of the natural resources necessary to feed them had to be found and replaced anew, and this task would once again be the responsibility of the party organizations. Very quickly this slid into the old flaw of the party workers becoming *tolkachi*, the glorified supply officers as Borisov called them, trying to grab for their enterprises another wagon, or an extra allotment of fuel—ignoring the party-political work entirely.¹²² But what choice

¹¹⁹ B. Borisov, *Zapiski sekretaria gorkoma* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1964), 33–34.

¹²⁰ G. V. Eliseev, *Prifrontavaia Kandalaksha: vospominaniia sekretaria gorkoma partii* (Murmansk: Murmanskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo, 1985), 67.

¹²¹ P. R. Sheverdalkin, I. Z. Zakharov, M. I. Likhomanov, eds., *KPSS—vdokhovitel' i organizator pobedy sovetskogo naroda v Velikoi Otchestvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1973), 188.

¹²² Borisov, *Zapiski sekretaria gorkoma*, 160.

was there? The workload grew heavier with every day, Moscow wanted concrete results above all, and the manpower drain continued unabated.

Even as Eliseev and Borisov spent their sleepless nights dealing with the problems of the industry and the front, party organizations across the USSR realized they were actually shrinking in size. Abkhazian party chief Baramia pleaded with Moscow that one of his *raikoms* was being staffed by two people and, echoing his military colleagues, asked for permission to relax the rules governing promotions.¹²³ His near neighbors in Dagestan could relate to his problems with considerable ease—of thirty-eight provincial and town party committees in the region by the end of 1941, fifteen had 75 percent of the needed complement, nine had 66–75 percent, eleven had 50–66 percent, and three were working with less than half of the needed staff.¹²⁴

The extraordinarily successful mobilization of the Communists to the front was not being matched by recruitment. The net loss for 1941 in Ivanovskaia *oblast* was calculated at fourteen thousand people.¹²⁵ As the gravity of the situation became clear, the old compromises had to be made. The philosophical purity quickly began to give ground to the priorities built around practical demands for higher agricultural production and timely plan fulfillment. Borisov himself, for all his faux indignation against the slide into technocracy, admitted that “the largest part of the workday we now spent in the enterprises, at the locales we reviewed how the resources were economized, the fuel, the metal, the electro-energy...”¹²⁶

¹²³ From M. Baramia (Secretary of Abkhaziia Obkom) to Andreev (Secretary of TsK): “Report about the changes in oblast’s party structure,” RGASPI (17 December 1941) f.17, op.122, d.17, l.5–l.6.

¹²⁴ “Report about the changes in oblast’s party structure,” RGASPI (31 December 1941) f.17, op.122, d. 17, l.22–l.23.

¹²⁵ “Doklad zav. organizatsionno-instruktorskogo otdela Ivanovskogo obkoma partii, tov. Zelianova: O roste Partii,” RGASPI (13 February 1942) f.17, op.88, d.44, l.119–l.140.

¹²⁶ Borisov, *Zapiski sekretaria gorkoma*, 159.

Much as was the case in the armed forces, the first reaction of the regime to the situation was to reintroduce and strengthen the ideological bastions made defunct as recently as few years previously, to reinforce the crumbling core focus and values of the party. And just as the army proceeded to co-opt the commissars, so would the civilian aspects of the Soviet state undermine the new ideological barriers put in their way. The civilian equivalents of the commissars could be found in the political departments brought back into the Machine Tractor Stations and the party organizers network that was rapidly expanded throughout the industrial enterprises.

It is dangerous to draw exact parallels between the military and the civilian aspects of party relations. Although there was considerable commonality in the impetus and the form of the hurried measures introduced in the first months of the war, there was a significant disconnect between the situation in the countryside and the urban industry. And each dealt with and was treated by the party with considerable variance, this specialization having no exact equivalent in the Kremlin's relationship with the army. Yet it would be difficult to ignore considerable commonalities.

The countryside posed a significant challenge to the party. Communist presence there was never strong, with the majority of its presence concentrated at the strong points like *sovkhozes* and Machine Tractor Stations.¹²⁷ Yet it was from among the peasants that the overwhelming majority of the army conscripts would come—60 percent of the army, according to Alec Nove's findings, would be peasant conscripts.¹²⁸ They would also provide the manpower for the growing industry—23 percent of the war work conscripts

¹²⁷ M. I. Likhomanov, *Khozaistvenno-organizatorskaia rabota partii v derevne v pervyi period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny (1941–1942)* (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1975), 29.

¹²⁸ Alec Nove, "Soviet Peasantry in World War II," in *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), 78.

were of peasant background in 1942.¹²⁹ That percentage would triple within the next year. Vinogradov puts the loss of the labor-capable *kolkhoz* members, within the first three years of the war, at 37.2 percent.¹³⁰

Worse, the party found itself facing a very real risk of losing its grip on the countryside through the sheer lack of presence. As the party mobilizations geared up, the villages themselves were almost completely depopulated of the party's direct representatives. The network of *kolkhoz* party organizations fell by an astounding 20 percent within the first year of the war.¹³¹ Only 19,000 party organizations remained among 150,000 *kolkhozes*.¹³² In the first six months, the countryside lost almost half of its Communists; in the primary groups their presence decreased by more than 60 percent.¹³³ Along with the Communists, the army and the industry also requisitioned men, machinery, cattle, and food.¹³⁴ The agricultural industry lost 21.5 percent of the tractors, 17.2 percent of assorted farm machinery, 71 percent of all automobiles, and from the *kolkhozes* alone, the regime confiscated 1,251,000 horses for the army.¹³⁵

The return of the MTS political departments was an instinctual and immediate answer. Originally debuted in 1933, the departments represented an old tactic of securing the ever-recalcitrant peasantry through ideologically reliable redoubts manned by the urban proletariat.¹³⁶ By 1934 the experiment had quietly folded as the *politotdels* caused a

¹²⁹ John Erickson, "Soviet Women at War," in *World War II and the Soviet People*, ed. John Garrard and Carol Garrard (London: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 56.

¹³⁰ I. I. Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS i sovkhov v gody velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941–1943)* (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1976), 12.

¹³¹ *Partiinoe stroitelstvo* No. 12 (1942): 44.

¹³² N. N. Shishkin, ed., *Vozrostanie rukovodiashchei roli kommunisticheskoi partii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Petravodsk: PIO Petrazavodskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 1988), 75.

¹³³ Shishkin, ed., *Vozrostanie rukovodiashchei*, 74.

¹³⁴ Nove, "Soviet Peasantry," 78.

¹³⁵ Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS*, 12.

¹³⁶ Robert F. Miller, "The Politotdel: A Lesson from the Past," *Slavic Review* 25, no. 3 (Sept 1966): 475.

dazzling array of unanticipated problems that dwarfed by far any benefit they provided, although the *sovkhozes* retained the departments until 1940.¹³⁷

Machine Tractor Stations offered a perfect anchor for the departments—these state-run providers of farm machinery oversaw the poorly-bolshevized countryside, and served as garrison houses for the urban proletariat. Yet their main task remained that of supplying the *kolkhozes* with technology and maintaining it. The political departments were expressly tasked with propagandist and politico-educational duties.¹³⁸ Nominally subordinated to the directors of the MTS, the *politotdel* bosses functioned in a nebulous neutral space, consumed by their own aims.

The Politburo edict of 17 November 1941 that resurrected the *politotdels* outlined those aims in a typically concise and yet vague fashion. The resolution directed the political departments to raise the level of political work among the population, to ensure labor discipline in all spheres of work and the timely fulfillment of the plans.¹³⁹ This essentially created a second tier of *raikoms*, given direct orders to infringe on the jurisdictional bailiwick of original party committee system in the *raions*. What prompted this not-quite-innovation to make a return, after the ignominious mothballing of the *politotdels* half a decade earlier?

Both in the 1930s and in 1941 the political departments tempted the central leadership with a spectacularly diverse potential for theoretical windfalls in the management of the countryside. Not least among the possible benefits was the mirage of a direct conduit into the villages that bypassed the regional networks dominated by the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 494–95; Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS*, 14.

¹³⁸ *KPSS v resoliutziakh i resheniiakh s'yezдов, konferentsii i plenumov TsK (Volume 6)* (Moscow: Politozdat, 1971), 37.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

increasingly independent local bosses.¹⁴⁰ The Kremlin made it clear that although *politotdels* should keep the *raion* committees in the loop,¹⁴¹ their primary channels of communication and subordination ran in a parallel system, through the specially established network of regional political sectors, up to the Political Administration for the MTS, attached to the People's Commissariat of Agriculture.¹⁴²

The Center and Periphery: Looking for Balance

Regionalism had been on the rise throughout the 1930s. And although it was interrupted by the Terror for a time, the old forms and relationships would slowly creep back, sped up by the war pressures. Much like GKO's agents, the political departments of the MTS allowed the center a direct role in the locales, an information channel autonomous of local interests and a measure of centralized control. However, the similarities would not end there. Just as with the GKO and its branches, the *politotdels* would confuse the jurisdictional lines and blur the boundaries between the party and the state.

Yet the centralized control *politotdels* seemed to offer was seen as essential to remedying another recurring flaw. In 1933, the introduction of the political departments followed the wake of the Great Famine and the urgent need to repair the broken system of food procurement in order to feed the urban centers, and the army demanded that something must be done.¹⁴³ The political departments offered an answer—a new,

¹⁴⁰ Takeshi Tomita, "Stalin, Politburo, and Its Commissions in the Soviet Decision-making Process in the 1930s," in *Empire and Society: New Approaches to Russian History*, ed. T. Hara, K. Matsuzato, Proceedings of the July 1994 International Symposium at the SRC (Sapporo: SRC, Hokkaido University, 1997), 158.

¹⁴¹ Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS*, 17.

¹⁴² Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors: The MTS and the Development of Controls in Soviet Agriculture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 267.

¹⁴³ Tomita, "Stalin, Politburo," 158

ideologically pure institution staffed by Communists free of the taint of the reactionary peasantry. *Politodels* could be counted upon to bring the villages to heel and extract the hoarded grain and cattle. Where the traditional systems like *raikoms* failed, this extraordinary and purpose-designed ad hoc innovation would succeed as a coercive cure-all.¹⁴⁴

The war presented a similar problem, albeit on a grander scale. As the mobilization continued, the villages were further denuded of peasants, communists, cattle, and tractors. The network of primary party groups—never thick on the ground outside of the cities—continued to shrink at a bewildering pace. The result was a drastic fall in the harvests, with only half of the State Plan being fulfilled.¹⁴⁵ As the German army continued to advance into the traditional bread basket regions of Russia, the demands on the countryside rose, rather than fell. Once again, the country faced a specter of famine and starvation—even with the draconian rationing instituted for the society outside of the party elite.¹⁴⁶ The Kremlin itself realized that it was asking the peasantry to make bricks without straw, and signaled to the party that it was their responsibility to solve the dilemma of rising demands and decreasing production means.¹⁴⁷

Yet the *raikom* secretaries and MTS directors seemed to offer nothing but excuses—lack of equipment, dislocation brought by evacuation, time needed to train the new cadres. In Kalinin one *raikom* had to squat in the buildings occupied by the local *ispolkom*, lacking his own office space. His organization was in no better shape—

¹⁴⁴ Robert F. Miller, “The Politotdel,” 477–78.

¹⁴⁵ Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS*, 16.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Braithwaite, *Moscow 1941: A City and Its People at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 157.

¹⁴⁷ *Partiinoye Stroitelstvo* No. 2 (1942): 5.

understaffed and barely functional.¹⁴⁸ The *politotdels* were almost an inevitable answer as the party once again looked back in search for innovation. They were looked on as the perfect solution to the re-emergent problem of continuous turnover of personnel within the Communist organizations.¹⁴⁹ As the traditional system increasingly oriented itself toward the pragmatic goals of plan-fulfillment, the *politotdels* would be able to take up the ideological slack, proving party education to the Communists as well as motivating the peasants.

Yet—paralleling the reintroduction of the commissars—just as the causes of the disinterment of the political departments recalled their origin, so did the defects. Once again the regime was trying to counteract the symptoms of the fundamental problems, because it had no available tools to address the core issues. As a result, the ad hoc solutions, be they the GKO or political departments, simply contributed to the contradictions already inherent in the system. Thus, once again, the basic problem of the qualified manpower reserves was still unsolved, so in order to staff the political departments, the regime had to engage in a creative yet ultimately destructive reshuffling of the cadres from the existing party and soviet organizations—this inevitably complicating their already fragile grasp on the situation.

More than eighteen thousand desperately needed political workers were sent to serve in the MTS political departments at the height of the cadre shortages.¹⁵⁰ It is unlikely that Moscow engaged in a purposeful attempt to weaken the already tottering regional organizations, but its decisions certainly had that effect. In the end it proved

¹⁴⁸ “Dokladnaia zapiska o sostoianii khozaistvennykh rabot i agit-massovoi raboty v Goritskom raikome,” PAKO (25 Nov 1941) f.147, op.3, d.42, l.16.

¹⁴⁹ Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors*, 267.

¹⁵⁰ Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS*, 18; Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors*, 268.

insufficient and some of the *politotdel* staff had to be recruited from technical rather than ideological experts—engineers and agronomists. Only 47 percent of the heads of the *sovkhoz* political departments had experience in carrying out party-political work.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, political departments were not immune from the drain toward the army and by 1942 in the *sovkhozes* of the Western Siberia, the situation was even grimmer than average, with less than 30 percent of the political departments' members had party work experience.¹⁵² The statistics illustrate that the underlying causes that prompted the introduction of the *politotdels* could only be gamed so much before the new organization largely followed the path of evolutionary development charted by the very *raikoms* they were set to replace or oversee.

The bosses of the political departments entered the party *nomenklatura* with the position of the assistant to the MTS directors, responsible for the political line. However, even as they were shuttled into the Machine Tractor Stations, the directors and many of the experienced technicians were leaving, part of the inexorable manpower drain toward the front—by 1943, 50 percent of mechanics, 62 percent of the combine drivers, and an incredible 81 percent of the tractorists were female.¹⁵³ The implications of these numbers are staggering—the vast majority of these women and the men who came to work alongside them, had to be trained practically anew, with inadequate equipment.

And yet the plan fulfillment was the *raison d'être* of the *politotdel* boss. This was the focus of the central party organs and, as the assistants to the (sometimes new and

¹⁵¹ Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS*, 19.

¹⁵² S. N. Kozyreva, "Organizatsionno-massovaia rabota politotdelov sovkhozov Zapadnoi Sibiri v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny," in *Partiinoe rukovodstvo obshchestvennymi, gosudarstvennymi i narodnokhozaistvennymi organizatsiiami Zapadnoi Sibiri*, ed., B. Ia. Baianov (Tomsk: Tomskii Universitet, 1986), 88.

¹⁵³ V. S. Murmantseva, *Sovetskie zhenshchiny v Velikoi Otechstvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Mysl', 1974), 37.

untried) MTS director, they were equally responsible. The ideological health of the population and the Communist cadre was much harder to measure. As would be the case in the *raikoms* and the *obkoms*, the focus of the supposed guardians of the Marxist-Leninist purity turned steadily toward economic pragmatism.¹⁵⁴ Nor should it be surprising, considering the nature of the relationship between the *raion* committees and the *politotdels*. As was the case in 1930s, and paralleling similar dynamics of the GKO, the introduction of the political departments created a jurisdictional confusion between them and the entrenched party organs.¹⁵⁵

The Kremlin's pious injunction to avoid "parallelism" could not prevent the utterly predictable conflict between two networks with essentially identical responsibilities. The available data does not allow a concrete and clear judgment as to the relative strength of the combatants, yet both the Soviet and the Western historians of the system agree that the conflict was serious and at least a considerable number of the *raikoms* triumphed, co-opting their supposed controllers in another parallel with the military commissars.¹⁵⁶ This development negated yet another of the core missions of the political departments—to serve as a direct and independent avenue of information to the center. Yet it would take until May of 1943 for the Kremlin to disband the *politotdels* yet again, to be reinstated four years later, disbanded, and brought back again.

Meanwhile, throughout their brief renaissance in 1941 and 1942 they continued to be slowly absorbed into the *raikoms*' sphere of influence. The co-optation process was an old trend, buttressed by the wartime challenges. The competition for the common pool of expertise forced the regional party, soviet, and industrial organizations into cooperative

¹⁵⁴ Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS*, 25, 39.

¹⁵⁵ V. S. Papin, *Organizatsionno-partiinaia*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors*, 271; Papin, *Organizatsionno-partiinaia*, 11.

arrangements. The growing role of the party, combined with the contracting human resources, forced compromises and the industrial and state organizations slowly began to carve out small areas of autonomy. By the middle of 1942, the head of Kalinin *obkom*'s cadre department was already complaining that the traditional role of the party as the overseer of appointments was being weakened and some *raikoms* were giving the local enterprises freedom to appoint and demote cadres without the party's approval or oversight.¹⁵⁷

The stakes were high and the pressure to produce results was overwhelming—commonality of goals presented an unavoidable temptation toward coordination, a modicum of trust and mutual dependence between the systems that were theoretically supposed to keep each other in check. Once again, some farsighted party workers like Krylov sounded warnings, pointing to the dangerous trend of the party organizations making a plethora of combined decisions with their Soviet counterparts on issues that hardly required them.¹⁵⁸ Yet a few months later, the same *obkom* was sending out directives, addressing both soviet and party chairmen apparatchiks, excoriating them for the poor results of potato and vegetable sowing.¹⁵⁹ The practice of combined decisions quickly became the norm throughout the whole system, as the party workers discerned the cost of ignoring practical concerns in favor of ideological aims.¹⁶⁰

The party-state had limited recourse against the trend. Just like the tsarist state, they were forced into an uneasy accommodation with the regional elite—the only

¹⁵⁷ From Bochkov (zav otelom kadrov Kalininskogo raikoma) to Vorontsev (Secretar' Kalininskogo obkoma) "Spravka," PAKO (10 March 1942) f.147, op.3, d.871, l.135.

¹⁵⁸ "Stennogramma plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma," PAKO (27-28 June 1942) f.147, op.3, d.275, l.83.

¹⁵⁹ To raispolkom predsedatel' and raikom secretar' from Kalininskii Obkom: "O neudovletvoritel'nom vypolnenii seva," PAKO (9 Feb 1942) f.147, op.3, d.24, l.27.

¹⁶⁰ Cherpanov, *Vlast' i voina*, 157.

effective avenue of control was direct violence against the regional bosses and their networks. But the cost in lost efficiency was tremendous and the success was fleeting, as the purges demonstrated. By 1941, the post-Terror replacements of the old *obkom* secretaries had in effect already replicated the old arrangements. Under pressure to deliver results, the party and state leaders often enough became co-conspirators to defraud or deceive the party-state, which made clear its ability and willingness to punish those who failed to adequately perform. A report from Orlov of the Party Control Commission is representative of the trend as he described the collusion between the local *raikom* secretary and local head of the Soviet economic agency, who pressured the *sovkhos* director into filing bogus claims of harvest collection.¹⁶¹ Orlov also remarked that the cover-up extended throughout the entire organization, with the regional party committee refusing to investigate the reports.

The war increased the centrifugal effect, paradoxically combining it with the quest by the Kremlin to centralize the party. The contradictory nature of the system was revealed in the nationwide effort aimed at evacuating the integral industry across the Urals. Nominally a centrally mandated and preplanned operation, the reality soon devolved into chaos and improvisation, with heavy dependence on the local party organizations and the initiative of the regional party bosses.¹⁶² The network of Evacuation Councils sprang up and rapidly devolved into a confused morass of jurisdiction and uncertain loyalties that would be very familiar to the bosses of the MTS *politotdels*. Responsible both to the central organs and yet ordered to cooperate with the

¹⁶¹ To Andreev (predsedatel' KPK) from Orlov (Upolnomochennyi KPK pri kraikome Krasnodraskogo kraia): "Spravka," RGANI (23 November 1942) f.6, op 6, d.393, l.1–l.8.

¹⁶² Sanford R. Lieberman, "Crisis Management in the USSR: the Wartime System of Administration and Control", in *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* Susan J. Linz, ed (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), 69–70.

local party organizations, the Councils rapidly found themselves following the “recommendations” of the *obkom* secretaries who were intimately familiar with the situation, industry, and peculiar demands of their region.¹⁶³

The GKO plenipotentiaries provided an uncertain link to the center and often enough gave tacit consent to the co-optation of the Councils—the old tendency to favor informal conduits that achieved desired results rearing its head yet again.¹⁶⁴ The GKO itself was very much a feature of the same trend. In effect, Moscow had neither the means nor the opportunity to reassert central control over the locales. The fragile system of communications faced a near collapse within the first year of the war—only reinforcing the centrifugal effect. The number of central papers fell dramatically—by the end of June of 1941, the Secretariat had expanded the network of military papers by ruthlessly cutting the civilian publications.¹⁶⁵ Overall, within the first two months of war, the publication of 1,945 magazines and journals was stopped, and those that were still published were delivered on an uncertain schedule by fewer transports and through clogged roads.¹⁶⁶ Radios were actually confiscated by the regime itself. The agitators and propagandists, on whom the task of information delivery and collection increasingly devolved, faced a problem indicative of the wider party predicament—a spontaneous reorientation toward production goals.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945*, 49.

¹⁶⁴ M. I. Likhomanov, L. T. Pozina, E. I. Finogenov, *Partiinoe rukovodstvo evakuatsiei v pervyi period velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Leningrad, Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1985), 12, 74–75.

¹⁶⁵ I. I. Shirokorad, *Tsentralnaia periodicheskaia pechat' v gody velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941–1945* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta Pechati, 2001), 30.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁶⁷ Richard J. Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front During World War II* (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers, 1994), 12–13.

This cadre that was slated to be the “basic communication link with urban and rural populations”¹⁶⁸ rapidly lost its best personnel to the mobilization, and the ideological standards grew increasingly lax as they were diverted by the party organizations toward the more urgent tasks of overseeing harvests or agitating for plan fulfillment on the factory floors.¹⁶⁹ The material sent from Moscow was often met with blank incomprehension by the new agitators, who proceeded to either mangle the centrally supplied propaganda or reinterpret it within the framework of values they understood and shared with the population.¹⁷⁰ The resulting message frequently had little in common either with the Kremlin’s themes or with the reality. Consequently the apathy and disdain toward agitators spread both among the population and themselves.¹⁷¹

In this environment, the power of the local party secretary grew exponentially and the old Faustian bargain of the Russian state was struck yet again. The tacit consent of the party-state gave the regional leaders a free hand, in return for results. The center still retained the monopoly on violence and thus the power to exercise final control—and did so. The cases of the *obkom* secretaries being relieved, and sometimes executed, demonstrate that the underestimation of the Kremlin’s reach even at the nadir of the war would be a mistake.¹⁷² Yet overestimation of the centralizing effect often ascribed to the wartime party can also be very tempting. Moreover such examples as had been made of Saprykin, the secretary of Cheliabinsk *obkom*, and Anoshin, the head of Bashir *oblast*, reinforced the fact that the primary concern of the center seemed to be the ability to

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁶⁹ “Stennogramma plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma,” PAKO (21–22 November 1942) f.147, op.3, d.278, l.9–10.

¹⁷⁰ Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization*, 14.

¹⁷¹ Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization*, 20–21.

¹⁷² *Partiinoe Stroitelstvo* No. 2 (1942): 6.

deliver the necessary production.¹⁷³ Few, if any, party leaders were dismissed for inadequate party-political work.

The dynamic that developed between the center and the locales belies easy labels. As was the case during industrialization, the pressure from the center for results forced a higher degree of cooperation between party, soviet, and industrial organizations. As a paradoxical effect of this linkage, however, the same party organizations that had won a implicit degree of autonomy from Moscow slowly slid into an increasingly subordinate role vis-à-vis the industrial complex. The fact that the political departments of the MTS were made answerable to the Ministry for Agriculture, in an effort to bypass the stubbornly autonomous regional party organizations, was indicative of the trend.¹⁷⁴

There is no evidence that the industrial enterprises of the locales ever replicated the political maneuver of their party counterparts and achieved autonomy. The Plan was still king and they followed the directives of the central ministries to the best of their ability. Even as the *raikoms* encroached onto the *politotdels* and their areas of responsibility, they assumed their subordination to the state and economic ministries as well. As a corollary, they found themselves relegated to secondary tasks as the technocrats came into their own. Much as the commissars by the end of 1942 were finding themselves taking on the duties of the supply officers, the civilian party organizations were slowly becoming adjuncts to the industrial complex—taking on the

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors*, 267.

responsibility for training the workforce, arranging housing, and providing fuel and energy.¹⁷⁵

Thus the *obkoms* found themselves dancing to the tune of the Moscow economic-technocrat apparatus, even as they ignored or subverted the resolutions of the party hierarchy. The realization of the slide toward combined decision making and the diminution of ideological oversight was clearly perceived by both the central organs and their regional counterparts. On the November plenum of Kalinin *obkom* in 1942, the secretary of the propaganda department, Maximov, protested the temptation to turn the party organizations into simply another economic organ, reminding people that without political work, there can be no economic success.¹⁷⁶ His words echoed Moscow's warning, sounded as early as the September of 1941.¹⁷⁷

Yet the reality was seemingly proving him wrong and, with extremely damaging long-term implications for the system, the country was learning that economic results could be achieved at the expense of the political outlay. So, while a few voices sounded the alarm and protested the increasing devaluation of the party's core strength, the majority was willing to let the process unfold. At the same plenum where Maximov was sounding the alarm, he also cited the response that reflected the party's mindset. There was simply no time and no resources to spare. Production came first, and failure there was being punished.¹⁷⁸ After all, "the war was no time to study theory."¹⁷⁹ The efficient

¹⁷⁵ P. R. Sheverdalkin, I. Z. Zakharov, M. I. Likhomanov, eds., *KPSS—vdokhnovitel' i organizator pobedy sovetskogo naroda v Velikoi Otchestvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1973), 188, 192, 197.

¹⁷⁶ "Stennogramma zasedaniia plenuma Kalininskogo Obkoma," RGASPI (21–22 November 1942) f.17, op.43, d.741, l.16.

¹⁷⁷ "Proekt postanovleniia TsK VKP(b) o partiino-politicheskoi rabote v usloviakh voyennogo vremeni," RGASPI (5 September 1941) f.17, op.122, d.5, l.194–201.

¹⁷⁸ "Stennogramma plenuma obkoma VKP(b)," PAKO (21–22 Nov 1942) f.147, op.3, d.278, l.8–l.9.

¹⁷⁹ "Protokol plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma," PAKO (21–22 November 1942) f.147, op.3, d.277, l.2.

running of the economy took ultimate precedence, and any wide-scale attempts to reverse the triangulation of the party, state, and the industrial complex would have been enormously destructive and wasteful from that perspective.

The New Face of the Party: The White Collar Generation

Further impetus was also given by the changing demographics and social makeup of the party. Throughout the 1930s, and especially in the wake of the purges, the new recruits that flooded into the party ranks came increasingly not from among the proletariat or *kolkhoz* workers, but from among the Soviet proto middle class, the white collar professionals. By the end of the decade, the party grew concerned with the mass nature of this phenomenon—the overwhelming influx of new members and candidates overmatched the existing system of Marxist education (weakened already by the Terror), resulting in lower standards. In response, the Kremlin began instituting measures to limit the effect of the “White Collar Revolution” and to return to the idea of itself as a select, minority institution composed of dogmatically pure cadres. The requirements of admission were tightened up and an increased investment was made in the party school system in order to elevate the existing membership theoretical level to the proper standards.¹⁸⁰

The demands of the war threw those fragile reforms into utter chaos and reshuffled the deck once more, as the Kremlin found itself in a situation far more reminiscent of the Five-Year Plans’ Era. Just as the demands of the front necessitated increasing shortcuts in Communist education, the pressures of the industrial battle pushed the importance of fluent command of dialectical materialism into background. Central

¹⁸⁰ Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 493

party organs themselves seemed eager to abet this change in direction as they specifically tasked the local party organizations to take up the responsibilities of filling the niches of industrial brokers and coordinators.¹⁸¹ They provided communication and direction to the suppliers and consumers of raw materials, straightening out the transport bottlenecks, mediating between the competing agencies, and satisfying the welfare needs of the population.¹⁸²

The very policy of the party experienced yet another jarring reversal, the brief victories of Zhdanov's faction swept fully away, as the functionalist trend gave way to production-branch organization once again. Rigby, rather cautiously, traced the growth of this trend—which would culminate in 1948—to 1943.¹⁸³ Yet in practice it was already in place before the war started. At the Eighteenth Conference, Malenkov was already pushing against the Red faction and its insistence that the party should remove itself from the direct leadership of the economy in order to retain its ideological purity.¹⁸⁴ The war strengthened that impetus immeasurably—the new industrial departments were created in every party committee, with secretaries increasingly specializing in a specific area of the economy, again in parallel to the example set by the GKO.¹⁸⁵ Meanwhile the corps of the

¹⁸¹ Cynthia Kaplan, "The Impact of World War II on the Party," in *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union*, ed. Susan J. Linz (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), 173.

¹⁸² "Zamechaniia po rabote Ivanovskogo obkoma i sekretarei obkoma po rukovodstvu promyshlennost'iu," RGANI (7 December 1942) f.6, op.6, d.277, l.27.

¹⁸³ T. H. Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Worcester: Billing and Sons, 1990), 109.

¹⁸⁴ Kaplan, "The Impact of World War II," 173.

¹⁸⁵ G. G. Morekhina, "Voenno-ekonomicheskaiia politika Kommunisticheskoi partii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny" in *Vsemirno-istoricheskaiia pobeda sovetskogo naroda 1941–1945 gg*, ed. A. A. Grechko (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 432.

party organizers was dramatically expanded, and by the end of 1941 they were inserted into 1,170 enterprises.¹⁸⁶

Furthermore, party committee secretaries could relate only too well to the dilemma facing the bosses of *politotdels*. They too found themselves sharing the responsibility for the industrial output level with the factory directors. And in the case of agricultural production, it was often the party organizers alone who bore full responsibility. So, the political leaders in the territorial party organizations soon transformed primarily into the assistants of the industrial managers, and “many members, absorbed in the overriding tasks of war production, tended to lose interest in indoctrination activity.”¹⁸⁷ The memoirs of the various *obkom* secretaries are instructive in illustrating the speed with which the transformation occurred. It is hard to explain that aspect without coming to the conclusion that what took place was simply a strengthening of the pre-existing trends, rather than an entirely new development.

The sudden outflow of the qualified cadres into the army was mismatched by the ever-increasing influx of new recruits. The Kremlin’s policy on party growth changed almost overnight as an entire generation of Communists disappeared into the gaping maw of the German advance. In directive after directive, the Kremlin demanded fresh recruits.¹⁸⁸ The local party organs could sympathize, as the military mobilization denuded them of the necessary manpower and they struggled to maintain discipline and

¹⁸⁶ I. P. Petrov, “Perestroika raboty i struktury partii v sviazi s voinoi” in *Vsemirno-istoricheskaia pobeda sovetskogo naroda 1941-1945 gg* ed., A.A. Grechko (Moscow: Nauka, 1971) 403—4.

¹⁸⁷ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 139.

¹⁸⁸ “O rabote partiinykh organizatsii zavoda #76 goroda Sverdlovsk po rostu riadov partii,” RGASPI (28 February 1942) f.17, op.88, d.147, l.53-l.60; Ibid., “O roste riadov partii v Sverdlovskoi oblastnoi Partiinoi Organizatsii,” l.78–l.80.

competency standards within the ranks.¹⁸⁹ It would take time before the new measures penetrated the system, but eventually the new admissions began to quantitatively match the departures and eventually to dwarf them.¹⁹⁰

Yet well into 1942, the interparty dialogue continued to transmit the aftershocks of the panic that gripped it in the early days of the war, when it seemed that the losses of the Bolsheviks could not be made good.¹⁹¹ The helpless frustration tinged with terror almost drips off the pages of a report to Moscow from Zelianov, an apparatchik of Ivanovsk *obkom*. He said the “oblast party organization had sent to the Red Army 22451 of its best communists, while the party growth is far from compensating for the decrease, itself fell from month to month. The issue is all the more significant since the near future prognosis does not suggest that the drain of the communists into the army will slow , but increases the likelihood that our organizations will have to contribute communists to staff the newly liberated regions of our country.”¹⁹²

That mindset of being trapped in a demographic sinkhole would linger, and in and of itself would become a significant problem for the center. In 1943, when the Kremlin began to revise its approach, it found that it had limited control over events and that the inertia of the apparatus’s hunger for growth was hard to rein in. A number of historians seem to suggest that the party personnel policies during the war were planned out and a substantially controlled process. Cynthia Kaplan pointed out that “prewar Party recruitment focused on the new Soviet intelligentsia . . . the trend towards an increasingly

¹⁸⁹ Kees Boterbloem, *Life and Death under Stalin: Kalinin Province 1945–1953* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 51.

¹⁹⁰ Rigby, *Communist Party Membership*, 241.

¹⁹¹ “Doklad zav. organizatsionno-instrukorskogo otdela Ivanovskogo obkoma VKP(b), tov. Zelianova: O roste Partii,” RGASPI (13 February 1942) f.17, op.88, d.44, l.140–l.140

¹⁹² Ibid.

white-collar party continued during the war.”¹⁹³ Yet, if we take the VKP(b) at their own words, that would appear to be an erroneous conclusion.

The opening of the gates into the party was likely an almost instinctual decision prompted, as Kaplan herself underscored, by the bare necessity to replenish the ranks—much as was the case in the 1930s. Once again, the lessons of the previous applications of those solutions were either forgotten or ignored. Notably, even in the midst of this search for growth, the party tried to control the process and maintain oversight. Repeated injunctions were sent out to the regional organizations, chiding them for overfocusing on admission of white collar professionals, while neglecting the “heroes of labor,” peasants and workers.¹⁹⁴ Far from aiming toward induction of the white collar Communists, the Kremlin was very much interested in growing the proletarian stratum of the party.

The replies from the *obkoms* and the *raikoms* asserted that the local party organs tried their best and devoted much of their attention to correcting the imbalance in party admissions.¹⁹⁵ Yet the same assurances of Herculean and successful efforts also answered every central query that remained just as stubbornly unfulfilled. It is thus difficult to move past speculation in attempting to decipher whether the regional party organizations were mulishly obfuscating and subverting the demands of Moscow or truly powerless to come to grips with the phenomenon that was changing the very nature of the party. The commonality of the problem throughout the Soviet Union and its enduring nature would seem to suggest the latter explanation.

¹⁹³ Kaplan, “The Impact of World War II,” 160.

¹⁹⁴ “Report about the party growth in Rostov oblast,” RGASPI (1942) f.17, op.88, d.79, l.16–l.17; “Protokoly buro obkoma,” PAKO (18 May 1942) f.147, op.3, d.280, l.231, l.239–l.241.

¹⁹⁵ To org-inst ot del Kalininskogo obkoma ot Markov (sekreter’ Novo-Karelskogo raikoma): “Dokladnaia zapiska o vypolnenii postanovlenia buro obkoma ot 18 May 1942 po dokladnoi orgotdela obkoma O rukovodstve delom priema v partiui i reshenii plenuma obkoma ot 27 June 1942 O roste oblastnoi partorganizatsii,” PAKO (18 August 1942) f.147, op.3, d.399, l.46.

Yet there was also a very rational motive for the local party organs to continue admitting white collar professionals in ever-increasing numbers. The transformation of the party into an appendage of the economic-industrial establishment was a feature of resented necessity. The old rivalry of Reds and Experts was never truly won by either faction, and the pendulum would continue to swing back. Within the party, there continued to exist the instinct of self-preservation that prompted people like Krylov and Maximov to sound the alarm. The abandonment of monopolistic ideological expertise, which essentially legitimized their existence, never sat easily with the party, even as pragmatic adjustments did need to be made.

The instinctive response was, once again, to try to do it all. Rodric Braithwaite described a perfect microcosm of the party's situation, pointing to a *raikom* whose responsibilities expanded to cover every aspect of people's lives, even as the turnover of personnel continued unabated.¹⁹⁶ The party's responsibility grew to encompass the coordination and oversight of the economy and an ever more pervasive penetration of the industry, while still trying to maintain its ideological duties. Partly this was achieved by a redefinition of what constituted patriotism and political health—this was now expressed less through political literacy, and more through the ability to increase one's output (or to fight bravely on the field of battle).¹⁹⁷ Yet this was a facile tactic, and the persistent voices both from above and below demanded both the retention of focus on the traditional duties of the VKP(b) and increased oversight of the economy.

¹⁹⁶ Braithwaite, *Moscow 1941*, 214.

¹⁹⁷ To Shchamberg from Pischugin: "O perestroike organizatsionno-partiinoi i politicheskoi raboty v voyennoi obstanovke v partiinykh organizatsiakh v partiinykh organizatsiakh Nemrespubliki," RGASPI (27 August 1941) f.17, op.88, d.70, l.20–l.30.

The sudden drive for new members was one result of the situation, as the party attempted to broaden its base among the technical intelligentsia as well as the proletariat.¹⁹⁸ The eagerness of the *sluzhashie* to answer the call was certainly an extremely convenient development, since they presented less of a challenge in terms of education and training. Similar problems did not face the party organizations of the army. There, the admissions based primarily on the battlefield presented few challenges. Civilian party recruits urgently needed to be qualified in bureaucratic minutiae or at least be used to studying. They had to learn the procedures of implementing the economic plans, as well as being able to self-educate themselves in the basics of Marxism-Leninism. In effect, the party was trying to replicate the Muscovite compact with the service gentry, trying to outsource the production of the administrative class to the society.

Yet the compressed time frame and the structural flaws of the system created a bottleneck. There was simply not enough slack in the system and soon the backlog of unqualified Communists began to build up. This led to farcical incidents, such as the meeting of the Kalinin party instructors. One after another the *raikom* and *gorkom* workers complained about the need to teach the new secretaries of the primary party groups how to fill out simple forms. Having carefully listened to their concerns, the *obkom* representative went on to demand that they ensure speedy and exact transfer of information throughout the system.¹⁹⁹

By the end of 1941 there were two Communist Parties—the upper and middle management composed of the old Bolshevik professionals, familiar with administrative

¹⁹⁸ Morekhina, “Voenno-ekonomicheskaiia politika,” 208.

¹⁹⁹ “Stennogramma soveshchaniia zaveduiushchikh organizatsionno-instrukornym otelom raikomov i gorkomov Kalininskoi oblasti,” PAKO (2-3 Nov 1942) f.147, op.3, d.386, l.3.

procedures, and the mass of foot soldiers recently inducted into the party and often lacking the most basic understanding of how to keep minutes of party meetings, or how to put together a budget for their organization.²⁰⁰ Old Bolshevik becomes a relative term, however—due to continuing rapid turnover, the seniority of many regional apparatchiks continued to drop. Yet in this brave new party it took relatively little experience to make one an old hand.

There developed a curious relationship within the party network as the isolated centers of competence withdrew from contact with their new compatriots. This dynamic was especially visible in the countryside, where the sparse network of primary party groups was almost completely ignored by the *raikoms*. Often the secretaries and the members of the bureaus bypassed the lower links of the apparatus entirely, preferring to deal directly with the factory directors, or the chairmen of the *kolkhozes*.²⁰¹ This tendency perpetuated the problem, yet it was almost impossible to fight, despite repeated censures from the central organs. Theoretically it was the job of the *raikom* to provide leadership, example, and education to the primary groups. Part of that education was endowing them with the responsibility of implementing the party tasks. Yet these noble goals required diversion of the nonexistent reserves of qualified personnel that could be used to improve the chances of plan fulfillment.

Taking the example of the GKO to heart, ad hoc improvisation became the order of the day throughout the system—members of the *raikoms*' organizational-instructional departments or agitators were detached from their duties as political educators of the new

²⁰⁰ “Spravka o rabote raikomov po obucheniiu i vospitaniuu sekretarei pervichnykh organizatsii,” PAKO (28 Dec 1942 f.147, op.3, d.1205, l.32–l.35.

²⁰¹ “Stennogramma zasedaniia plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma ot 21-22 November 1942,” RGASPI (21–22 November 1942) f.17, op.43, d.741, l.116.

Communists and sent into the countryside to drum up the harvests.²⁰² The idea of entrusting that task to the newly minted Communists of the primary groups was theoretically sound, but practically impossible—there was no room for the inevitable messes, and the final responsibility rested with the *raikom* and *obkom* who would have to answer for the plan's deficiency.²⁰³

The predictable consequence was overwork of the party members who took on the responsibilities they dared not to delegate. The dictatorial powers of the local party bosses grew, but so did the deficiency of their work and the propensity to solve problems with a one-size-fits-all decree that could be promulgated throughout the entire regional organization. The complaints about the increasingly paper-fueled style of leadership turned into a steady trickle, yet there seemed to be few other options available. In that context, Moscow's demands for more stringent oversight applied to the new entrants into the party and the principle of individualized selection seemed as well-advised as they were unrealistic, especially when they were combined with demands for better production and/or faster party growth.²⁰⁴ A more discerning approach toward admissions would have probably eased some of the contradictions and pressures on the system, but it too demanded a commitment of resources that the local organizations simply did not have to spare. The mass admissions continued, swamping the party with new, untested, and unqualified recruits.

In these circumstances it made all the sense in the world for the pockets of competence to stick together, ignoring the lines of administrative and jurisdictional

²⁰² Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization*, 13.

²⁰³ Braithwaite, *Moscow 1941*, 214.

²⁰⁴ "O roste riadov partii, rabote s kandidatami i sostoianii seti partiinykh organizatsii Altaiskogo kraia," RGASPI (21 March 1942) f.17, op.88, d.112, l.36–l.44.

division. Thus, the *raikom* secretary saw no problem with issuing a combined decision with the Soviet chairman, co-opting the boss of the MTS political department or the agitator as a plenipotentiary to a failing *kolkhoz*, or consulting with the local industrial manager on the way they could work together. Similarly there seemed to be little point in punishing a competent colleague who strayed and took a bribe, committed another misdeed, or even failed in fulfilling the impossible demands of the center. Punishing him in accordance to the demands of the Party Code would simply deprive the state of the rare enough professional. Often such cases were resolved by transferring the offender to a new district at an equivalent position of responsibility.²⁰⁵

Notably, there was much less cooperation among the party members and the managers of the agrarian economy. There was considerable common ground between the industrial and party elite, with the members of both sharing urban cultural values, educational background, and goals. Conversely the elite of the village leadership was drawn off into the army, leaving the agrarian economy in the hands of new and inexperienced *kolkhoz* chairmen, who were suddenly faced with inadequate resources and impossible demands.²⁰⁶ The answer, from the perspective of the party, was increased coercion—whether through *politotdels*, *raikom* plenipotentiaries, or the OGPU (United State Political Directorate, the predecessor of the KGB), the *kolkhoz* chairmen were made to bear the full brunt of the party's frustrations. The turnover rate among them skyrocketed, despite command by the center to rein in the abuse.

Meanwhile the new Communists were largely left to their own devices, often feeling bewildered as the frantic attempts to recruit them into the party quickly dissipated

²⁰⁵ Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR*, 118.

²⁰⁶ Kaplan, "The Impact of World War II," 167–68.

after the fact of admission, leaving them to fend for themselves in terms of acclimatization and education. The lower levels of leadership struggled both with the basic procedural skills and with their identity formation. After all, the example shown to them by the higher organization, in the midst of the habitual neglect, was that of a split personality. If any current of thought did seem pre-eminent, it was the focus on managing the economy, not ideological indoctrination.

The long-term effects of this situation were hidden at first by the continually increasing rate of admissions, but they were not ignored. Even with the leniency described above, misuse of one's position was the primary motive for expulsion from the party in 1941 and 1942.²⁰⁷ The falling standards of ideological education were also carefully noted and increasingly commented on by the center.²⁰⁸ The retrenchment was inevitable, and waited only for the breathing space that was finally afforded by the stabilization of the front in 1943. The pendulum was about to swing yet again.

Conclusion

The first two years of the war present a rather unique and informative picture of the crisis afflicting the party and its methods for solving it. The cycles were compressed and exaggerated—and it is telling that under the pressure of the initial shock and trauma the party turned away from the reforms undertaken in the wake of the purges and the Russo-Finnish War. The short-lived emphasis on professionalism evaporated within days of the German invasion, underscoring the fact that at the start of the war, the party was still imbued with the strong sense of its own identity as an ideological entity—its first,

²⁰⁷ "Spravka," RGANI (1942) f.77, op.1, d.3, l.90.

²⁰⁸ "Spravka o sostoianii partiino-politicheskoi raboty na Motozavode, Proletarskii Raikom," TSAOPIM (15 January 1942) f.4, op.39, d.2, l.1-l.2; "Stennogramma plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma," PAKO (27 June 1942) f.17, op.43, d.741, l.58.

instinctive reaction to the unforeseen crisis was to abandon its venture toward a technocratic solution and lurch back toward the quest for security within the familiar embrace of dogmatism and political correctness.

Within the military, the institution of commissars and equalized authority was rapidly reintroduced, along with an emphasis on ideological education—even at the expense of technical proficiency. Meanwhile in the civilian apparatus, the party's solution to the Communist depopulation among the peasantry was to reinstitute MTS stations along with other features designed to maintain political oversight and central control. However, as the magnitude of the challenge facing the Soviet state became clear, the party exhibited its traditional penchant for ruthless pragmatism, reversing its policy once again. The Kremlin did not simply accept that the conditions in the provinces made its drive for centralization a futile enterprise, but instead it took an active step in regularizing the tendency for autonomy, trading relaxed controls for efficiency in mobilization of resources.

Similarly, the political gave way to the practical as the party leaders made alliances and developed working relationships with the industry and the soviet bosses, in clear contravention of their brief as the latter's overseers. Among the civilian apparatchiks as well as the military political workers, the danger of co-optation of the Reds by the Experts loomed ever larger. The dilemma was made sharper by the unprecedented level of demographic and social changes within the party. Under the pressure of the circumstances, the influx of white collar professionals into the party ranks reached epidemic proportions, forever redefining the character of the system. The results of the process were surprisingly similar within the military.

The regime also had to amend the prewar consensus it reached with the service elite and add new incentives to counterbalance the increased demands it was forced to place on this social stratum during the war. One of the more visible and famous of such acts was, in fact, also defined by the seeming eagerness with which the white collar professionals responded to the call of the party. In need of their skill and comforted to a certain degree by the visible exhibition of their loyalty to the regime, the controls on the intelligentsia were relaxed to a degree. The wonder of the intelligentsia and their hopes and plans connected with wartime's "thaw" were well documented by contemporaries and later scholars alike.²⁰⁹ As the conflict drew toward its conclusion, these expectations would only grow, as would the disconnect between the ideas of the intelligentsia and the regime for the postwar society.²¹⁰

Another aspect of the same trend was the change in policy toward religion and the relative rehabilitation of the latter. The topic of the Church's utility as an additional mobilizational tool and its general reawakening of nationalist attitudes has a long pedigree.²¹¹ Yet the timing of the process also serves as an illustration that the cycles of the party's policy did not always move in uniform directions in all spheres. Nor could they in a complex political system like the USSR. Thus, although the tentative overtures to Orthodoxy were made early on, the trend only reached its peak well into 1943.²¹² Thus, even as the Party began to retrench and turn toward the policies of Zhdanov and the

²⁰⁹ Vassilii Grossman, *Zhizn' i Sud'ba* (Lausanne : L'Age D'Homme, 1980); Georgi Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (New York: Times Books, 1992).

²¹⁰ G. A. Bodriugov, "Velikaia Otechestvennaia: podvig i obmanutye nadezhdy" in *Istoria otechestva: liudi, idei, resheniia*, ed. V. A. Kozlov (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), 274–75, 280.

²¹¹ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 144.

²¹² Dmitrii Pospieolovskii, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 270.

ideologues, the Patriarchate of Moscow was being restored and a governmental liaison office of a Council for Affairs of the Orthodox Church was being established.²¹³

Within the context of the relaxed political review of the prospective entrants, the profile of the new, wartime Communist changed rapidly and significantly. Rather than political expertise and familiarity with the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, one's ability to become a party member now hinged either on technical/military expertise or one's personal bravery on the frontline. Combined with the continuing attrition and rapid turnover of the prewar cadre, this process greatly exacerbated the root problems of the system, eroding the already insufficient qualified cadre that formed its foundation.

Yet the Kremlin was aware of the process and retained its wariness as to its direction. The turn toward the technocrats was a reluctant maneuver forced only by the dearth of other options in the grip of the crisis of historical magnitude. As the turning point of the war dawned in 1943 and the specter of defeat receded from the minds of the party elite, they once again attempted to reverse the situation forced upon them by the grim necessities of the war.

²¹³ Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from WWII to the Khrushchev Years* (New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc, 2002), 15–18.

Chapter 3: The Great Reawakening

1943 as the Turning Point in Party Policies: Reasons and Trends

During the war itself, the third year of the conflict was already trumpeted as the seminal moment, and was enshrined as such by both Stalin¹ and Churchill in their treatments of the era.² The subsequent historians saw no reason to disagree—thus John Erickson’s decision to make the battle of Stalingrad a chronological point of separation in his two-volume treatment is mirrored by David Glantz’s assessment as to the year’s significance.³ Stalingrad marked the beginning that would be soon followed, on the Eastern Front, by the chancel house of Kursk and relief of Leningrad from its crippling siege. Elsewhere, the battle of Midway and the victories in North Africa visibly thrust the Axis on the defensive.

Within the narrower framework of the internal politics of the Soviet Union, however, the conceptualization of this year has been largely underestimated. Partly, of course, this has been due to the somewhat parochial overview of the war by the Soviet-era historiography—exemplified even by the central texts of John Armstrong, T. H. Rigby, or Leonard Schapiro—that tended to ignore outright, or at the very least downplay, events beyond the scope of the Great Patriotic War.⁴ That does an injustice to

¹ Bruce Franklin, ed., *The Essential Stalin: Major Theoretical Writings, 1905–52* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 394–98.

² Winston S. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 780.

³ David M. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941–1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 40–43.

⁴ John Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1961); T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR*

the breakpoint that occurred in the party-military and party-civilian relationships at this point. The extraordinary circumstances and pressures defining the decisionmaking matrix of the party could not help but affect the transition. Thus the propensity of historiography to point toward the end of the war as the marker of the sea-change in the party's approach to wartime liberties is very much a function of the party's trend toward codifying changes that took place in the chaotic war years later when the Cold War as a whole was beginning to take recognizable shape.

The changes in the party's policies were, inevitably, a function of the vagaries of war. The dynamic remained a conflicting interplay of several power centers and agendas—not all of them fully cognizant of themselves. The situation was complicated yet more by the fragile communication network available to the party. The ability of the VKP(b) to transmit, collect, and collate the data on the situation in the armed forces was often tenuous and uncertain, hampered not simply by the physical defects of the infrastructure—which was substantial—but also by a systemic propensity for falsification.⁵

Stalin's changing tone remains the best encapsulation of the ongoing reassessment of policy that was taking place in the higher echelons of the party. The victory at Stalingrad took some time to percolate. In the closing weeks of February, as the echoes of the battle were reverberating throughout Soviet society, the Generalissimo was still sounding a cautionary note, warning the country (and the party) against premature triumphalism.⁶

1917–1967 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1959).

⁵ Michael Garder, *A History of the Soviet Army* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 117.

⁶ I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, II (Stanford: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1967), 92.

Yet even in the context of overall uncertainty, the Kremlin was in a position to finally reassess the policies of the previous two years. The year of Stalingrad and Kursk was seen as the long-awaited window of opportunity to finally reverse the decreased emphasis on political education and ideological purity among the civilian and military party apparatchiks.⁷

The specter of co-optation of the political elite by the professional classes loomed large, joined, as always, by the danger of local autonomy that had to be sanctioned for the sake of efficiency during the crisis years. As the opportunity presented itself in 1943, the party responded quickly with a number of wide-ranging reforms, setting the foundation for the policies that would define the Kremlin's approach for the next five years.

The Stresses on the System and the Motivation of the Center for Reform

As the year unfolded, the immediate danger to the capital, and thus the seat of government, had receded, allowing the bulk of the party officials to return from evacuation and rejoin Stalin and his coterie in Moscow.⁸ This end of exile was almost symbolic, since in parallel with their return to the traditional seat of power, the party also launched an assault on the autonomy of the local cliques. The manner of this attack differed substantially from the similar offensives of the Terror and the Great Break—inevitably so, since it was taking place against the background of the still raging conflict. Yet surprisingly, many of the tactics utilized mirrored those honed in the course of previous cycles. Most significantly, the center would once again mobilize the middle

⁷ Jonathan Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat, 1939–1948* (Toronto: Lexington, 2008), 61–63

⁸ John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (New York: Longman, 1991), 47.

management and the grassroots cadres in an attempt to undermine the provincial bosses and use the primacy of ideology as a channel of exerting central control.

As was demonstrated in the previous chapters, in order to mobilize the resources of the society and maximize efficiency, the system reverted to the durable yet primitive institutions that Russia called on again and again throughout its history—whether during the Imperial era or the chaotic turmoil of the 1920s. These were the organizational methods of the personalized system of governance and loyalty, characterized by consensus-building between the center and the periphery, which abrogated to the provincial agent the near-universal jurisdiction over public life in each locale.⁹ These, however, were also counterbalanced, to a substantial degree, by the modern tools of bureaucracy and mass mobilization. Yet interaction between these two facets in the Soviet context and the search for balance between the two paradigms often reinforced the worst features of both phenomena.

The leeway and a considerable degree of the local autonomy were thus bartered to an extent to the local potentates in return for economic and industrial expediency. The system was, in the grim first years of uncertain survival, incentivized to elicit pragmatic rather than ideological excellence. One *raikom* secretary said in the blandest of terms in response to a query from a secretary of a primary party organization, “When the spring sowing is done, then we’ll start worrying about party work.”¹⁰ Political education began to fall by the wayside, increasingly seen as a sideshow next to the real work of running the economy.

⁹ Delano Du Garm, “The Struggle for Grain in Tambov,” in *Provincial Landscapes: Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917–1953*, ed. Donald J. Raleigh (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 60, 80–81.

¹⁰ “Stennogramma soveshchaniia zaveduiushchikh organizatsionno-instrukorskimi otdelami gorkomov i raikomov Kalininskoi oblasti,” PAKO (22-23 June 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1202, l.8.

The instructions and edicts from the Kremlin demanded that the production goals be met without compromising political standards. Yet, primarily, it was the failure in the former task that was penalized, and the provincial apparatchiks were clearly aware of that. As one Kisileva, the aide to the head of propaganda and agitation department of the Kalinin *obkom* bitterly put it, “in the words of series of comrades there is a pronounced thought—‘victors aren’t judged.’ The plan was fulfilled, that clearly means our work is solid, correct.”¹¹ Similarly, Moscow sporadically attempted to centralize the party-state structure and to bring the periphery under more direct control.

This trend was especially evident in the early months of the war, when—under the unrelenting blows of Nazi Germany—the regime’s instinctual reaction was to strengthen the ideological focus and centralize control. The establishment of new avenues of control like the State Committee of Defense (GKO) and the political departments of the Machine-Tractor Stations went hand in hand with the strengthening or revitalizing of the existing institutions like the Commission of Party Control (KPK).¹² Some of these structures—like the political departments or the KPK—had dual potential, both to ensure central control over the peripheries and to revitalize the ideological primacy. The latter, as some held, would in time also result in greater industrial and agricultural efficiency.

That phase of the cycle, however, ran its course relatively quickly as the unprecedentedly disastrous course of the conflict forced the party into one of its trademark compromises with pragmatism. Most of the newly created, or recreated, organizations were subverted in a short order—mimicking the processes that have always taken place in response to Moscow’s attempts to impose its dominion. The subversion

¹¹ “Stennogramma plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma,” RGASPI (20 January 1943) f.17, op.43, d.742, l.34.

¹² Viktor Cherpanov, *Vlast' i voina: Stalinskii mekhanizm gosudarstvennogo upravleniia v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Izvestiia, 2006), 230–35.

played out in a myriad of very similar forms—whether through the GKO’s local representatives devolving increasing power to the local dignitaries in order to achieve faster evacuation, or in the political departments of the MTS being steadily overtaken by the *raikoms* and using the political cadre to whip up production in the provincial *kolkhozes*.¹³

Perhaps the trend could have been slowed down had the response from the center been anything but nominal. Yet the demand for concrete results became the unmistakable and overriding goal of the Kremlin very quickly and that was clear to the apparatus, despite the various rhetorical flourishes urging them to maintain their theoretical grounding.¹⁴ This robbed much of the new institutions established by the center of their supposed *raison d’être* and reduced their ability to resist the inertia of collapsing into the existing, provincial power structures. That ability, of course, was also congenitally compromised by factors such as limited qualified manpower and an uncertain communication and infrastructure network.

Much as was the case with the military, it was the reversal of battlefield fortunes that brought about a change of policy and a determined attempt by the Kremlin to reverse the slide into decentralization and depoliticized technocracy. This process, much like every policy initiative undertaken by the center, was less than flawless. Often its implementation was interrupted by the unexpected vagaries of war. Yet, in comparison to the military, the reformation of the civilian party apparatus and its relationship with the

¹³ I. I. Vinogradov, *Politotdely MTS i sovkhovov v gody velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941–1943)* (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1976), 5, 39.

¹⁴ *KPSS v resoliutziakh i resheniiakh s’yezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK (Volume 6)* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), 65–104.

state, industry, and Moscow could proceed in a context that was considerably less sensitive to the course of the war.

Military Background to the Political Reforms and the Interplay of the Two

Underscoring his own and the party's dilemma, the General Secretary blandly warned the soldiers and the political workers alike that to give in to unwise optimism that Germany was about to collapse would be "to indulge in unwise and harmful self-delusion. To think so means to overestimate our own forces, to underestimate the enemy's forces, and to adopt an adventurous course. The enemy has suffered a defeat, but he is not vanquished yet."¹⁵

The caution was more than understandable. It is unlikely that anyone among the Communist elite had forgotten the unfounded optimism that dominated the prewar period, predicting a short, victorious conflict fought primarily on the territory of the aggressor. Perhaps remembering the heavy price paid for such rhetoric in the morale of the shocked populace, Stalin reiterated his warnings throughout those early post-Stalingrad days, remarking that Russia would not be able to win the war by itself.¹⁶

The hard-fought lessons of the first two years of the war instilled a healthy respect for the Nazi war machine, and the victory at Stalingrad could still turn out to be a fluke, a short-term reprieve similar to the Moscow counteroffensive. Yet this reticence was to be short-lived. Within months after remarking that "the real struggle is only beginning,"¹⁷ Stalin began to realize that a qualitative shift in the correlation of power

¹⁵ J. V. Stalin, *The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1945), 80.

¹⁶ Alexander Werth, *Russia at War: 1941–1945* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1964), 585.

¹⁷ John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin: Continuing the History of Stalin's War with Germany* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 55.

was taking (or, arguably had already taken) place. By May of 1943 the Stavka and the GKO were imbued with an increasingly ambitious spirit, fueled by the visible professionalization of the Red Army.

Dunn, among other military historians, went so far as to argue that by early 1943 the Soviet military achieved quantitative as well as qualitative superiority over its opponent, as well as matching and overcoming the Germans in terms of training, equipment, and organization.¹⁸ While such far-reaching assertions are debatable and debated, the newly-found confidence among the Soviet leadership was readily perceptible. In his 1943 May Day speech, the tenor of Stalin's remarks rang with visibly increased combativeness and vigor, as he pointed to the winter campaigns. In marked contrast to the caution of the previous months, the bombastic rhetoric proclaimed that the recent victories "have shaken the Hitlerite war machine to its foundation, have changed the course of the World War, and created the necessary prerequisites for victory over Hitlerite Germany."¹⁹

It is arguable that his earlier prudence was better justified. The newfound self-confidence resulted in the rushed orders to undertake several ill-conceived offensives that resulted in serious reverses. Glantz asserted that the Stavka was seeking comprehensive victory, ordering wide-ranging offensives along the entire front in the wake of Stalingrad's success.²⁰ Anthony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova went farther and placed blame for the catastrophes of those operations squarely on Stalin's shoulders. According

¹⁸ Walter S. Dunn, Jr., *Hitler's Nemesis: The Red Army, 1930–1945* (London: Praeger, 1994), 215.

¹⁹ Stalin, *The Great Patriotic War*, 84.

²⁰ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 43.

to them, it was his growing sense of “misplaced certainty that the Germans were about to collapse” that led to overextension of the Red Army and the subsequent disasters.²¹

Manstein and the rest of the German command were quick to seize the opportunity and their pre-Kursk counterstrikes produced considerable consternation in Moscow.²² Yet the setbacks prompted by Stalin’s overconfidence were short-lived, and the slugging match at Kursk and the casualties incurred by the Germans at that battle were unmistakably decisive. In the wake of the victory, there was a tangible sign of its surety that the back and forth of trading Soviet territory with the Germans was over and that the war had entered a resoundingly offensive phase. To mark its newfound self-assurance, the Kremlin sanctioned the construction of the war memorials in the liberated territories.²³

Stalingrad made the war unwinnable for Germany on any terms. Kursk confirmed that it had not been a fluke.²⁴ As if to mark the crossed Rubicon, and in an ironic counterpoint to his earlier assertion, Stalin, upon his return from Tehran, closed the year by declaring contemptuously that he trusted Roosevelt’s promises about the opening of the Second Front and invasion of Europe. Yet even if the American had lied, the Soviet Union was more than capable of crushing the Third Reich on its own.²⁵

The changing fortunes of war and their effect on the mood of the ruling elite form a tangible background that affected the policymaking initiatives undertaken by Moscow throughout the year. Examination of the countervailing currents and the emerging

²¹ Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova, eds., *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), 213.

²² Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 41.

²³ Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 595.

²⁴ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 38.

²⁵ Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 601.

consensus presents 1943 as the axis upon which the party's approach to the issues facing it turned yet again. Thus 1943 allowed for a brief window of opportunity for the Communist leadership to assess its situation, take stock, and make preparations for the future. The year was one of potential, yet optimally free of complications.

By the next year, a host of other worries would crowd the dockets of the Central Committee—not least among them the emerging dilemmas of a non-Soviet populace coming in contact with the newly minted Communists of the Red Army. Yet 1943 provided a sterile environment of sorts. That fateful year gave the party architects some room to maneuver, as the change in direction could be tested out both on the army moving steadily into the recently occupied territory, and the civilian infrastructure slowly turning toward reconstruction.

The Problem of Co-optation of the Commissar Corps and the Reform

The status of the political officers presented an inevitable barometer of the changing attitude. Mirroring the party's earlier focus on practicality in favor of dogma, the commissar corps was consistently militarized and limited in its ability to interfere with the war-making professionals of the officer corps.²⁶ In a perfect expression of the party's core value, the adaptation to the demands of the day, framing theory into praxis in order to survive took precedence above all else. The commissars, whose power had increased in an instinctive lashing out at the start of the war, found themselves steadily driven from their positions as ideological instructors and watchdogs. Instead they began

²⁶ Garder, *A History of the Soviet Army*, 114.

to teach classes on tank destruction, the correct way to assemble a mortar, or took upon themselves logistical burdens.²⁷

This trend culminated in October of 1942, as the army achieved its greatest victory in winning back the crowning privilege of the 1920s: the policy of double authority was finally reversed. The very office of the commissar disappeared, replaced by a symbolically unambiguous appellation of the *zampolit* (deputy commander for political work). Yet as is often the case, the apogee of the military establishment's role in the wartime system also marked the beginning of the end. The situation that the army found itself in was complex and rich with ironies.

The victories achieved by the soldiers, for example, were instrumental in instilling the sense of security necessary for the Communist leadership to begin dismantling the system that achieved this success. As victory became increasingly perceptible, military competency of the political officers mattered less than their political functionality.²⁸ Although pragmatism was enshrined as the venerable tool of the party, ideological purity was inescapably tied to its sense of self. The compromises made under the pressures of war were a reluctant price.

There is also a strong argument to be made that there were solidly pragmatic reasons for the shift. For example, 1943 saw the first instances of consistent and wide-scale liberation of the occupied territories and in conjunction with the continuing hunger of the army for new recruits, this resulted in substantial conscription of the young men

²⁷ Dale R. Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains: Civil-Military Relations since Cromwell* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 171.

²⁸ Frank Ellis, *Army and Party in Conflict: Soldiers and Commissars in the Prose of Vasily Grossman*, in *World War II and the Soviet People*, ed. John Garrard and Carol Garrard (London: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 191.

who had spent time under the rule of the Germans.²⁹ Standards also dropped in general and political prisoners and criminals were increasingly utilized—with predictable effects on discipline.³⁰ The loyalty of these new troops could not be taken for granted. Isaak Kobylanskii, an artillery officer and a newly minted Communist, described a problem that was hardly unique. “A few of the newly ‘liberated’ soldiers were assigned to our battery in October 1943. The youngest among them was Slava Tsybulskii. . . . As everybody supposed, Tsybulskii proved himself to be a diligent, smart, and quite bold warrior.”³¹ A few days later, however, Slava was arrested by SMERSH (counter-intelligence service within the military).

“It turned out that in fact Tsybulskii was a native of Tsiurupinsk. Once the Germans came, he served as a local policeman under them and was remarkable for his devotion to the new rulers. Tsybulskii headed the search for local Jews who were hiding from the Germans and the police. He personally escorted seventy poor Jewish old men, women, and children to the place where they were to be shot, and actively took part in the executions.”³² Tsybulskii was summarily executed (Kobylanskii electing not to witness the hanging of the young man he was so fond of only days before), yet the overall problem was more difficult to correct. Thus by the end of summer—when Stalin was more confident in the military situation and less concerned about finessing the military caste’s pride—he had to address the situation and also utilized it as a vehicle for re-establishing the primacy of the political leadership.

²⁹ Walter S. Dunn, Jr., *Stalin's Keys to Victory: The Rebirth of the Red Army* (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), 18, 52–54.

³⁰ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 546.

³¹ Isaak Kobylanskii, *From Stalingrad to Pillau: A Red Army Artillery Officer Remembers the Great Patriotic War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 109.

³² *Ibid.*, 110.

On 21 August 1943, Stalin signed an order to stiffen discipline in the Red Army. Glantz directly attributed this edict to the problems of the new recruits. Yet the measure also drastically expanded the quantity of officers who could be sentenced to penal units—and the vast majority of the officers were from unoccupied territories.³³ The Central Committee's Resolution also came on the heels of the restructuring of the party organs throughout the armed forces, one among many markers signaling a gradual progression of the party leadership toward increasingly direct measures aimed at reasserting control and focusing ideological experts on the professional caste.

The large turnover of members, the new recruits (functionally illiterate in the basics of Marxism-Leninism), the increasing arrogance of the officer corps, all of these events had to be tolerated, as long as the survival of the USSR itself was in question.³⁴ The changes were never meant to be permanent, however.³⁵ A number of historians argued that, in fact, there was no substantive break in the policy of the Kremlin. Glantz asserted that the changes, including the reintroduction of the *edinochalie* (one man management), were purely cosmetic, and that underneath the new veneer, the basics of the party-security mechanism remained essentially stable.

“Although the GKO ostensibly abolished the commissar system in 1943, it maintained stringent political control over the military by continuing its infamous prewar purges of the officers corps during wartime, albeit more covertly and at a reduced level, by employing political deputies at all levels of command and by creating a harsh and

³³ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 546.

³⁴ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 142.

³⁵ Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 68.

often arbitrary and brutal security regime managed by the NKVD to detect any disloyalty on the part of officers and soldiers.”³⁶

In 1943, the number of soldiers and officers arrested for less than patriotic behavior topped six hundred thousand.³⁷

This view, however, ignores the fact that the political officers—scattered throughout the army in great numbers though they were—saw themselves as outnumbered, and constantly complained of being understaffed and overworked. They also pointed out the inexperience that afflicted the replacements who came to fill the shoes of the political officers lost in combat.³⁸ Swamped by waves of recruits, they were increasingly falling prey to the mystique of the military, co-opted by the very institution they were supposed to monitor. Konstantin Rokossovskii—much like Zhukov—tried diligently to depoliticize his memoirs, and the absence of discussion concerning the political cadres is glaringly notable in its absence. Yet even he could not avoid commenting on the trend completely.

In passing he commended the commissariat for their role in the preparation for the battle of Kursk. “Political workers, communists, and members of the *komsomol* organizations inspired the warriors toward increase of their military professionalism, helped them developed steadiness and unit cohesion, the habit of careful care of their weapons and battle technology.”³⁹ The evolution from political controllers into adjuncts to the military professionals under their oversight was steady and sure. One of the

³⁶ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 124.

³⁷ Roger R. Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience* (London: Routledge, 2000), 116.

³⁸ A. A. Epishev, ed., *Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Vooruzhennykh Silakh SSSR 1918-1973: Istoricheskii Ocherk*, (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), 212; M. G. Sobolev, *Organizatsionnoe ykreplenie armeiskikh and frontovikh partiinykh organizatsii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voyny* (Moscow: Znanie, 1975), 24–25.

³⁹ K. K. Rokossovskii, *Soldatskii dolg* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1972), 209.

émigrés, after the war, noted that the separation between newly recruited political workers and those who had already spent some time on the front was visible and perceptible.⁴⁰

The wealth of scholarship spearheaded by historians like Amir Weiner and Catherine Merridale established the significance of military service as the new marker of “Sovietness.” “The army became a primary source of identity—instrument of collective revenge and redemption.”⁴¹ The *politruks*, especially as the ranks of the party proceeded to change and the prewar cadres were steadily replaced, were not immune. Those political officers that found themselves in the uniform and on the frontlines, perforce felt a certain separation from their erstwhile comrades who still enjoyed the civilian life.⁴²

As Glantz pointed out, the security organs—whether SMERSH or NKVD—continued to function throughout the war, albeit at a lower tempo. It would be a mistake, however, to conflate them with the political officers of PURKKA. The triumvirate of security, political, and military officers was never an easy combination, and often enough, the latter two cooperated against the former.⁴³ This, of course, provided yet another marker of the selfsame co-optation that could not but worry the party leadership and lead to the resumption of tensions between the army and the party.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 141.

⁴¹ Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 229.

⁴² Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 143.

⁴³ Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 166.

⁴⁴ Leonard Bertram Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1959), 502; Erickson, *Road to Berlin*, 41; Werth, *Russia at War*, 598.

The Appanage Secretaries: The Dilemmas of the Autonomy and Control in the Rear

Defined by their own unique circumstances, the dynamics of the civilian party apparatus forced the center to deal with essentially the same problems of the existing oversight institutions being subverted in the name of the momentary efficiency, and the professionals—albeit economic rather than military—overtaking the political expertise on the scale of priorities. When General Borshchev wanted to heap praise on the local party secretary, he highlighted the fact that Danilin (a secretary of Slutskii *raikom*) was an exceptional economic organizer.

“Under his leadership the work of the bread plant proceeded without fail, as did the provision of utilities, repair of the tractors, and the harvest preparations. . . . He helped us not only with party-political work, but with the issues of logistics. If a truck would break down for example, or a part is unavailable in the army supply depots, you’d call the *raikom* secretary. . . . Everyone knew that if Iakov Il’ich said he’d “try,” it would all work out.”⁴⁵

From the point of view of a military commander, it is unsurprising that one would concentrate on the ability of the local leader to supply his war effort. Yet this portrayal of a party leader was clearly seen as nothing out of the ordinary. Danilin was the rule, not an exception—a secretary of the party committee who was primarily a managerial professional, who could always be relied upon to “fix” a supply situation and whose description included only the barest nod toward the “party-political work.”

The Kremlin had to react to this redefinition of the party-workers’ identity. The process of consolidation was uneven and unsteady, and while some of the trends can be

⁴⁵ S. N. Borshchev, *Ot Nevy do El’by* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1973), 189.

traced to the previous year,⁴⁶ it was in the course of 1943 that they took recognizable shape and coalesced into a cohesive whole. Furthermore, while the quest by the party elite to reassert its control over the recalcitrant provincial cliques benefited from a certain detachment from the immediacy of the war effort, it was not, could not, be fully free from it. Even more consequential for the dynamic was the paradoxical fact that the military was more centralized and thus more susceptible to the party-state's reassertion of control than the party apparatus itself. These cliques resembled the familial networks that arose in the provinces by the mid 1930s. Targeted by the regime during the Terror, they returned by 1943, arguably stronger than ever. The weakening of the centralization attempts tried during the prewar era prompted the unfolding of the new campaign by the Kremlin against them as soon as the war situation allowed.

For example, a Central Committee review conducted throughout 1943 and 1944 complained that the first secretary of the Kursk *obkom*, Doronin, gathered around himself a clique that operated along dangerously fraternal (*panibratskie*) modes of behavior. As the report accusingly recounted, the local party apparatchiks obeyed the *obkom* boss completely and without criticism. His coterie included every personage of political significance—a newspaper editor, secretary of agitation and propaganda, chairman of city council, and many more.⁴⁷

Penetration and dissolution of such closely knit local power structures was a formidable task for the central government, still reliant on them for mobilization of the local resources needed for the war effort. The fragmented nature of the provincial coterie, each under the thumb of their own “little Stalin,” proved resilient to the attempts

⁴⁶ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 142.

⁴⁷ “Dokladnaia zapiska o rabote Kurskogo obkoma,” RGASPI (1943-1944) f.17, op.122, d.30, l.217.

by Moscow to reverse their gains. One of the more revealing episodes of the fits and starts that plagued the newly resurgent policy of centralization took place in Murmansk, where the center's plenipotentiary, a KPK representative named Kuz'min, developed a feud with the *obkom* secretary. The latter, Starostin, complained to Moscow, saying that Kuz'min was becoming a hindrance to the running of a region that was still on the frontline. Within two months, the Central Committee's Organizational-Instructional Department was recommending Kuz'min's transfer.⁴⁸

As a necessary corollary to this frustrating tug of war with the periphery, the center was also to experience a growing frustration in its struggle to re-establish the pre-eminence of party-political education and Marxist-Leninist indoctrination. This was further complicated by the tangled nature of the relationship between local party bosses and the local state or business dignitaries. As the war wore on, the former were often becoming increasingly beholden to the local industrial and/or economic interests.

Action had to be taken if the party was to retain its identity, and as soon as the military circumstances allowed it, the reforms were pushed forward. The new cycle began, in stark symmetry, with the measure aimed at the very institution whose establishment two years earlier arguably marked the start of the regime's instinctual grab toward ideology at the start of the war. On 31 May 1943 the Politburo of the Central Committee issued a resolution that summarily "liquidated" the political departments in Machine Tractor Stations and *sovkhozes*.⁴⁹ The same day also saw the disestablishment of *politotdels* throughout the railroad, sea, and river transport industries.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ "Dokladnaia zapiska," RGASPI (1 July 1943) f.17, op.122, d.28, ll.45-46, 48.

⁴⁹ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh v resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Volume 6: 1941-1954) (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), 57-59.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-62.

Similar to the contemporaneous abrogation of the commissar position in the armed forces, these measures seemingly undercut the thesis of the party elite's commitment to re-establishing the predominance of ideology over economic pragmatism, and institution of Moscow's control over the provinces and their increasingly autonomous party bosses. After all, since the political departments were established in the fall of 1941 specifically with the above goals in mind, their destruction must imply the abandonment of centralization and politicization of the party structure.

The Tools of the Reform and its Progress: Politization and Centralization

Yet, much akin to the illusory dissolution of the commissar corps, the demobilization of the MTS political departments in fact, paradoxically, signaled the renewed determination by the Kremlin to pursue those very goals. The resolution elucidated that the political departments, while contributing positively to the war effort in any number of ways, had grown much too concerned with purely economic minutiae and had forgotten their primary reason for existing. Political work among the population and the party members alike had been neglected by the *politotdel* personnel, who increasingly imitated the local party organs (and the national party structure as a whole) in pursuing the fulfillment of the all-important Plan, and making sure of the delivery of the required amount of grain on time. The Politburo finally saw no choice but to move "to limit local party officials to interfere in the details of industrial management."⁵¹

Besides neglecting the party-political work, many political departments engaged in political intrigue and in-fighting with the *raikoms* and *gorkoms* surrounding them.⁵²

⁵¹ Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat*, 56.

⁵² Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors: The MTS and the Development of Controls in Soviet Agriculture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 271.

Worse yet, they often lost, turning into the adjuncts of the very institutions they were supposed to police. Furthermore the *raikom* secretaries (and more importantly their bosses at the *obkoms*) were in turn often becoming uncomfortably close to the local industrial directors and various economic managers.

The distance from the center, their relative isolation, the grant of autonomy in return for results, and the uncomfortable awareness of the penalties inherent in failing to deliver on their part of that bargain increasingly brought the party apparatchiks and the leaders of industry together as their priorities began to merge. Cases began to appear of cover-ups involving coterie comprised of both the economic and industrial leadership of the locales—both factions motivated by the same pressure demonstrated plan fulfillment with falsified numbers.⁵³

The subversion of these political watchdogs by their charges presented an uncomfortable parallel to the process that was playing out in the armed forces, where the workers of the MPA were struggling against the seductive ethos of the military machine they were supposed to control. Not being encumbered by the demands of the situation that forced Stalin to move with considerable subtlety against the autonomy of the army, the Kremlin's proscription for taming the provinces was clearly elucidated starting with the Politburo's resolution on political departments.

Largely recognizing the already existing situation, the MTS and *kolkhozes* were placed outright under the purview of the provincial party committees. The independent political structure that had been envisioned as an autonomous channel of control over the *obkoms* was largely abandoned. The Edict still exhibited the peculiarly schizophrenic

⁵³ "O narusheniiakh gos distsipliny i zloupotrebleniiakh na zavode #698 Narkomata Elektropromyshlennosti," RGASPI (12 November 1943) f.17, op.116, d.138, l.31–32.

rhetoric that had been the norm for most of the early wartime period. It called for the *raikoms*, *gorkoms*, and *obkoms* to continue taking all necessary measures to strengthen the economy of the *kolkhozes*. Yet, the language made clear that the political departments were being dismissed because they “lead the political work among the *kolkhozniks*, and workers of the *sovkhoses* in a completely unsatisfactory fashion, and especially poorly utilize such significant fulcrum of mass work as the newspapers.”⁵⁴

The provincial party committees were also excoriated for having used the *politotdels* in an incorrect fashion, having outsourced their own duties to the latter and also having abandoned the party-political work. The political departments were judged to be a utter failure by the center; in fact, the magnitude of their disappointing performance is reflected in the fact that, unlike the end of the previous cycle in 1934, their breakdown in 1943 left no visible mark and no special political post was established in MTS.

The contemporary party press quickly and predictably extrapolated the conclusions that were to be drawn from the Kremlin’s decree—the party organizations of the periphery were to blame for having distanced themselves from the MTS, for having lost touch and failing to keep close links with the MTS.⁵⁵ Blaming the local party structure, the center absolved itself of any responsibility for the failed experiment of establishing a parallel political structure in the provinces.

The Machine Tractor Stations were collapsed into the ordinary party structure, losing any vestige of political autonomy, with their internal party organizations directly answerable to the local district party committee. “The *raikom* thus assumed total control over the political, economic, and social affairs of the MTS and the surrounding

⁵⁴ *KPSS*, 57.

⁵⁵ Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors*, 273.

kolkhozes.”⁵⁶ This control was, however, simply recognition of the truth that in most locales they had already won the power struggle with the political departments, rather than the expansion of a concrete sphere of influence. The actual thrust of Moscow’s policy was reflected in the fact that the male political workers of the appropriate age “freed” by the dissolution of the political departments did not revert into the nomenclature of the provincial party apparatus, but rather were, in the main, given over into the purview of the Defense Department for speedy military training and mobilization into the armed forces.⁵⁷

The Central Committee made it abundantly clear that autonomous decisions by the local party organs in terms of cadre appointment and disposition would not be tolerated. Approval of the center was required at every step of allocation of human resources and no appointment was to be agreed upon until Moscow approved the submitted personnel lists. Thus the *politotdel* reform of 1943 presented the provincial party structure with an unenviable situation. The scope of their responsibilities was now officially widened, placing the political and economic well-being of the countryside and the Machine Tractor Stations directly in the *raikom*’s hands. Concurrently, however, the center withdrew the best-qualified cadres of the political departments, leaving the local party committees with the task of controlling more with less.⁵⁸

For an administrative system already facing the paradoxical crisis of being overwhelmed with deficiently educated new Communists while starved of qualified cadres, this policy was a devastating blow. In effect, since the reason for the dissolution of the political departments was the increasing co-optation of the MTS cadre by the party

⁵⁶ Ibid., 272.

⁵⁷ KPSS, 58.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

committees, the resolution amounted to radical personnel downsizing. The inevitable retrenchment of the measures already in place to compromise with the inadequate manpower supply followed. Specifically the expansion and strengthening of the plenipotentiary institution took root and was to remain an indelible feature of the provincial administrative landscape well into the post-war period. The plenipotentiaries were a widespread response to the limitations of the system—just as the Kremlin often utilized troubleshooters, detaching the apparatchiks toward a specific region or section of the front in order to oversee an improvement in economy or battle performance—the practice also caught on at the lower reaches of the hierarchy.

The practice of detaching *obkom* and *raikom* party workers nominally tasked with political education or even military training in order to oversee plan fulfillment in the countryside had become routine.⁵⁹ It was also routinely decried, both by the Kremlin and the more ideological of the local party workers, but given the situational constraints there was little alternative. Political education and instruction of the new Communists were sacrificed as their supposed teachers were detached to oversee the harvest collection or fulfillment of the industrial goals. Despite the mounting criticism from the Kremlin, the practice continued to grow. Thus, in 1943, complaints were registered by soviet organs of the local *raikoms* “impressing” some of their personnel as plenipotentiaries. The agencies of the latter personnel were sometimes not informed for months.⁶⁰

To exacerbate matters, the initiative and pragmatic compromises of the local coteries were to be curtailed as well. Centralizing the administrative policy and restaking their claim to final control over the local cadre policy, the Kremlin effectively tied the

⁵⁹ “Spravka,” PAKO (5 March 1943) f.147, op.3, d.89, l.59.

⁶⁰ “Stennogramma soveshchania sekretarei gorkomov I raikomov Kalininskoi oblasti po kadram,” PAKO (12 June 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1733, l.12.

hands of the provincial political bosses. Those *politotdel* workers who were to be exempted from conscription were ordered to be appointed as directors of MTS, newspaper editors of the local newspapers, and secretaries of the *raikoms*. Thus, it was largely the political arm of the party system of the periphery would be reinforced.

More importantly, the men who would fill these key posts in the local power structure were required to be first evaluated and approved by the Kremlin. This rather unsubtle measure was a warning to preclude the *obkom* or *kraikom* bosses from safeguarding their patronage networks by exempting loyal clients among the personnel of the political departments from military service and retaining their loyal presence within the provincial hierarchy. From now on, the bosses of the periphery would have to come, hat in hand, to the Kremlin asking for the reinforcements of their fragile cadre structure.⁶¹

Rebranding of Victory and Resurgence of the Party in Civil-Military Dynamic

In the course of their offensive against the centrifugal forces within the civilian apparatus, the twin goals of the Kremlin, that of reimposing central control and reprioritizing the focus on ideological education—were mutually supportive and self-reinforcing. This also paralleled closely the dynamic of the center's quest to reform the party-military institution. The problems of the latter, however, were magnified by the strength of the prestige accumulated by the army in the course of the war. That intangible yet very substantial complication was strengthened yet farther by the fact that it was within the army that the majority of the party now resided.⁶²

⁶¹ "Pros'ba TsK KP Belorussii o napravlenii v ego rasporiazhenie 15 byvshikh rabotnikov politotdelov MTS i sovkhozov," RGASPI (24 June 1943) f.17, op.116, d.125, l.9.

⁶² "Otchet o chislennom sostave partii," RGANI (1 January 1943) f.77, op.1, d.3, l.209, 214.

Thus, instead of direct confrontation, the party took a more subtle approach. It undertook it, however, with the same vigor and lack of hesitation as its offensive against the provincial elites. The active retrenchment began almost immediately after Stalingrad. The press and the agitators, including the political officers, framed the triumph as the result of Stalin's genius. The deification of the Leader that had been subdued and subtly distanced from the uncertainties of the military struggle was once again at the forefront. The victory on the Volga "marked the decisive turning point in the wartime cult of Stalin. As the Red Army's fortunes rose, so also did the quantity of propaganda featuring Stalin. . . . From February 1943, new phrases like 'Stalinist strategy,' the 'Stalinist military school of thought,' and even 'the military genius of Stalin' first made their appearance in the Soviet press."⁶³

Concurrently with the agitation and propaganda blitz, Stalin moved quickly to reward the military. The army and the navy were given a new system of ranks, decorations, and awards. The term *officer* was reintroduced and tangible economic, social, and educational privileges were conferred onto the military caste, which once more had the right to visibly distinguish itself through epaulets.⁶⁴ These 1943 reforms sparked controversy as the few surviving Old Bolsheviks and their younger comrades in spirit clamored over the perceived retreat toward the traditions of the Imperial army.⁶⁵ Yet Stalin had his way, as he moved swiftly to associate himself with the newly emergent military elite.

⁶³ John Barber, "The Image of Stalin in the Soviet Propaganda and Public Opinion during World War II," in *World War II and the Soviet People*, ed. John Garrard and Carol Garrard (London: St. Martin's, 1993), 43.

⁶⁴ Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*, 67.

⁶⁵ Marius Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians, and Their War, 1941–1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 194.

This, however, was not simply a grander example of the party's co-optation by the army taking place at a higher stratum. Rather, the system of awards provided by Stalin served to appease and, essentially, to buy off the officer corps in a dynamic ably dissected by Timothy Colton.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Stalin's association with the military served as a wedge of a greater project to portray the army and its victory as an extension of the party, of which Stalin was after all not simply the head but a living embodiment. The regime offered material rewards and increased status (or rather an official recognition of the popular process that already elevated the status of the military).

This solution to the problem of military loyalty was not unique, having been successfully utilized in the course of the Frunze reforms of 1924–1925.⁶⁷ Nor was the regime's anxiety over the army's loyalty the only reason for these reforms. A professional and competent army had been constructed in the course of the war and its officer corps required the symbols and the rewards of such forces.⁶⁸ The issue of loyalty, however, was also very much a concern. The complex dynamic of cooperation and conflict between the army and the party simply defies easy classifications and definitions.

As William Odom argued, by 1943 the military elite of the Red Army was very much a product of the Soviet society, defined by the framework of ideological values and cultural assumptions that it shared with the party aristocracy. Yet the officer cadre's understanding of what Communism was and the role of the party in the system was never fully in line with the view of the apparatus, and began to diverge even farther under the pressures of war. Petro Grigorenko, future major general and a dissident, grappled with

⁶⁶ Colton, *Commissars*, 253, 257.

⁶⁷ Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 218.

⁶⁸ Erickson, *Road to Berlin*, 40–41.

the dichotomy even as the war unfolded around him. Commenting on the various admiring anecdotes that traversed the military grapevine about Stalin, he explained:

“I recount all this so that the reader will understand that my anti-Stalinist utterance on the first day of the war did not at all reflect a condemnation of Stalin and Stalinism. Ideologically, I remained a Stalinist, and even if I had some individual doubts, the cult of the leader was something in which I partook. Like most people with whom I associated, I connected the turnabout on the course of the war with Stalin, and stories of him as a human being encouraged the magnification of his charisma. Therefore, though I had begun the war with doubts about the wisdom of Stalin’s leadership, I ended it believing that we had been very lucky, that without Stalin’s genius, victory would have taken much longer to achieve and would have entailed far greater losses.”⁶⁹

Thus, while the military was distracted or awarded with various symbolic and economic rewards, the party was steadily recasting the army’s achievements as the property of the system as a whole, and those of the apparatus in particular. It would take some time for the implications to sink in. Once they did, however, the veterans would harbor longstanding and bitter grudges. As late the 1990s, in the wake of the fall of the USSR, the former soldiers, now writers, would complain bitterly about the Stolen Victory.⁷⁰

Furthermore, the disdain of the officer corps for the party men appears to have grown alongside the former’s self confidence. While officers like Grigorenko may have adopted the interpretation of “Stalin’s victory” they did not necessarily equate Stalin with the MPA. Grigorenko himself recounts an episode where he confronted Nikolai

⁶⁹ Petro G. Grigorenko, *Memoirs* (London: W. W. Norton, 1982), 139.

⁷⁰ Gennadii Bordiugov, Alexandr Afanasiev, “Ukradennaia pobeda,” *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, 5 May 1990, 1–2.

Bulganin, lecturing the colonel-general and Politburo member on the finer points of military procedure.⁷¹ The army's loyalty to the system as a whole had never been seriously in doubt, of course. The Vlasov movement remained a rather marginalized and exceptional phenomenon and it was not mirrored by any attempts at a coup or mass mutiny. Yet the front bred a new culture, a specialized sort of understanding of the Communist society, and created new definitions of loyalty to the regime.⁷²

Even as the party's propaganda offensive unfolded and was taking root, to an extent, even within the officer cadre the complexity of the relationship between the military professionals and the commissariat remained a significant issue. While the political officers remained attracted to the ethos of the military profession, the reverse was much less true. "Field commanders who had no sympathy for polit-propaganda kept political officers at arm's length. I heard some field commanders openly ridiculing the work of these officers as a waste of time that could better be used for military training."⁷³

Thus the separation between Stalin and the party, or at the very least between the party and its representatives within the military stubbornly persisted. This view of the Generalissimo as being a separate fixture of the system rather than part of the apparatus—a new refrain on the familiar old motif of the good tsar and evil advisors—contributed to the slow understanding by the soldiers of the proceeding appropriation of victory by the system.⁷⁴ A clear, and inevitably tragic, example of this miscalculation was General V. N. Gordov, a distinguished commander of the Thirty-Third Army, the former commander in chief of the Stalingrad Front.

⁷¹ Grigorenko, *Memoirs*, 145.

⁷² Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 229–30, 188–89.

⁷³ Gabriel Temkin, *My Just War: The Memoir of a Jewish Red Army Soldier in World War II* (Novato: Presidion, 1998), 131–32.

⁷⁴ Barber, "The Image of Stalin," 47.

Gordov had written to Stalin, pressing him to increase the concessions to the army at the expense of the party.⁷⁵ Among his suggestions was eliminating the Military Councils, eliminating the independent channels of communications enjoyed by the political officers, and transferring control of the local army publications to the military staff. Gordov's career peaked in 1943, along with his suggestions, due to his surprisingly tin ear. N. V. Pupyshev, who served as the aide to the head of PURKKA, still remembered the episode with some heat when he wrote his memoirs in the 1980s. Despite repeated rejections of his suggestions, Gordov continued writing and was eventually demoted on the grounds of "undervaluing the role of the commissars in the activity of the armed forces and replacing the educational work with measures of repression."⁷⁶ Shortly after the war, he was convicted and executed on the charge of treason.⁷⁷

Gordov was hardly a lone example of the growing tendency by the army to express its relative autonomy within the confines of the system. A. S. Cherniaev remembered with relish an ongoing feud he had with a new battalion commissar during the summer of 1943. The confrontation came to a boil when the commissar chided him for failing to organize a study group devoted to the Short Course. Cherniaev sought support from the chief of staff, pointing out the absurdity of studying the history of the party in the conditions of the frontline. The officer recommended that Cherniaev make the commissar back off—albeit politely. He also advised him that the commander of the battalion was well aware of the situation and the commissar was a laughingstock.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ N. V. Pupyshev, *V pamiati i v serdtse* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), 91.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁷ Erickson, *Road to Berlin*, 84-85.

⁷⁸ A. S. Cherniaev, *Moia zhizn' i moe vremia* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1995), 151.

In the wake of the reinstatement of *edinochalie* and the slew of subsequent reforms, the emboldened officers grew increasingly arrogant and let their feelings show.

“Commissars were shaken to find in many cases how much Red Army officers loathed and despised them. Certainly Pupyshev’s reaction and memory of Gordov indicated that the upper stratum of the party was not indifferent to the situation. The political department of Stalingrad Front, for example, complained bitterly to Alexander Shcherbakov, the head of the Red Army’s political arm, GLAVPURKKA, about the “absolutely incorrect attitude” which had emerged.”⁷⁹

This situation could not be tolerated any more than the white collar attitudes of the civilian apparatus and their growing dependence on the nominally subservient economic and technical experts. The autonomy of the army could not be allowed to grow and its definition of loyalty had to be brought in line with the official model. The beginning of the new phase of the cycle was subtle due to the delicately balanced situation on the front and the increased stature of the military in the society. The overt measures like purges, which had been used to eliminate the competing centers of identity within the military and technocracy in the 1930s, could not be applied immediately or on a wide scale—although they continued steadily under the surface.⁸⁰ The first step of the counterattack by the center was the attack on the stature of the army. It began, as was seen, with the linkage of their successes to the genius of Stalin. That early and tentative gambit was swiftly followed upon and extended, however.

⁷⁹ Beevor and Vinogradova, *A Writer at War*, 219.

⁸⁰ Glantz, *Colossus Reborn*, 400.

Ideological Offensive: Education, Press and Quality Control

As the year continued to unfold, the party was able to build both on its steady groundwork among the military and on the latter's success against the Germans. Once the Kremlin decided on the full-scale push toward political education among the troops, they did so with the vigor and commitment that matched the parallel effort in the civilian sphere. The time for subtlety in dealing with the army was drawing to a close. The party press and the number of newspapers and journals delivered to the troops grew rapidly throughout the year, spurred on by the special and vocal focus of the Central Committee.⁸¹ It quickly reached the astounding number of 123 daily newspapers and hundreds of papers that came out three times a week.⁸²

The media, maintaining the praise of Stalin, was now also conflating party as a whole with the army, and the military achievements thereof. "The Party was, as it were, now living in the reflected glory of the Army, or was it vice versa, since all official propaganda now went out of its way to point out that all that was best in the Army was 'Party'?"⁸³ A perceptible shift took place as the Russian identity used to mobilize the society at the start of the war began to once again give way to the promotion of the Soviet one.⁸⁴

The Army had to be educated anew in the fact that it was merely an extension of the party's genius. Worse yet, there was also a considerable deficit of proper ideological understanding among the new Communists within the ranks. The correction of such

⁸¹ I. I. Shirokorad, *Tsentralnaia periodicheskaia pechat' v gody velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941–1945* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta Pechati, 2001), 71.

⁸² I. P. Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskoii armii i flote* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatelstvo Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, 1964), 411.

⁸³ Werth, *Russia at War*, 598.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 588, 595.

trends demanded a rollback of the utilitarian compromises of recent years. On 23 May 1943, in conjunction with the reforms of the party structure, the Kremlin ordered a substantial increase in army newspapers. In a meeting with the editors, Nikita Khrushchev stressed that the focus had to be on the political content and indoctrination.⁸⁵

The political officers were also instructed to utilize the gift of extra time that resulted from the implementation of *edinochalie*. Now freed from the responsibilities of professional military tasks, they could and must focus on the political education of the troops and Communists.⁸⁶ The quality of the new recruits into the party was again and again affirmed to be one of the most important factors. Alas, the orders were not implemented quickly. The war continued to exact a heavy price on the manpower reserves and the political officers continued to be utilized in a fashion that was not always fully consistent with their reasserted role as secular chaplains. Moreover, the sudden policy change confused some of the apparatchiks. Faced with a jarring change of focus, they requested clarifications from the Kremlin.⁸⁷

The apparatus had its own inertia (strengthened by the pressures of the war) and it proved exceedingly difficult to reverse it in one fell blow. Thus, for example, even as the Kremlin was slowly reasserting the primacy of political education as the premier task of the *zampolits*, the Briansk front was using them as health and welfare inspectors of the troops.⁸⁸ In fact, the political workers of the Sixth Army proclaimed outright that they

⁸⁵ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 412–13, 417.

⁸⁶ P. R. Sheverdalkin, I. Z. Zakharov and M. I. Likhomanov, eds., *KPSS-vdokhovitel' i organizator pobedy sovetskogo naroda v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1973), 82–83.

⁸⁷ “Spravka,” RGASPI (1943) f.17, op.122, d.28, l.117.

⁸⁸ N. A. Antipenko, *Na glavnom napravlenii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 87.

considered the daily care for the living conditions of the soldiers to be an integral part of their duty, one whose lack would make propaganda and agitation useless.⁸⁹

Knowledge is Power: Centralization through Purification

Much as was the case among the soldiers, the stress on education and the need to refocus the Communists toward that basic building block of their identity was certainly the most vocalized justification for the Kremlin's attack against *obkoms* and *raikoms*.⁹⁰ Only by closely supervised involvement in the active party life, and simultaneous education in theory of Marxism-Leninism, would the new entrants into the VKP(b) be able to learn the routine of political management.

To a large degree these initiatives were a success. Sometimes the improvements were marginal. In other areas, however, they were quite significant. With the usual caveat of uncertain reliability, if one is to trust the contemporary Soviet statistics, the data indicates that the meetings of the party *aktiv* increased twofold in 1943 as compared to the previous year.⁹¹

Moreover, these meetings were the responsibility of the provincial party committees who had to call and organize them. The success of the initiative thus indicated a considerable measure of control reasserted by the center—especially important in view of the unfolding campaign by the Kremlin to combat the periphery's poor implementation of its orders and resolutions. To complement the above measures, the Central Committee also embarked on more concrete steps. In 1943, the party

⁸⁹ I. F. Biriulin, *Verkhni i Sredni Don v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine: Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v voiskakh i prifrontovykh raionakh* (Voronezh: Tsentral'no-chernozernoie knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1970), 140.

⁹⁰ "Spravka o sostoianii vospitatelnoi raboty s kandidatami v chleny VKP(b) v Bolotovskom raione," PAKO (13 April 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1214, l.10–11.

⁹¹ A. V. Mitrofanova, ed., *Sovetskii tyl v period korennogo pereloma v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1942–1943* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 237.

experienced a considerable expansion of the political educational net. This was arguably the largest such push since the decapitation of this network by the purges of the late 1930s, as a variety of short-term courses were established at *obkoms* and *kraikoms* throughout the country for the party and soviet workers.⁹² Thus, once more special attention was paid to the measures meant to increase the local party organizations' ideological and educational work with the young Communists. The focus was also markedly increased on the interparty and agit-prop work.

In effect, the party leadership began to attempt to control the devaluation of the party's brand. The initiative came not a moment too soon. Even at the highest reaches of the educational pyramid, the faults produced by the years of war-prompted shift of focus could be discerned. Mary Leder, an American who emigrated to the USSR as a teenager and spent more than thirty years as loyal yet increasingly doubting citizen, began to experience the first pangs of heresy as a student at the wartime Moscow University. Nor was she alone, as she found out with mixed emotions. "During a class break, I congratulated a classmate on her brilliant presentation at a seminar in political economy. Suddenly she burst out, 'How do I know that what I said is true or even correct? We are not given any other point of view, no other literature to read. It may all be lies for all I know!' and she walked away."⁹³

The author of the outburst rather wisely avoided Leder for the rest of the term, afraid of being reported. But others expected the continuing relaxation of the system, rather than the opposite reaction. In Kharkov, shortly after the liberation, a university

⁹² "Ob organizatsii partiinykh kursov v Riazanskoi oblasti," RGASPI (September 1943) f.17, op.116, d.132, l.8; "Ob organizatsii shesti-mesiachnykh kursov podgotovki i perepodgotovki partiinykh i sovetskikh rabotnikov v Ivanovskoi oblasti," RGASPI (14 April 1943) f. 17, op.116, d.119, ll.28-30, l.511.

⁹³ Mary M. Leder, *My Life In Stalinist Russia: An American Woman Looks Back* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 239.

professor summed up the attitude: “After everything we went through, the government must change its policy. In the political life of the country there must happen, and essentially already are happening, serious changes. . . . These changes will have to continue, especially toward greater democratization.”⁹⁴

Professor Tereshchenko’s thesis that these changes were already underway was precisely the specter the regime wanted to exorcise before it was too late. The wartime measures forced an unprecedented influx of new members under the new, relaxed standards, which were now becoming problematic as members of that new wave began to fill leadership posts within the regional party institutions and outnumbered the prewar generations heavily at the general level. While the situation in the military was the most egregious, the civilian environment was hardly much better. By July of 1943, 70 percent of the primary party groups’ leaders were wartime Communists, of whom 68 percent had only the basic level of literacy.⁹⁵ The level of education of rank and file new Communists was even lower.

Throughout the year, conferences and discussions took place throughout the country, bringing up the topics of tightened standards of party admission, education of the new recruits, establishment of new party courses, and various other initiatives for quickly raising the ideological standard of the new party.⁹⁶ The Central Committee and its representatives (including the reinvigorated KPK) began to steadily press the local committees on this issue.⁹⁷ A series of *oblasts* were inspected by the Central Committee

⁹⁴ G. A. Bodriugov, “Velikaia Otechestvennaia: podvig i obmanuty nadezhdy” in *Istoria otechestva: liudi, idei, resheniia*, ed. V. A. Kozlov (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), 274–75.

⁹⁵ V. G. Boradachev, *Podgotovka i vospitanie partiinykh kadrov v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1974), 20.

⁹⁶ “Sostoianie org-partiinoi raboty v Krasnodarskom kraikome,” RGANI (21 January 1943) f.6, op.6, d.393, 1.9–1.25.

⁹⁷ “Dokladnaia zapiska o rabote Voronezhskogo obkoma,” RGASPI (1943–1944) f.17, op. 122, d.30, 1.97.

and each inspection was crowned with a resolution explicitly pointing out various flaws and outlining Moscow's recommendations for fixing the situation.⁹⁸ In addition, from March 1943 to March 1944, more than thirty *obkom* and *kraikom* secretaries for agitation and propaganda were summoned to Moscow to report to the Central Committee.⁹⁹ Once more a dual purpose was discernable in the process. The center unambiguously reasserted its power over the locales, reminding them of their subservience.

On 21 September 1943, the Central Committee issued a resolution aimed at its own Organizational-Instructional Department.¹⁰⁰ It was ordered to pay closer attention to the work of the provincial party committees and the Central Committees of the Republics. Specifically, the oversight of their work with the smaller provincial party organizations was emphasized. The Organizational-Instructional Department was heavily encouraged to engage in timely identification of the flaws presents in the work of the provincial power centers and provide timely assistance.

Simultaneously, the Central Committee demanded that the Orgburo and the Secretariat strengthen their oversight over the implementation of the party decisions by the local Communist structures.¹⁰¹ All too many resolutions and orders by the center were dutifully agreed to, but never actually carried out.¹⁰² In a familiar fashion, this weakness was reflected throughout the entire chain of command. Just as *obkoms* failed to implement the orders of the Central Committee, their own subordinate organizations

⁹⁸ Mitrofanova, *Sovetskii tyl*, 235.

⁹⁹ *Istoria*, 406.

¹⁰⁰ KPSS (Moscow: Politisdat, 1985), 475–76.

¹⁰¹ Cherpanov, *Vlast' i voina*, 399.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 362.

often did the same to their demands.¹⁰³ This growing defect of the party work was to preoccupy the party organs throughout the year, and in fact for the rest of the war.

In addition, the entire system was hopelessly clogged up as economic matters crowded the dockets of the party committees, leaving little time or energy for the party-political work. This too was partly the result of trying to achieve a consistent pattern of implementation—albeit by the managerial apparatus. Borisov—the secretary of Ivanovo’s *gorkom*—understood the situation intimately:

“The bureau of the *raikom* and even *gorkom* regularly discussed issues, which could have been speedily solved elsewhere. And so the bureaus would be overloaded, the people would be diverted from their real work. . . . Meanwhile the economic workers, the workers of the soviet organs, and even some among the party workers objected: “When we have a resolution of the party organs, everything goes differently, there’s a guarantee of implementation.”¹⁰⁴

Despite his forthright identification of the problem, however, Borisov’s memoirs make it clear that throughout most of the war he was very much part of the faction among the party workers that abetted the above arrangement.

The measures emanating from the Kremlin measures were a direct response to the evolved system. In effect, they simply attempted to retask the main focus of the central party organs. They amounted to nothing less than an open declaration of their intent to regain control of the periphery. The process of demanding personal reports from the local grandees, especially, had a surreal element of feudal politics. There was also the detail of who was summoned. Summoning the propaganda and agitation secretaries—the nominal

¹⁰³ “O praktike raboty instruktorov Proletarskogo raikoma,” PAKO (4 March 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1226, 1.70–71.

¹⁰⁴ B. Borisov, *Zapiski sekretaria gorkoma* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1964), 161.

ideological puritans of the regional party strongholds, tasked with education of the party members and the population—was not intended to be subtle. Once again, centralization and repoliticization marched in step.

The Krasnoiarsk *kraikom* formed probably the most visible illustration of the Kremlin's offensive.¹⁰⁵ In its resolution on 12 August 1943, the Central Committee criticized the recently reviewed party committee. The Central Committee excoriated it for spending too much time on the minutiae of industrial and agricultural production. In its passion for pragmatic results, the local party leadership was accused of neglecting and missing the truly important matters, of forgetting their core focus. The harmful effect of the party committees overly focusing on economic affairs and blurring the line of separation between themselves and the industrial and soviet organs was reinforced by the center throughout the year, through various channels.¹⁰⁶ The trend of increased cooperation between these three branches of the state did not go unnoticed.¹⁰⁷

It was becoming commonplace, for example, to have combined meetings of party *aktiv* and the executive committees (*ispolkoms*) of the Soviets, where the industrial leaders of the province or district sat in the audience and participated in the decisionmaking process.¹⁰⁸ Much like the rest of the crisis-driven compromises of the first war years, this trend was tolerated until the tide of the conflict turned. Once the victorious momentum of the Red Army became more certain, the Central Committee immediately turned toward reversing the trend of the provincial committees growing ever

¹⁰⁵ Iu. A. Vasiliev, *Sibirskii arsenal: deiatel'nost' partiinykh organizatsii Sibiri po razvitiu promyshlennosti v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Sverdlovsk: 1965), 235.

¹⁰⁶ "Otchet Leningradskogo gorkoma," RGASPI (1943) f.17, op.122, d.29, l.60.

¹⁰⁷ "O nepravil'noi praktike priniatiia sovместnykh reshenii biurom Ivanovskogo obkoma and oblispolkoma," RGASPI (3 July 1943) f.17, op.122, d.57, l.95–97.

¹⁰⁸ A. V. Mitrofanova, ed., *Sovetskii tyl v period korennogo pereloma v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1942–1943* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 251.

closer to the economic matters. The specter of these party centers becoming nothing more than production-oriented bureaus, clearinghouses of industrial and agricultural data, loomed ever closer. Thus, on 4 Aug 1943, the Politburo moved to liquidate the institution of the industrial secretaries in the local party committees (*obkoms*, *kraikoms*, and *gorkoms*).¹⁰⁹

Instead, the reform established the position of a vice secretary who would simultaneously lead the industrial departments. In effect, the resolution aimed to decrease the prestige of the party apparatchik presiding over the local economy. They would now be responsible for their party duties—as the aides to the heads of the regional party centers—while performing their oversight of the local industry and agriculture. Specialization of the party workers in purely economic matters was clearly meant to stop. The edict expressly ordered the secretaries of the party organs to head the main concentrations of party work.

The Krasnoiarsk Resolution, discussed earlier, reflected and reinforced this newfound focus on de-emphasizing the party's entanglement with the economic branch of the state. The Central Committee instructed it to henceforth pay more attention to its duties of providing leadership to the local party, soviet, and union organization.¹¹⁰ Rather than squandering its attention on the flood of economic issues, the party was to see to its control over the implementation of party decisions by the provincial party structure. The response to the resolution was predictable and unfolded directly according to script. The *kraikom* held a number of meetings, familiarizing the cadre of the local party apparatus from the *kraikom* to primary party organizations with the demands of the center. A

¹⁰⁹ “Ob organizatsionnom uporiadochenii raboty gorkomov, obkomov, kraikomov i TsK kompartii soiuznykh respublik,” RGASPI (4 August 1943) f.17, op.3, d.1048, l.37.

¹¹⁰ Vasiliev, *Sibirskii arsenal*, 235–36.

number of *kraikom* leaders left for the districts to help with the task and to give speeches to the *raikoms* and grassroots organizations.¹¹¹

A year later, the Central Committee followed up with another review, and once more found the *kraikom* to be deficient. This time, in addition to reprimands and recommendations, the leadership of the party took more direct measures. The *kraikom* was supplemented with an additional cadre of party workers. Described in the orders as experienced and energetic, they were also outsiders. This cadre picked by the Central Committee would not be immediately loyal to the established Krasnoiiarsk power structure and would act as a dispersed sort of *politotdel*—presenting an independent channel of information and control, and thus a lever keeping the provincial leadership in check.

Central Plans and Facts on the Ground: Perspectives of Provincial Elites

This, however, was not a tactic that could have been applied on the national scale. The interminable constraint of the dearth in qualified manpower precluded such measures from being institutionalized or applied on a scale vaster than a few carefully publicized examples. The same constraint, of course, plagued the provincial leadership, making their conflict with the Kremlin's campaign of repoliticization and recentralization of the party largely inevitable. There is very little evidence that there was a concerted, organized effort by the local party bosses to present cohesive, organized resistance to Moscow's plans. Rather, much like the Imperial Russian state before them, and the party as a whole throughout this period, they were trapped into a limited range of solutions to persisting problems.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

While the external factors changed, and that change impacted the implementation of the above solution, there is a remarkable consistency and continuity to the underlying logic. The way in which the local party bosses responded to the challenges of the war took place on a much grander scale compared to the previous decades. The war forced unprecedented dislocation of material and human resources, even compared to the great tribulations of the first Five-Year Plan. Yet, despite the sharp breaks in continuity brought about by the center's previous attempts to break the provincial cliques through the purges, the essential model of the periphery organization had already begun to reassert itself by the late 1930s. The war and the pressures it generated simply sped up the process and entrenched it on a much greater level.

Apart from the inadequate infrastructure and communication net of the Soviet Union, which forced the periphery toward a degree of autonomy and gave them a measure of insulation from the central controls, the paradigm of the party's inner conflict was once again defined primarily by the Cadre Question. Ironically, besides the usual deficits brought on by the drain of manpower to the military and the lack of adequately educated replacements among the growing number of recruits, the party also faced a new problem in 1943: a problem of success. The same success that made it possible for the Central Committee to start the reformation of the party apparatus also effectively hobbled that self-same apparatus. As the Red Army began to advance and liberate vast swathes of the Soviet territory, it was of paramount importance to re-establish the party structure in those regions.

The previous members of the local apparatus had by this time been evacuated and given new duties, conscripted into the military, left behind the lines as leaders of the

guerilla struggle, or simply caught by the rapid advance of the German army. The few of the latter who survived their time under enemy occupation had to be carefully vetted before they could be trusted with administrative or political duties again. This, along with the general necessity of staffing the re-established *obkoms*, *gorkoms*, and *raikoms* in the liberated territory required relocation of considerable numbers of party workers from the existing institutions.¹¹²

Already short-handed, the provincial party structure was faced with a bleak situation in 1943. In some areas, the party shrank to half of its size between 1942 and 1943.¹¹³ The dissolution of the political departments combined with the existing and now the new drains of their manpower coincided with the demands by the Center to focus on innumerable tasks. Among the latter were ideological work among the population, increasing the political literacy of the party apparatus, engaging in close supervision and education of the new members of the party, holding regular meetings and elections, and re-establishing close links with the center—including frequent reports and reviews.

All of this, of course, required a considerable investment of time and manpower that simply was not there. In May of 1943, Voronezh *obkom* appealed to the Kremlin yet again, informing it that its organizational-instructional department was still 25 percent understaffed. Each instructor was thus responsible for nine to ten *raions*, “making it difficult to provide real assistance to the *raikoms* and to oversee their work properly.”¹¹⁴

The task of the provincial organizations was all the more unenviable since, while the Central Committee made it clear that the political and party work was to be the main

¹¹² “O meropriiatiakh po usileniiu kul’turno-prosvetitelnoi raboty v raionakh, osvobozhdenyonykh ot nemetskoi okkupatsii,” RGASPI (13 September 1943) f.17, op.166, d.130, l.12–13.

¹¹³ “Spravka o sostave Kalininskoi oblastnoi organizatsii,” PAKO (1 December 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1205, l.19.

¹¹⁴ “Spravka,” RGASPI (5 May 1943) f.17, op.88, d.172, l.77–82.

preoccupation of the local committees, it was implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) understood that such a change of focus was not to come at the expense of the industrial and agricultural output.

Thus the 1943 plenums' agenda, while topped (as per Moscow's orders) by party-political work, was also heavily concerned with agricultural production and improvement of welfare for invalids/families of veterans.¹¹⁵ The task set by the Kremlin was simply self-contradictory given the constraints of the local party workers. Even the Central Committee's own resolutions sometimes underlined the incompatible nature of its demands. Concurrently with the edict that so heavily penalized the Krasnoiarsk party organization for being overly concerned with minutiae of production, the Kremlin demanded that the Riazanskii *obkom* take all necessary measures to put its economic performance back on track.¹¹⁶

At almost every step of their agenda, the center created a conflict within the system evolved by the provincial party committees. Engagement of the new reinforcements in active party work, for example, meant entrusting them with specific tasks and maintaining consistent oversight since they lacked experience that would suggest reliability. With one's career depending on the adherence to the Plan, few were willing to risk it in order to give the newcomers a chance to learn by doing. It was in response to the growing lack of competent underlings, as much as the natural tendency toward autocracy, that the peripheral leaders grew increasingly isolated during the war. Alexei Kuznetsov's chiding of Leningrad's *gorkom* was not uncommon in pointing out

¹¹⁵ "Spravki Unpravleniia Propagandy i Agitatsii Arkhangel'skogo, Voronezh'skogo, Kurskogo i Tambovskogo obkomov," RGASPI (1943–1944) f.17, op. 122, d.30, l.1–l.11

¹¹⁶ "Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) o rabote Riazanskogo obkoma," RGASPI (Fall 1943) f.17, op.122, d.31, l.19–32.

the necessity of redressing the balance and reining in the wartime practice of local party leaders concentrating on economic achievements at the clear expense of connection with and oversight of young Communists and grassroots organizations.¹¹⁷

This tendency was replicated throughout the provincial chain of command, with the primary party organizations often being left out of the loop entirely, due to their cadre being utterly new and thus unreliable.¹¹⁸ The apparatchiks nominally tasked with performing oversight over the primary organizations and the implementation of the party orders had long been turned into plenipotentiaries spending most of their time in the *kolkhozes* and plants, making sure that production goals were met.¹¹⁹ Even the instructors nominally charged with the specific role of maintaining the political readiness of the party committees were subsumed by the economic concerns.

Kalinin *gorkom* listed a bitter litany of complaints about its own corps of instructors, which were echoed by would-be reformers among the central and provincial party workers throughout the country. “They are poorly familiar with the state of the party-political work, seldom instruct the secretaries of the primary party groups, do not familiarize themselves with the protocols and the work plans of the party organizations, do not provide time correction of flaws in their work. Moreover they are poorly known among the wider circle of the aktiv and the rank and file of the communists, do not learn their political and business qualities, seldom converse with them or visit party meetings,

¹¹⁷“Otchet Leningradskogo obkoma,” RGASPI (1943) f.17, op. 122, d.29, l.60.

¹¹⁸ “Stennogramma soveshchaniia zaveduiushchikh organizatsionno-instruktorskimi otdelami raikomov i gorkomov,” PAKO (22-23 June 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1202, l.6–7, 16.

¹¹⁹ “Stennogramma plenuma Kalininskogo obkoma,” RGASPI (9–10 July 1943) f.17, op.43, d.742. l.82–83.

instead engaging in bureaucratic style of work of preparing reports and memos, neglecting the personalized forms of organizational-political and ideological work.¹²⁰

Yet the central organs demanded the impossible—an end to the administrative, paper-based method of government and recognition of the thesis that without a solid ideological base the production goals were but a mirage.¹²¹ The problem, of course, remained that the wartime experience proved the opposite and the local leaders knew that they could achieve their economic aims in motivating people with tools other than Marxism-Leninism. The provincial leadership mouthed the rhetoric but continued to be unable or unwilling to make any real changes.

Lacking people they trusted, the local party leadership could not risk delegating the tasks and attempted to centralize the work. The qualifications needed for ensuring the production goals were often concentrated at the elite level of management—but not simply party management. This coordination between the leaders of the soviets, party committees, and the local industrial elite became commonplace.¹²² The pressure from the center to produce results framed the relationship between the local elites in terms of mutual dependency. The industrial leaders needed the political experts in order to carve out a sphere of protected space with some avenue for initiative, and they also needed them in their role as unofficial brokers within the system and coordinators that could link the production centers with raw materials.

Defensively summing up the situation and the conflicting pressures, Borisov readily agreed that the political work sometimes suffered as “some economic leaders,

¹²⁰ “O praktike raboty instruktorov Proletarskogo raikoma,” PAKO (4 March 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1226, l.70–71.

¹²¹ “Report by I.P. Boitsov, secretary of Kalinin obkom,” *Proletarskaia Pravda*, 3 September, 1943.

¹²² “O sostoianii organizatsionno-partiinnoi raboty v Voronezhskoi partiinnoi organizatsii,” RGASPI (1943) f.17, op.88, d.172, l.58.

instead of solving the problems of their own shortages or instituting a better conservation regime of their enterprises, would embark on the easy path of going to the *gorkom* with the request to assist.”¹²³ He did not, however, neglect the all-important exercise in self-criticism expected of Communist leaders. Spreading the blame, he also chided members of his own coterie. “Some workers of the *gorkom* apparatus allowed themselves to be convinced and immediately undertook the task of questing for the opportunity to provide all available assistance, occasionally to the detriment of the overall task.”¹²⁴

The center expressed strong displeasure at the level of cooperation and feared the dangers of the local party bosses becoming subservient to the managers and technocrats. As the Kremlin began to press the periphery, however, it once again rediscovered the old limits. Borisov’s ready admission of the faults was not uncommon. Yet few of the local party bosses were willing or able to go farther. Quite simply, there were very few intermediary measures available to Moscow’s leaders in terms of reasserting control over the provincial power hubs. They could once again disrupt them through the indiscriminate application of terror, but the contemporary circumstances (the war and the ongoing drain of qualified personnel) made that wildly impractical.

Thus, they were largely reduced to legislation, lacking adequate mechanisms of enforcing the edicts. In a somewhat ironic twist, this was a perfect reflection of the dynamic playing out at the lower levels of the party. Much akin to the provincial bosses they were trying to control, the center was trapped within a system that lacked proper resources and a clearly articulated system of priorities and incentives.

¹²³ Borisov, *Zapiski*, 161.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

The View from the Trenches: Limits of Reform

The same relationship, defined by necessity and shortages, replayed itself within the army as well, mirroring the dilemmas of the civilian apparatchiks. The center itself, in a familiar, contradictory fashion continued to reassert that political work had to be tied closely to reality and the concrete demands of life on the front.¹²⁵ Inadequate resources had to solve growing problems, resulting in paradoxical and self-defeating orders. Thus, in the units of the Second Baltic front, among the leaders of the primary party organizations, 40 percent had one year or less of party work experience; among their equivalent at the company level, the number climbed to 90 percent.¹²⁶

The party bureaus situated at regimental levels had been endowed with increasingly wide-ranging powers as a result of the centralization.¹²⁷ The party bureaus found themselves responsible for dealing with a veritable flood of party documentations and requests for admission.¹²⁸ One Gorodetskii, the adjutant of the head of the political department of the First Tank Army, complained bitterly about the bureaucratic tendencies of the newly conscripted political workers. "So much writing! War, people dying, and the head office writes and writes. These ink-souls got into the army from the civilian life and can't help but to waste paper. Before the war not a single unit received as much orders and demands during the entire year, that it now gets in a single day."¹²⁹

The complaint, while useful in underlining the separation of the military and civilian party structures, was less than fair in assigning blame. The tendency toward over-bureaucratization was hardly limited to any specific faction within the apparatus.

¹²⁵ Sheverdalkin et al., *KPSS-vdokhovitel' i*, 82–83.

¹²⁶ Epishev, *Partiino-politicheskaia rabota*, 211.

¹²⁷ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 140.

¹²⁸ Sobolev, *Organizatsionnoe ykreplenie*, 24–26.

¹²⁹ F. A. Garin, *Ia liubil ikh bol'she vsekh* (Moscow: Sovetskaiia Rossiia, 1973), 254.

Predictably, the results were less than optimal, resulting in generalized admissions that sent unqualified party candidates into the arms of inexperienced party leaders of the primary groups tasked with educating and indoctrinating the new generation of Communists.¹³⁰ The practices directly contravening the wishes of the reforms continued to be utilized out of sheer necessity. Boris Gorbachevskii was thus appointed to the position of the *komsomol* leader of his unit when the previous party worker was killed. He ardently defended his unsuitability for the job, citing his qualification as a mortarman and a mortarman only. Gorbachevskii's lack of party work experience was genially countered by the commissar interviewing him. "I, my dear fellow, was a simple village teacher, but now you see, I'm the deputy commander for political affairs of a rifle regiment. You'll be fine, and you'll quickly gain experience."¹³¹

Similarly, in a parallel to the center's attempts to instill a new sense of responsibility into the party admission procedures, the reality remained lacking. Kobylanskii was shocked at the ease with which he was admitted into the party ranks. His interview consisted entirely of two questions—whether he loved the homeland and Comrade Stalin. Having answered in the affirmative, he found himself a candidate, before the hurried committee dismissed him and moved on to the next case. He was issued no party tasks or engaged in any particular educational initiatives. Within a year, however, he was dutifully promoted to the rank of full party member.¹³² And this was the situation within the elite technical branch of the army—the artillery. Similar events

¹³⁰ Biriulin, *Verkhni i Sredni*, 49.

¹³¹ Boris Gorbachevskii, *Through the Maelstrom: A Red Army Soldier's War on the Eastern Front, 1942–1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 219.

¹³² Kobylanskii, *From Stalingrad to Pillau*, 71–72.

played themselves out throughout the military and were at least tacitly recognized by the center.

The reasons for the deadlock between the leadership's desires to reverse the existing trends and the local conditions were depressingly familiar. The root cause remained unchanged and seemingly unchangeable—a manpower crisis. The practical depopulation of the countryside as well as the increasing utilization of women in both the civilian and combat arms of the state bore witness to the continuing demands of the front for more recruits and officers.¹³³ It is the deficit of the latter that was especially critical, for it required not simply an expansion of the manpower pool but the attendant logistical burden of education. This problem was solved partially by the massive transfer of the political officers into the military officer corps after the abolition of the commissar position. As many as 122,000 officers with battlefield experience were thus made available for duty.¹³⁴

This, however, was once again sleight of hand. The regime was again attempting to solve the lack of resources by robbing Peter to pay Paul and simply exacerbated the problem. Although significant in absolute numbers, the new officers were woefully inadequate to serve the needs of the army that was growing rapidly and numbered in the millions. The experienced officers were lost within the sea of the cadres that had been churned out with more attention toward speed rather than quality. Thus Gorbachevskii, pushed so suddenly and forcefully into the role for which he thought himself manifestly unsuitable, unhappily recorded his devolution into an arrogant, violent apparatchik,

¹³³ John Erickson, *Soviet Women at War*, in *World War II and the Soviet People*, ed. John Garrard and Carol Garrard (London: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 56, 62; Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience*, 109.

¹³⁴ Dunn, *Hitler's Nemesis*, 100.

reaching the nadir when he found himself beating a Jewish soldier accused of cowardice.¹³⁵

In fact, the problem of officers' education had finally become pressing enough for the Stavka to cautiously expand the length of the educational courses and school terms.¹³⁶ The solution had marginal effects. Throughout the war, Zhukov would continue to bemoan the educational defects of his officers, complaining they were simply not up to the technical demands of the modern war.¹³⁷ Contemporary observers like Gabriel Temkin agreed, witnessing the crowds of young recruits being given into the hands of equally inexperienced cadets recently graduated from the short-term officer training courses.¹³⁸

While failing to solve the issue of the military cadre's professionalization, the transfer of political officers bore a heavy cost of its own. Even more than the army elite, the military political officers suffered from the manpower shortage, and the educational demands weighed even heavier on this strange stratum caught between the party and the army and increasingly finding itself faced with the responsibilities for both ends of the spectrum.¹³⁹

The more military savvy of them were part of the transfer, but the rest could hardly absolve themselves of military responsibilities, considering the lack of expertise of the junior officer cadre being supplied by the home front. The senior command staff certainly continued to view them as such—few had any qualms about detailing the

¹³⁵ Gorbachevskii, 223–24.

¹³⁶ Dunn, *Hitler's Nemesis*, 100.

¹³⁷ Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience*, 125.

¹³⁸ Temkin, *My Just War*, 117.

¹³⁹ Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars*, 172–73.

politruks into the front lines to regroup the troops.¹⁴⁰ Others were relegated to facilitating communications between unit commanders, policing the rear areas, and ensuring fulfillment of orders of the military authorities.¹⁴¹

It is macabre to call such duties distractions, considering their value for successful military operations, yet, in a very real sense that is what they represented for the political officers, who simply lacked the time to educate either themselves or the ever-increasing number of Communists under their command in the intricacies of the theoretical dogma forming the bedrock of the Soviet system. As Zolotukhin, the head of the Organizational-Instructional Department explained, the situation was rather grim. “The party bureau of the regiment is already unable to handle the leadership of the company organizations, the number of which sharply increased, experiencing considerable difficulties with holding the party meetings, lacks time to review the party admission applications.”¹⁴² Moreover, the officers delegating the political workers toward military duties established a dynamic of party functionaries serving as subordinates and aides de camp of the military caste. The summer of 1943 saw the biggest crossover of political workers into the line commands, but it was also the end of the experiment. After that summer the changeover stopped almost completely.¹⁴³

The Resurgence of the Reds at the Expense of the Experts in the Kremlin

As the specter of defeat continued to recede, the regime grew increasingly direct in their attempts to redress the situation, moving beyond mere propaganda and

¹⁴⁰ John Erickson, ed., *Main Front: The Soviet Leaders Look Back on World War II* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1987), 65.

¹⁴¹ Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience*, 135.

¹⁴² Pupyshv, *V pamiati*, 152.

¹⁴³ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 381–82.

redefinition of victory-ownership, Stalin began sending clear messages to the army—disinterring and relaunching the careers of both Lev Mekhlis and Andrei Zhdanov. The careers of the above luminaries had somewhat stalled and both found themselves in disfavor as recently as the beginning of the year. Zhdanov, who was (then as later) popularly perceived by Kremlinologists as the head of the hard-line ideological faction, had found himself sidelined ever since the Winter War fiasco and had incurred Stalin's wrath several times in course of the battles on the Leningrad front.

His contemporaries recalled several episodes where the Generalissimo raged at Zhdanov, specifically blaming him for any number of disasters—including the poor condition of the Soviet artillery and tanks and his sheer military incompetence.¹⁴⁴ However, Zhdanov had been steadily working his way back into Stalin's good graces. The turning point of his career proved to be 1943, marking the beginning of a climb that would continue uninterrupted until his death.¹⁴⁵ Throughout the year, Zhdanov progressed quickly in accumulation of rank, catching up with Malenkov, the head of the technocrat faction, and his enduring rival.¹⁴⁶

Zhdanov's success in 1943 can be explained away as the culmination of several years' worth of effort. It is more difficult to apply the same reasoning to Mekhlis. His biography made Mekhlis an almost quintessential Red. As a graduate of the Institute of the Red Professors, he was quite literally a first-generation ideologue. He survived and even prospered throughout the various adjustments of the regime's policies, going on to head the Department of Press and Publishing Houses of the Central Committee and become

¹⁴⁴ Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896–1948* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 231.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁴⁶ Erickson, *Road to Berlin*, 43.

editor-in-chief of Pravda.¹⁴⁷ He thus played a considerable role in the creation of the Stalin cult in the 1930s and his bona fides as an ideologue were well established when the Terror moved him into the military sphere and made him one of the pre-eminent “inquisitors” of the Red Army.

During the purges, Mekhlis made himself truly infamous among the officer corps, “the inquisitor par excellence, a vigilante in combat fatigues. He went about the business of routing supposed enemies with passion.”¹⁴⁸ This fervor and competence exhibited during the Terror, however, did not translate into effective performance during the war. Widely despised, hated and feared by the army, Mekhlis was described by future Marshal Kirill Meretskov as an unpleasant, albeit scrupulously honest man, who had survived his failures primarily due to his widely known personal loyalty to Stalin. This was among the most favorable assessments available—and even Meretskov remarked on the deep unpopularity of Mekhlis among the officers.¹⁴⁹

Mekhlis started the war as the head of the Military Political Administration. By the end of 1942, however, he found himself as a mere corps-commissar. The rapid demotion of this once fearsome instrument of Stalin’s regime was punishment for several bloodily costly failures on the battlefield—among which the loss of Crimea was especially notorious. Furthermore, his replacement as the head of the MPA had signaled a change toward the pragmatic, the pre-eminence of expertise over ideology, and the attempts by Stalin to appease the army.¹⁵⁰ Since Mekhlis had done little to distinguish

¹⁴⁷ Lewis H. Siegelbaum, Andrei Sokolov, L. Kosheleva, eds., *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000), 81, 119.

¹⁴⁸ Colton, *Commissars*, 141

¹⁴⁹ John Erickson, ed., *Main Front: Soviet Leaders Look Back on World War II* (Washington: Brassey’s Defence, 1987), 100.

¹⁵⁰ Werth, *Russia at War*, 389.

himself in his exile, it is difficult to regard his return to prominence less than a year after his disgrace as anything but a deliberate maneuver by the Kremlin to underline the change in policy.

The rise of these men as the newly empowered watchdogs of the center on the army stands in interesting parallel to the wide-ranging reforms announced in May 1943 and aimed at the restructuring of the entire machinery of the party-military institution. The twin lynchpins of the reform program were the elimination of the office of the deputy of political affairs in the company-level units and above and the establishment of the primary party groups at the battalion level.¹⁵¹ In effect, the reforms resulted in the elimination of the middle-management of the political officer cadre, the very link that was most closely associated with the military officer corps.

Certainly Shcherbakov, the heart of the Military Political Administration, expressed worries to his staff by the end of 1943 that the level of political preparedness of the heads of the army political departments lagged behind their professional growth as military officers.¹⁵² This group—most at risk of co-optation—was summarily written off and dispersed into the officer corps outright through appointments to the line command. It is not inconceivable that the Kremlin had a secondary goal in mind, hoping to link the party and the army more closely through the injection of tested Communists into the life stream of the military establishment. While uncertain as commissars they would be more than adequate simply as party's representatives among the officer cadre.

In consequence, by the end of summer the Party's control over the army was effected through the twin bastions. One functioned at the very pinnacle of the system

¹⁵¹ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 402.

¹⁵² Pupyshev, *V pamiati*, 125.

through the GKO and the Stavka representatives at the Military Councils—like G. M. Malenkov, Nikita Khrushchev, A. Zhdanov, and L. Mekhlis. The other was established by the reforms of 1943 and was situated at the grassroots levels of the military machine. “Without disturbing the semblance of full *edinochalie* in the units he [Stalin] ordered the structure of the Party organizations to be changed in such a way as to strengthen controls at the lower levels of the military hierarchy.”¹⁵³

Party Organization Reform as the Centerpiece of the Kremlin Offensive

The Central Committee’s edict aimed at reforming the military party structure was not a radical innovation.¹⁵⁴ Rather, it returned to being the system that flourished for a short time in the 1930s, before the decimation of the Terror forced a scaling back of the primary party organizations. Now they were once again instituted at the battalion level and matched by the establishment of a party organizations’ network at the company level. This innovation was an attempt to make up for the lack of qualified political officers by outsourcing the organizational and indoctrination duties to the Communist collective as a whole, allowing the leaders of these groups to focus on their political rather than military duties.¹⁵⁵ The increase in the number of primary groups also sought to deal with the fact that, due to sharp increase of the number of Communists in the ranks, the size of the average group grew tremendously, making it increasingly harder to hold meetings or educate the new Communists.¹⁵⁶

The scale of the changes was tremendous. Overall nearly twenty thousand party groups were created at the battalion level or the equivalent units in the other combat

¹⁵³ Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*, 68–69.

¹⁵⁴ “Protokol zasedaniia # 123 Orgburo TsK VKP(b),” RGASPI (3 April 1943) f.17. op.116, d.123, l.3,

¹⁵⁵ Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars*, 174.

¹⁵⁶ Sobolev, *Organizatsionnoe ykreplenie*, 24-25.

branches. The number of primary groups as a whole increased 1.5 times and, by July 1943, came to 60,414.¹⁵⁷ The idea was to address the primary concerns of the party—more intensive political oversight of the military and a renewed focus on indoctrination. As a further benefit, this reorganization was expected to result in more thorough vetting practices, and consequently a better quality of party recruits.¹⁵⁸

The party organizations at the regimental level—such as the party bureaus—now, in theory, faced a much more limited sphere of obligations. In an attempt to free the most experienced Communist leaders from the minutiae of the party work, they had been relieved of responsibility for overseeing party admissions, reviews of personnel files, and similar concerns. Their primary duties now consisted of overseeing the work of the primary party groups and, implicitly, a closer supervision of the military cadres. These groups, paralleling their civilian counterparts, were staffed primarily with new Communists possessing little experience in managerial or theoretical fields.¹⁵⁹

The primary party groups were supposed to take on the burden of vetting the candidates, working with the new recruits, and maintaining discipline. By virtue of being closer to the individual soldiers than the removed political officers at the regiment bureau, the battalion and primary party organizations would act as a more efficient filter and recruiter. The theoretical gains of the reforms, however, proved illusory and in many ways prophetic of similar drives being attempted in the civilian party structure. The conference of the bosses of organizational-instructing departments in August of 1943

¹⁵⁷ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 404.

¹⁵⁸ Pupyshev, *V pamiati*, 152.

¹⁵⁹ I. P. Iakovenko, *Vo Glave Atakuiushikh Rot* (Kiev: Politizdat Ukrainy, 1983), 113.

aimed to assess the early results of the restructuring. They were found to be, at best, mixed.¹⁶⁰

The reports of the party doyens paid the obligatory respect to the reform and steadily testified that overall every goal of the restructuring was achieved and telling improvements were observed in party discipline, work with the active, political education, vetting, and party admission. This was to be expected—an Edict of the Central Committee had to be successfully implemented, or more importantly, reported to be so. Thus, for example, the head of the Political Administration of the Central Front, S. F. Gladzhaev, reported optimistically that “If before the regimental party bureaus focused primarily on the party admission applications, not paying enough attention to the problems of leading the lower party organizations, now—due to the issues of party admissions being dealt with by the primary party organizations . . . the party bureaus have the opportunity to deal with interparty and polit-educational issues, personnel questions and raising the vanguard role of the communists in the battles with the fascist invaders.”¹⁶¹

The self-same reports, however, carried significant caveats that shed light on the continuing and depressingly familiar problems. The upper levels of the political-military apparatus were chided for distancing themselves and failing to offer leadership and advice to the leaders of the smaller party organizations.¹⁶² The problem of political education of the new Communists, and their active involvement in party life remained a weak spot, as well as the lack of experience of the people tasked with educating them and

¹⁶⁰ Pupyshv, *V pamiati*, 181.

¹⁶¹ Sobolev, *Organizatsionnoe ykreplenie*, 31.

¹⁶² Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 407.

the continuing flood of new recruits.¹⁶³ Since a solution to these problems was the cardinal goal of the reform, the observations offered at the conference spotlighted a rocky beginning for the experiment. The improvements in vetting and stricter party admission were also not forthcoming in the short term—1943 would prove the peak year of the unprecedented influx of recruits into the party that took place during the war.¹⁶⁴

The Kremlin leadership strongly demanded the strengthening of the role of organizational-instructing departments in the leadership of the party organizations and education not simply of the new Communist recruits but their yearlings, thrust into authority positions as the secretaries of the primary groups.¹⁶⁵ Seminars, conferences, and similar events were highly recommended—yet again echoing the insoluble dilemma of the civilian apparatus. The available Communist functionaries, despite the reforms, still faced the double burden of an increasing influx of young recruits who needed to be taken in hand, and the pressure of contributing to the war effort.

The conference itself sent a conflicting message, in another example of the contradictions hampering the regime from making a clean break with the last cycle. In the same injunction that called for strengthened political education and ideological preparation, the soviet stressed the necessity to tie all such works to the pragmatic and functional demands of the military life. In other words, the political officers were still being pressed to keep abreast of the military conditions and demands, and to serve both as the ideological chaplains and the technical advisors. Yet, the tilt toward a renewed focus on ideological work was unmistakable, and the political officers did not miss the concurrence of the conference and the TsK Resolutions aimed at increasing the study of

¹⁶³ N. D. Kozlov, A. D. Zaitsev, *Srazhaiushchayasia partia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1975), 212.

¹⁶⁴ Sobolev, *Organizatsionnoe ykreplenie*, 18.

¹⁶⁵ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 407.

Marxism-Leninism in the civilian organizations—expressed via widely publicized edicts about the political work in Tatar and Bashkir republics.¹⁶⁶

The Return of the Interparty Democracy and “Smychka” of the Kremlin and the Grassroots

In a familiar gambit, the tactics that were used to undercut the tendency for authoritarian power-building and identity co-optation in the military were paralleled away from the front. The renewed focus on the ideological content of party work would march hand in hand with the centralizing reform, the two mutually reinforcing. As part of such dual measures of control, applicable concretely to the internal structure of the party organization, the Central Committee passed on 14 January of 1943 a resolution requiring that the party organizations be returned to the prewar democratic traditions.¹⁶⁷

This meant, above all, reinstitution of the steady schedule of elections and reports within the primary party organizations. Similar demands were made of the higher party organizations. Whether intended or not, these measures had the dual effect of promoting political work and weakening the regional leadership. As Richard Brody pointed out, for example, the regional bosses were extremely wary of compromising their authority by public speaking—hounded by the specter of undermining their popular standing due to

¹⁶⁶ A. Kisilev, G.V Sredin, eds., *Ideologicheskaya rabota KPSS v Deistvuyushchei Armii: 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1985), 109.

¹⁶⁷ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh v resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Volume 7: 1938–1945) (Moscow: Politizdat, 1985), 354.

lack of respect for political agitation and their own potentially embarrassing lack of grasp of such matters.¹⁶⁸

While the elections were not as universal as the center might have liked, they did encompass 19 cities and 183 country districts.¹⁶⁹ In addition, in 1943 there were, overall, 195 plenums of the *obkoms*, *kraikoms*, and the Central Committees of the Soviet Republics.¹⁷⁰ The agenda was dominated by the party-organizational work, agitation and propaganda efforts, the party growth issues and, most importantly, education.¹⁷¹ The issue of education touched on the new recruits that entered the party during the war and the cadres who let their political literacy slip.

Once again the improvement over the previous year was marginal (there were 181 plenums in 1942). Yet, more importantly, they allowed the Kremlin to articulate the new party line, a consequence the effects and reach of which were well out of proportion of the size of the electoral campaign. The electoral meetings, reports, and reviews all presented a clear and easily followed narrative, echoing throughout the Soviet Union and bespeaking the usual orchestration from the capital. Several key points were emphasized as the *raikom* and *obkom* leadership were forced into a gauntlet of unrelenting criticism.

Echoing the language of the *politotdel* resolution, they spotlighted the importance of local party dignitaries involving themselves more closely with the party life of their organization and increasing their supervision and education of the new Communists.¹⁷² This was to encompass both the young party members now comprising the majority of

¹⁶⁸ Richard J. Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front During World War II* (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers, 1994), 23.

¹⁶⁹ *Istoria Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970 (Volume 5), 367.

¹⁷⁰ Cherpanov, *Vlast' i voina*, 389

¹⁷¹ Mitrofanova, *Sovetskii tyl*, 234, 237.

¹⁷² "Otchet Leningradskogo gorkoma," RGASPI (1943) f.17, op.122, d.29, l.58.

the rank and file and those who had been promoted to the leadership posts, primarily as secretaries of the primary party groups.¹⁷³

The rise of the wartime Communists was only reinforced by the elections, as they once again dominated the leadership of the primary party groups and continued to make increasing inroads into the *nomenklatura* of the *raikoms*.¹⁷⁴ Party statistics showed that by 1943 two-thirds of the party was composed of the “young Communists,” those admitted into the rank of VKP(b) during the war.¹⁷⁵ The composition of junior and midlevel leadership was beginning to reflect that change in demographics.

The steady drumbeat of critical rhetoric also made sure that the entrenched powers of the local party structure realized that the center was serious about its demands to involve young party members in active political life. The reasons for this requirement were also twofold. The new generation of leaders raised in the atmosphere of war would prove a natural ally of the Kremlin elite against the local bosses. In addition, ambitious new party leaders with little common ground with the holdovers from the prewar era would be eager to undermine the regional party grandees, especially with the backing of the center. Criticizing and denouncing the provincial bosses was not without peril, of course, but it garnered allies in Moscow and, with luck, cleared the career path of competitors.

¹⁷³ “Stennogramma soveshchania sekretarei gorkomov i raikomov Kalininskoi oblasti po kadram,” PAKO (12 June 1943) f147. op.3. d.1733. l.2, 4.

¹⁷⁴ Mitrofanova, *Sovetskii tyl*, 232.

¹⁷⁵ “Report from Shchamberg (Head of Organizational-Instructional Department departmentt of TsK) to Andreev, Zhdanov, Malenkov, Shcherbakov,” RGASPI (1 July 1943) f.17, op.122, d.56, l.39.

Conclusion

The reshuffling of power arrangements achieved by the provincial cliques did not end with cadre reform. The next step was to make the local political bosses more exposed to the grassroots, to undermine their isolation and thus to undercut the sacralizing distance, to paraphrase Richard Wortman,¹⁷⁶ and to mobilize the rank and file as a force that could be allied with the center and used as a check on the party magnates of the periphery. The simplest way to remind the *obkom* and *raikom* secretaries (as well their nominal constituents) of the power inherent in latter's mobilization was a return to the methods perfected during the previous turn of the cycle.

As was the case in the late 1920s and late 1930s, the idea of interparty democracy was once again ascendant and the local party organizations were excoriated for neglecting that aspect of interparty work under the stresses of war.¹⁷⁷ Those eras, much like the period that began in 1943, were periods of considerable upheaval, a part of the vicissitudes of the regime's triangulation between ideological revivalism and prioritization of expertise, with similar tools used to break the nominally entrenched or seemingly secure position of pragmatists.

Similarly, as the Kremlin embarked on another shift in policy, the vehicle of interparty democracy was utilized against the threat of growing autonomy along the periphery. Moreover, the leaders of the provincial organizations were specifically instructed to remedy their tendency to distance themselves from the rank and file and to increasingly engage in an "administrative," dictatorial, and bureaucratic management

¹⁷⁶ Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 15, 236.

¹⁷⁷ "Spravka o vospitanii kommunistov," PAKO (1 October 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1205, l.30-l.31; Cherpanov, *Vlast' i voina*, 388–89.

style.¹⁷⁸ The political workers were ordered to focus once again on personal aspects of governing and especially to engage as much as possible in mass political work such as the ideological education of the population in form of reports and speeches.¹⁷⁹

This is not to suggest that the center saw this measure as a carefully planned out tactic, diabolically combining the renewal of the ideological nature of the party and the drive for renewed centralization. Rather, there was a considerable degree of internal logic to the VKP(b) that made the coinciding nature of such trends almost inevitable. As Michael Gehlen pointed out, “much has been written about the growing significance of specialization in the Soviet Union, especially as a major criterion for recruitment to high political office. Relatively little attention, however, has been given to the apparat as a specialized institution that requires specialists of its own.”¹⁸⁰ Gehlen himself, however, did not carry his thesis to its logical conclusion.

As previously discussed, the party’s foremost claim to power and internal legitimatization was founded in its self-perception as the ideological touchstone of the system. That was its core area of specialization. “The outstanding characteristic of the Soviet elite is that it has become ‘professionalized’ not in the technical sense but in the sense that governing itself is seen as a profession with arcane skills not possessed by the nonprofessionals.”¹⁸¹ As the system developed—proceeding from crisis to crisis—there developed a permanent tendency to compromise ideological purity in search of technocratic proficiency. This trend was especially strong along the periphery, where in a

¹⁷⁸ *Partiinoe Stroitelstvo*, #7, April 1943: 1–6.

¹⁷⁹ *KPSS*, 63–64.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Gehlen, “The Soviet Apparatchiki,” in *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. R. Barry Farrell (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), 141.

¹⁸¹ Kenneth C. Farmer, *The Soviet Administrative Elite* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 166.

parallel to the compromise in Tsarist Russia, the center was usually willing to forgive a considerable amount of ideological deficiency in return for concrete results.

In Moscow, however, the Red faction always remained powerful and ready to push back against the Experts. The party's internal dialogue could never free itself from an obsessive concern over the makeup of its conscripts and their educational focus. As Gehlen pointed out, at the core of this dilemma was "a profound policy conflict over the respective roles of apparatchiki who are specialists by education and early careers and whose specializations make them competent to enhance the Party's leadership of and control over the economic-technical institutions of the system—and those who are more politically and ideologically oriented."¹⁸²

As the country progressed farther and farther along the path of modernization and transformation into a complex technology-buttressed polity, the moments of crisis and confrontation between the two factions within the party came with increasing frequency. Yet, once more, the core issue was one that defied easy (and perhaps any) solutions. In order to control the technocratic elite, the ideological overseers needed a modicum of professional education. Yet such a split of focus inevitably compromised their concentration on ideological literacy and over the long term promoted their transformation into adjuncts of the managers. That tendency was also reinforced by the foundational definition of the Communists as the party of technological progress.

The tempting shortcut of simply converting the technocrats and making them into Communists carried its own dangers. It lessened the aura of the party membership by expanding it to more and more members. Moreover, when tried, this expedient and seemingly logical, solution simply internalized the Red/Expert debate to the party itself,

¹⁸² Gehlen, "The Soviet Apparatchiki," 141.

failing to resolve it while threatening the party's identity. It augured an existential crisis, undermining the core legitimacy of the Vanguard of Proletariat. And in fact the fears of the technocracy plotting to take over the state would continue well into the 1950s.¹⁸³

After all, if the managers were also Communists—loyal to the system and able to steer it according to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism—what justification was there for a specialist class of professional ideologues? The dichotomy inherent in the problems facing the party continued to bring its factions into repeated conflicts over the correct policy choices. The supporters of the Reds were to be found in the periphery as well as the center. As J. Arch Getty argued, they were often and especially prominent among the grassroots membership and local secretariat.¹⁸⁴ The most powerful advocates for this cause, however, were found in the Kremlin—both due to the fundamentally centralized system of the USSR and due to the fact that the entrenched leadership of the party of the Heroic and Stalinist eras was dominated by the political leaders, whose careers were based on their command of the theory.

¹⁸³ Farmer, *The Soviet Administrative Elite*, 165.

¹⁸⁴ J. Arch Getty, "'Excesses are not permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," *Russian Review*, Vol. 61, No.1 (Jan 2002): 113-117.

Chapter 4: The Last Puritan

Historiographical Context and Factional Architecture

The historiography of the factional politics of the USSR has been substantially defined by the prevailing tendency to date the end of the war as the rebirth of politics as usual after the mutually agreed upon period of voluntary quiescence. As such, many explorations of postwar politics tend to resume the narrative at the events of the late 1930s, with merely a brief mention of the war. While underlining the continuities, by glossing over the trends of the war, these arguments often miss the framework within which the factions had to operate. Consequently, the analysis often limits itself to the examination of leading personalities.

Not all scholars and commentators adhere to that rubric. T. H. Rigby's monumental exploration of the demographic changes presented an invaluable foundation for the history of the party in this period.¹ His examination of the broad social trends, however, ignored the individuals and their impact and role in the process. Alternatively, in his hagiographical biography of his father, G. M. Malenkov's son, Andrei, does not hesitate to point to his father's actions during the war as proof of the latter's longstanding commitment to the ideals of the technocratic faction. He refers to the social changes brought on by war as the impetus for the new political configuration: "During the war within the leadership of the country and army there appeared new, young, talented people. Many of them were direct *vydvizhentsy* (appointees) of Malenkov, and with

¹ T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R., 1917–1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

majority of them he easily found common ground. . . . In other words after the war Malenkov became the admitted leader of the young technocrats.”² Yet the biographical examination of the history presented in the book is rather facile and personalized. Thus the niche between social history and the Great Man approach of the scholarship of this period still remains to be filled.

The wide-ranging consensus within the scholarship singles out Malenkov and A. A. Zhdanov as the primary figures of interest in the postwar Soviet elite, the respective leaders of the pragmatist and puritanic wings of the party. A rare challenge to the conventional wisdom came from Werner Hahn who, in his work on the factional strife of the late 1940s, attempted to show that Zhdanov and his followers actually comprised the moderate center of the party. According to Hahn, even as Zhdanov “called for a greater emphasis on ideology, he resisted the dogmatists who sought to impose narrow ideological constraints in philosophy and science and encouraged more creativity in these fields.”³

While provocative, the thesis has found little support among the scholars of the period. It proved briefly popular among the revisionist historians such as J. Arch Getty, but even within that school, the image of Zhdanov has now undergone a reassessment. Most scholars—whether examining Zhdanov’s impact on foreign affairs⁴ or on the scientific establishment⁵—see him as a clear heir to the leadership of dogmatist wing of the party. In fact, many contextualize his assumption of that role as a logical continuation

² A. G. Malenkov, *O moem otse Georgii Malenkove* (Moscow: Tekhnoekos, 1992), 52.

³ Werner G. Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946–1953* (London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 20.

⁴ Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 36

⁵ Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 7.

of his prewar policies and attitudes. “The principle of the ‘careful selection of new cadres’ that Zhdanov had prescribed at the Eighteenth Party Congress, ignored during most of the war, was now restored. . . . Agit-prop had to inculcate selfless enthusiasm for the radiant future, which, in the 1940s just as in the 1930s, had to compensate for the lack of material incentives.”⁶

Yet, even if his grand thesis remains in abeyance, Hahn’s examination of Zhdanov’s maneuvers against the other members of the elite and, most importantly, his illustration of the fact that “politics existed in the Soviet Union and that the political struggles were not solely over posts and power but also over ideas and policies”⁷ made a tremendous contribution to the field, defining even the works of his opponents. Thus, Jonathan Harris in his exhaustive examination of the see-saw struggle between the technocrats and the ideologues throughout that period—and one of the few works that treats 1939–1948 as an integral period—relies strongly on Hahn’s conceptualization. His research conclusively demonstrates the intricate political and theoretical debate that took place within the party, encompassing far more than simple ambitions of its leaders. The Malenkov-Zhdanov rivalry represented a deep-seated split within the party itself, characterized by a volatile tug of war between divergent plans for the USSR’s future.⁸ And as the struggle reached its apogee, it was far from certain that the Zhdanovites would triumph. The ascent of the ideologues, however, was buttressed by the cotext of the coalescing Cold War framework.⁹ As some scholars argue, the renewed international

⁶ Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896-1948* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 270.

⁷ Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 185.

⁸ Jonathan Harris, *The Split in Stalin’s Secretariat, 1939–1948* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 61 153–55.

⁹ Anthony D’Agostino, *Soviet Succession Struggles: Kremlinology and the Russian Question from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 167–68.

hostility could be utilized in the mobilization of the Soviet population.¹⁰ This too was easily conflated with the project of re-Boshevization.¹¹

Furthermore the Kremlin's turn toward the promotion of nationalism (Russocentrism specifically) and anti-Westernism benefited the ideologues by paralleling their domestic platform of renewed focus on party militancy. The technocrats and experts who had grown in stature and prestige during the war were increasingly seen as too independent and influenced by the West.¹² Thus the members of the apparatus forced by their duties to interact with their Allied counterparts were sternly warned as early as 1944 about minding their behavior. The boss of Sovinformburo, A. S. Scherbakov, announced that "we have warned and are again warning the comrades that all sorts of talks, meetings and councils can take place only with permission and after notification of the leadership."¹³ Meanwhile the revitalized ideological structure would provide the medium for coordinating and legitimizing Moscow's new empire in Eastern Europe.¹⁴

Zhdanov's turbulent series of appointments present an outline of his faction's shifting fortunes. As the Leningrad blockade was lifted, he was able to make his mark quickly by inserting himself into the increasingly acrimonious debate over the thrust of the official Soviet ideology. The contemporary doyens of the Marxist-Leninist school, P. F. Iudin and M. B. Mitin, were strongly attacked for their errors in interpretation of

¹⁰ Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War: From Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 53.

¹¹ N. V. Romanovskii, *Liki Stalinizma* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia Akademia Gosudarstvennoi Sluzhby, 1995), 30.

¹² V. D. Esakov and E. S. Levina, *Delo KR, Sudy chesti v ideologii I praktike poslevoennogo Stalinizma* (Moscow: RAN, 2000), 131–32.

¹³ V. S. Lel'chuk, ed., *Sovetskoe obshchestvo: budki Kholodnoi voyny* (Moscow: RAN, 2000), 52.

¹⁴ Vladislav Zubkov and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 114

Marxism, the undue influence they ascribed to Hegel and Western philosophers in general, and an overall lack of respect for native philosophical achievements.¹⁵

This “philosophical debate” carried far-reaching implications and has long been interpreted by a number of scholars as the beginning of the Cold War, presaging the *Zhdanovshchina*, the anti-cosmopolitanism and the radicalization of the Soviet foreign policy. Iudin and Mutin were the pre-eminent authorities on the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Moreover, after leading the attack on Abram Deborin and the ‘dialectician school of philosophy’ in the 1930s, they went on to appropriate much of the latter’s ideas¹⁶ which held that “the dialectics was a universal science embracing both society and nature.”¹⁷ In effect, the philosophy saw itself as the master discipline, providing the foundation and the compass to all the other scientific and scholarly fields. Whoever claimed the mastery of this field, also claimed authority over the entire framework of the Soviet culture.

By joining the fray, Zhdanov implicitly reestablished his credentials as one of the architects of ideological policy. The Iudin-Mitin affair also established the terminology and parameters of the newest phase of the Reds vs. Experts conflict. The Malenkovites needed to deflect the calls for renewed focus on theoretical education of the Communists and, as a necessary consequence, limiting their involvement in the day-to-day administrative minutiae of economic administration. Their argument revolved around the

¹⁵ Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 68, 70–72.

¹⁶ Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy: Russian Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 1986), 321.

¹⁷ Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (Toronto: The Free Press, 1994), 232.

thesis that Russian or Soviet patriotism rather than Marxism-Leninism produced the productivity that won the war and would be needed to support the reconstruction.¹⁸

The affair quickly moved beyond Iudin and Mitin and eventually engulfed G. F. Alexandrov—the chairman of the Agitprop Department and a recognized authority on proletarian philosophy. The attacks began in April of 1944 with a slew of articles, speeches, and memos by both Zhdanov himself and his proxies. Alexandrov’s philosophical treatise was castigated for lacking the necessary political vigor and the audience of the spectacle was urged to “understand the discussion as part of the effort to invigorate work on the ideological front.”¹⁹ The consequences were predictable, albeit on the milder side of the potentially lethal fallout.

In a perfect encapsulation of the new policy, the party bureaucrat whose usual role entailed ideological oversight of the philosophers and theorists under his purview was exposed by the Kremlin to the process of sustained critique by the “grassroots” of his domain culminating with Alexandrov’s public admission of faults.²⁰

Zhdanov was able to chart a complicated course that excoriated an undue cosmopolitanism of the theoretical establishment and its propensity to view Marxism-Leninism as an overly international rather than primarily native phenomenon. Yet he also had no compunction about firmly reinstating the significance of ideological indoctrination and the ephemeral nature of any gains that would be achieved without it. The party elite were not blind to the dangers in the platform of the technocrats, which

¹⁸ Harris, *The Split in Stalin’s Secretariat*, 61.

¹⁹ Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, 26.

²⁰ Alexei B. Kojevnikov, *Stalin’s Great Science: The Times and Adventures of Soviet Physicists* (Athens: Imperial College Press, 2004), 194.

directly undercut the Party's legitimacy and claim to power. The Philosophical Debate served as a clear declaration of the changing focus of the party's efforts.

The ease with which Zhdanov was able not simply to effect his return but to do so in triumph, indicated considerable support among the upper echelon of the party for his ideas. Similar attitudes had been given voice at the regional party conferences throughout the war as the more foresighted of the party members perceived the dangerous trends yet were unable to stop the compromises dictated by the pragmatic needs of the state. Thus, in a graphic example, a 1944 letter of a despairing *raikom* secretary pleaded with Stalin to stop the deterioration—to centralize the party system again to free it from the taint of the growing state and economic organs.²¹ Zhdanov simply provided the necessary focus for the existing discontent—in some ways paralleling Stalin's success in unleashing the horrors of NEP's reversal.

As Alexei Kojevnikov points out, the tactic of utilizing the traditional tools of *samokritika* (self-criticism) by the center to mobilize grassroots criticism against the provincial or institutional grandees also made a return to the highest levels of the interparty struggle with the Mitin-Iudin affair. It would remain an integral part of the factional arsenals throughout the period, as the “rites of the interparty democracy” were transplanted “from the communist political culture” into academia, military and the world of arts”—paralleling the events of the Great Break.²²

By May, the Central Committee made its view clear by sharply censuring the Iudin-Mitin group and their views. Shortly thereafter they were removed or demoted from the positions at the various editorial boards and a number of new appointments were

²¹ “Ob izmeneniiakh v strukture i shtatakh mestnykh partiinykh organov,” RGASPI (1 March 1944) f.17, op.122, d.57, l.25–l.26.

²² Kojevnikov, *Stalin's Great Science*, 191.

made. Ethan Pollock suggested that the events set in motion by the “Crisis on the Philosophical Front” weakened Zhdanov in the long run, depriving him of an important ally like Alexandrov and replacing him with the new personages like Dmitrii Shepilov and Mikhail Suslov, who owed less to Zhdanov as a patron.²³ Yet this analysis underestimates Zhdanov’s successful manipulation of the events.

Zhdanov’s recommendations played a considerable part in ensuring the appointments of the new slate of editors at such media flagships as *Bolshevik* and *Pod znamenem marksizma*. And the fact that no one suffered anything beyond relatively slight professional setbacks also ensured minimal backlash against Zhdanov personally. The fall of 1944 found him appointed to the post of secretary for ideology of the CC, with many of key posts in the propagandist apparatus filled by the members of his coterie or by the recently chastened yet grateful opponents. By late February, Malenkov was maneuvered into actually presiding over one of the perfunctory meetings aimed at correcting the theoretical errors of his own clients.²⁴

As Pollock himself admitted, Zhdanov returned to the forefront of the political scene, as “the discussion now became a nationwide affair and a strategic piece of the broader *zhdanovshchina*.”²⁵ Nor would Zhdanov, his star now rising quickly, have many problems with drawing Alexandrov’s replacements into his clientele. Suslov would become his protégé and a “successor as ideological chief,”²⁶ while Shepilov would

²³ Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, 40.

²⁴ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 406.

²⁵ Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, 27.

²⁶ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 265.

eulogize Zhdanov in his memoirs (long after his late patron's downfall) remarking specifically on the latter's wisdom and acumen in solving the Alexandov affair.²⁷

The Chastisement of the Army

As 1944 progressed, the defeat of Germany was clearly becoming only a matter of time. The fourth year of the war would become known in the Soviet military annals as the year of Stalin's Ten Blows to commemorate a series of successful and bloody offensives that drove the Germans out of the Soviet Union and into Eastern Europe. With each victory, however, the military weakened itself against its political overseers, who depended on them progressively less as the overall threat to the regime diminished. The increased confidence of the party was quickly reflected in a series of measures that foreshadowed Zhdanov's campaign within the civilian party apparatus that would commence within a year.

The issue of the re-Bolshevization of the new generation of the Communists within the military was raised again by the Central Committee during a mid-October meeting in 1944.²⁸ The resultant directive made clear the necessity of "sharp improvement" of the theoretical indoctrination of the party members. This injunction was shortly translated into an order by the GlavPURKKA that resolved to "concentrate the main focus of the party organizations on the ideological and political instruction of the communists."²⁹

²⁷ Dmitrii Shepilov, *The Kremlin's Scholar: A Memoir of Soviet Politics Under Stalin and Khrushchev* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 81.

²⁸ "O krupnykh nedostatkakh po priemu v chleny i kandidaty VKP(b)," RGASPI (15 October 1944) f.17, op.116, d.179, l.183–l.190.

²⁹ A. Kisilev, G. V. Sredin, eds., *Ideologicheskaya rabota KPSS v Deistvuiushchei Armii 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1985), 117.

The discussion throughout the germination of these directives was dominated by the scale of turnover of the party and its contemporary dominance by the members who joined recently without the necessary grounding in theory or familiarity with the normal, peacetime procedures of the party apparatus.³⁰ This was unambiguously seen as the primary issue that had to be dealt with by the revived network of party education. N. V. Pupyshchev, the aide to A. S. Shcherbakov (the head of the Military Political Administration) remembered his chief driving home the new priorities in a speech to the MPA cadre. He made the parallel to the conditions of the civil war clear, invoking Lenin's speech to the VIII party conference. "After we enacted such expansion of the party, we must close the gates, we must now be wary. We must say that now, when the party is winning, we do not require new members. . . . Shcherbakov, worried about the qualitative aspect of the party admission work underlined the necessity of increasing the requirements from the Communists who entered the party in the new, wartime environment, now that the most critical moment of the conflict had passed."³¹

Thus the party organizations were instructed to do their utmost to involve the new Communists in daily party life, entrust them with duties and oversee their implementation of these tasks, familiarize them with the demands of party discipline and the bureaucratic routines of the regime.³² The party schools were specifically focused on training these Communists and they were expected to offer both the day and night courses. Eventually they were to be expanded even into the active areas and fronts, not simply the liberated regions. The schools were to be staffed by professional party workers, including the

³⁰ I. P. Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskoï armii i flote* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, 1964), 431.

³¹ N. V. Pupyshchev, *V pamiati i v serdtse* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1986), 22.

³² "In regards to the growth of the party and measures necessary to strengthen party-organizational work with the young communists," RGASPI (5 August 1946) f.17, op.122, d.191, l.61–l.76.

deputy commanders for political work (*zampolits*), heads of the primary party, and *komsomol* organizations. In effect, the entire party cadre of battalion level units was expected to participate in the political-academic schedule that envisioned an 8-hour session every ten days.

By the end of 1944, nearly nine hundred divisional party schools were functioning within the Red Army with enrollment of more than 72,000 communists. The polit schools numbered in excess of 22, 000 and covered more than 380, 000 Communists.³³ It was an impressive achievement – yet it has to be put in the context of the fact that by the beginning of 1944, the Red Army held two-thirds of the party membership, nearly three million men and women. The Communists made up 23 percent of the entire military personnel.

This coincided with the tendency to concentrate on quantity rather than quality in the preparatory institutions dedicated to producing the military-political workers. Thus, this expansion of political education was expected to be staffed primarily by the same cadre of the political workers who were vastly outnumbered by the new Communists. They themselves were the product of a system that sacrificed their theoretical preparation to the exigencies of pragmatic gains on the front, and had long been assimilated into the military hierarchy.

Inevitably the shortage of cadres was acute and by the end of 1944, 32 percent of the polit school teachers of the 3rd Byelorussian front were military officers, members of the command staffs of battalions and regiments—not members of the party apparatus.³⁴ Although the party expected them to steadily withdraw from direct participation within

³³ Kisilev, Sredin, 195.

³⁴ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 433.

the professional military operations, reality saw them trying to carry out the entire spectrum of their responsibility.³⁵

The military party organizations also began to steadily outsource political education to students themselves, as independent study was stressed as the primary venue of ideological training. This was especially true for the Communists on the still active fronts and the officer cadre. In addition to the universal problem of the shortage of qualified instructors, the active war areas also faced the handicap of only being able to support the party and political schools during the rare moments of low-intensity combat. And, of course, the Communist officers faced a myriad of professional duties that could often interfere with attendance at formal political learning institutions. Thus, the party-political work itself continued to be “corrupted” by the exigencies of the military demands of the front, and the Marxist meaning of the events had to take second place to technical education or explanation of the tactical and strategic context.

“During the political talks and party meetings the commanders and the political officers elucidated the significance of the Berlin operation in the context of the defeat of the Hitlerite armed forces.”³⁶ This recollection by General Borshchev neatly summed up the trends that the Kremlin was trying to combat—the co-optation of *politruks* all too used to working closely with the officer corps, the subsequent dilution of their attention toward pure political work, and the resulting mass and poorly reviewed party admissions by the overworked members of the MPA. The latter in turn produced yet more Communists poorly versed in Marxism-Leninism and thus more susceptible to co-optation.

³⁵ Roger Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience* (London: Routledge, 2000), 136.

³⁶ S. N. Borshchev, *Ot Nevy do El'by* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1973), 386.

Meanwhile the military was steadily growing confident in its position vis-à-vis the political apparatus. “I recall a send-off Red Army troops had once received from a commanding officer. Wanting to save them the stale propaganda of the *politruks* just before the attack, he decided that it would be best if he himself warmed them up with a brief talk of substance. . . . ‘Men! Ahead of you is a city, and there are wine and women there, as much as you desire!’”³⁷

The limitations inherent in the work of the military party organizations were understood by the central apparatus. After all, they closely paralleled the dilemma facing the party as a whole. Thus, as Shcherbakov elucidated, the initiative to decisively limit the admission rate into the party was put in effect.³⁸ After the steady increases that resulted in the unprecedented growth rate, the Kremlin took sharp steps to reverse the policy that made them possible. Already in October 1944 a resolution by the Central Committee stressed the importance of careful, individualized selection of candidates for party membership.³⁹ By the end of the war, the new policy was institutionalized as the CC nullified the early decrees of the war that made admission easier for the soldiers.⁴⁰ The mass demobilizations followed, making the problem of military Communists much more manageable—while, of course, simultaneously transferring that burden to the shoulders of their civilian counterparts.

Furthermore when the dramatic reductions took place, the shock of the rapid change presented its own difficulties. The first to leave were the Communists keen on reestablishing their civilian careers. This left behind a party-military apparatus staffed to

³⁷ Gabriel Temkin, *My Just War: The Memoir of a Jewish Red Army Soldier in World War II* (Novato: Presidion, 1998), 201.

³⁸ “Protokol zasedaniia Orgburo TsK VKP(b),” RGASPI (18 October 1944) f.17, op.116, d.179, l.12 .

³⁹ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 439.

⁴⁰ Pupyshev, *V pamiati*, 221.

a considerable degree by Communists enchanted with the military life, the men who had been co-opted by the mystique of the professional cadre of the army. The Red Army of the mid-1940s was imbued with a sense of triumph and arrogance that was commented upon by both foreign and Soviet Communists alike.⁴¹ “The Commandant of Berlin, Major General A. G. Kotikov was accused of *chvanstvo* (conceit). Allegedly, he paid no attention to the Communist Party organization, refused to come to party meetings and did not seem interested in what good communists had to say. The head of SVAG’s (Soviet Military Administration of Germany) Transportation Administration was repeatedly cited for ignoring party organization and refusing to take the Bolshevik practice of self-criticism seriously.”⁴² And these were among the very top of the military elite, whose behavior served as an example for the rest.

In May of 1945, Stalin was already commenting about the dangers of Bonapartism, the old fear of the party being given a new lease on life as G. Zhukov, K. Rokossovskii, and I. Konev became household names.⁴³ In occupied Europe, the party was beginning to worry about the defecting officers.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, in the rear, the garrison troopers like those in Kalinin behaved akin to the occupying army, with very loose standards of discipline. Fokin’s (the secretary of the *gorkom*) complaint to the head of Moscow’s military districts described the events in details lurid enough to break through the bureaucratic jargon. “A group of the drunk officers, including three lieutenants of the Guard and a sergeant Hero of the USSR started a brawl in the teacher House which was hosting the concert by the Pushkin theater company from Leningrad. In

⁴¹ William O. McCagg, *Stalin Embattled, 1943–1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 20.

⁴² Norman N. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 35.

⁴³ Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 239.

⁴⁴ “Doklad,” RGASPI (12 June 1947) f.17, op.122, d.200, l.11–1.14.

response to the demands of the workers of the MVD to cease, they engaged in the lynching of the militia.”

The brawl (and the beating of the MVD officers) continued outside the theater. In response to the reinforcements arriving to support the militia, the events escalated, finally culminating in a shootout on the city’s main street and use of machine guns by the soldiers against the local law enforcement.⁴⁵ The event was probably among the more spectacular examples of the difficulties between the party and the army, but hardly atypical. In the same report, Fokin described a spontaneous pistol whipping of the *gorkom*’s vice-secretary by two passing soldiers. “In response to the query as to the reason for the assault one of them answered ‘Less talking, more walking, I still have about seven rounds in the clip.’”⁴⁶

Little besides identification with the military rather than the party cadre could have attracted party workers to stay in an institution that was feeling sure enough in its own identity to pointedly allow only one building to the party administration in newly occupied Kaliningrad—the former city brothel.⁴⁷ The Zhdanovites perceived commonalities in the tendency for autonomy within the regional party organizations and their predilection for identifying with the state and economic interests, and the separate identity formation within the armed forces and its lure to the Communists in uniform. The tactics utilized by the center were intended to be as universally applicable as the core problems seemed to be.

⁴⁵ “Spravka,” PAKO (10 October 1946) f.147, op.4, d.296, l.26.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Rabota partiinykh organizatsii v Kaliningradskoi oblasti,” RGASPI (30 October 1947) f.17, op.122, d.203, l.43–l.47.

As the war drew to its conclusion, Stalin assumed the mantle of Generalissimo and completed the assumption of credit for victory. Through him, the party itself moved forward to share the triumph with the army, and eventually to own it entirely. The more direct measures followed shortly thereafter with the focus on the internal party democracy being raised sharply in 1946 with the CC Resolution aimed at the structure of the leading party organs of the armed forces and their electoral practices.⁴⁸

The resolution mirrored the measures already taken vis-à-vis the civilian party organizations, again enlisting the rank and file in direct cooperation with Moscow and bypassing and weakening the commanders or the co-opted *zampolits*. The latter were to be brought back in line just like their wayward analogues in the provinces through humiliating ordeals of criticism and self-criticism. As General I. V. Shikin, the new head of the MPA, piously explained in his missive to N. S. Patolichev, the authoritarian modes of leadership practiced by the military Communist leaders during the war had proven themselves, but it was time to reform in order to meet the needs of the peacetime army.⁴⁹

Moreover, the war system of expedient replacement of party workers was no longer suitable in a condition of peace, not plagued by the constant attrition. The regular system of elections was reinstituted, with the party organization leaders' elections controlled by Moscow, of course. Thus the grip of the military party bosses on the dangerous tool of building their own coteries through personal appointments was weakened; along with their ability to preemptively dictate the resolutions of the subordinate party bureaus and generally replicating the cliques of their counterparts in the

⁴⁸ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 443.

⁴⁹ "Spravka," RGASPI (May 1946) f.17, op.122, d.190, l.90–l.94.

civilian party apparatus.⁵⁰ At every step of the way, the Kremlin strove to make the decisionmaking process as communal as possible, to limit the rise of “little Stalins.”

Shortly after the resolution, the army held the elections and party conferences. These, in time-honored fashion, were of course filled with critical reports and a focus on shortcomings.⁵¹ Unsurprisingly, these often echoed the recommendations of the Central Committee for more interparty democracy, regularized party routine, and increased responsibility of the secretaries to the *aktiv* through regular reports.⁵² In a further parallel with Zhdanov’s other reforms, the apparatus of the military-political administration was centralized.

Just as the apparatus of the Central Committee was undergoing centralization and the industrial branch method of organization was abandoned, in March 1946, the military establishment was coalesced out of separate branches of the Army and the Navy into a unified ministry of the armed forces. Shikin—a long-time crony of Zhdanov—was placed at the head of the new centralized GlavPURKKA. He immediately “initiated a number of measures intended to raise the authority and scope of activity of the political control organs. Thus, he created three Political Administrations, immediately subordinate to his own, in the Army, Air Force, and Navy, respectively, and gave them wide authority.”⁵³

To reinforce the necessity for continued ideological indoctrination, a wide-ranging review of the political apparatus within the military was undertaken by the Central Committee in the second half of 1946. The results were predictable—the number

⁵⁰ “Ob itogakh provedeniia otchetno-vybornykh sobranii v partiinykh organizatsiakh Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR,” RGASPI (27 February 1947) f.17, op.122, d.194, l.27–l.42.

⁵¹ “Svodka pisem postupivshikh v ‘Pravdu’ v mart 1946 v kotorykh govoritsia o nastroeniakh sredi voennosluzhashikh,” RGASPI (17 September 1946) f.17, op.125, d.424, l.54–l.56.

⁵² Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 444.

⁵³ Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 73.

of party workers within the armed forces had shrunk precipitously, to a level below that of the prewar years. The vast majority of them showed glaring deficiencies in theoretical preparedness—more than half had graduated from shortened wartime courses or programs and 25 percent of the regimental and battalion party workers lacked any military or military-political education. The lack of any training system for the cadres of the military press was also noted.

Within the next year, measures to correct the situations were instituted. By August 1946 the army was ordered to reintroduce all “forms and methods” of the prewar political-education work with the military personnel. The Kremlin was rolling back the clock. The number of newspapers and journals available to the army, and especially to units stationed outside of the Soviet Union, was also increased. The most notable among the new programs, however, was the refoundation of Lenin’s Military-Political Academy.

The Academy was dedicated to the training of political workers with complete political education and enough military expertise to qualify as a regimental deputy political commander and positions within the higher levels of military party organs. The goals pursued now by such institutions were instilling ideological purity and inculcating central rather than local loyalties in the members of the party apparatus.

In conjunction with the reform of the party structure, the Kremlin also assailed its direct competitors. Just as the ministries formed the center of rival identity for the technocrats, the appeal of the army also had to be undercut. It is striking that as late as 1945 and 1946 the military institution still remained in the happy mindset of self-contentment, so sure of its own invulnerability that “the Soviet officers freely told German Communists how much they resented even the non-Party, civilian ministerial

teams which had been sent into the military's bailiwick for the purpose of looting Germany's industrial wealth."⁵⁴

Each such demonstration of the army's *esprit de corps* and self-conscious uniqueness as a Soviet institution not subordinate to but perhaps equal to the Party, however, simply spurred the inevitable backlash. As Shikin rose, the Kremlin also sped up the rise of Nikolai Bulganin, until the latter finally rose to head the Ministry of Defense in 1947.⁵⁵ Bulganin was very much an ideologue, who started his career as in the security services during the civil war and held primarily administrative positions within the party and army throughout the war. In essence Bulganin was promoted to fulfill the same role that Mekhlis executed in prewar and yearly war years—to help the party to bring the army to heel.

The lower-ranking officers had already suffered from the steadily increasing political oversight—A. Solzhenitsyn probably presents the most famous example. Yet the (then) mere captain of the artillery was hardly alone. His letter criticizing Stalin was opened by the military censor as part of a much wider net, cast in order to reintroduce proper discipline and a code of Soviet conduct in the wake of wartime relaxations. In order to achieve the subordination of the military, the party also had to show its lordship over the very elite of the army. This was achieved through the meteoric downfall of Zhukov.

The vitriolic session of the Military Council that stripped Zhukov of his accolades was a proxy judgment on the army itself as he was accused of disloyalty, political unreliability, and insubordination to the Central Committee and the party. "He was

⁵⁴ McCagg, *Stalin Embattled*, 78.

⁵⁵ Martin Ebon, *Malenkov: Stalin's Successor* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 97.

roughly handled by the chairman, who contemptuously addressed him as ‘ty,’ the familiar form of ‘you,’ generally used when spoken to inferiors. ‘The credit for our victory,’ shouted the chairman, ‘does not belong to you, but to the Party and its leaders!’”⁵⁶

Zhukov’s fall was followed by a wide-ranging criminal investigation of the Aviators’ Affair. Nominally it centered around the investigation of low quality airplanes being produced and the frequency of crashes. The Affair saw a wide range of high-ranking military officers caught in the gears of the Soviet justice system, as well as a number of the ministerial and state officials.⁵⁷ The decapitation of the Air Force was simply a part of the multipronged siege of the armed forces. The process was followed up relentlessly, culminating in 1948.

By then, an outright public humiliation of the war heroes was proven to be safe for the party. The lesson was driven home with the resumption of Zhukov’s destruction. Already demoted to the humiliating post of the commander of Odessa Military District he was now convicted of embezzlement, plunder, and coverups dating to his activities in occupied Germany. Driven even further into the provinces, he assumed command of the Urals military district and suffered a heart attack in the same year.

In the same month, the Affair of the Admirals broke, as four of the leaders of the Soviet Navy were brought to trial for voicing objection to a number of Stalin’s naval reforms. Admirals Galler, Kuznetsov, Lafuzov, and Stepanov were all convicted, along with a number of lower-ranking officers.⁵⁸ The lessons were graphic and clear. “Both Admiral Kuznetsov and the formidable Marshal Zhukov were made to understand in harsh manner that Stalin would not tolerate defiance by his officers in peacetime. The

⁵⁶ Otto Preston Chaney, Jr., *Zhukov* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 348.

⁵⁷ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 26.

⁵⁸ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 320.

first of the two courts that tried Kuznetsov in 1948 was, to a great degree, the brainchild of Andrei Zhdanov.”⁵⁹

Party Education

The attack on the party’s rivals in the army and the state apparatus, and their allies within the party itself, was multipronged and fierce. Its effects could be felt across the entire spectrum of Soviet society. As John Armstrong pointed out, however, the goal of reforming the party itself remained paramount and “of the various aspects of the emphasis on ideological matters in 1946–48, the new system of Party training is perhaps the least spectacular, but among the most important in its long-range effects.”⁶⁰ The political education reform, both as a tool of re-Bolshevizing the party and a way of limiting the wartime autonomy of the experts, was the cornerstone of *Zhdanovshchina*.

In parallel to the measures affecting the military apparatus, the Kremlin also targeted the civilian political structure. Thus, on 11 February 1944, as the military party schools were being overhauled, Moscow moved to reform the Central Committee’s Lenin Courses.⁶¹ This study program—dedicated to the raising the qualifications of the *gorkom* and *raikom* secretaries—had undergone a fundamental change at the outbreak of the war and was turned into a shortened course preparing the party workers for the military. By the end of the war, the view of ideological education as a distraction was widespread not simply among the Communists at large, but the propagandists and agitators themselves.⁶²

This was all to change. To illustrate that, the Secretariat ordered the political education

⁵⁹ Ibid., 267.

⁶⁰ John Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1961), 179.

⁶¹ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh v resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Volume 7: 1938–1945), (Moscow: Politizdat, 1985), 491.

⁶² Richard J. Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front During World War II* (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers, 1994), 21–22.

institutions to provide considerable material incentive to the students, so as to allow them to continue their studies without distractions.⁶³

A more broad-based platform of reforming party education and turning back toward pragmatism, to restore “complete ideological conformity among Party officials as well as rank-and-file Communists” followed shortly and continued throughout *Zhdanovshchina*.⁶⁴ Utilizing his new position as the overseer of the agit-prop Department, Zhdanov put into practice his theories of renovating the party itself. On 20 May 1944, the Central Committee instituted a training program to produce new propagandists of Marxism-Leninism for the universities and institutes throughout the country. The issues of the massive organization filled primarily with undereducated members unfamiliar with the basics of civilian routine were to be solved through the clear primacy of ideological and general education, purging of deadwood, tightening of admission parameters, and relentless attention to the provision of material benefits to the Communists returning from the front.

On 9 August 1944, the resolution addressed to the party organizations of the Tatar Republics was promulgated. It, along with similar decision aimed at Byelorussia, had an impact far beyond the immediate recipients. In the customary fashion, these resolutions were meant to be (and were seen as) a blueprint for the entire new party line being articulated by the Kremlin.

Tatarstan had been relatively untouched by the German occupation, and it also became a hub of the evacuated industry, Academy of Sciences, and numerous party organizations. Combined with a fortuitous oil strike, the region was among the most

⁶³ “O material’nom obespechenii slushatelei Vysshikh partiinykh shkol i kursov pri TsK VKP(b),” RGASPI (29 April 1944) f.17, op.116, d.152, l.29.

⁶⁴ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 179.

productive areas of the USSR—yet, in the Central Committee resolution, its political apparatus was sternly instructed in the deficiencies apparently prevalent in their work. The sharpness of the rebuke is especially noticeable in the contrast to the Byelorussian resolution. The Tatar Republic, after all, had a functioning party organization, not a virgin field that needed to be rebuilt from the ground up.

The Central Committee directly called to task the secretary of the *obkom*—Nikitin—and supported the point of view of M. T. Iovchuk (aide to the head of administration of propaganda and agitation of the Central Committee). Nikitin, along with the rest of the local party structure, was accused of letting the cadres neglect the study of Marxist-Leninist theory, of failing to provide necessary assistance to the Communists engaged in independent study, and of failing to properly oversee the mass media. Furthermore, and—arguably most portentously—they were censured for allowing the workers of the *obkom* to veer away from their direct duties and into the work of economic administration, often as the plenipotentiaries inserted into the *kolkhozes* and village *soviets*.⁶⁵ The resolution closed with a list of wide-ranging recommendation for correcting the existing flaws, ordering the establishment of an multitiered system of party education.

Zhdanov himself, throughout the year, tirelessly advocated the return to what he argued were the normal methods of party management and administration. At this particular point, however, the avenues available to him for the articulation of his platform were still somewhat limited.⁶⁶ Still, his report to the Leningrad party organization in the spring of 1944 allowed him to once again reiterate the danger of the apparatus engaging

⁶⁵ KPSS v resoliutsiiakh (1971), 113–20.

⁶⁶ Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat*, 66.

too closely with economic matters to the detriment of theoretical preparation. He continued to call for a renewed focus on party-political work, seeking to re-establish the barriers between the state and the party.⁶⁷ The educational reform was thus only partly aimed at the short-term goal of raising the theoretical level of the cadres. The long-term aims of reinstilling loyalty to Moscow and rebuilding the barriers between the state and the party were always present, underpinning the initiatives stemming from Zhdanov's camp.

It continued to be an uphill battle. In Moscow, G. Popov, the "party governor" of the capital summed up the mindset of the apparatus in the closing years of the war. "In 1944 Moscow's party organization still oriented all of its efforts toward the victory against the enemy, but already the great challenges of reconstruction of the economy were becoming clear."⁶⁸ For the head of the party and state machine of the capital city, the party-political work did not even merit a mention.

As the Red Army advanced beyond the Soviet borders and into Finland, Zhdanov was speedily promoted into a familiar post, tasked with ambassadorial duties and overseeing the agreement of Helsinki's surrender. The argument continues whether it was intended as an opportunity for vindication and a sign of his rising fortune, or as a reminder of a catastrophic misjudgment made by him in 1939 when he advocated the Soviet invasion. Alfred Rieber, for example, saw his interlude in Finland as a prestigious appointment. He was "the western vanguard of Soviet foreign policy," with a responsibility "not only to enhance Soviet influence but also to serve as midwife for

⁶⁷ *Ocherki istorii Leningradskoi organizatsii KPSS* (Leningrad: Leninzdat, 1968), 655.

⁶⁸ E. V. Taranov, "Partiinyi guvernator" Moskvy: Georgii Popov (Moscow: Izdatelstvo glavarkhiva Moskvy, 2004), 206.

Finland's social and political transformation."⁶⁹ Similarly, Vladislav Zubok saw this turn in Zhdanov's career as a marker of his rising fortune, placing him among the coterie of Stalin's "proconsuls."⁷⁰

Boterbloem, on the other hand, considered Zhdanov as essentially a "second-tier boss" until well into 1945 and argued that "at that time, it was far from clear that Andrei Zhdanov . . . would return as one of Stalin's closest confidants."⁷¹ Yet, once again, this episode demonstrated the interplay of the domestic and international trends of the Soviet politics. And although in the long term they favored the continuing strengthening of the party revivalist faction, in the short term Zhdanov's new duties required long absences from the capital. Without his presence and direct advocacy, the agenda of the ideologues momentarily faltered and lost momentum. As Jonathan Harris pointed out, the contemporary attempt by the Zhdanovites to articulate their platform became muddled and at times "completely contradictory."⁷²

Thus, in an attempt to insist that the relationship between the party apparatus and the managerial cadre return to that of checks and balances, rather than dangerously close cooperation, the Communists were ordered to exercise closer oversight over the economy.⁷³ Meanwhile the same media organs publicized speeches by party bosses like Shcherbakov, who—concerned with the theoretical level of the party members produced by the war—flatly elucidated in his speech to the Moscow party apparatus that "the main focus of the party organizations must center on the task of ideological education of

⁶⁹ Alfred J. Rieber, *Zhdanov in Finland* (The Carl Beck Papers) (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1995), 60.

⁷⁰ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 23.

⁷¹ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 251

⁷² Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat*, 69.

⁷³ Ibid.

communists. People newly admitted into the party must undergo a serious school of Marxist-Leninist upbringing.”⁷⁴ In the absence of a strong leader, the very wing of the party that positioned itself as the ideological reformers were reflecting the rift in the party as whole, as well as grappling with the search for balance between purity and expediency.

The continuing lack of qualified cadres necessary for its implementation, the persistent autonomy of the regional bosses, and the interdependence of the local soviet and party organs lead to the editorials that simultaneously urged more time spent on theoretical studies and forbade neglecting the oversight of the economy.⁷⁵ Without Zhdanov’s ability to form a cohesive message, the inherent contradictions of his faction’s platform became evident.

Taking advantage of the situation, the technocrats briefly reasserted their influence at the highest levels with the Central Committee resolutions aimed at the party organization of Bashkiria.⁷⁶ The text of the edict was heavily focused on the need for the political workers of the region to involve themselves in economic oversight and focus on the solution to the issues of the production. The goals of ideology were thus made to appear in purely pragmatic terms. Yet, a striking feature of the resolution is the fact that even this decree, passed during the brief retrenchment of the technocrats, was now forced to adopt the terminology of their rivals. Ideology was now implicitly admitted to be the cornerstone of the industrial and agricultural gains.

Economic oversight was discussed in almost purely negative terms—with the party leadership of Bashkiria excoriated for losing the connection between political work

⁷⁴ *Partiinoe Stroitelstvo*, no.21, (1944), 18–25.

⁷⁵ *Partiinoe Stroitelstvo*, no.18, (1944), 1-7, 22–27.

⁷⁶ *KPSS v r esoliutsiakh* (1971), 130-134.

and production goals.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the resolution echoed the litany of criticisms and remedies that was established in the Zhdanovite polemics of the previous year.

Discussing the problems of the theoretical education of the Communist cadres, the Central Committee pointed out that the Communists were not studying the history and theory of the party and the party workers were not exercising due diligence in solving the interparty and political issues of the republic.

The resolution served as an interesting marker of the fact that the underlying fundamentals that allowed for Zhdanov's resurgence in the first place remained constant. The resurgence of the technocrats proved ephemeral and had little lasting impact. Zhdanov, carried by the changing tide combined with his own not-inconsiderable skill, proved ready and able to exploit the opportunity provided by the death of Shcherbakov in May 1945.⁷⁸ Malenkov, who functioned as Shcherbakov's stand-in during Zhdanov's sojourn in Finland (and briefly occupied the role of the ideological warlord earlier in the war), was overlooked. Zhdanov was in effect given complete authority over ideological matters, inheriting the practical control of department of agitation and propaganda, with the chastened Aleksandrov still in place as the figurehead.

Dmitrii Shepilov, still making his way up the career ladder of postwar society, saw the unfolding confrontation within the apparatus in stark, bitter terms of uncompromising and divergent strata. He saw himself as part of the veterans, the Bolsheviks whose dedication and purity had been tempered by their direct confrontation with death and Nazism on the frontlines. However, "...quite a different course was taken by that fairly large stratum of the petite bourgeoisie within the intelligentsia to which I

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 256

referred earlier. It goes without saying that . . . not one of them left for the front when the life and death of the Soviets was at stake. . . . During the war they expanded and consolidated their control of all the sectors of the ideological front. They met those of us who returned from the front with ill-disguised hostility. Not because we were a reproach to their consciences—no, there were no excess pangs of conscience for them! We just made them look bad.”⁷⁹

As Amir Weiner and Mark Edele demonstrated, there was no monolithic cohort of veterans, and the entirety of the Soviet body social redefined itself in order to draw legitimacy from the war.⁸⁰ The technocrats felt vindicated by the measures adopted during the conflict, which privileged pragmatic solutions. The ideologues, like Shepilov, utilized the same experience as a way to brand the extant leadership with the label of opportunism and careerism, their pragmatism a result of middle-class values. These were people who, according to Shepilov, survived and prospered due to their cowardice and avoidance of service. It is critique of this stratum that is given in Leonid Zorin’s play “The Guests,” as the Old Bolshevik and his *frontovik* grandson unite against the respective son and father in a facile parallel to Turgenev’s novel of generational conflict.

Sergei, the veteran-son, breaks passionately and bitterly with his father in whom he sees the stagnant, corrupt generation of managers: “You no longer have a son!” he announces. “But I shall find a path to you. I, Sergei Kirpichev, am declaring war to you—Peter Kirpichev! And whenever I meet you – in any armchair, in any office, whatever name you happen to have, however you happen to look, whatever last name you happen

⁷⁹ Shepilov, *The Kremlin’s Scholar*, 79.

⁸⁰ Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Mark Edele, A “Generation of Victors?”: *Soviet Second World War Veterans From Demobilization to Organization 1941–1956* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2004).

to carry, I shall recognize you and will make war upon you to the death. You hear me? To the death.”⁸¹

For Shepilov, and the “Peters” of the new USSR, Zhdanov was the natural leader. It was he who continued to give voice to their frustrations and form to their political desires. Within two years he was returned from obscurity back to the position of power he occupied in the 1930s. *Zhdanovshchina* soon followed. One of Zhdanov’s preeminent biographers described this as an era of unprecedented delegation by Stalin of duties in the spheres heretofore constituting his “exclusive monopoly.”⁸²

Zhdanov was given leeway to practically set policy in cultural, theoretical, and ideological areas, with the mandate of restoring the position that the party enjoyed in the late 1930s. In effect he was tasked with rolling back the effects wrought by the war. This goal of a re-Bolshevized party was to be achieved through a centralization of the study material, with the *Short Course* and Stalin’s *History of the Great Patriotic War* once again becoming the bibles of theoretical education. It was also necessary to take sterner measures to combat the persistent problems of poor attendance and the uncertain dedication of the multitude of the Communists engaged in independent study (according to the statistics faithfully compiled by the regional bosses), while still focusing all of their energies on the administrative and economic duties.⁸³

Thus, in 1946 the Higher Party School was created with branches throughout the country. Using the pre-existing Party School that previously covered only the party organizers as the foundation, the scope of the new organ was widened considerably and

⁸¹ Leonid Zorin, *Izbrannoe* (Moscow: Isskustvo, 1986), 518.

⁸² Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 255.

⁸³ A. N. Zhukova, *Deiatel’nost’ KPSS po uluchsheniiu kachestvennogo sostava partii, 1945-nachalo 1950-kh godov* (Leningrad: Leningradskii universitet, 1987), 23–24, 83–84.

now encompassed essentially the entire provincial party and soviet elite. The same resolution gave birth to the Academy of the Social Sciences tasked with “preparation of the theoretical workers for the central party institutions, Central Committees of the communist parties of the Allied republics, *kraikoms* and *obkoms* VKP(b), but also qualified educators of the higher learning institutions, workers of the science-research foundations and scientific journal.”⁸⁴ Notably both the Academy and the Party School had the duration of the study period set at three years. This presented a marked contrast to the courses of education measured in months that had become norm during the war. The Kremlin was planning for the long term.

The primary purpose of such programs was of course to raise the theoretical level of the party apparatus and to increase the focus on the study of Marxism-Leninism at the expense of administrative and economic oversight. As a review among the periphery would show, the state of party education remained abysmal. The leaders of agitation and propaganda departments were asked to discuss the political literature they were currently consuming:

A: “Comrade Stalin’s first volume.”

Q: “What have you read in that volume?”

A: “Forgot, can’t remember, will not answer.”

Q: “What else are you reading?”

A: “About the bourgeois theories of Comrade Alexandrov.”

Q: “What bourgeois theories?”

A: “Something about idealism.”

⁸⁴ *KPSS v resoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s’ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK (Volume 6)*, (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), 162–72.

Another was queried whether he was familiar with Zhdanov's report on *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* journals. He was not.

Q: "What was the last resolution of the Central Committee that you utilized in your work?"

A: "Can not recall at the moment."

Q: "Who is the head of Yugoslavian government?"

A: "Either in Yugoslavia or in Bulgaria the head of the government is Tito, but I do not remember which."⁸⁵

These answers came from the nominal elite of the provincial party apparatus, specifically oriented toward the study of Marxism-Leninism and its dissemination. The situation contextualized Zhdanov's consistent and monumental efforts to raise the party's educational level. Yet, this initiative grew in focus and also served to strengthen the drive toward centralization as well as to push back against the conflation of various facets of party, society, and the state. More ideologically prepared and engaged Communists would have less time and inclination to spend on the economy. They would also be aware that materialistic achievements are the result of political enlightenment, and if achieved otherwise, represent simply, as Stalin put it, castles built on sand.⁸⁶

Once again, of course, the courses provided by the Central Committee bypassed the *obkom* and *kraikom* secretaries entirely, strengthening the direct authority of the Kremlin over the immediate underlings of the dangerously powerful party bosses of the provinces. The centralization of party education made it easier to inculcate the new

⁸⁵ "Zapisi besedy," RGASPI (1947) f.17, op.125, d.516, 126–127.

⁸⁶ "Spravka o krupnykh nedostatkakh v partiino-organizatorskoi rabote nekotorykh raikomov," PAKO (1945) f.147, op.3, d.2009, 1.52–1.64.

generation of party workers, reintroduce ideological vigor, and remind the apparatus of its *raison d'être*. Yet it also served as a politically centralizing influence. The educational infrastructure centered on the Kremlin, with the latter serving as the only touchstone of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy.

By re-establishing its reach into the provinces—much in the same way the reborn political departments were intended for such a dual role—the party did not simply strengthen itself absolutely, but relatively as well: at the expense of both the state and the local Communist grandees. The Soviet workers were subject to obligatory ideological education as much as the members of the provincial party apparatus, after all. With the functioning network of political centers that existing outside of the local hierarchy, the party could balance the influence of the ministerial channels of power.

It is hardly a coincidence that at the end of 1946, the Kremlin introduced the new incarnation of the organizational-instruction department. Now known as the Administration for Checking Party Organs, its mandate was loudly reiterated as focusing on “inspecting the work of *oblast* party committees, *krai* committees, and republic CCs and their fulfillment of CC decrees.”⁸⁷ The everyday duties of the new department would be carried out by a newly constituted corps of inspectors empowered with a considerable degree of influence over the local party organizations and answerable directly to the central party organs.

The new inspectorate was primarily a tool of central political control, rather than a way to impart professional expertise to the untried cadre. Much like the experience of the industrial branches, MTS political departments, the Committee of the Party Control, and a myriad of similar reforms undertaken during this cycle, the new administration was

⁸⁷ Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 54.

an attempt to make a failed and unworkable concept of an improvised direct channel of control function without being suborned by the local cliques.

The consolidation of power by the Zhdanovites was immediately felt both in the effects on the legislative agenda and the wider tone of the party propaganda. Throughout the rest of the last year of the war, the Central Committee affirmed its support for the platform of the primacy of theoretical and political education of its members.⁸⁸ Yet that momentum was often deceptive in its scope.

The interlude that allowed the re-emergence of the Malenkovites and the ease with which the message of the reformers was derailed and confused demonstrated that both factions were in a state of fundamental flux, desperately trying to find the balance between pragmatism and fanaticism, both unsure of their own ground. Throughout the years of Zhdanov's triumph, that incomplete victory and muddled party identity would be reflected in somewhat schizophrenic behavior by the Central Committee and the subordinate apparatus—the edicts demanding theoretical improvements were rivaled by the missives dedicated entirely to the provincial harvest, and the *obkoms'* discussions would veer uncertainly from topics of economic importance to the need for ideological retrenchment.⁸⁹

Even as Zhdanov seemed to achieve the peak of his influence in Moscow, leaving his stamp on the legislative and executive institutions of the center, his initiatives often stalled in the provinces. Once again, the reach of the center was drastically limited by the inherent problems of the system, negating the very measures aimed at their resolution.

⁸⁸ Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat*, 79

⁸⁹ "Protokol zasedaniia Sekretariata TsK VKP(b)," RGASPI (14 July 1944) f.17, op.116, d.159, l.51–l.63; "Protocol soveshchaniia vtorykh sekretarei i zaveduiushikh org-inst otdelami raikomov i gorkomov v gorode Kalinine," PAKO (7-8 March 1946) f.147, op.4, d.93, l.10–l.13.

The educational reform could not help but to exemplify the gridlock. The establishment of the wide network of the party schools and supporting organizations had to be staffed regularly by both the qualified cadre of teachers and the leading party workers of the regions to be engaged in study. This represented an intolerable burden on a party composed of a thin reserve of competent managers, surrounded by a multitude of newly admitted members with inadequate skills both in technical and in ideological areas. Even as the reform was being put in place, the flaws in its very conception were being revealed by the dismal reports from the provinces.⁹⁰

Poor attendance was noted in the formal settings and noninvolvement in independent studies—explained by the students’ need to oversee the fulfillment of the economic plan in their bailiwick.⁹¹ Concrete results were still seen as the only marker of one’s excellence in building a party career. Many political schools were organized as Potemkin villages and hastily abandoned thereafter or inadequately staffed.⁹²

The generally poor education level of the vast mass of the Communists continued to impede the smooth running of lessons—since it was notable not simply among the students but also among the pool of nominal teachers as well.⁹³ Combined, these processes produced the incongruous spectacle of party workers with barest minimum of general or political education attending an infrequent seminar that urged them to

⁹⁰ “Spravka,” PAKO (16 June 1944) f.147, op.3, d.2553, l.30, l.98–100.

⁹¹ “Spravka o rabote s molodymi kommunistami,” PAKO (13 March 1943) f.147, op.3, d.1224, l.4.

⁹² “O khode vypolneniia postanovleniia TsK VKP(b) ot 26 iulia 1946,” RGANI (5 February 1947), f.6, op.6, d.348, l.12–l.19.

⁹³ “Spravka o rabote Bezhetskogo raikoma,” PAKO (1946), f.147, op.4, d.80, l.83–l.86; “Doklad sekretaria obkoma Vorontsova na plenum Kalininskogo gorkoma,” PAKO (20 November 1947) f.147, op.4, d.622, l.167–l.173.

participate in the discussion of topics like “Imperialism—The Highest Form of Capitalism.”⁹⁴

A review that canvassed the ranks of the rank and file agitators painted a disconcerting picture:

Q: “Can you name the highest organ of power in the USSR?”

A: “Working class? TsK? VKP(b)?”

Q: “What is the occupation of Comrade Stalin?”

A: “He has many posts, I cannot say.”

Q: “Who is the head of the Soviet government?”

A: “I cannot say.”⁹⁵

Yet the solution continued to elude the Kremlin. Increasingly independent study of Marxist-Leninist theory was used as a fig leaf for following Moscow’s orders, yet it was equally inefficient, uncontrolled, and flawed.⁹⁶ Help from the *obkoms* was minimal or nonexistent, due to the traditional reasons of qualified cadre shortages, the pressure to deliver on pressing economic matters, and the impotence of Moscow to exercise direct and constant pressure on them to comply.⁹⁷

Center and Periphery

Almost from the start of Zhdanov’s ascent, the era was characterized by the Zhdanovites’ continuing inability to transform their decrees into reality in the provinces.

⁹⁴ “O neudovletvoritel’noi rabote Gofitskogo raikoma,” RGASPI (September 1946) f.17, op.122, d.132, l.206–l.218.

⁹⁵ Elena Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy, 1945-1964* (Moscow: Rossiia Molodaia, 1993), 82.

⁹⁶ “O khode vypolneniia postanovleniia TsK VKP(b) ot 26 iuliia 1946,” RGANI (February 1947) f.6, op.6, d.409, l.4–l.10; “Protocol zasedaniia buro Kaluzhskogo obkoma,” RGANI (13 August 1946) f.6, op.6, d.329, l.60–l.66.

⁹⁷ “O roste partii i o merakh po usileniiu partiino-organizatsionnoi i partiino-politicheskoi raboty s vnov’ vstupivshimi v partiiu,” RGASPI (4 February 1947) f.17, op.122, d.199, l.19–l.23; “Protocol zasedaniia buro Kaluzhskogo obkoma,” RGANI (13 August 1946) f.6, op.6, d.329, l.60–l.66.

Even as the campaigns to revitalize the political purity of the military and civilian apparatus were unfolding, the problems of execution continued to manifest themselves. There were simply not enough trusted subordinates to oversee the implementation of the orders.⁹⁸ The CC's response consisted of repeated orders to the provinces to correct the situation. Its edicts strongly censured the periphery for failing to ensure adequate implementation of the Center's demands and made clear the importance of this enterprise: "Henceforth the organization of execution of CC's resolutions and the timely undertaking of the measures ensuring their full accomplishment within the demanded timeframe."⁹⁹ The *obkom* secretaries were once again enjoined to deliver regular reports and the center once again threatened to dispatch a wave of its representatives to ensure compliance.

Typically, Boitsov, the party chief of the Kalinin *oblast*, readily admitted in his reports to the flaws in implementation of the center's orders. He provided a laundry list of measures undertaken by the *obkom* to ensure future success—*obkom* workers periodically sent to oversee the work of the *raikoms*, discussion of the resolutions and their implementation, etc.¹⁰⁰ Yet little substantive change took place, and in appropriate venues Boitsov felt secure enough to let the Kremlin know their demands were unreasonable. Speaking at the Eighth City Party Conference, he explained that although it was of course incumbent upon them all to "implement the task set for us by Comrade Stalin, to raise—above all—the level of our execution of the Resolutions and to increase personal

⁹⁸ "O proverke ispolneniia reshenii TsK po otchetnym dokladam obkomov, kraikomov and TsK soiuznykh respublik," RGASPI (29 September 1945) f.17, op. 122, d.90, l.146–147.

⁹⁹ "O proverke ispolneniia resheniy TsK VKP(b) po otchetnym dokladam obkomov, kraikomov i TsK kompartii soiuznykh respublik," RGASPI (7 April 1945) f.17, op.116, d.211, l.18–l.19.

¹⁰⁰ "O sostoianii kontrolya i proverki ispolneniia reshenii TsK VKP(b)," PAKO (Summer 1945) f.147, op.3, d.2730, l.177–l.178.

responsibility. In the wake of the decision, the oversight and organization of its completion must follow.”¹⁰¹

Yet as he went on to explain, this task was not going to be easy or simple. “At the present time to a large number of new comrades, inadequately versed in organizational work have risen to the leadership. A certain time is needed for a worker to begin to correctly solve and implement the tasks set by the higher party organs.” Using the center’s own rhetoric, Boitsov pled inability to solve all problems simultaneously and cited the necessity for the party-educational reform to take hold before other issues could be tackled. “Thus the question of learning must be seen in the wider context—to raise the general level of education and especially the training of the cadres in the Marxist-Leninist theory, so that the work of those cadres could be raised to the appropriate level.”¹⁰²

Unless the center was willing to acquiesce to slower economic performance and sacrificing material gains for the sake of ideological renaissance, the regional bosses had no impetus or ability to fulfill the goals of the Zhdanovite program. And despite the rhetoric accompanying the new legislation, the Central Committee still signaled that the fulfillment of the Plan was high on its list of priorities. Essentially, the provincial organizations were expected to achieve ideological renewal without sacrificing economic gains. Faced with impossible demands, the periphery simply ignored them.

A few new flourishes were added to the normal processes to appease the center, with little practical effect. For example while the mass admissions were not replaced by individual case work, the number of the new candidates began to fall sharply. There is no evidence, however, that there was a systematic attempt to adjust the percentages of the

¹⁰¹ “Vystuplenie sekretariia obkoma Boitsova na 8-oi gorodskoi partkonferentsii,” PAKO (Summer 1945) f.147, op.3, d.2754, l.17.

¹⁰² Ibid.

new Communists. Rather, the regional organizations simply decreased the quotas of those who would be admitted, some stopping admissions altogether for a month or more.¹⁰³

The new Communists were left primarily to their own devices after that, with little or no supervision.¹⁰⁴ Like the make-show political schools, the regional elite engaged in a semblance of self-flagellation and admission of faults. A number of *obkom* or *kraikom* workers were sent out to deliver lectures and seminars to the leaders of the primary party organizations. But much as was the case with educational reform, these measures quickly ground to halt.¹⁰⁵

Yet much of these processes continued taking place below the surface of the system. And thus the uncertain course of his reformist initiatives did not yet impede Zhdanov's continued rise in the ranks of the elite. Malenkov's coterie continued to reel as their bases of strength within the industrial ministries came under sustained assault.¹⁰⁶ Malenkov's speech in 1946 was thus remarkably ill-timed. "Speaking in favor of new party principles, Malenkov actually called for a revision of Marxist tenets. A worshipper at the altar of his own accomplishments, he spoke out in favor of the doers, and against the theorists and the talkers."¹⁰⁷

In a sense this was a call for legitimizing an extant condition, for recognition of the new people produced by the war and effectively advocated adjusting the ideals of the prewar party to the postwar reality. As the Zhdanovites were discovering, the situation in the provinces was grim—the preeminent focus of the party organizations continued to be

¹⁰³ "Stennogramma VII plenuma oblastnogo komiteta partii," PAKO (27-28 December 1946) f.147, op.4, d.18, l.1–l.9.

¹⁰⁴ "O rabote partiinykh organizatsii po vospitaniuu molodykh kommunistov," RGANI (21 May 1946) f.6, op.6, d.421, l.2–l.11.

¹⁰⁵ "Spravka o rabote Bezhetskogo raikoma," PAKO (1946) f.147, op.4, d.80, l.83–l.86.

¹⁰⁶ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 264.

¹⁰⁷ Ebon, *Malenkov*, 42.

economic matters to the exclusion of the party-political work, and the soviet and party institutions continued to operate without any sense of separation between the two. Worse, in many cases, the party leaders and organizations allowed themselves to become little more than subordinates of the local economic interests, carving out their niche by adopting the role of the middle-men¹⁰⁸ and procurers of materials and resources, connecting them with the factories and other enterprises much in the way of the *tolkachi* (pushers) of the 1920s.¹⁰⁹

As Moscow demonstrated, it was unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices in material gains to achieve its ideological goals. Malenkov proposed a truce, a recognition of the technocratic revolution and the gains it made within the party throughout the previous half a decade. This was in direct contradiction to the increasingly clear mandate given to Zhdanov to accomplish the reversals of the very changes that Malenkov was proposing to institutionalize. The changes would spell the end of the party in its original form as it would forfeit the legitimizing platform of ideological primacy and the party's unique role as its guarantor. By 1946, Zhdanov's star reached its zenith. His views on ideology's place within the Soviet system and the primacy of political training and mass work were being visibly endorsed by Stalin and disseminated among the regional party organizations.

As Zhdanov's fortunes rose, Malenkov's career entered a precipitous decline. His political allies were demoted, and in some cases arrested. Especially visible allies like

¹⁰⁸ "O nekotom sokrashchenii chisla promyshlennykh otdelov v raikomakh, gorkomakh, obkomakh, kraikomakh i TsK kompartii soiuznykh respublik," RGASPI (14 August 1946) f.17, op.122, d.195, l.13–l.17.

¹⁰⁹ "Report about condition and tasks of continuing improvement of organizational-party work by Cheliabinsk Obkom," RGASPI (2 August 1946) f.17, op.122, d.136, l.230–l.289.

Varga were relentlessly hounded into the refuge of obscurity.¹¹⁰ And even more dangerously, Malenkov was beginning to be personally implicated in allegations of sabotage arising from the persecution of the Airforce Case.¹¹¹ Yet once again there were clear indications that the assault was not motivated by personal enmity against Malenkov specifically. Rather the entire theoretical bulwark of his faction was being directly attacked with the clear sanction of Stalin himself.

Once again, Ukraine provided a convenient location to test out a fresh avenue of attack. The ideological errors present in literature, arts, and general culture of the republic were exhibited as proof of deficiency in political oversight. This in turn was explained as an inherent problem with the training, selection, and appointment of the political cadres.¹¹² This provided yet more impetus for the reform of the party educational system and of the cadre departments of the Central Committee. The episode was also a clear antecedent of the war on the intelligentsia of the whole USSR that was declared in the Central Committee's Resolution on *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* a few months later. The mistakes committed by the *Leningrad* writers (and by extension the rest of the national community of arts) were also depicted as the result of the party losing focus on its role as the overseer, and losing control over its cadre selection and education.¹¹³

Once again paralleling the domestic ascent, the ideologue faction was also gathering increasing recognition and power within the unfolding framework of international tension. Thus, the fall of 1947 saw the firm enthronement of Zhdanov in his new role as Stalin's right hand. This was symbolized by his report at the Sklarska

¹¹⁰ Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security, 1939–1953* (London: Praeger, 1996), 210.

¹¹¹ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 272.

¹¹² Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 49.

¹¹³ *Doklad t. Zhdanova o zhurnalakh Zvezda i Leningrad* (Moscow: Ogiz, 1946).

Conference, which established the Cominform and laid the foundation of the Eastern Bloc.¹¹⁴ Zhdanov, as the keynote speaker, was entrusted with the articulation of the ideological framework of the new, postwar world as seen by the Kremlin. This honor was a measure of his faction's strength.

By July of 1947, the high ranking members of the Communist elite like Alexei Kuznetsov—now a secretary of the Central Committee—felt free to address the membership of the newly constituted department of cadres in order to denounce their ideological weaknesses. Kuznetsov, who replaced Malenkov at the helm of the department, did not mince words. He specifically railed against the fact that there were too many “technocrats” in what was nominally the front rank of the party. This speech skillfully combined the attacks on Malenkov's coterie with an unambiguous charting of the new course for the administrative apparatus of the VKP(b).¹¹⁵ Kuznetsov, coincidentally, spent much of his early career as Zhdanov's lieutenant in the Leningrad party apparatus.

The “soft” purge soon followed, as Zhdanov's followers attempted to replace the technocrats with the theoretically sound appointees. Malenkov was in no position to protest or to protect his clientele as he was summarily dismissed from his posts as the Central Committee secretary, member of Orgburo, and the Secretariat. The fall was instantaneous and highly publicized even by the standards of Soviet feuds. “On May Day, 1946, Malenkov stood right next to Stalin on the reviewing stand overlooking the Red Square parade. One year later, he had dropped down to sixth place among the Soviet

¹¹⁴ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 111–12.

¹¹⁵ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 272.

leaders on the rostrum.”¹¹⁶ This metric, so beloved by the Kremlinologists of the Cold War, still serves well as the measure of the damage that Malenkov suffered, and the attacks continued still. By the time of Cominform’s formation, Malenkov was reduced to the time-honored tradition of publicly retreating from his own platform and voicing support for various initiatives of the rival grouping.¹¹⁷

The Supreme Soviet’s deliberations served as the pulpit for the party to outline the new course. Its resolutions set the goals of agitation and propaganda that would underwrite the postwar Five-Year Plan. Once again the production was to be clearly understood as the function of correct motivation achieved through application of Marxist-Leninist theory. The heady days of wartime improvisation and compromises were over and it was time to return to the regular party procedures. The center publicized the drive for reinstituting the routine of party work, regularization of elections and plenums, of party meetings and improved communication within the entire regional party apparatus. The stress on the responsibility of the higher leadership to work closely with the new generation of leaders—already vocalized strongly in the education reform push—was reiterated.¹¹⁸

And, of course, grassroots participation in the political process was strongly encouraged. The party meetings and plenums could not be held on a regular schedule during the wartime years.¹¹⁹ Yet it is these tools that the center desperately needed now—the meetings would serve as the foundation of the political education of the new

¹¹⁶ Ebon, *Malenkov*, 49.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 54.

¹¹⁸ “Spravki o nepartiinom rukovodstve Bogotolskogo raikoma raionom i o anti-partiinom povedenii ego sekretaria Ivanova i drugikh,” RGASPI (22 March 1946) f.17, op.122, d.136, l.69–l.76; “Doklad,” RGASPI (27 April 1948) f.17, op.122, d.299, l.8–l.11.

¹¹⁹ “Struktura i plan raboty upravleniia po proverke partiinykh organov na leto 1946 goda,” RGASPI (14 August 1946) f.17, op.116, d.273, l.112–l.121.

Communist leaders in how the party structure was supposed to function. A steady system of plenums and reports by the regional party elite and their exposure to the criticism and self-criticism inherent in those function, would serve to undercut their prestige and power, breaking the isolation.¹²⁰

The concurrent reform of the apparatus of the CC toward a model that was more conducive to ideological matters served as the public endorsement of Zhdanov's policies. Just as individuals had to be refocused toward theoretical matters, on a larger scale, the line of separation between the state and the party had to be strongly emphasized once more and the reach of the state was demonstrably rolled back. This was tackled through several venues. The spring of 1946 saw the evolution of the newly strengthened structure of the Central Committee's apparatus. On 2 August 1946, the process culminated with the Politburo Resolution adopting Zhdanov's plan for the reconstituted department of cadres under the aegis of the Central Committee, reforming both the Orgburo and the Secretariat and "reorganized the party structure from the CC apparat to the *raion* party committees, inclusively."¹²¹

By gathering the responsibility of appointing and educating the cadres under a single department, the party would once again attempt to re-establish control, ideological focus, and clear responsibility. Many of these functions had been steadily ceded to the state organizations throughout the war as the exigencies of the conflict forced accommodations and collaborations. The industrial departments of the regional party committees developed the habit of looking to the ministries for guidance, while the *obkom* often found it convenient to co-opt the Soviet and managerial cadre and their

¹²⁰ "Report about condition and tasks of continuing improvement of organizational-party work by Cheliabinsk Obkom," RGASPI (2 August 1946) f.17, op.122, d.136, l.230–l.289.

¹²¹ Ibid., 52.

methods of operation in their chase for the plan fulfillment.¹²² The new centrally oriented department specifically tasked with cadre selection was an integral first step toward restoring one of the party's treasured power monopolies. The fact that this policy signified a return to the system already tried and discarded in the 1930s was tactfully overlooked.

Concurrent with the reform of the party apparatus and laying the foundation for what he perceived as a structural defect responsible for the incremental amalgamation of the party and state systems, Zhdanov also attacked the more immediate features of the phenomenon. The conflation of the economic and political structure in the Soviet system inevitably generated corruption.¹²³ The local party secretary, driven by necessity (as discussed above), was able to surround himself with a likeminded coterie of economic, soviet, and party leaders and enjoyed practically limitless control over his province.

This inevitably engendered corruption that pervaded the system. The lack of manpower made the apparatchiks reluctant to subdivide the administrative areas, which in turn placed a greater burden on them, once again reinforcing the existing system of isolation and cocooning.¹²⁴ The networks of patrons and clients (defined once again by the shortage of cadres) protected their own. Even the most corrupt and venal apparatchik was often shielded from consequences by his indispensability. A reprimand and a transfer to an equivalent position elsewhere was the usual punishment, as proved to be the case in the rather egregious exploits of one P. Lapin.

¹²² "O khode Krymskoi oblastnoi partiinoi konferentsii," RGASPI (March 1948) f.17, op.88, d.900, l.71.

¹²³ Romanovskii, *Liki Stalinizma*, 18–19.

¹²⁴ "Stennogramma VIII plenuma obkoma o postanovlenii fevral'skogo plenuma TsK VKP(b)" "O merakh pod'yoma selskogo khozaistva v poslevoennyi period," PAKO (14-15 March 1947) f.147, op.4, d.528, l.15–l.29.

A former partisan commander with the managerial career before the war, Lapin was fast-tracked as a party worker after the war, eventually reaching the post of a *raikom* secretary. Within his first two years on the job he—along with much of the local party and soviet leadership—became a part of a widespread scheme involved in “self-supply” from the local *kolkhozes* and enterprises. Later, as the ambitions of the clique grew, they began diverting the materials and labor for construction of private houses for the leading personages of the province. All of this was ignored until their actions impacted the quotas to a degree that could no longer be concealed. The cadre instructor of the Kalinin *obkom*, Rozov, described him in terms that positively dripped with fury: “Comrade Lapin, as a party worker, does not constitute any great worth. To be frank, as he was a petty businessman with a narrow political outlook, he so remains.”¹²⁵

Pointing out that apart from corruption, malfeasance, and neglect of the party-political work, Lapin also created a familial coterie in his district, Rozov flatly objected to the proposed method of dealing with the problem. Yet he was simply ignored, and—following a mild reprimand by the *obkom*—Lapin was simply transferred. His sentence consisted of a term in the oblast party school. There, still receiving the appropriate stipend, it was hoped his political and theoretical level would be raised for his subsequent utilization in a post similar to the one he was just forced to relinquish.¹²⁶ Whatever the worth of Lapin as a party worker, there were simply not enough experienced apparatchiks to discard him.

¹²⁵ “Spravka ob obrastanii khoziaistvami ot del'nykh rukovodiashchikh rabotnikov raiona,” PAKO (10 July 1948) f.147, op.4, d.993, l.144.

¹²⁶ “Spravka o prichinakh osvobodzheniia ot raboty Lapina P.S.,” PAKO (15 September 1948) f.147, op.4, d.1428, l.187.

The corruption was present at a number of levels and was targeted in a multitude of campaigns. In the closing years of the war and early phase of the reconstruction, however, the facet that drew the Kremlin's ire was the tendency of the managers to buy the patronage of their nominal political overseers and the practice of rewarding the party workers assigned to the industrial enterprises and the machine-tractor stations.¹²⁷ By matching the material awards given to the managers for good economic performance, the party attempted, in effect, to bid with the state for the loyalty of its own representatives. The awards were to be administered strictly through the *obkoms* and *kraikoms*, to make sure the recipients were aware of who presented them with this largesse. This practice had obvious drawbacks, however, not least the fact that it involved considerable financial outlay.

The problem only grew with time as the members of the party-administrative branch pointed out the necessity of widening the cadre of professional apparatchiks within the primary party organizations. Many among them drew a partial salary from the industrial, agricultural, or other economic enterprises in the area. This allowed trimming of the party's budget but, as Vinogradov (the deputy chairman of the department of party review) pointed out, it also placed the party workers in the direct dependence to the economic cadre. He suggested putting them on a party budget.¹²⁸

Zhdanov decided to launch a full frontal assault on the practice. A memo was circulated among the Politburo members that "charged that party officials' acceptance of 'material rewards' from the economic administrators under their supervision had blurred the lines between the party apparatus and the state administration, had undermined party

¹²⁷ "O poriadke premirovaniia osvobodzhennykh sekretarei pervichnykh partorganizatsii MTS," RGASPI (20 April 1944) f.17, op.116, d.150, l.74–l.75.

¹²⁸ "Spravka," RGASPI (1 November 1947) f.17, op.122, d.196, l.109.

officials' independence, and had reduced them to the playthings of the economic administrators."¹²⁹ On 18 May 1946, the topic was brought up at a meeting of the Orgburo of the Central Committee. The protocol of the day endorsed Zhdanov's definition of and approach to the problem and went farther still by singling out specific apparatchiks—both among the ministerial and party cadre—who were found to have engaged in the practice.

Nor were the people involved of a trifling position—USSR Minister of Lumber production Saltykov, Secretary of Udmurtian *obkom* Chekinov, Secretary of Kalinin *obkom* Veselov, Minister of Paper Production Orlov, and former Secretary of Ukrainian *obkom* Gorba were all given reprimands and some were demoted.¹³⁰ The measures advocated by the Orgburo paralleled the language of Zhdanov's memo—unsurprising since by this point he and his allies controlled much of the agenda of both the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee and its Secretariat.

Hot on the heels of the Orgburo's injunction and its stern resolution that its list of now targeted excesses was to be distributed throughout the Soviet Unions, the dangers of the loss of independence by the party workers to the economic institutions was duly noted in the resolution passed by the Ukrainian Central Committee.¹³¹ The resolution warned against the practice of awards and made clear the necessity of maintaining the character of the party as an independent and impartial watchdog.

¹²⁹ Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat*, 92.

¹³⁰ "O faktakh premirovaniia Ministerstvami SSR i khozaistvennymi organizatsiiami rukovodiashchikh partiinykh i sovetskikh rabotnikov," RGASPI (18 May 1946) f.17, op.116, d.261, l.8-l.10.

¹³¹ "Postanovlenie TsK Ukrainy po otchetu TsK Ukrainy o podgotovke, podbore i raspredeleniiu rukovodiashchikh partiinykh i sovetskikh rabotnikov," RGASPI (26 July 1946) f.17, op.116, d.271, l.12–l.17.

The corruption and loss of ideological purity were seen as intimately connected by the Kremlin. The need to address the root cause of the problem was clearly articulated to the party and the society at large in a 1946 CC missive. It outlined the pressures that the unprecedented growth of its ranks placed on the party and made clear the steps that Moscow wanted the party apparatus to make.¹³² The confirmation that two-thirds of the national party membership were currently composed of the people admitted during the war and they were practically ignorant of Marxism-Leninism was a political earthquake.¹³³ The party was publicly closing its doors to any new applicants, with the admission standards being now raised to prewar levels.

In effect, Zhdanov's universalist program of reforms committed the entire party leadership to an open course of confrontation with the peripheral apparatus. The regional bosses simply could not comply with the orders because the reasons for the previous attempts to reform the system failed were still very much in place. Absent a slackening of the pressure to maintain the industrial tempo necessary for the reconstruction of the Soviet Bloc, the provincial party organizations would be not be able to comply with the demands of the Kremlin. Yet the latter's prestige was now openly committed to them doing exactly that.

The results were predictable. The initial onslaught of the center's program was immediately answered with a slew of reports assuring the Kremlin that the provinces were enthusiastically reforming their behavior. Optimistic missives painted the periphery as quickly and forcefully changing the focus of their efforts toward changing the admission policies, involving the new party members in every aspect of party life, and

¹³² "O roste partii i o merakh po usileniiu partiino-organizatsionnoi i partiino-politicheskoi raboty s vnov' vstupivshimi v partiiu," RGASPI (26 July 1946), f.17, op.116, d.271, l.5–l.11.

¹³³ KPSS v resoliutsiakh (1971), 154–61.

generally returning the party to its prewar roots.¹³⁴ Yet underneath, the familiar forces were at play, frustrating any attempt to deal with the issues brought up by the Central Committee.

More than ever, in this period the party was forced to deal with an overwhelming number of unqualified members. The sudden influx of the veterans greatly contributed to the problem, adding a few unfamiliar complexities, but in general the issues facing the system in the second half of the decade differed little from the processes that dominated the debates of the 1930s or even 1920s. The task set by the Kremlin required the provincial organization to tackle several layers of the existing situation. They were instructed to abandon the mass approach to admissions and instead approach every case on individual basis with careful consideration of the candidate.¹³⁵

Implicitly, the ideological strength of the prospective Communist was to be given primacy—this was also reflected in the demand that the imbalance of the admission be corrected on the class basis and more workers admitted to counterbalance the overwhelming numbers of white collar Bolsheviks.¹³⁶ The leading Communists of the provinces were to provide an example and serve as mentors to the new leaders who appeared throughout the war. These secretaries of the primary organizations and some *raikom* workers differed little from the other Communists admitted under the relaxed rules of wartime and required attention, supervision, and a detailed education in the realities of an apparatchik's duties.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ "Otchet," RGASPI (December 1946) f. 17, op.88, d.703, l.2–l.5.

¹³⁵ "Report," RGASPI (1946) f.17, op.88, d. 691, l.100–l.101.

¹³⁶ "Rost i sostav partii," RGASPI (22 July 1947) f.17, op.122, d.199, l.130–l.135.

¹³⁷ "Zamechaniia Zhdanova po proektu resheniia 'O rabote Chkalovskogo Obkoma VKP(b)'," RGASPI (17 February 1948) f. 77, op.3, d.21, l.17–l.19.

The dilemma facing the provincial party chieftains was that the Kremlin's orders were deceptively simple and straightforward. Any and all of them could have been solved by an application of adequate time and human resources. The core of the problem was, of course, the lack of the above. That too presented a difficulty, since nominally the party had never been stronger in numerical terms. Yet the same imperatives that drove the Zhdanovite quest for purity also defined the inability of the system to accommodate them. The war forced a Darwinian selection within the civilian apparatus and it favored the managers not the ideologues. It was the ideologues who were called to the front in their thousands during the first two years, perishing almost as quickly. Even the most capable of managers disappeared into that cauldron, leaving only a patina of competence to run the system behind the lines.¹³⁸ Compromises needed to be made and the focus was clearly on keeping the economy functioning.

What followed was a horizontal integration of the *nomenklatura* and technical intelligentsia. The party apparatchiks, soviet workers, and economic elite drew closer on the basis of their ability to achieve pragmatic results, rather than along the lines envisioned by the architects of the system. Whether the factory director was a good Communist—or even a Communist at all—was less important to the local party secretary than his ability to fulfill the plan. The imbalance of party admissions, favoring the white collar stratum of Soviet society, was related to the same imperatives—that caste offered the highest probability of providing the qualified managers so desperately needed by the apparatus.

Similarly, the waste of time and qualified cadres on sifting through the admission applications, holding interviews, or mentoring the new generation of leaders was almost

¹³⁸ "Prilozhenie k resoliutsii TsK o roste partii," RGASPI (14 June 1946) f.17, op.122, d.189, l.149.

perverse. Instead the apparatchiks nominally occupying the posts of the instructors were detailed as plenipotentiaries into the villages to ensure harvests; the new Communists were simply bypassed.¹³⁹ The pockets (or arguably cliques) of competence attempted to take on the entire burden of running the system. This in turn produced the effect of increased isolation and cocooning, strengthening the tendency for dictatorial and administrative leadership essentially autonomous from the central oversight unless their corruption or political malfeasance became simply too much to ignore.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile it was the least able who were given the tasks concerned with ideological education. Thus one *raikom* secretary, himself possessing only the basic education, forced the head of his agit-prop department—Korotkova—to resign in favor of a newcomer from the army. The reason given was that the veteran was more qualified. The review showed that he was barely literate. In another instance, Frolova was appointed as the head of a party education group. The reviewer reported indignantly that this Frolova “failed as a propagandist two years previously. The reason given by the *raikom* secretary for her appointment—‘she’s not a bad person, in addition she’s getting on in years. In this post it will be no worries for her, and a salary is a bit higher.’”¹⁴¹ Both episodes revealed the power of the local party bosses over their coterie and the process of building the patron-client networks—at the expense of ideological competence. The attempts by the Kremlin to change the results before addressing the fundamental causes continued to end in deadlock.

¹³⁹ “Stennogramma soveshchaniia po voprosu o rabote sel’skikh party organizatsii,” RGASPI (7 January 1947) f.17, op.122, d.221, l.1–l.39.

¹⁴⁰ “Ob itogakh provedeniia otchetno-vybornykh sobranii v partiinykh organizatsii Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR,” RGASPI (27 February 1947) f.17, op.122, d.194, l.35; “Ob itogakh otchetno-vybornykh konferentsii,” RGASPI (10 September 1947) f.17, op.122, d.194, l.159–l.169.

¹⁴¹ “O nedostatkakh raboty Gorkovskogo obkoma s propagandistkami kadrami,” RGASPI (1 February 1947) f.17, op.125, d.516, l.24

The center's response was to attempt to increase direct supervision and force the recalcitrant periphery to heel. Among the tools picked by the Zhdanovites to break the regional bosses was a familiar institution. In 1947, at the February Plenum "the position of the deputy director for the political sector was reintroduced, and a special campaign was launched to use the MTS as the keystone of postwar rehabilitation and reconstruction in the countryside."¹⁴² This was the third reincarnation of the political departments within the Machine Tractor Stations, the last iteration of this system having been abolished almost exactly four years previously in May 1943. Just as with their earlier introductions of 1929 and 1941, this latest attempt to make them work came in the midst of famine and a centralizing drive rooted in the campaign to restore the ideological purity of the party.

In a trajectory that inevitably paralleled the previous historical experience of this tactic, the political departments quickly bogged down in bureaucratic warfare with the local party organizations—especially the *raikoms*. Despite being given far greater powers of discretion, the *politotdels* remained dependent on the local party apparatus for cadres and assistance. Such assistance was uncertain in the atmosphere of certain mutual hostility and the persistent shortages of human and material resources. In time the political departments were once again gradually subsumed into the regional systems, subject to the same conditions of cooperation with the business and state structures that their introduction was supposed to eliminate.

"Left to their own devices, often without the attention or support of the *raikoms*, many found it easier to choose the path of acquiescence in the manipulations of the MTS directors, on whose good will they depended for their daily welfare and tranquility.

¹⁴² Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors: The MTS and the Development of Controls in Soviet Agriculture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 273.

Instead of Party overseers protecting the interests of the state in the MTS zones, they became in such cases mere accessories to the MTS directors, assisting them in making the stations look good in the eyes of the higher Party and state officials.”¹⁴³

Another tool utilized by the Zhdanovites was an entirely new force in Soviet politics—veterans, many of them recent Communists. The policy adopted by the Kremlin vis-à-vis these men was an elegant attempt to turn weakness into strength. Although the vast majority of the demobilized Communists differed little from their counterparts in the civilian apparatus, their position was quickly delineated as that of a special subgroup, entitled to special considerations.¹⁴⁴ Although the regional party organizations were still ordered to engage in a thorough campaign of raising the clearly deficient theoretical level of the veterans,¹⁴⁵ there was also a discernible effort to promote them to leading positions within the apparatus.¹⁴⁶

The Kremlin envisioned the veterans as reinforcements in their effort to communize the countryside¹⁴⁷ as well as disrupting the comfortable power networks of the provinces. Mekhlis described these men as the ready-made reserve upon which the party could draw.

“Among the veterans there are almost two million communists many of whom are talented party workers. In some district party organizations there are veterans who are, by their business quality, political maturity, and ability to organize masses stand above some local workers. We can’t forget that during the liberation the party and soviet work was

¹⁴³ Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors*, 285–86.

¹⁴⁴ “O l’gotakh dlia uchastnikov otechestvennoi voiny postupaiushchikh v VUZy i tekhnikumy,” RGASPI (12 May 1945) f.17, op.116, d.217, l.81.

¹⁴⁵ “Politicheskaiia rabota sredi veteranov Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny,” RGANI (June 1946) f.6, op.6, d.466, l.75–l.81.

¹⁴⁶ “Doklad,” RGASPI (Winter 1945) f.17, op.88, d.471, l.24–l.28; “Politicheskaiia rabota sredi veteranov Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny,” RGANI (July 1946) f.6, op.6, d.480, l.19–l.29.

¹⁴⁷ “Review Report,” RGASPI (18 December 1946) f.17, op.122, d.164, l.75–l.93.

fulfilled by appointment of workers from among the available reserve. And it was rather shallow. The point is the necessity of certain corrections in the appointment and distribution of the cadres through *vydvizhenie* of the more capable demobilized communists to leading positions within party, soviet and economic work.”¹⁴⁸

By inserting the soldier-Communists into this structure, Moscow could benefit from the presence of the Communists whose loyalty had been conditioned toward the Kremlin by their sojourn in the military. To a certain extent, the experiment was successful and the Communist veterans proved to be a loyal stratum. Some of them proved invaluable in attacking the local authorities on the grounds of corruption of malfeasance, unbound by longstanding ties and less easily intimidated than the rest of the population.¹⁴⁹ Others, like Shepilov, did the same at a higher level of the apparatus.

Yet overall, this attempt to weaken the provincial cliques also failed. The veterans presented a disparate and massive group with few common markers of identity beyond their war experience.¹⁵⁰ Without direct and continuous direction from Moscow they could not equal the party-machines of the regional bosses. And Moscow could not provide the necessary conduits. Conversely, the tools available to the provincial party chiefs were many. Initially some tried to drive a wedge between the center and the veterans, pointing out that the returning soldiers had been exposed to the deleterious effects of exposure to the West and might carry harmful attitudes back with them.¹⁵¹ Yet such crude measures were quickly stamped out by the center. In the end the Communist-veterans were simply

¹⁴⁸ “Prilozhenie k resoliutsii TsK o roste partii,” RGASPI (14 June 1946) f.17, op.122, d.189, l.149.

¹⁴⁹ “Istoria odnogo signala,” GARF (1945) f.r-8131, op.22, d.105, l.65.

¹⁵⁰ Mark Edele, A “*Generation of Victors?*”: *Soviet Second World War Veterans From Demobilization to Organization 1941–1956* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2006), 105–7.

¹⁵¹ “Informatsionnaia svodka sektora informatsii Organizatsionno-Instruktorskogo otdela TsK VKP(b),” RGASPI (13 July 1945) f.17, op.88, d.649, l.136–l.138; “Protokol,” RGASPI (17 August 1947) f.17, op.122, d.273, l.32.

subsumed in much the same way as the MTS political departments or CPC representatives. The unique nature of the military Communist organization prepared these men to accept a much higher level of authoritarian rule and command authority.¹⁵² And the primary beneficiaries of those reflexes were their direct bosses and patrons, not the distant and amorphous masters in Moscow. Those who were competent and reliable were gradually adopted by the local cliques; those who, like most new Communists, were not were similarly bypassed or quietly expelled.¹⁵³

In response to Moscow's demands, a series of plenums and reports by the *obkoms*, *kraikoms*, and the CCs of the republics were held throughout 1946 and 1947. The transcripts and reports from the CPC representatives and inspectors outline the predictable uniformity of a scripted performance. The party bosses of the regions were duly excoriated by the *raikom* secretaries and the leaders of the primary organizations for the distant style of leadership and for the tendency to ally themselves with the economic elite and demand material results while putting ideological work on the backburner.¹⁵⁴ The institution of the plenipotentiaries was widely panned as harmful, distracting the *obkoms'* ideological instructors toward economic duties.¹⁵⁵ The local bosses dutifully admitted fault and promised improvements.

Yet within the next few years the reality proved to be quite different. Soon the plenums and the meetings themselves were either subverted or adapted to the goals of the regional elite. Thus a common way of holding the plenums began to include a widened

¹⁵² "Spravka," RGASPI (May 1946) f.17, op.122, d.190, l.90–l.94.

¹⁵³ "Stennogramma XI plenuma obkoma," PAKO (1948) f.147, op.4, d.1095, l.3–l.39.

¹⁵⁴ "Report on the Party Plenum of Uzbekistan SSR," RGASPI (July 1946) f.17, op.88, d. 691, l.105–l.108.

¹⁵⁵ "Stennogramma soveshchaniia po voprosu o rabote sel'skikh partiinykh organizatsii," RGASPI (7 January 1947) f.17, op.122, d.221, l.1–l.39.

aktiv that saw the inclusion of party, soviet, and economic leaders.¹⁵⁶ This essentially institutionalized the linkage of the three spheres and the Kremlin seemed unable to stamp out the phenomenon. The reports reaching Moscow also showed that communication within the apparatus remained very poor. The power of the local elite made the grassroots reluctant to contradict them or even inform the center, where their target might have a patron.¹⁵⁷ The overburdened leaders of the periphery also had neither the time nor the patience for traveling out to the countryside—and when they did so, they usually sequestered themselves with the *kolkhoz*, MTS, or soviet leaders, rather than the local primary party group.¹⁵⁸ The resolutions passed by the *raikoms* were often utterly apolitical, concerned only with industry and agriculture.¹⁵⁹

The influence of the primary party organizations remained negligible—and the lack of any semblance of education in the proper maintenance of the party bureaucracy was telling. The losses or negligence with regards to party cards was prevalent—one case had the party member leaving his card as surety for a cow he was buying.¹⁶⁰ The documentation sent by many party organizations was often indecipherable: full of errors or very late.¹⁶¹ This was an intrinsic feature of the system, where the Central Committee was faced with an inability to account for as many as a million Communists in the postwar era.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ “O ser’eznykh nedostatkakh v praktike provedeniia plenumov Ivanovskoi oblasti,” RGASPI (22 August 1946) f.17, op. 122, d.126, l.154–l.157.

¹⁵⁷ “Vystuplenie sekretaria Kalininskogo obkoma na plenum obkoma,” PAKO (30 October 1948) f.147, op.4, d.989a, l.1–l.28.

¹⁵⁸ “Otchet o Ukrainskikh partiinykh konferentsiiakh,” RGASPI (February 1948) f.17, op.88, d.900, l.6–l.7.

¹⁵⁹ “O politicheskoi rabote sredi veteranov Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny,” RGASPI (1946) f.17, op.122, d.164, l.2–l.9.

¹⁶⁰ “Spravka,” RGASPI (22 November 1945) f.17, op. 122, d.124, l.20–l.23.

¹⁶¹ “O nedostatkakh v oformlenii protokolov buro, plenumov i sobranii partaktiv v raikomakh, gorkomakh partii i o zaderzhke ikh pri vysylke v obkom,” PAKO (1946) f.147, op.3, d.2009, l.71–l.72.

¹⁶² “Spravka,” RGASPI (1946) f.17, op.122, d.189, l.96–l.100.

Faced with the task of regularizing a system whose members lacked the most basic understanding of a bureaucratic routine, the local leaders chose an easier path of command authority—simply writing out for the subordinate organizations the topics of discussion and the resolution of meetings or summarily firing and replacing the secretaries of the lower organizations for their flaws, without bothering to instruct them.¹⁶³ The meetings remained haphazard and often sparsely attended.

The drive for democratization of the local apparatus thus floundered. The general and political ignorance of the grassroots made them easy prey for the falsification of elections or pressures from the local authorities.¹⁶⁴ This was made easier by the very system of party elections. Moreover, the rank and file of the postwar party could not be relied upon to side with the center in the latter's quest to centralize through re-Bolshevization. The veterans of the war or the "technical-engineering" intelligentsia—the new generation of young Communists—were a different breed of Bolshevik. Many could not give satisfactory definitions of terms like *democracy*, *communism*, or *party program*.¹⁶⁵

Nor were they unduly worried by their failure to do so. Inculcated in the pragmatism of the war, they were loyal and generally approving of the system, but they saw little sense in wasting their time on the *Short Course*, instead of the factory manual.¹⁶⁶ As V. Ovechkin, a veteran and a writer, remarked, "Bolsheviks are practical,

¹⁶³ "O neudovletvoritel'noi rabote Gofitskogo raikoma," RGASPI (September 1946) f.17, op. 122, d.132, l.206–l.218.

¹⁶⁴ "Spravki upolnomochennykh komissi partiinogo kontrolia," RGASPI (1946) f.17, op.122, d.126, l.36–l.37, l.287–l.291.

¹⁶⁵ "Spravka ob ideino-politicheskom vospitanii kandidatov v chleny VKP(b)," TSAOPIM (January 1947) f.4, op.39, d.126, l.1–l.10.

¹⁶⁶ "Dokladnaia zapiska o rabote s molodymi kommunistami v Kievskom raione," TSAOPIM (July 1946) f.4, op.39, d.29, l.1–l.8.

down to earth people. Theirs is a brave, ‘practical’ fraternity.”¹⁶⁷ This new breed was buttressed in their attitudes by their instinctive understanding of the party’s immediate priorities. As one factory engineer (and a Communist since 1943) explained: “Our technical expertise is constantly tested and asked about, the political side—not so much, therefore we can skimp on it.”¹⁶⁸

A reason had to be found to explain the consistent failure of the reforms. And the rank and file of the party had to be educated with the help of an appropriately public example. The attempt to utilize the provincial party leadership was grinding to a halt. Yet the state and economic managers could still provide a perfect target. Nor could the Zhdanovites tolerate a continuing base of support for the technocrats in the ministries and various industrial outlets throughout the economic sphere of the Soviet political structure.

Ministries Besieged

The process of the Zhdanovite attack on the ministerial apparatus has to be seen within a broader context of contemporary policy. While the entire scope of the period that saw the transition from World War II to the Cold War is much too broad to be properly examined in this work, the available evidence presents an internally cohesive, interconnected, and logical process. As the momentum shifted from the pragmatists toward the ideologues, the changes had to take place throughout the entire structure. In this respect, the degree to which the reforms aimed at reintroducing the primacy of ideology within the party and the primacy of the party within the society were

¹⁶⁷ V. Ovechkin, *Stat’i, dnevniki, pis’mo* (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel’, 1979), 198.

¹⁶⁸ “Spravka,” TSAOPIM (1946) f.4, op.39, d.29, l.45.

interdependent and translated seamlessly from the repression of the army into the purification of the party and curtailment of the state and economic elite.

The dynamic of Zhdanov's struggle with the ministries presents a perfect microcosm of this multifaceted organism of repression. The process was powered by a self-reinforcing feedback mechanism. The backlash against the rewards proffered to the party apparatchiks by outside agencies tackled the issue of professionalism and party education. It also connected the process to the parallel centralizing efforts, however, aimed at taming the outposts of autonomy in the state and economic spheres and their attempts to suborn their Communist overseers.

Similarly, the issue of control over the selection, training, and appointment of cadres transcended the original goal of reinstituting of political education and theoretical learning at the basis of the party life.¹⁶⁹ Inevitably it transitioned into an attack on the privileges of the technocrats, the military, and managerial professionals and the attempt to trim back their autonomy developed at the expense of the traditional powers of the central party organs. In the military, the propensity of the local bosses (both party apparatchiks and the professional military officers) to build their own power groupings through usurpation of the party's privileges powers of selecting and appointing the under-bosses of the power structure was dealt with through reform. The new strictures once again delineated (in theory) the powers of appointment, democratizing the process and installing a number of additional checks within the system.

Yet the achievement of the similar goal in the ministries occupied a much greater share of the Kremlin's efforts, especially as the war wound down, increasing the power of

¹⁶⁹ "Postanovlenie TsK Ukrainy po otchetu TsK Ukrainy o podgotovke, podbore i raspredeleniiu rukovodiashchikh partiinykh i sovetskikh," RGASPI (26 July 1946) f.17, op.116, d.271, l.12–l.17.

the state and economic institutions involved in the reconstruction. As part of the campaign to reform the Cadre Department of the Central Committee and return the education of the apparatchiks to the primary focus of the party workers,¹⁷⁰ Zhdanov also turned toward using the ministries as examples of the flaws in the current system. Even as his attack encompassed the Malenkovites connected with the Ukrainian party organization, central apparatus, and those responsible for overseeing the intelligentsia he also berated them for allowing the state organs to encroach on such integral party duties as selection and appointment of the cadres. The decree of the Central Committee voiced that line of thought as early as July 1946, followed shortly by Khrushchev's public concurrence and apology at the Ukrainian party plenum.¹⁷¹

One tack, already described above, was to develop these deficiencies into criticism of Malenkov himself, under whose purview fell the Cadre Administration of the USSR. The reorganization of the central party apparatus soon followed. Connected, yet separate, was the thesis that the only recourse was renewed influence on party education. And yet another prong of this offensive was the attack on ministerial autonomy. As part of the rhetoric surrounding the reorganization of the Cadre Administration, a 12 June 1946 Secretariat resolution chided it for devoting insufficient attention to the practice of selection, review, and appointment of economic, state, and party cadres. Especial stress was put on the laxity of such procedures within the ministries and other state departments (*vedomstva*).¹⁷² Within the ministries themselves, the leaders of the internal party

¹⁷⁰ "Meropriiatiia po znachitel'nomu uluchsheniiu raboty upravleniia kadrov TsK VKP(b) v dele izucheniia, podbora i raspredeleniia partiinykh, sovetskikh i khozaistvennykh kadrov," RGASPI (12 June 1946) f.17, op.116, d.264, l.99–l.119.

¹⁷¹ Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 49.

¹⁷² "Meropriiatiia po znachitel'nomu uluchsheniiu raboty upravleniia kadrov TsK VKP(b) v dele izucheniia, podbora i raspredeleniia partiinykh, sovetskikh i khozaistvennykh kadrov," RGASPI (12 June 1946) f.17, op.116, d.264, l.99–l.119.

organizations appeared unwilling to confront the leaders of the state and economic institutions with regards to appropriate work with the cadres.

The result was a de facto takeover by the ministries of the party privileges with regards to the staffing of the *nomenklatura* posts. The Secretariat noted indignantly that the practice resulted in the ministers staffing their bailiwicks on a familial basis, surrounding themselves with their cronies and supporters. These, the resolution explained, lacked principles and ideological purity and thus often colluded in hiding the true situation within the state organizations, reporting falsehoods and inflated production numbers. Correction of the cadre situation within the Ministries and *vedomsta* was deemed to be the primary task of the Cadre Administration, although similar flaws within the provincial party organizations were also to be addressed.¹⁷³

This was to be achieved by increased central oversight, making sure the ministries and the periphery employed ideological specialists in the roles defined for them by the center without improvisation and that only qualified cadres were entrusted with leading positions. A month later, the injunction was echoed by the decree of the Soviet of Ministers. In clear and certain terms, the state apparatus was forbidden to fill the vacancies within the apparatus on their own authority; candidates were to be submitted to the party organs and were contingent on their approval, and the ministries were not to engage in any unauthorized reorganization of their staffs or their increase. Those engaged in these practices would face criminal penalties.¹⁷⁴ The party declared its intention to keep the state organs on a very short leash.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ "Postanovlenie Soveta Ministrov o zapreshchenii rasshireniia shtatov administrativno-upravlencheskogo apparata sovetskikh, gosudarstvennykh, khozaitvennykh, kooperativnykh i obshchestvennykh organizatsii," GARF (13 August 1946) F(r)5446, op.1, d.282, l.180–l.181.

Of course, such peremptory orders could not address the fundamental deficiencies in the structure that created the crisis. The shortage of qualified cadres continued to be acute throughout the system. As a result, the ministries, much like the provincial party bosses, were caught between the need to continue operating and delivering results, and the orders requiring them to do so without shortcuts developed to deal with the systemic flaws of the Soviet government model. They could not obey the orders and were acutely aware that their careers still depended primarily on pragmatic results rather than more amorphous ideological purity.

Thus the ministries continued to bypass the party directives. A year after the edicts of the Central Committee, private correspondence between Zhdanov, Rodionov (chairman of the Soviet of Ministries), and Pegov (vice-chair of the Department of Party Organs Review) reveals the Zhdanovites demoralized and almost resigned to the subversion of their initiatives by the ministerial institutions. The problems they so earnestly attacked a year ago showed no sign of dissipating, and the Soviet of Ministers had taken considerable strides in establishing a de facto Cadre Administration of its own. The situation was so bad that Pegov (Zhdanov's appointee and direct subordinate) saw no choice but to sanction it officially in order to save face.¹⁷⁵

An attack begun with the singular aim of reforming the Cadre Administration evolved steadily on every front concerned with the Zhdanovite platform and faced defeat at most of them within a year. The logic of the system made any isolated attack almost impossible, since the Malenkovites presented an interlocking system of alliances and client-patron relationships. These relationships went beyond simple vertical connections

¹⁷⁵ "Perepiska mezhdru Zhdanovym, Radionovym i Pegovym," RGASPI (14 November 1947) f.17, op.122, d.195, l.237-l.242; (May 1947) l.239-l.240.

based on personal ties that characterized Russian authority structure for generations. Rather they were based around a specific interpretation of the necessary balance between ideology and pragmatism. An attack on one of the bastions of that system could not help but evolve into a wider conflict.

Every step of the Zhdanov-Malenkov feud had dogmatic and theoretical repercussions, eschewing the parameters of simple personal rivalry and developing inexorably into a battle of political platforms. In this respect, the Kliueva-Roskin Affair provides another interesting model of the contemporary dialogue between the two factions and the difficulty subsequent scholars have had in attempting to single out a specific goal or an overriding impetus for the Affair itself and the phenomenon of the Honor Courts that it unleashed.

The Affair centered on a married team of medical researchers—Nina Kliueva and Grigorii Roskin. The two had achieved promising results in their quest to find a cure for cancer and by the fall of 1946, their research increasingly began to attract the attention of the Western scientific establishment, culminating with one of the institute's workers taking their book to the West in the course of a speaking tour. The pre-eminent work on the Affair suggests that Zhdanov began taking an interest in the episode as early as the summer of 1946.¹⁷⁶ Yet the process would not reach its fruition until the following year, when, on 17 February a Politburo session was convened to discuss it, culminating in the excoriation of the intelligentsia for insufficient loyalty and a propensity to share secrets with the West.

¹⁷⁶ Nikolai Kremmentsov, *The Cure: A Story of Cancer and Politics from the Annals of the Cold War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 103

It has always seemed tempting to see this episode as an outgrowth of the foreign policy influenced by the nascent Cold War and of construction of the Hermit Kingdom. Thus V. D. Esakov and E. S. Levina saw the pressures of the global conflict as being the primary engine for the Affair.¹⁷⁷ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, on the other hand, saw the issue as a more multifaceted engagement. They concluded that Stalin was the true architect of the episode, with Zhdanov relegated to the role of manager of the Vozhd's grand design. As such, they argued the case was both a reaction to the newly emergent pattern of the Cold War and an opportunity to bring Zhdanov to heel. If Stalin himself was behind the attack, then perhaps the connection to international developments had more merit. Certainly the Kremlin itself cited the necessity for tightened security and less genuflection to the West. Such admonishments were at the center of the letter it sent out throughout the country popularizing the event and making it a linchpin of a broader propaganda campaign. If Zhdanov was merely the manager of a campaign planned out by his boss, perhaps the letter needed to be taken at face value as a mobilization tool aimed at conscripting the scientific establishment against the West.¹⁷⁸

At the same time, it provided Stalin with an opportunity to practice his traditional tactic of cutting short any potential rival, even someone who had recently and publically enjoyed his favor and patronage. In fact, they asserted, the entire Affair was an extreme embarrassment to Zhdanov. "Stalin demonstrated his control of his deputy by drawing Zhdanov into attacks that damaged Zhdanov's own interest."¹⁷⁹ Conversely, Nikolai Kremmentsov asserted that while Stalin may have endorsed *zhdanovshchina*, the campaign

¹⁷⁷ V. D. Esakov and E. S. Levina, *Stalinskie "Sudy Chesti": Delo "KR,"* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 53–54.

¹⁷⁸ Nikolai Kremmentsov, *Stalinist Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 130–35.

¹⁷⁹ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 36.

itself was shaped by the man whose name defined it.¹⁸⁰ “The honor courts were Zhdanov’s creations. . . . Zhdanov wrote a complete scenario for the opening show: he created a series of roles, deciding that the trial should include a public prosecutor, a chairman, court members, witnesses, the accused, and spectators; then he selected ‘actors’ to play these roles.”¹⁸¹

Viewed from that perspective, the Affair and the attendant campaigns are seen as a primarily domestically motivated political development. The KR case, according to Krementsov, and the Honor Courts that followed, were simply another stage in a systematic program of exerting party control over the Soviet society. Having tamed the arts, Zhdanov now turned toward the sciences. His crusade, inevitably feeding on itself, proceeded to enhance the prestige and influence of the ideologue faction.¹⁸²

As Krementsov demonstrated, Zhdanov envisioned the “high-level state bureaucrats” as his targets from the start. “In his notebook he wrote of his intention ‘to establish a court of honor for ministries and deputies.’ During the interrogations in February, he had paid particular attention to the role of the minister of public health and his deputies in the KR affair. In another notebook he wrote: ‘Courts of Honor in eight to ten ministries in May. Prepare carefully.’” From that perspective, the arguments proposed by Zubkova, Esakov, and Levina that the Courts were motivated primarily by opposition to the West seem less convincing. Yet to dismiss the looming Cold War completely is also unwise. It is thus the more balanced approach, offered by Gorlizki and Khlevniuk that strikes closest to the truth.

¹⁸⁰ Krementsov, *The Cure*, 102.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁸² Krementsov, *Stalinist Science*, 130, 135, 156.

Given the outcome of the process and the close resemblance to the blueprint envisioned by Zhdanov, the argument that he was simply the puppet in Stalin's hands, led reluctantly into public shaming, appears threadbare. Yet, any attempt to single out any one of the above rationales for the offensive begat by the KR Affair falls in the self-same trap of bypassing the true question of import. As important as the original intent of the operation's architect may be, it is the outcome and consequences that outline the true forces governing the contemporary dynamic of the power-struggle. Thus it is notable that the primary impact of the new campaign—which once again affected almost every bastion of the technocrats—was felt among the ministerial apparatus.

The Courts of Honor were reborn in the spring of 1947. They were founded by parallel edicts of Stalin and Zhdanov throughout the key institutions of the Soviet state and the Communist Party.¹⁸³ The rhetoric preceding the legislation carried a heavy degree of concern over the influence of the West on Russian society, espionage by the former Allies, and the “slavishness” of the intelligentsia. Yet the actual resolutions affirmed by the Politburo and the Soviet of Ministers carried titles that in the usual manner of Soviet-speak made it clear that the main target was the state apparatus. By October the courts established by the resolution “Regarding the Courts of Honor in the Ministries and Central Departments” were installed in eighty-two ministries and other power centers.¹⁸⁴

According to Elena Zubkova, the original genesis of the Courts was to be found in Imperial Russia, where they were utilized primarily within the army's officer corps.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ “Postanovlenie Soveta Ministrov SSSR i TsK VKP(b) o Sudakh Chesti v Ministerstvakh SSSR i tsestralnykh vedomostyakh,” RGASPI (28 March 1947) f.17, op.3, d.1064, l.32.

¹⁸⁴ V. D. Esakov and E. S. Levina, *Delo KR, Sudy chesti v ideologii i praktike poslevoennogo Stalinizma* (Moscow: RAN, 2000), 127.

¹⁸⁵ Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 221.

Oleg Kharkhordin saw their origin even earlier, in the ecclesiastical courts of the Russian Orthodox Church. Remarking on the similarity between the discourses of the party and the Church, Kharkhordin asserted that “neither corresponded to reality, but both reasserted the same need to cure rather than punish, to admonish rather than expel.”¹⁸⁶

Their descendents would have considerable parallels. Akin to the agitation trials of the 1920s examined by Elizabeth Wood, the Honor Courts sought to educate and to publically humiliate the selected individuals and institutions while simultaneously exhibiting the correct mode of behavior and thought, simultaneously creating the impression of People Power, with the subjects cast in the role of the judge and the jury.¹⁸⁷ Much like the ecclesiastical courts or the public trials, they were much more spectacle than jurisprudence. Krementsov also described Zhdanov’s authorship of the process in terms more suitable to those of a theater director, rather than the architect of domestic policy program: he wrote a scenario, picked the actors, mandated an audience . . .¹⁸⁸ All that was left was for the spectators and the participants to learn the appropriate lessons.

The actual powers of the Courts were rather limited, since the highest sentence they could proffer consisted of rebukes, public shaming, and rituals of social self-humiliation. For more permanent consequences the Courts had to refer their cases to the actual criminal system.¹⁸⁹

In that respect they presented another logical outgrowth of the campaign for grassroots participation in the political process and interparty democracy. Remarking on the

¹⁸⁶ Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 49.

¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth A. Wood, “The Trial of Lenin: Legitimizing the Revolution through Political Theater, 1920–23,” *Russian Review* 61, no. 2 (2002), 238.

¹⁸⁸ Krementsov, *The Cure*, 111.

¹⁸⁹ Esakov, *Delo KR*, 129.

phenomenon of self-criticism as it was practiced in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, Oleg Kharkhordin identified “the renewed attempt to mend the split between the leaders and the rank and file” as one of the reasons.¹⁹⁰ The same impulse was visible in the Honor Courts conception, both in the rhetoric that surrounded it and the established system itself.

The anti-elite, pseudo-populist language text of the resolution specifically proclaimed that the Courts were responsible for the review of “antiparty, anti-state and anti-social actions committed by the leading, administrative and science workers of the USSR Ministries and central departments.”¹⁹¹ Meanwhile the broad nature of their mandate and the open meetings of the Courts ensured maximum potential for the grassroots’ grievances to be utilized by the center against the state bosses who had gathered such strength during the war.

The earliest Courts were established in the Ministries of Health, Trade, and Finance.¹⁹² It was a rather clever gambit, bound to ensure fullest utilization of the new concept and result in considerable momentum. Even disregarding the near-universal corruption inherent in the Soviet system, organizations as concerned with budgetary policy as Trade and Finance Ministries were bound to be involved in some sort of legitimate malfeasance—especially given the Monetary Reform scheduled for December 1947. And, of course, the Ministry of Health had already been implicated and brought low by the very inception of the new campaign visualized in the KR Affair. The closed letter was discussed throughout the country, with appropriate conclusions publicized by

¹⁹⁰ Kharkhordin, *The Collective*, 147.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁹² “Protokol resheniia Politburo TsK VKP(b) o Sudakh Chesti v Ministerstvakh SSSR i tsentralnykh vedomstvakh,” RGASPI (28 March 1947) f.17, op.3, d.1064, l.32.

the local party organizations. In that respect the Courts fit rather neatly into the taxonomy of the types established by Wood—specifically the niche of “political trials.”¹⁹³

Organized originally around the impetus of a very specific political event, they went on to become a way to showcase the latter-day wreckers within the ministerial apparatus.

The evolution of the campaign proved increasingly complicated, however, by the marshaled resistance of the state apparatus and by the nature of the system itself, which once again demonstrated the limits of any centralizing and Bolshevizing impulses, and the changed composition of the society and the party. By the end of the summer of 1947, the Department of Party Organs Review at the Central Committee had already reported several troubling development within the campaign. Although the Courts were duly and universally established, only a handful actually held the meetings and utilized them for singling out the malefactors.¹⁹⁴

Moreover, even in the organizations that bothered to hold the events, the discussion veered away from the review of local party and state bosses. Utilizing the anti-intelligentsia rhetoric that masked the process, the dignitaries maneuvered the discussions away from themselves and toward more generalized and safer targets.¹⁹⁵ In essence, the ministries were engaged in the time-honored tactic of loyal noncompliance—acknowledging the orders and obeying its forms, but slowing down the process and ignoring the spirit of the measures, rendering them practically useless. The task of

¹⁹³ Elizabeth A. Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 4.

¹⁹⁴ “O khode obsuzhdeniia v partorganizatsiakh zakrytogo pis'ma TsK VKP(b) o dele professorov Kliuevoi i Roskina,” RGASPI (26 August 1947) f.17, op.122, d.272, l.20–l.29.

¹⁹⁵ Esakov, *Delo KR*, 281.

strengthening party-political work and educating the workers of the ministries, set by the closed letter, was judged to be unmet at this time.¹⁹⁶

To regain the momentum, on 27 August 1947 the Orgburo resolved to call a number of ministers and their party secretaries to answer for the poor implementation of the orders of Central Committee in this regard. Duly supported by the Secretariat, the state, and party chiefs of power, metallurgy, and heavy industry were designated to appear before the Orgburo.¹⁹⁷ In other words, the ministries singled out as examples were primarily the elite of the new technocracy empowered throughout the war and reconstruction. Not coincidentally, they were also closely associated with Malenkov.

The attempt to bring the ministers to heel approached something close to a disaster for the Zhdanovites. The ministers, represented by Khrushchev, the head of the aviation industry, and Minister of Electrical Industry Kabanov, came as close to open defiance of the Central Committee as was possible within the structure of the system. What was worse, they were functionally supported by the heads of the party organizations of their ministries. The letter dispatched by Kabanov on 30 October 1947 (fifteen days after his personal appearance before the Orgburo) was a study in carefully calibrated insubordination. Rather than engage in admission of sins, he proceeded to lecture the departments of party organs review. Much of the missive was spent discussing the concrete, *real* achievements of the technocrats, the question of ideology skirted with an almost insulting dismissal—especially considering the recipients of the letter.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ “Protokol zasedaniia Orgburo TsK VKP(b) o khode obsuzhdeniia zakrytogo pis'ma TsK VKP(b) o dele professorov Kliuevoi i Roskina v partiinykh organizatsiakh,” RGASPI (27 August 1947) f.17, op.116, d.317, l.2.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ “The report on the measures taken by Ministry of Electric Industry, apart from measures ordered by the party organization of the Ministry in regards to the letter about the case of Kliuevoi i Roskina,” RGASPI (30 October 1947) f.17, op.122, d.269, l.29–l.33.

Having established the value and power of his constituency, Kabanov proceeded to instruct the Central Committee that inspiration rather than Courts of Honor would be the more valuable and useful way of achieving their goal, raising productivity and buttressing patriotism. In essence, Kabanov advised them to eschew the stick in favor of the carrot. And finally, in three sparse lines at the end of his letter ostensibly devoted to explaining his ministry's shortcomings in implementing the party's orders, Kabanov discussed the actual operation of the Court within his bailiwick. A similar series of reports was dispatched by other ministries as well, to a slew of party elite—including Zhdanov—and some of them bore the signatures of the party secretaries of the ministries.

In essence, this was an open challenge, a dare for Zhdanov to escalate. Not only were the ministries engaging in de facto opposition to his policy and orders, they also demonstrated that the need for such policies was greater than ever. By siding with their state apparatus bosses, the ministerial party workers supported every fear of the ideologues. The very dangers that they had been fighting in the military and the economy were finally displayed as the Communist watchdogs of the State sided with their putative charges. Yet at the moment when the Red faction seemed at its strongest, when the reason for their platform was more visible than ever, their fortunes began to diminish. Instead of the decision to increase pressure to its fullest and bring the full force of the repressive institutions to bear on the recalcitrant ministries, the Honor Courts initiative began to steadily lose momentum, soon followed by Zhdanov's own fortunes.

The result of the CC commission tasked with reviewing the results of the Orgburo meeting was equivocal at best, reflecting the changing trends. While castigating the ministries for “underestimating the political significance” of the closed letter, the

resolution primarily blamed them for poor political work with the intelligentsia.

Essentially the party allowed the ministries to redefine the focus of the campaign and divert it from themselves in order to eke out a measure of victory from the confrontation.

Humiliatingly, the Central Committee had to publicize the fact that the Courts in the ministries were still not being used. A month later, the Orgburo signed a rather shocking resolution not to hold any more reviews of the ministries whose heads had so recently clashed with the Central Committee. As the head of the Department Party Organs Review, N. Pegov (who was also the addressee of Kabanov's letter) reasoned that the defects present in those institutions were typical of the rest of the ministries and almost universally widespread. Thus it would be more productive to simply send out the Orgburo Resolution to every involved organization, rather than single out any of them for a specific focus.¹⁹⁹ By 1948, the Courts of Honor were reorganized by the Politburo, effectively dismantling the structure.

Conclusion

The reasons for the failure of the Courts were as multifaceted as their nature and goals. The universalist nature of the Zhdanovite campaigns (wherein each eventually grew to fully reflect his entire platform) was reflected in a number of ways throughout the odyssey of the Honor Courts. This was exemplified by the aborted attempt by Abakumov, the minister of state security, to turn the Honor Court to his own advantage within the ministry of state security. Stalin's reaction was swift.

¹⁹⁹ Esakov, *Delo KR*, 283.

Abakumov was censured for the unauthorized action and the Politburo resolution of 15 March 1948 “henceforth forbade ministries to organize Honor Courts without authorization from the Politburo.”²⁰⁰ The Courts were intended as the centralizing tool, answerable to and directed by the Kremlin against the incipient feudalism of the state apparatus, as well as the tool of taming the postwar intelligentsia, an attack against Malenkov and his technocrats, and the re-Bolshevizing influence on the state apparatus. And such a goal seemed logical within the context of the Zhdanovite platform, since all the aims were seen as logically related.

In that respect, another striking parallel emerges between the Courts and the agitation trials of the 1920s that illustrates the close relationship between the centralizing impulse and the tendency toward Bolshevization. As Wood pointed out, the goal of the trials had been to instruct the populace to act, as well as speak, Bolshevik, “to teach the audience to about politics and events from a particular, state-oriented point of view. It was the power of the state that had to be safeguarded. In their turn the agents of the state . . . would teach and guide the people, showing them the way of the revolution.”²⁰¹ The same characteristics defined the Courts as well. Even to speak of the twin aims of the state is to distort the issue. There was little if any separation between the centralizing and purifying agendas of the Zhdanovites, they were envisioned as mutually supporting aspects of the same program.

Yet, as the Abakumov episode illustrated, the Courts were quickly suffering from the same process of subornation as the party organizations within the ministries before them. In turn, this process echoes the futility of the MTS political departments, the

²⁰⁰ Gorlzi and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 61.

²⁰¹ Wood, *Performing Justice*, 84.

plenipotentiaries of the Committee for Party Control, of the Commissars and GlavPURKKA. Analogous to the experience of the above agencies, the Courts were beset by a host of problems, including the chaotic overlap of responsibilities with the existing organs tasked with similar responsibilities and lack of personnel.

Much as was the case throughout the Soviet system, the attempts by the Kremlin to re-infuse the structure with centralizing and re-ideologizing momentum had to resort to extra-systemic addendums to the system. These additions often represented recycled institutions of the past, intended to bypass their failed predecessors, yet inevitably succumbing to the same defects of the system. As the war decade began to draw to its conclusion, the party was dealing with the same fundamental contradictions that had beset Russia for generations.

The educational drive engineered by Zhdanov held the potential to provide the long-term solution to some of those dilemmas. Yet the inertia of the existing compromises presented a considerable danger as the party apparatchiks and the technocrats increasingly began to get used to the existing balance of power. Such danger had been resolved before, yet as the conflict over the Honor Courts demonstrated, the Kremlin was as yet unwilling to resort to the measures it employed at the end of the 1930s. Instead, the Zhdanovites overreached themselves, unable to truly destroy the opposition or even to substantially damage their positions within the institutions of power outside of the Party apparatus itself. They found their gains contested once again by rivals who now knew their strength.

By 1948 the attempted attack on the ministries was increasingly seen as a failed experiment that served only to underline the extent to which the power of the state, and

the managers had grown since the Terror. The bureaucratic siege of the ministries ended, at best, in a deadlock. From the perspective of the party, however, anything short of an outright triumph was a significant setback. By 1948, the Honor Courts were beginning to be phased out and, concurrently, Zhdanov's star was beginning to dim.

As Boterbloem pointed out, Zhdanov's fall from grace has long been connected to the contemporary debacle in the relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR. "But to date, neither in archival nor published sources has any corroborating evidence for it been found."²⁰² The program for dealing with Tito had been a concerted effort, involving most of the Soviet top leadership. Pointing to its failure as the cause for Zhdanov's fall from favor leaves open the question why he was singled out to take the blame. This suggests dissatisfaction by Stalin with the performance of Zhdanov in his other areas of responsibility. Therein the foreign affairs were, in fact, far from being the most significant.

Zhdanov's *raison d'être* had always been seen in his struggle against the ideological complacency. And there, despite monumental effort expended since his accession to power in 1944, the monumental task of re-Bolshevizing the Party (much less the society at large) still appeared incomplete. In fact, the episode with the Honor Courts (of which, as Krementsov demonstrated, Zhdanov *was* a key author) underlined the lack of progress made. Thus, contrary to the thesis put forth by Khlevniuk and Gorzlicki, it was Zhdanov's failure to successfully implement his own campaign that led to the latter's downfall and public humiliation.

The Vozhd's displeasure was quick in coming. In May, Stalin blamed Zhdanov for taking the wrong stance on the Lysenko matter. Trofim Lysenko was a product of the

²⁰² Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 326.

Stalinist scientific establishment and an enduring favorite of the Vozhd. The Lysenkoist school of genetics rejected the Mendelian concept of inheritability of the biological traits in favor of the more ideologically convenient neo-Lamarckian thesis. Lysenko, with his theory of biological characteristics being acquired and susceptible to change through manipulation of the environment, had dominated Soviet genetics since the 1930s.

Zhdanov was much too canny to attack him, but his son was less careful.²⁰³ And Stalin, already angered by Zhdanov's domestic failures as well as the ongoing crisis in Yugoslavia, blamed the father for the sins of the son.²⁰⁴

Moreover, to make the turn in policy clear, he added insult to injury by appointing Malenkov himself to investigate the flaws in the agit-prop apparatus, the main bastion of the Zhdanovites.²⁰⁵ Almost overnight, the gains made by the Reds had been put in jeopardy. The next blow followed shortly thereafter when Stalin pressed for reorganization of the recently unified apparatus of the Central Committee. Once again the Cadre Department lost its centralized monopoly, which now devolved onto the various departments of the Central Committee. An autonomous cadre division was to be attached to each.

After this fundamental reversal of Zhdanov's entire reformist thrust, a more personal misfortune was inevitable. The habitual process of steady demotion and loss of various prestigious posts continued inexorably until Zhdanov's death on 31 August 1948. Already in disarray and reeling, his faction lost all cohesion for a time. Yet even had he lived, it is unlikely that Zhdanov would have fared any better against the changing of the cycle than Malenkov had half a decade before.

²⁰³ Ibid., 327

²⁰⁴ Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 97.

²⁰⁵ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times*, 327.

Chapter 5: A More Perfect Union

Introduction

The ascension of the pragmatist faction to power at the end of the 1940s took place in an environment of uncertainty and flux among the Soviet leadership. The far-reaching demographic and social adaptations forced on the party by the war severely limited the decision making paradigm of the Kremlin. Thus the party was still home to a vast number of the new Communists who entered the ranks under relaxed standards but whose political, and in many cases general, education level, remained low.¹ Furthermore, the pressures of World War II had forced the center to devolve a considerable degree of autonomy to the provincial party leaders and the ministerial apparatus, in order to successfully mobilize the economic capacity of Soviet society. The danger of the party members being co-opted by the ethos of the economic (or military) institutions whose role received so much focus during the war also bedeviled the Kremlin.²

The ideologue faction led by A. A. Zhdanov had in the closing years of the war and the early postwar era been given a mandate to resolve the situation and to re-establish the prewar paradigm. Zhdanov's approach was based on strengthening the party control of the governmental structure through a policy of centralization driven primarily by a focus on the political education and ideological purification of the party ranks.³ It failed, stalled by the opposition of the governmental apparatus and the provincial party

¹ "Zapisi besedy," RGASPI (1947) f.17, op.125, d.516, 126–27.

² Jonathan Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat, 1939–1948* (New York, Lexington, 2008), 92.

³ John Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1961), 179.

organizations, who could not comply with the re-Bolshevizing agenda without compromising economic performance.

In the years of the postwar reconstruction, the Kremlin was not willing to countenance such a compromise. Consequently the party began the new decade with a humiliation of public reverses in its attempt to reimpose direct control on the ministerial apparatus and provincial party bosses. The failure of the Honor Courts was mirrored by the stalled initiative of curbing the autonomy of the periphery, and the educational programs for the new Communists continued to experience considerable difficulties.

The lackluster results of the ideologues in their attempt to reform the party-state led to Zhdanov's fall in 1948 and the subsequent rise of G. M. Malenkov and the pragmatist faction. Malenkov's return to power was contingent on the mandate to succeed where Zhdanov had failed and to reaffirm the political authority of the party as the central feature of the Soviet system. The priority of re-establishing control over the provincial party organizations and the state apparatus now took clear precedence over Zhdanov's insistence on tying it to ideological education. Malenkov's approach consisted of embracing rather than limiting the role of the party as the governing, managing institution, encouraging the ties between the governmental and the party apparatus. The Kremlin now would signal acquiescence and approval of interference by the party in the economic matters, in effect legitimizing the wartime compromise.

Yet the change in course required a fundamental shift in party identity, or rather the official recognition that such a shift had occurred. The impasse that had doomed Zhdanov's reforms faced Malenkov as well—given the continued priority of economic growth and limited human resources of qualified personnel, a choice had to be made

between Bolshevizing and the Technocratic agenda. The party simply lacked the capacity to pursue both simultaneously or to achieve the latter through attempting the former, as Zhdanov intended. By making economic growth an indelible and central priority of the party's responsibilities, the pragmatists would reorient the party from its role as the guardian of the ideological purity and toward a more conventional governmental structure. In essence, the problems of political control were thus solved by giving ground on the issue of co-optation, the process now sanctified by the Kremlin itself.

In their departure from the unsustainable methods of the ideologues' reform, the pragmatists proposed—through a combination of new repression encapsulated in the Leningrad Affair, and the wide-scale changes embodied in the legislation of the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952—a new balance between the technocrats and the party revivalists. This new equilibrium was based on the recognition of the vast inertia behind the power gathered by the ministerial apparatus, the strength of the white collar professionals within the Soviet society as well as the party itself, and the limitations of a party comprised of a multitude of new Communists.

The postwar consensus would offer a new elite contract, of sorts, between the party and the emerging pseudo-middle class represented by the technocrats within its own ranks, within the state structure, and within the society at large. Maintaining the authority of the party, the new weight and relevance of the technocrats within the elite would be recognized and legitimized. The thesis of the party's direct role as an economic manager—rather than a distanced political overseer of the latter—would no longer be in any real dispute, and as such, the identity of the Communists would shift dramatically toward that of the Expert rather than the Red. In return, the party maintained and

reaffirmed its centralized political authority and began moving beyond the struggle over its identity by substantially merging the governmental and party structures.

The paradigm created during Malenkov's tenure did not, of course, fully resolve the core contradictions of the Soviet party-state overnight and the cyclical pattern would continue to endure. Yet the changes and compromises instituted throughout the last five years of Stalin's reign moved the system off the dead center that made such patterns into inescapable cycles of destruction and futility. The new equilibrium substantially undermined the power of the ideologues (although it did not fully dissipate it) and ensured that the consequent cycles would be progressively weaker. Over the long term, this process would essentially hollow out the structure of the USSR, corroding its ideological foundations and contributing to its final collapse.

The New Face of the Party

The fundamental feature of the postwar party that had to be dealt with before any other reforms could be undertaken was the demographic changes that had occurred since 1941—specifically, the dramatic influx of the new Communists who now had to reintegrate into the civilian society. Malenkov's solution consisted of providing the new Communists with clear opportunities for advancement and increasing their general educational level. Their loyalty would thus be assured, even as they would become an integral part of the new party-state equilibrium, an asset rather than a hindrance.

The postwar era saw a wide-scale replacement of the wartime apparatchiks—many of whom were promoted due to lack of any other option—by the returning veterans who were perceived by the Kremlin as useful in breaking local power structures and more

professional than local cadres.⁴ The party statisticians continued to group the war Communists into a separate rubric, reflecting the perception of the Kremlin that they were a unique social stratum.⁵ The memoirs of the veterans themselves reflected an awareness of this quest by the party to ensure their loyalty through various venues. Many reciprocated just as the authorities expected. Thus, A. Cherniaev remembered his fellow veteran who was promoted to the post of a university party secretary. “Everyone of the faculty was afraid of his categorical, un-appealable verdicts, his secret influence, his seemingly limitless authority.”⁶

In response to the perceived preferential treatment by the center, there were attempts by the local entrenched interests to point out that many of the new Communists were themselves often lacking in prerequisite qualifications (both in professional as well as ideological qualities) and had to be expelled or censured shortly after their promotion.⁷ Writing to the Central Committee, the Kalinin *obkom* secretary defensively explained that while strides had been made, there were still considerable flaws in the situation: “Not all *gorkoms* and *raikoms* pay adequate attention to systematic, methodical preparation of the propagandists. Many of the latter do not attend the seminars; do not receive theoretical or methodological assistance from the party committees. Some of them give lessons of low ideological level, make errors and inexactness in elucidation of history and theory of Bolshevism.”⁸

⁴ “Spravka,” RGASPI (14 June 1946) f.17, op.122, d.189, l.149; A. B. Kononov, *Partiinaiia nomenklatura Sibiri v sisteme regionalnoi vlasti, 1945–1991* (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 2006), 22.

⁵ “Sostav partii,” RGANI (1951) f.77, op.1, d.7, l.81.

⁶ A. S. Cherniaev, *Moia zhizn' i moe vremia* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodne otnosheniia, 1995), 203.

⁷ “Stennogramma XI plenuma obkoma,” PAKO (26 March 1948) f.147, op.4, d.1095, l.1–1.5.

⁸ “Otchet o khode vypolneniia postanovleniia TsK VKP(b) ot 6 September 1950 O podgotovke k novomu uchebnomu godu v sisteme partiinogo prosveshcheniia,” PAKO (November 1951) F.147, op.5, d.39, l.31.

This assessment was confirmed by V. P. Astafiev, a veteran who would become a writer. According to him, the generation of the demobilized soldier-Communists was characterized primarily by their widespread ignorance of politics and history of the party.⁹ Those among them who quickly made their way into the party bureaucratic apparatus lacked the basic skills of bureaucratic maintenance, bookkeeping, or even stenography, seeing little wrong with leaving the keys to the party documents archives with the night watchman, for example.¹⁰

The complaints against the new Communists, however, were met with severe pushback by the higher organs. One Parfenov, a secretary of the Kalinin *obkom*'s agit-prop department serving as the mouthpiece of the center, made the situation clear when he lectured the local party organization: "In many of the *gorkom* and *raikom* party organizations there is a widespread opinion that anti-party behavior and the expulsions fall primarily in the military veterans among the new communists. These, it is thought, were admitted in the Red Army without having been vetted at all, but we—it is said—must now deal with them and correct the situation. This is a harmful and anti-Bolshevik theory which does not reflect the reality. This theory is used by some to try to cover own flaws in the work of party admissions and education of the young communists."¹¹

Since most of the veterans were utilized at the entry levels of the hierarchy, the center was assisted by some of the local party bosses who were not averse to co-opting the veterans used to a rigid, orderly, and disciplined power relationship. The party, however, also engaged in a systematic attempt to professionalize its own ranks through

⁹ V. Kondratiev, "Ne tol'ko o moem pokolenii..." *Kommunist* #7 (1990): 114–15.

¹⁰ "Spravka o sostoianii partiinogo khoziaistva, ucheta kommunistov i vydachi partiinykh dokumentov v nekotorykh raikomakh," PAKO (12 November 1951) f.147, op.5, d.199, l.131.

¹¹ "Stennogramma XI plenuma obkoma," PAKO (26 March 1948) f.147, op.4, d.1095, l.6.

new education policies. A number of plenums and party conferences of the era began stressing not political education, but the deficiencies of the apparatus in general education.¹²

In 1941, only 13.8 percent of the *nomenklatura* had middle or higher education. By the end of the decade the number reached 52 percent, but that was simply not adequate in the new system.¹³ In Saratov *oblast*, the *obkom* instructed the lower party organizations in the realities of the new system by ordering them to create a qualified reserve not simply for the party organs but for the soviet and economic organs, eliminating the high turnover inherent in the system by raising the educational level of the *nomenklatura*.¹⁴ N. V Bezriadin, the head of the Novosibirsk *obkom*, vividly remembered the ever-increasing chorus ordering him to take greater care of the new Communists, especially those promoted into the party-apparatus positions. “New tasks demands more smarts. So help them, don’t hasten to yell at them.”¹⁵

With the help of the statewide educational reforms undertaken in 1948, the educational level of the party workers rose considerably, and by 1950 all *gorkom* secretaries had higher education and the situation was rapidly improving among the *raikom* workers as well. By 1952 the number of secretaries of the regional party committees with higher education rose from 47 percent to 73 percent.¹⁶

Thus, by the time of the Nineteenth Party Congress, much of the provincial party apparatus could confidently claim that the command of the Kremlin to “arm all party

¹² Konovalov, *Partiinaia nomenklatura*, 34.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A. G. Fedianin, *Podgotovka partiinykh kadrov v poslevoennyi period, 1946–1955* (Saratov: Izdatelstvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1974), 19.

¹⁵ N. V. Bezriadin, *Ni chasu otdykha, ni chasu bez tseli* (Novosibirsk: GP Novosibirskii Poligrafkombinat, 2002), 34.

¹⁶ Fedianin, *Podgotovka partiinykh*, 22, 25.

members not simply with the Marxist-Leninist theory but with sure command of the political economy” was being fully fulfilled.¹⁷ Much of the party educational system painstakingly established by Zhdanov was suborned as well, as the pressures of the era and the lack of qualified teachers of Marxism-Leninism combined. As a result, the party schools evolved into an institution dominated by professional educators partially (if at all) qualified to instruct in purely ideological matters.¹⁸

The professional propagandists themselves were still often extremely poorly educated in political discourse and unable to answer basic questions on the material they were tasked with presenting.¹⁹ The problem stemmed from the same source—they too were often drawn from the new generation of Communists and had been exposed to only a sporadic indoctrination, frequently in “anti-Bolshevik” behavior, without consciously realizing their errors. Participation in the religious rituals was thus an increasing problem.²⁰ I. B. Maklevskii, for example, a party member since 1942, celebrated a traditional Jewish wedding. When questioned, he explained that “I did not pay much attention to it, simply wanted to support general custom of my people.” He went on to argue that in his understanding of the “current views of the Soviet state and party toward the Church, I don’t think I seriously breached party discipline.”²¹

Similarly, Lt. Colonel N. P. Zhuchkov, a chief of staff of a rifle regiment and a party member since 1943, also celebrated the wedding of his daughter in style. Wearing

¹⁷ Ibid., 68–69.

¹⁸ A. A. Shchebliakov, “Deiatelnost’ kommunisticheskoi partii po vospitaniuu partiinykh kadrov v pervye poslevoennye gody,” in *Opyt perestroiki raboty partii v poslevoennyi period*, ed. L. V. Shirikov (Moscow: Akademia obschestvennykh nauk pri TsK KPSS, 1989), 56.

¹⁹ “Spravka o nachale uchebnogo goda v Vyshnevolotskoi gorodskoi partiinoi organizatsii,” PAKO (7 October 1952) f.147, op.5, d.534, l.61–l.62.

²⁰ “Informatsiia o sobliudenii religioznykh obriadov nekotorymi kommunistami,” PAKO (25 April 1949) f.147, op.4, d.1543, l.84.

²¹ “Otchet o rabote partkollegii Komissii Partiinogo Kontroliia pri TsK VKP(b) za iun’ 1939- Dekabr’ 1951,” RGANI (1952) f.6, op.6, d.6, l.34.

his parade uniform, he headed the procession all the way to the local church, where he proceeded to host a party for the priests and the church choir. His explanation echoed that of Maklevskii: “Now the Soviet power no longer despises the Church. Even generals now go to the Church to wed.”²²

Such interpretations of the party line missed the mark, of course. As Elena Zubkova demonstrated, the war-induced “accommodating policy toward religion was a forced and transitory measure that would yield after the war to the former policy.”²³ In that respect, the ideologues and the pragmatists also marched step in step. The postwar policies steadily limited the newfound sphere of clerical activity, closed churches, and condemned the Council of the Orthodox Affairs. Yet the center still lacked the fundamental tools necessary to extend that work deep into the party ranks, much less the population as a whole, and had to limit itself to the traditional tools of resolutions and pronouncements, thinly supported by actual implementation.

Meanwhile, as the general education levels rose, party education continued to suffer from a shortage of supplies and a chronic lack of attendance due to the students’ priorities, which held that the choice between going to a lecture and making sure the harvest was collected was no choice at all.²⁴ While it is arguable that the events in the regions were a function of local pressures—the case made by Shepilov in his report to the Central Committee²⁵—such a thesis was belied by the signals coming from the center.

²² Ibid., 35.

²³ Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 73.

²⁴ “O podgotovke k novomu uchebnomu godu v sisteme partiinogo prosveshcheniia,” PAKO (November 1951) f.147, op.5, d.39, l.31.

²⁵ “Informatsiia o novom uchebnom gode v sisteme partiinogo prosveshcheniia,” RGASPI (7 January 1949) f.17, op.132, d.103, l.1–l.12.

The articles in *Pravda*, for example, spoke of the flaws in cadre selection that led to the promotion of Communists lacking “practical skills.”²⁶ The same press also praised the recent developments that promoted Communists with adequate “general as well as political education.” The order of those words alone spoke volumes to the practiced readers of the official rhetoric. The concurrent change of subject matter in the party schools was also hard to explain as a local initiative.

Although it would have been possible for the regional party bosses to subtly influence the composition of the teaching staffs in the local party schools, the curriculum came directly from the top. By the start of the new decade it reflected an increasingly pragmatic outlook of the party, which was once again stretching its influence to cover most of the sociopolitical spectrum. Stalin’s new economic textbooks, along with his treatise on Marxism and linguistics, formed the backbone of the new curriculum.²⁷

The same message was driven home through the more official channels as well. A series of Central Committee resolutions focused party members’ attention on improving the qualitative performance of local industry.²⁸ The instructions were detailed enough to make sure that the local party leadership understood that they were now responsible for improving every aspect of the local economy, from electrical power to the timely supply of raw materials to industry and strengthening the latter’s financial discipline.²⁹

Throughout the country, the young leaders of the local party committees were encouraged by the highest organs to cooperate with their industrial and state counterparts,

²⁶ *Pravda*, 19 December 1952, 2.

²⁷ Shchebliakov, “Deiatelnost’ kommunisticheskoi partii,” 57.

²⁸ N.V. Chertverkov “Partiinye organizatsii v bor’be za povyshenie rentabelnosti predpriatii tezheloi promyshlennosti” in L. V. Shirikov, ed., *Deiatelnost’ KPSS v pervye gody posle Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow: Akademia Obshestvennykh Nauk pri TsK KPSS, 1978), 71.

²⁹ *KPSS v resoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s’yezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK (Volume 6)* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), 277–80.

meet with them in order to educate themselves in the intricacies of the economic administration, and spread that knowledge throughout the party apparatus.³⁰ Thus, V. Kondratiev in his semi-autobiographical novel *Krasnye Vorota*, has one of his characters, a veteran, excoriate another with a speech that might have come from the pages of *Pravda*. “You were at the front as well and should know better! The country is in ruins, monumental work has to be done to reconstruct it. This is no time for idle talk.”³¹

The regional party organizations were now encouraged to hold the previously condemned “combined meetings” of economic and party workers aimed at improving industrial performance.³² The practice of detaching the party workers to work on important economic enterprises, to be rewarded with later promotion within the party apparatus, institutionalized the practice of the plenipotentiaries so derided by the ideologues.³³

The new focus on professionalization in administrative and economic matters, rather than ideological expertise, led logically to what V. P. Mokhov referred to as the “party-state symbiosis.”³⁴ Moreover, the long-term trend of the confluence of the nominally separate parts of the system was now being openly sanctified by the Kremlin. The same symbiosis would be promoted by Stalin with his new foray into economic theory and would be finally enshrined as the platform of the new party line during the Nineteenth Party Congress.

³⁰ Shchebliakov, “Deiatel’nost’ kommunisticheskoi partii,” 59–60.

³¹ V. Kondratiev, *Krasnye Vorota* (Moscow: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1988), 265.

³² Chertverkov, “Partiinye organizatsii,” 73.

³³ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁴ V. P. Mokhov, *Evolutsia regionalnoi-politicheskoi elity Rossii, 1950–1990* (Perm: Permskii Gosudarstvennyi Tekhnicheskii Universitet, 1998), 35.

There appeared little that Zhdanov's faction could do to reverse the turn of the party toward technocracy. Reminiscing about the postwar era, Valentin Varenikov, a military hero and an ardent Bolshevik, contrasted in his memoirs the environment created by Malenkov—which he neither understood nor condoned—with his recollection of the purer time of the war. With considerable relish, he related a popular anecdote of a meeting between Stalin and a factory director. Varenikov wrote of Stalin coldly informing the manager that if the plan (for production of binoculars) was not fulfilled, he would be held personally responsible. “The director, clearly understanding what Stalin meant took off from the Kremlin straight to his factory and there practically fell to his knees before his colleagues. ‘Brothers, help!’”³⁵

In a month, Varenikov gloated, the plan was fulfilled and Stalin—the man of the era as he refers to him—maintained this by judicious threats to the ministerial and state bureaucrats. That was the only way to deal with the bureaucrats, Varenikov argued implicitly, and the party should have never relaxed its control over them. The power and prestige gathered by these selfsame people after the war puzzled and angered him. And although his conception of the dynamic during the war differed sharply with reality, his rage was very real. Furthermore, as V. Molotov would confirm in interviews later, Varenikov was hardly alone in that attitude.³⁶ Yet in the wake of their recent fall from power, the ideologues could do little but fume.

Despite the seeming impotence of their rivals, however, Malenkov and his allies resolved on a course that would render the opposition even more powerless. The retreat of the ideologues from their position of dominance began even before Zhdanov's death,

³⁵ V. I. Varenikov, *Nepovtorimoe* (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel', 2001), 117–18

³⁶ Felix Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym. Iz dnevnika F. Chueva* (Moscow: Terra, 1991), 337.

and they thus were given ample warning of the changing winds. In the traditional Soviet manner, the ideologues' leader and a number of his aides and allies began to experience career troubles throughout 1948. Zhdanov himself died while on a hiatus that was quickly beginning to take on the uncomfortable sheen of permanency. Still, the main and surprisingly vicious blow against the Zhdanovites came in 1949, in the course of what would become known as the Leningrad Affair.

The Leningrad Affair

Some scholars explain the fury with which the Leningrad apparatus (and later other cliques of the party reformers) was purged by the involvement of Lavrentii Beria.³⁷ Ironically for the head of the internal security structure, Beria aligned himself with the technocrats for much of the war and postwar period. He was given the immense responsibility of maintaining the steady and increasing production of armaments and he cooperated closely with Malenkov in the resolution of various issues of the industrial policy—especially those touching on the administration of the aviation industry.

By the end of the war, having been entrusted with the development of the atomic bomb, Beria also had the opportunity to work within the scientific establishment of the Soviet Union. Such a career made certain demands, which echoed the compromises that were being made throughout the system. Cooperation between the party and the state was a necessary precondition, which inevitably created a framework of a rivalry between Beria and Zhdanov. As the ideologues returned to power, they did not hesitate to sideline and weaken Beria to the best of their ability. Thus he was powerless to prevent the growth of party oversight over the internal security services. “Indeed, in 1947 this

³⁷ William O. McCagg, *Stalin Embattled, 1943–1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 85.

function fell into the hands of A. A. Kuznetsov, one of Zhdanov's principal associates who had been prominent in Leningrad during the war."³⁸

The Leningrad Affair started with a seemingly mundane event: an anonymous letter received by the Central Committee in January of 1949. The nameless well-wisher reported a number of discrepancies during the Leningrad regional party conferences of the previous month.³⁹ The purview of the investigation was given over to Malenkov and Beria. Neither man could claim responsibility for such affairs, not even Beria whose internal security portfolio had been recently stripped away, yet they took charge of the process with dispatch. The review commission was speedily organized and determined that the letter was accurate. The leaders of the Leningrad party organization (including F. F. Kuznetsov) were convicted of having engaged in falsification of voting results. Soon afterward, the review widened into an investigation of the Leningrad Trade Fair.⁴⁰

Once again, with notable expeditiousness the investigation arrived at a conclusion and the organizers of the Fair were unmasked as having embezzled state funds. More importantly, the widening of the case linked the party workers of Leningrad to the other Zhdanovites—specifically his appointees within the state apparatus. Nikolai Voznesenskii was, by far, the most famous of Zhdanov's acolytes. As the latter regained his position of power in 1943–1944, Voznesenskii had quickly resumed his collaboration with him—and in 1947 he was once again promoted, taking his place among the full members of the Politburo.

As the reign of the ideologues continued, Voznesenskii steadily enlarged his empire, primarily through increasing the power and oversight of Gosplan at the expense

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ V. E. Demidov and V. A. Kutuzov, *Leningradskoe delo* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1990), 60–61.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

of various other state institutions.⁴¹ In fact, Hahn went as far as to argue that “Voznesenskii appears to have used his power to establish himself as the undisputed authority in the field of economics, purging all competing authorities. He took control over the economic institutes and used his book to discredit the leading economists, notably Varga, and to break up the establishment that dominated economic science.”⁴²

Yet as the 1949 investigation of the Leningrad case grew, it quickly created a parallel Gosplan Affair that successfully targeted and destroyed the very man who less than a year prior was seen as the economic guru of the regime. The alternative theories for his downfall range from Beria’s hostility fed by the perennial clashes with the leader of Gosplan over resource allocation, to—as Michael Parrish proposed—Stalin’s sudden animosity due to Voznesenskii’s insufficient praise for him in his latest book.⁴³ Yet it is often overlooked that Voznesenski had been sounded out in 1948 by P. S. Popkov. The head of Leningrad’s *ispolkom* “approached him with a request that he act as a ‘patron’ to Leningrad.”⁴⁴

Voznesenskii was seen by the now leaderless ideologues as a potential heir to the departed leader. Presumably the rival faction shared this assessment, which accounts for the necessity to decapitate not simply the party organization of Leningrad but to make sure that Voznesenskii along with M. I. Rodionov—another appointee of Zhdanov who was ensconced as a chairman of the Soviet of Ministers of the RSFSR after A. N. Kosygin’s demotion in 1946—were removed as potential threats.

⁴¹ Werner G. Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946–1953* (London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 130.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴³ Michael Parrish, *The Lesser Terror: Soviet State Security* (London: Praeger, 1996), 216.

⁴⁴ Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, eds., *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 81.

Still questions remain about the unexpectedly vicious and bloody fate of the presumed leaders of Zhdanov's faction, and many of their underlings. Notably the interfactional struggle of the immediate postwar years lacked the same sort of cataclysmic finality that characterized the Terror and were replicated in miniature as the Leningrad and Gosplan Affairs unfolded. Zhukov was, for example, simply hounded into a backwater command, Beria was pushed out of his power base, and Malenkov was stripped of many of his party posts and forced into a Tashkent exile for a time.

The qualitative difference in approach to the struggle between two factions was clear within months of the announcement of the trial of the Leningrad party leaders. Shockingly, the death penalty was once again legalized. The speed with which the law was adopted and the entire confluence of events left few other explanations but the fact that the "final measure" was being brought back specifically in order to utilize it against the Zhdanovite clique. The irregularities did not stop there. The convicted "traitors" were not allowed even the formality of appealing to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Immediately after the reading of the verdict, six of the convicted were executed. They were not alone—altogether upwards of two thousand members of the Leningrad apparatus would face prison terms and executions.⁴⁵

Certainly, the tendency toward fatal resolutions of interparty rivalries had been a feature of Soviet politics since the 1920s, interrupted only by the war. Under this model, the Leningrad Affair was the resumption of a normal process. Certainly such an idea would fit well with the totalitarian school of Soviet historiography, yet it is belied both by the immediate post-war period's lack of a revival of the old party tradition of internecine

⁴⁵ Blair A. Ruble, "The Leningrad Affair and the Provincialization of Leningrad," *Russian Review*, 42, no. 3 (1983): 315.

strife concluding in executing squads and the way such practices never resumed after the conclusion of the Leningrad Affair. In fact, “the two most obvious characteristics of the post-Stalin regime have been the absence of widescale overt terror and a sharing of power among components of the system.”⁴⁶

Such restraint is especially puzzling, considering that many of the same processes were coalescing by the end of 1940s. Much as was the case on the eve of the Great Purges, the center’s campaign to re-Bolshevize the party, to limit the influence of the pragmatists, to weaken the power of the regional party magnates, and to re-establish the separation between the party and the state was running into increasingly effective resistance. Certainly the situation appeared ripe for one of the cataclysmic responses that were the prerogative of the State and exercised as the measure of the last resort—whether under Grozny with *oprichnina*, or under Stalin with the Terror. And yet that final step was not taken. In fact the Leningrad Affair was the last such operation.

The explanation of this peculiar episode is to be found in the relative strengths of the two factions. Despite the resurgence of the ideologues at the end of the war and the speed with which they reclaimed control, the power of the revivalists and the pragmatists was no longer equal. The impetus given by the exigencies of war to the latter tilted the balance noticeably in their favor. Furthermore the nature of the Cold War, with its focus on economic competition as well as the pressure of the reconstruction, gave further leverage to the managers and their allies within the party.

In response to these processes, the party itself was steadily becoming a utilitarian institution primarily concerned with accomplishing pragmatic goals. The decrees from

⁴⁶ Judson Mitchell, *Getting to the Top in the USSR: Cyclical Patterns in the Leadership Succession Process* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 1.

the center increasingly called on the provincial apparatus to interfere more and deeper into the economic sphere, to provide “incisive leadership to industrial enterprises.”⁴⁷ This inevitably came at the expense of the ideologues’ platform. Rather aptly named the “party revivalists” by McCagg, this faction sought to return the party to its core mission of educating and indoctrinating, charged with transforming society itself through molding of new ideologically prepared generations. In the postwar world, however, the priorities made that focus anachronistic, as even within the party itself, economic considerations steadily began to trump those of ideology.

The man exemplifying a typical new Communist in most respects was one Pinkin, used as a visual aide of the defects in the postwar structure by the Kalinin party organization. A veteran of the war, twice awarded for courage, he entered the party in 1944 and returned home in 1946. Atypically, he came back to the village rather than—like most veterans—migrating to an urban center. Once home he entered the party organization of the local *kolkhoz*, becoming an active participant. Eventually, however, distracted by the need to support his family, he stopped attending the meetings and paying the party fees. Criticizing the local *raikom* for the unceremonious expulsion of Pinkin, the recommendation of their superiors was for the party organizations to concentrate on understanding the material and everyday needs of the party members and helping to resolve them.⁴⁸

Similarly, A. Z. Chulkov wrote in his memoirs that the overriding concern of the veterans by this time was primarily economic. “Before many of us stood the question of

⁴⁷ “Informatsiia o provedenii otchetno-vybornykh konferentsii v raionakh oblasti,” PAKO (7 February 1949), f.147, op.4, d.1543, l.25–l.26.

⁴⁸ “Spravka o prichinakh otryva ot del’nykh kommunistov ot partiinykh organizatsii i o nedostatkakh v rassmotrenii personalnykh del kommunistov v Kalininskoi oblasti,” PAKO (19 January 1951) f.147, op.5, d.199, l.31.

acquiring a second job since the allotted stipend fell short by 15-20%. Some worked as stevedores, some sold cigarettes near the subway.”⁴⁹ The party, as Pinkin’s case indicated, was well aware of the situation and the moods and made it its priority to satisfy the material needs of its members and the population.

The corollary of this shift meant that the Soviet Union simply could not afford to inflict more casualties on its service elite, taking the ultimate recourse of the central power out of the hands of the ideologues. The economic situation was precarious already. Eliminating any more of the managerial caste was out of the question. Such restraint, however, presented a much less pressing concern for the pragmatists in their offensive against the ideologues. By their very nature, the party revivalist faction had considerably fewer ties to the technical and managerial caste and offenses against them could be inherently limited primarily to the party apparatchiks. From the purely utilitarian perspective of the pragmatists’ faction, which was now clearly in command of events, the ideological experts were also much less critical to the stability of the state.

Much like the Terror, the process was hardly neat and clearly delineated—Voznesenskii and Rodionov both, for example, were clearly of the managerial class themselves. Yet, despite inevitable exceptions, it is adherence to a particular political platform that provides a touchstone for the demise of a number of disparate members of the apparatus throughout the last years of the war decade and the beginning of the next. The repression, after all, did not limit itself to the leadership of Gosplan and the *nomenklatura* of Leningrad. Almost immediately, it was directed against the Ukrainian apparatus as well and the secretary of the Crimean *obkom* would be among the unlucky elite judged worthy of the death penalty. In fact, almost the entire belt of the territory that

⁴⁹ A. Z. Chulkov, *O tovarishchakh na fronte i posle voyny* (Moscow: Olita, 2005), 247.

had suffered the German occupation was subject to the focus of the assault. The purge of the party revivalists was thorough and widespread. Yet it was also more controlled and discriminating than the Terror.

Such a distinction is grotesquely banal given the scale of the latter, yet is very real nonetheless. While the ranks of the Leningrad party organization were decimated, the staff of Gosplan was targeted with much less severity. To an extent, this was a function of the relative worth placed on the expertise of both organizations. Yet the casualties among the Ukrainian Bolsheviks were also markedly fewer compared with their Leningrad counterparts.

The fact that the purge, apart from Leningrad, targeted primarily the liberated areas is also notable. The eastern regions of the USSR became the industrial and economic arsenal of the country during the war. There, the connection between the managers and the pragmatist party apparatchiks was strongest, due to the pressure to deliver results. It was also these areas that escaped the Leningrad Affair practically unscathed. Instead the blows fell on the newly freed regions—where the first priority had been given to re-establishing the Communist structure—the areas that attracted the attention and presence of many among the ideologues.

Thus, the previously mentioned unfortunate leader of Crimea—N. V. Solov'ev—had been a member of Zhdanov's coterie in Leningrad from 1938 to 1946, before being sent to take Crimea in hand.⁵⁰ Yet even Benjamin Tromley, who pointed to the Crimean episode of the Affair as particularly vicious, conceded that only a dozen or so party officials were swept up in the purges. (Five of them would be executed, however, which

⁵⁰ Parrish, *The Lesser Terror*, 216.

certainly deserves the sobriquet of viciousness bestowed by the author.)⁵¹ Geoffrey Roberts went farther, putting the bloodshed of the Leningrad Affair in the wider context of the postwar processes and finding a clear trend “towards a significant decline in arrests for alleged counter-revolutionary crimes. . . . Despite the Leningrad JAFC (Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee) and Doctor Affairs, the postwar Soviet regime was in transition from a system based on purges and terror.”⁵²

Thus, generally, even as the country was scoured of their rivals, the pragmatists exercised a measure of restraint. The impression from the affected victims of the purges was very different, of course. A contemporary of the events, D. A. Bakaev, who worked as the secretary of Penza *gorkom*, referred in his memoirs to the 1949 purge of the local apparatus as “St. Bartholomew’s Night” as a reference to a medieval French massacre.⁵³ Bakaev—a commended graduate of Zhdanov’s political education system—accused the “corrupted careerists” among the new, wartime Communists of perpetrating the new Terror against the true Bolsheviks.⁵⁴

The victims were, of course real, and so was their suffering. Yet once the fury of the initial attack on the root of the opposition in Leningrad had abated, the rest of the USSR was treated with relative discretion, with only certain, selected targets being picked for punishment. Unlike the Terror, this campaign was not allowed to gather its own inertia and get out of control. The scarcity of human resources once again dictated the policy.

⁵¹ Benjamin Tromley, “The Leningrad Affair and the Soviet Patronage Politics, 1949–1950,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 5 (Jul., 2004): 719.

⁵² Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin’s Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), 343.

⁵³ D. A. Bakaev, “*Varfolomeevskaia noch*” v Penze (Penza, 2001), 29.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11, 13.

One aspect of the Affair that has been heretofore conspicuously absent from the discussion is Stalin and his role and responsibility for the subsequent Terror-in-miniature. The available sources indicate that the creation of the case proceeded “with Stalin’s apparent sanction, or perhaps even at his direction.”⁵⁵ The facts of the case demonstrate convincingly that Stalin was fully aware of the process, presented with the lists of the accused, and approved the denial of defense counsel along with other restrictions.⁵⁶ He, thus, gave, at the very least, tacit approval to the measures being enacted against the Leningrad coterie and their allies. Furthermore, the very position of Voznesenskii as his perceived protégé required that Stalin unambiguously remove his protection for the former’s downfall to occur.

Geoffrey Roberts spoke for a wide consensus among the scholars when he placed the ultimate responsibility for the purge on Stalin’s shoulders. Roberts too, however, struggled with arriving at “precise motives for the purge,” describing them as murky. Much like Tromley and other scholars of the Soviet elites, Roberts ascribed it to the fact that Stalin was “genuinely annoyed with the independence shown by the Leningrad leaders and punished them as an example to other party leaders who might be tempted into unauthorized actions.”⁵⁷

Whether Stalin himself was the primary engine for the destruction of the Leningrad organization, or whether he was manipulated or overwhelmingly influenced by the advice of Beria and Malenkov, is less material to the discussion than the fact that he did give his approval to the attack. In fact, even that issue is overshadowed by the significance of the nature of the process, the legal guise adopted by the purges, and the

⁵⁵ Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin’s First Lieutenant* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 151.

⁵⁶ Parrish, *The Lesser Terror*, 217.

⁵⁷ Roberts, *Stalin’s Wars*, 337.

political messages that were produced out of the debris left by the Affair's culmination. As the repercussions of the case continued to unfold, it became increasingly clear that the Kremlin utilized the opportunity provided by the Affair in order to decouple the goal of re-Bolshevizing the party from the more secular political concerns. As Stalin proclaimed only a year later: "Marxism does not recognize immutable conclusions and formulas obligatory for all epochs and periods. Marxism is the enemy of every kind of dogmatism."⁵⁸

The purges that followed the Affair thus offer an invaluable microcosm of the internal balance of the regime and its goals, a graphic illustration of the emerging consensus as it was created on the cusp of the end of the old, and the beginning of the new, cycle. Even as it was utilized to decapitate and cripple the ideologue faction, the Affair also demonstrated the high degree of rather incongruous continuity in policymaking between the very factions that were engaged in often fatal competition throughout the last year of the 1940s. The examination of materials from the start of the Affair until the ascendance of Khrushchev (and concurrent victory of the ideologues, fragile although it would be) illustrates that apart from ambition and vicious disagreement on the scope that ideology should occupy in the schema of the Soviet apparatus, much more united the Reds and the Experts than divided them. These similarities between the two factions would prove integral in the formation of the new paradigm.

⁵⁸ *Bolshevik*, no. 14, (1950), 4.

Party Revivalists and Party Revisionist: Enmities and Continuities

The continuity between the ideologues and the pragmatists can be ascribed to the idea of “speaking Bolshevik” so ably discussed by Stephen Kotkin.⁵⁹ Yet apart from the common political language and system of indoctrination that inculcated a shared matrix of verbal and symbolic terminology and worldview, the new leadership engaged in a number of political initiatives that were direct elaborations on the initiatives of their predecessors. The germination of that tendency was visible at the very outset of the attack on the ideologues—the letter that began the purge utilized the goal of interparty democracy as the wedge issue. That vehicle would remain in use, forming a large portion of the platform presented at the Nineteenth Congress.⁶⁰

Nor was that an aberration or an exception. As the investigation into the Leningrad and Gosplan affairs unfolded, the pragmatists would continue to turn the very tools perfected by the party revivalists against them. Thus the accusations of corruption soon followed. Shortly thereafter, as the purge was widened beyond Leningrad, the rhetoric decrying the tendency toward familial grouping, formation of the patron-clientele networks, and repression of criticism was also brought to bear.⁶¹

The strategy was not surprising—the usage of such tools against interparty rivals had a long and honorable pedigree. As Alexei Kojevnikov argued, “communists themselves, in public and in private, viewed interparty democracy as a mechanism for making officials accountable to the party masses and as the main tool in the struggle of

⁵⁹ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 200–1

⁶⁰ “Spravka o sostoianii organizatsionno-partiinoi raboty v Kalininskoi oblasti,” PAKO (September 1953) f.147, op.5, d.770, l.168.

⁶¹ “O rabote Chitinskogo obkoma partii,” RGASPI (25 August 1950) f.17, op.116, d.526, l.3-l.6.

against bureaucratism and corruption in the party apparatus.”⁶² While Sheila Fitzpatrick and J. Arch Getty (and the revisionist school in general) famously saw these institutions as primarily the function of grassroots control,⁶³ Kojevnikov was less convinced.

“Although openly preferring administrative centralization and hierarchical discipline as the organizing principles of social life, they (the communists) were also aware that local bosses were in the position to abuse their power and to prevent higher authorities from receiving objective reports about local conditions. The Soviet leadership tried to establish a system of counterbalances designed to provide feedback as well as to define the situation and limits within which the grassroots control of the apparatus was possible.”⁶⁴ Thus, in effect, interparty democracy served as simply another institution of hierarchical centralization. While not as empty of voluntarism and purely manipulative institute of control as Merle Fainsod argued,⁶⁵ it was still a vehicle structured for the use of the Kremlin in its search to extend central control into the provinces and state departments. And it was a tactic useful and available to both ideologues and pragmatists.

The utilization of these tools also illustrates a factor often overlooked by the existing scholarship—namely that, in many ways, both factions were groping toward the same goals. Thus, like Zhdanov, Malenkov was very interested in revitalizing the center’s authority over the provinces, limiting the tendency toward autonomous cocooning among the regional party bosses. As early as 11 July 1949, the Central Committee, borrowing yet another maneuver from Zhdanov, passed a resolution dispatching a group of

⁶² Alexei B. Kojevnikov, *Stalin’s Great Science: The Times and Adventures of Soviet Physicists* (Athens: Imperial College Press, 2004), 197.

⁶³ J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 97–98, 141–42.

⁶⁴ Kojevnikov, *Stalin’s Great Science*, 197.

⁶⁵ Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 210–11.

apparatchiks of the Central Committee to “assist” the regional party and soviet organizations in their political and economic work.⁶⁶ Now, however, the emissaries from the center were tasked with providing purely practical help—making sure of the harvests and industrial plans, rather than ideological purity.

Once again, Malenkov was echoing his rival and predecessor in the quest for central control and independent channels of information. Yet, unlike Zhdanov, he was utilizing economic, rather than directly political, levers. That framework made it much harder for the provincial bosses to resist. Unlike Zhdanov, however, the pragmatists saw no inherent reason to combine these initiatives with the drive for ideological purification.⁶⁷

Malenkov signaled the change in course with a purge of the journal *Bolshevik*. Condemning wholesale the editorial slate, the Central Committee clarified the new party line. The journal was judged to be “out of touch with the practical work of building socialism. The magazine’s editors do not pose and do not treat topical questions of Marxist-Leninist theory . . . they limit themselves to setting forth in the magazine the most general and long-accepted theses. . . . The editors do not generalize the experience of the party’s struggle for the restoration and continued development of the economy.”⁶⁸

Thus, at the very outset of the campaign, the changed focus of the party, away from ideological education and now unambiguously aimed toward concrete economic results, was made clear. It was followed, however, by criticism of party workers who cocooned themselves for lacking a steady and firm connection to party life and creating

⁶⁶ *KPSS v resoliutsiakh i resheniiakh s'yezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK (Volume 6)* (Moscow: Politozdat, 1971), 291.

⁶⁷ “O komandirovanii v mestnye partiinye organizatsii rabotnikov apparata TsK VKP(b), ministerstv i vedomstv dlia okazaniia pomoshchi v ikh rabote,” RGASPI (7 May 1951) f.17, op.116, d.583, l.73

⁶⁸ “O zhurnale Bolshevik,” RGASPI (13 July 1949) f.17, op.3, d.1077, l.36–l.37.

an elitist coterie that ran the magazine in isolation from the input of the party collective.⁶⁹ Malenkov clearly intended to continue utilizing the vehicle of interparty democracy as a tool to centralize the power structure he inherited. Thus, even as the tools changed, the goal of maintaining political control remained the same.

The same message was sent yet again in the case of the leader of Moscow's party apparatus. G. M. Popov was, as he himself bragged in his memoirs, an undisputed boss of the capital city, reaching the combined post of secretary of Moscow *gorkom*, *obkom*, and the chairman of the capital's executive committee (*ispolkom*) as well.⁷⁰ With the help of Kuznetsov, he was also made a member of Orgburo and a member of the Central Committee. Yet it was his almost absolute power within the confines of the local city and regional government that made him a perfect target. Popov exemplified the ability of the local party chiefs to build their own insulated power structures with few if any countervailing influences. Matters were made worse by the arrogance of Popov himself, which was not necessarily atypical among his peers. Thus he made a convenient target, exemplifying the lack of tolerance that would be extended by Malenkov to the variety of "little Stalins" across the country.

Shortly after Zhdanov's death, and apparently out of tune with the changing political situation, Popov peremptorily demanded subordination of the ministers to himself. He justified the order for obedience with the unimpeachable logic that as the ministers were first and foremost members of the party—specifically of the Moscow party organization—they thus owed their obedience to the leader of the city's apparatus.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ E. V. Taranov, "*Partiinyi guvernator*" *Moskvy: Georgii Popov* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo glavarkhiva Moskvy, 2004), 133.

Malenkov swiftly struck, supported by the complaints from the ministers, who notified Stalin that Popov constantly interfered in their work.⁷¹

The downfall of Moscow's chief presented a perfect opportunity to elucidate the goals of the new administration. The state, in the face of the ministerial apparatus, was supported against the power grab of a local party chief. In fact, that was handled by Stalin personally and publically, in a letter to Malenkov. His indignant rage at Popov's action toward the ministers verged on flagrantly theatrical.⁷²

The charges of suppressing criticism, failing to provide a nurturing environment for self-evaluation of the members of his apparatus, and practicing the incorrect, detached work with the cadres were all brought to bear, once again echoing the tools utilized by the center throughout Zhdanov's tenure, now turned toward Malenkov's use.⁷³ Moreover, within months the same tactics—connection to the Leningrad “anti-party group,” accusations of arrogance, coterie building, isolation, and power-grabbing—would be utilized against scores of other regional leaders as well. This time, however, the initiative would not be accompanied by an attack on the governmental-economic apparatus and demands for resources to be diverted toward party-political education. Rather, the rhetoric would underline the more technocratic focus of the new party.

⁷¹ “Conclusions of the Politburo Commission reviewing the work of Comrade Popov,” RGASPI (December 1949) f.83, op.1, d.5, l.98.

⁷² Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 90–91.

⁷³ “Rech' tov. Malenkova na sovместnom plenumе Moskovskoi oblasti,” RGASPI (16 December 1949) f.83, op.1, d.11 l.100-l.105.

Search for a New Balance

Ironically, Popov was replaced—as the secretary of Moscow *obkom* and a secretary of the Central Committee—by Nikita Khrushchev, who was catapulted by the decapitation of the ideologue leadership faction into the top position within that faction. The general consensus of scholar—articulated by William Taubman and Werner Hahn, among others—posits that his elevation was not accidental, but rather a sign of Stalin’s realization that the party revivalist faction was verging on being irretrievably weakened.⁷⁴ Khrushchev was thus raised in order to prepare a counterweight to the Malenkov-Beria duumvirate.⁷⁵

For the next three years, the battle lines would slowly stabilize as Khrushchev built his base of support within the party structure, while Malenkov consolidated his control of the governmental apparatus. The two would continue to clash, the first battle coming as early as March of 1950, as Khrushchev challenged Malenkov’s competence in and leadership of the agricultural sector. In a series of speeches—widely publicized by articles in *Pravda*—Khrushchev proposed a solution. As so often had been the case before, the alternative involved consolidation.

Drawing upon his experimentation in Ukraine, Khrushchev advocated amalgamation of small *kolkhozes* and villages into greater units. Eventually the consolidated *kolkhozes* would be transformed into something he named agro-towns. These enterprises (fulfilling the age-old Communist goal of modernizing the peasantry and turning it into an agricultural equivalent of the urban proletariat) would be tended by

⁷⁴ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 210.

⁷⁵ Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics*, 137.

expanded brigades that would take the place of the undermanned crews or “links” of the present *kolkhoz* system.⁷⁶

The justification for the reform was twofold. Firstly—and in the spirit of the changing times—Khrushchev offered a solidly pragmatic, economic argument. This proposition held that the “matter of further developing agriculture and strengthening the kolkhozes is seriously obstructed by the existence in many oblasts, *krais*, and republics of considerable number of small kolkhozes that, because of the acreage allocated to them, are insufficiently successful in developing the communal economy.”⁷⁷ Apart from that, however, there were also implications for the cadre policy.

Even buttressed by the returning veterans, the Communist Party remained woefully underrepresented in the countryside. This was due in no small measure by the tendency of the returning Bolsheviks to settle in the cities. Less than 20 percent of the total party membership chose to return to the countryside in the postwar years.⁷⁸ Even when the local party organizations engaged the veterans in administrative work and sent them into the villages, the primary party groups thus established were often understaffed and their leaders underqualified. The temptation of consolidation offered the mirage of economizing on the needed manpower.

Theoretically, greater areas of control could be administered with fewer Communists, provided there was a strict enough measure of central control within the locales. “The simple physical unification of adjacent kolkhozes meant that the percentages of farms with PPO’s (primary party organizations) was bound to increase.

⁷⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 228–30.

⁷⁷ Robert H. McNeal, ed., *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), III, 254.

⁷⁸ N. S. Khrushchev, *Stroitel'stvo kommunizma v SSSR i razvitie selskogo khoziaistva* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1962), I, 72.

The result was a more effective distribution of the still modest army of Party members in the village.”⁷⁹ Thus, its economic merits aside, Khrushchev’s proposed reform was extremely astute politically.

Much as Malenkov was proving his bona fides to his constituency among the ministerial and managerial apparatus, Khrushchev was campaigning for the support of the party bosses of the periphery. Having experienced the pressures and dilemmas of the regional party management personally, he was familiar with the faux solutions popular among that stratum. The agro-towns were an attempt to institutionalize the measures already advocated, and sometimes tried, by the periphery and to consolidate the party and state control over the agricultural sector.

By February of 1951, the number of *kolkhozes* in Ukraine alone with functioning primary party organizations jumped from 52 percent to 80 percent. Palpable gains in the coverage of the newly enlarged *kolkhozes* by the party organizations were recorded in other locales throughout the country.⁸⁰ The number of Communists within such organization rose concurrently; whereas before the reform nearly half of the PPOs were staffed by five apparatchiks (or less), by 1951 only a quarter of the total remained classified as small.⁸¹

This was a tangible political success. “Quantitatively, at least, the distribution of Party forces in the village was at last approaching the level where the indirect leadership ideal of *raikom* control was a physical possibility.”⁸² If the leaders of these now

⁷⁹ Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors: The MTS and the Development of Controls in Soviet Agriculture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 287.

⁸⁰ “Resoliutsiia VIII partiinoi konferentsii po otchetnomu dokladu Kalininskogo obkoma,” PAKO (28-30 March 1951) f.147, op.5, d.1, l.6.

⁸¹ Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors*, 287.

⁸² Ibid.

respectably sized organizations could be educated to an acceptable level, the enduring tendency of the regional party bosses to rely on the plenipotentiaries (and to bypass the ineffective party institutions in favor of the competent substitutes within the state and economic sphere) could be corrected.

The technocrats saw little reason to prevent this development, since it dovetailed perfectly with their own program of shifting the emphasis toward general and technical education of party members, and away from the primarily ideological focused programs. In fact the very framework of Khrushchev's reform and his arguments in its favor signaled that the ideologues were adopting the technocratic rhetoric. This was a perfect illustration of the essential similarities between the two factions, contributing to the emergence of a new consensus. From Khrushchev's perspective, after all, he was doing little in terms of departing from traditional aims common to both factions—pursuit of the party's presence in the countryside.

In 1951, however, Khrushchev began to push for the second part of his plan—the establishment of the agro-towns. Malenkov struck back and the entire idea was turned into a laughingstock, along with Khrushchev. By 1951 the entire policy was decreed open for criticism, even at the lowest levels of the apparatus. These discussions, so closely connected to the painful issue of the general agricultural policy, had an occasional tendency to stray off the proscribed line of narrative. Soon the local propagandists were fielding uncomfortable questions such as:

“Why, after the consolidation reform, did some kolkhozes become weaker?”

“Are the Soviet organs to blame for committing errors in implementation of the reform?”

“Why did the Central Committee not correct comrade Khrushchev in time about his mistakes in his article regarding the issues of kolkhoz consolidation?”⁸³

The defeat of Khrushchev’s bid for control of the agricultural policy, however, turned out to have been a Pyrrhic victory for his opponents. Outmaneuvered by Malenkov in the center, Khrushchev made his mark among the regional bosses whose support would prove so invaluable to him in his later bid for power. As Crankshaw, one of his earliest biographers put it, “he faded out of the agricultural picture and began to emerge as a Party organizer.”⁸⁴ Most of the later students of his career agree.⁸⁵

Much like Zhdanov before him, Malenkov was now warned of the limits of his victory. Although weakened, the party revivalists remained an enduring feature of the Soviet political landscape and Khrushchev would remain a thorn in Malenkov’s side. Yet, as was so recently demonstrated, the platform of the ideologues was undergoing a considerable if slow shift, moving away from the overriding focus on party-political education and increasingly adapting to the fundamental basis of the pragmatists’ agenda—specifically the prioritization of economic, practical goals.

As the new decade began, the legislative agenda was already strongly dominated by the newly triumphant technocratic faction. It would be their predominance within the power structure, and the society in general, that would lay the foundation for Vera Dunham’s “Big Deal.” The regime recognized that the essential loyalty of the emergent middle class was not in any real doubt. Whatever their professional command of Marxism-Leninism, the ideology had been a steady background of their formation and

⁸³ “Voprosy zadannye kommunistami v Bezhetskom gorkome pri obsuzhdenii zakrytogo pis'ma TsK o zadachakh kolkhoznogo stroitelstva v sviazi s ukрупneniem melkikh kolkhozov,” PAKO (21 May 1951) f.147, op.5, d.34, l.3.

⁸⁴ Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev: A Career* (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), 181.

⁸⁵ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 230.

many simply lacked comprehension of any alternative models. Certainly that was the explanation offered by Evgenii Plimak, an interpreter during the war and a future history professor. He had little explanation for the “bright flame of patriotism” lit by the war for the system he later came to detest.⁸⁶

Yet their understanding of that ideology was simplistic at best and often based primarily on the identification of Stalin, the architect of victory (in their eyes), as the personification of the system. Another of Kondratiev’s heroes in *Krasnye Vorota*, a young veteran named Vladimir, denies even remembering having once criticized Stalin. “You know, during the war you somehow forgot it all and Stalin grew in our eyes so much that everything was forgotten and forgiven.”⁸⁷

This generation of veterans and white collar professionals increasingly saw itself as part of the regime and, in fact, “had managed to increase the ground won in the thirties and, at the close of the era, had come into its own.”⁸⁸ Zhdanov’s downfall was in many ways a recognition of that fact and admission of the power of the technocrats as the representatives of the constituency that was now not simply dominating the society, but increasingly integral within the party itself. These new Communists, many of them veterans, could not be dismissed or ignored—they now comprised the majority of the VKP(b).

Their simplified idea of Communism, centered around personal loyalty to Stalin, focused on results, and with considerable ignorance of theory was articulated at length by the wealth of the memoirs and articles. Thus V P. Astafiev described the sudden impetus

⁸⁶ Evgenii Plimak, *Na voine i posle voyny: zapiski veterana* (Moscow: Ves’ Mir, 2005), 58–60.

⁸⁷ Kondratiev, *Krasnye Vorota*, 364–65.

⁸⁸ Vera S. Dunham, *In Stalin’s Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 4.

of the new Communists to step beyond the wartime simplicity of clear sides and interject new complexity into their analysis of the party and its leaders.⁸⁹ He, and his friend and contemporary V. Kondratiev, both ascribed that new impetus to the sense of betrayal and disappointment engendered by Zhdanov's reign.⁹⁰ Kondratiev came from the family of an engineer, and Astafiev, while from more modest beginnings, was a teacher and a journalist by the end of the decade. Both were veterans, of course. These writers encapsulated the image of the new Communists both in their background and attitude. Both were solidly ensconced among the white collar stratum of Soviet society.

They were no longer willing to be seen simply as the cogs of the machine, but demanded recognition of their contribution to victory and a niche in the society commensurate with their practical rather than ideological credentials.⁹¹ And some among them, having seen the West, were also experiencing a mounting sense of disappointment that their country was still mired in poverty and ignorance.⁹² In response to this dissatisfaction, Malenkov turned his attention to an issue of internal party reform. It was intended to serve as a complement to the measures already undertaken toward the new Communists. The twin goals of the reversal of the gains of the party revivalists in political education and a return to the departmental model of party bureaucracy would finalize the confluence of the state and the party.

⁸⁹ V. Kondratiev, "Ne tol'ko o moem pokolenii..." *Kommunist* #7 (1990): 114–15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113–15.

⁹¹ Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 43–45, 50.

⁹² V. Astafiev, "Snachala snariady, potom liudi," *Rodina* #6-7 (1991): 55; Georgi Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (Toronto: Random House, 1992), 34.

Counter-Reformation: Malenkov and the Party Apparatus

The two competing models of the organizational structure of the party apparatus had remained essentially unchanged since the end of the civil war.⁹³ The original model, the so-called functional system, was instituted in 1924 and attempted to centralize the entire structure of selection, training, and appointment of party cadres throughout the Soviet system, whether in the state, economic, or political areas. When this approach floundered due to the lack of central control, availability of competent manpower, and the rapid expansion of the Soviet economy, a reform was undertaken in 1930.

The changed model operated along the departmental approach.⁹⁴ It called for the delegation of responsibilities for the work with the party cadres to the specific branches and departments of government, industry through the internal party cells, or the regional party secretaries. This model, of course, carried the danger of subversion—the threat of which was glaringly exhibited by the united front of the ministerial bosses and their party secretaries in the wake of the Honor Court experiment.

In the wake of Zhdanov's death, the groundwork for yet another reorganization of the party apparatus began. Many of the initiatives would continue up to their finalization at the Nineteenth Party Congress, but the Secretariat reform was put in place immediately. The technocrats rolled back the changes, reinstituting essentially the industrial-branch system of 1934.

“At the end of 1948 a Central Committee decree abolished both the Cadres Administration and the Administration for Verification of Party Organs, as well as the corresponding sections at lower levels of the Party structure. In their place the decree

⁹³ Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 190–95.

⁹⁴ Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union is Governed* (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 411–13.

established sections of Party, trade-union, and *Komsomol* organizations which supervised all aspects of Party affairs, including personnel.”⁹⁵

Thus, as a number of historians pointed out, this signified a reversion to the organizational model tried in 1934. Several aspects of the policy signified an effort by Malenkov to come to grips with the persistent flaws of the party organization while simultaneously disassembling the structure built by the party revivalists. Notably, among the first reforms undertaken by Malenkov was the cosmetic, yet openly symbolic downgrading of the Administration of Agitation and Propaganda.⁹⁶

Soon afterward, to drive the lesson home, the positions of the secretaries of propaganda and agitations were abolished within the nomenclature of the regional apparatus. This was simply the formalization of a long-term trend that became especially prevalent during the war. The tendency of the local party bosses to utilize their ideological experts as plenipotentiaries tasked with overseeing the fulfillment of the economic plans was as infamous as it was, apparently, pervasive. The reform also sent a clear signal of the relatively low focus of the new boss on the goal of ideological education and promotion.

This was underlined by the far-reaching reorganization of the party-industrial apparatus as a whole.⁹⁷ A series of new industrial-brunch departments were founded—transportation, heavy and light industry, agriculture, etc. The responsibility of direct work with the manpower issues of their respective industries was devolved upon them. The

⁹⁵ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 202–3.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 203.

⁹⁷ “Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) o reorganizatsii partiinogo apparata i zadachakh rabotnikov partapparata,” PAKO (1949) f.147, op.4, d.1707, l.186–l.190.

reorganization gave official blessing to the very merger of the party and economic institutions the ideologues were so vehemently combating.

The signal was received quite clearly since, unlike Zhdanov, Malenkov was not struggling against the tide, but rather codifying and recognizing as official processes that were already taking place. Thus, in a typical example, Sukhov (a director of a local plant) felt that he had both the justification and the freedom to openly criticize the Kalinin *obkom* at the district party conference. Nor was his criticism even vaguely couched in the platitudes of ideological leadership. It was a straightforward complaint about the flaws in the *obkom*'s duties to assist him in fulfilling the economic plan: "Despite repeated demands and requests through the *obkom*, we still do not have the resources, and as a result the annual plan will not be fulfilled." The head of the relevant department rose to defend the work of his organizations, and again the terminology was telling, as he explained that "the *obkom* repeatedly brought this issue to the attention of the Ministry of the Light Industry of RSSR." He went on to say that the *obkom* had the assurances of the ministry that the situation would be improved.⁹⁸

During the same conference, Sukhov was echoed by the head of the local wagon factory, Gedelman, who declared that he needed prompt assistance and that the *obkom* must increase pressure on the ministry to provide his factory with metal. The *obkom*'s response was once again a rather meek defense that it was "systematically engaged in assisting the wagon factory with the necessary materials."⁹⁹

In other words, the role of the *obkom* was reduced to that of a middleman, a message carrier between the ministry and the local industrial and agricultural enterprises.

⁹⁸ "Spravka o nerazreshennykh otdelami obkoma voprosakh postavlennykh raikomaki i gorkomami," PAKO (24 April 1950) f.147, op.4, d.2129, l.130.

⁹⁹ Ibid, l.132.

Furthermore, of the organs involved in the process, neither the party apparatus nor that of the state found the situation objectionable. All saw their role in similar terms. Thus, instead of centralizing the system on the basis of control of ideological “commanding heights” and then crowding the other foci out of the party’s immediate spheres of responsibility, the technocrats embraced the party’s role as an economic actor.

The war taught the provincial bosses that the ideology could be ignored or sidelined as a mobilizational tool. The labor force demonstrated its willingness to work simply out of a desire to defeat the hated enemy. The provincial party leaders, however, continued to be dependent on Moscow as the hub of economic activity, and the centrally located ministries were integral to local attempts to coordinate the economic interests of their locales with those of the country at large. As one *gorkom* secretary remembered in his autobiography, there were simply too many needs at the enterprises, and the shortest route to solving the logistical bottlenecks led to the local party committee and though it to the central party and soviet organs. “When there’s an order from the party organs everything is different, there’s a guarantee of resolution.”¹⁰⁰

Decentralizing the specific tasks of cadre selection, appointment, and promotion to the various industrial departments and local party organizations, the pragmatist faction centralized even farther the overarching control over the economy and industry itself. Malenkov’s vision of the party’s centrality was based not on its singular command and monopolistic possession of the Leninist writ. The new concept of the party embraced its de facto position as the coordinator of the composite parts of the state. This strategic placement, after all, also conferred control. The old admonishments against the cocooning tendency common to the regional leadership were now expressed in a rather

¹⁰⁰ B. Borisov, *Zapiski sekretaria gorkoma* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1964), 161.

different form as they were called upon to eschew that practice and instead “unite around themselves diverse ranks of the party, soviet and economic workers.”¹⁰¹

Creating an enduring and workable balance between the party and the state in the coalescing amalgamation, however, proved a difficult achievement. Periodic reminders were needed that the party remained the senior shareholder. Thus, for example, in October of 1952, the new Codex of the Party Rules institutionalized the functional difference of the ministerial sector as compared to the rest of the industrial, agricultural, and soviet organizations. The primary party organizations were detailed to continue participation in the activity of the rest of the enterprises (signifying the ongoing merging of the party responsibilities with that of the economic administration).¹⁰²

Within the ministries, however, the party organs were directed to remember that the former—due to their special circumstances—were to be free from overt interference in their administration by Communist organizations. The latter were to limit their activity primarily to timely reports to the higher authority vis-à-vis the existing problems in work performance, falsification of data, and possible malfeasance on the part of specific workers.¹⁰³ Once again, the technocrats sought a balance between pragmatic decentralization while maintaining overall control.

As the thesis of ideology as the inherent backdrop of the society in need of only marginal upkeep was being adopted by the party, the legitimizing aura of its leaders was steadily shifting to their position as the party managers rather than theorists of Marxism-Leninism. The two continued to be inherently connected of course. Yet the party

¹⁰¹ “Doklad sekretaria obkoma P.S. Vorontsova ‘O postanovlenii TsK VKP(b) po otchetu Kalininskogo obkoma’,” PAKO (January 1949) f.147, op.4, d.1707, l.95.

¹⁰² N. A. Petrovich, ed., *Pervichnaia partiinaia organizatsia: dokumenty KPSS* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1974), 306.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

continued to move steadily away from its original self-conceptualization as the distanced overseer of the economic sector and toward becoming the integral part of the ideological-industrial complex. In such a structure, one's reputation as an able administrator inevitably becomes decisive.

Cadres Decide Everything: Redemption through Education

In a correlation with the changing nature of the governmental structure, there was a change in the focus of the party educational system. In this too, the new party line followed Zhdanov's old approach—although now, of course, they pursued a different goal. On 30 May 1950, Stalin summoned the recently disgraced editor of *Bolshevik* and former head of the propaganda department of *Pravda*, Dmitrii Shepilov. Shepilov, a faithful follower of Zhdanov, spent the early postwar years as the deputy chairman of the Military Political Administration's Propaganda and Agitation Department. He was often considered one of the intellectual doyens of the party-revivalist faction. Stalin summoned him, just as Khrushchev was emerging as the new leader of the ideologues, to take the helm of a new literary project. According to the head of the USSR, the state was in need of a new textbook to supplement the universal *Short Course*.¹⁰⁴

Delegating this task to Shepilov at the time when the echoes of the Leningrad Affair were still rippling through the country and the victims of that process were still being executed appeared to be a strange choice. Yet, according to Shepilov's own recollection, his services were primarily needed for the academic and, probably, factional credentials he brought with him. Much of the theme of the book was dictated to him by

¹⁰⁴ Dmitrii Shepilov, *The Kremlin's Scholar: A Memoir of Soviet Politics under Stalin and Khrushchev* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2007), 196.

Stalin as well as taken in large part from his own recent work, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. Even the title of the textbook was changed due to Stalin's demand. Moreover, every draft was sent to the latter for a meticulous editing process. "He was amazingly thorough; nothing was too small for his attention; he carped about everything."¹⁰⁵

Political Economy: A Textbook opened with an emphatic restatement of the new values of the regime, already discussed in the very resolution on Bolsheviks that disgraced Shepilov and cost him his position near the apex of the Soviet power hierarchy. In the introduction to the tome, Stalin's addition proclaimed that "the study of political economy deals not with some abstract, irrelevant issues but with the most concrete and current questions involving the vital interests of people, societies and classes."¹⁰⁶ He went on to call on the managers and the Communist apparatchiks alike to abandon the illusions of separation between the party and economy, deriding "the fallacy of those economists who assert that political economy is a neutral, nonparty science that is independent of class struggle and free of any direct or indirect links to political parties."¹⁰⁷

The entire episode begs the question of why was it necessary for Stalin to subject Shepilov to the humiliating ordeal of effectively endorsing the verdict that sent him into a semi-retirement plagued by the fears of further repression and execution. Certainly there is a temptation to ascribe the event to the vindictiveness of Stalin so often remarked upon by his biographers. Yet Shepilov was a solidly second-tier figure who had few personal interaction with the *Vozhd* and his own memoirs and recollection lack any suggestion that Stalin was out to humiliate him particularly.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 196.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 197.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

The clue to this event can be found in the missive received by Malenkov's office nearly four years prior. Even as the war drew to an end, Malenkov was dealing with the proposal by Kanchukh, who suggested—among other innovations—giving the directors of the individual factories and enterprises the freedom to determine both the size of the staff they needed and the wage structure (within the general limits determined by Moscow). Needless to say, in the midst of *Zhdanovshchina*, the call for decentralization and development of the local initiatives among the regional economic elite was quickly deconstructed and suppressed. Kanchukh was speedily barred from access to Gosplan's archives and his proposal of a localized experiment in a selected factory was also quickly dismissed as “unproductive.”¹⁰⁸

Yet times changed and the confidence of the technocrats survived and outlived Zhdanov. In January 1950, I. M. Stul'nikov, a high-ranking member of the Latvian ministerial apparatus floated a proposal that dealt with the scenario of changing the industrial management toward a collective leadership model. Stul'nikov's ideas were couched in the habitual language of the central organs—he cited the tendency of the unified authority to promote isolation of the leaders, and the propensity for them to dismiss advice and ignore the signals from below.

Stul'nikov proposed an answer that, nominally at least, offered to reproduce the reforms, attempted in both military and party structure, within the economic and industrial apparatus. “The author envisaged a system administered by elected committees, a hierarchy of economic soviets from bottom to top, from individual enterprises to the ministerial level. In fact, he proposed to retain but modify the principle of one-man

¹⁰⁸ “Pis'mo tov. Kanchukha,” RGAE (29 June 1945) f. 1562, op.329, l.108–l.109.

management by requiring that the decisions of the head of an administrative unit be approved by an elected committee also attached to the office.”¹⁰⁹

Far from being approved and adopted, the initiative was greeted with cool dismay and quickly swept under the rug. Stul’nikov misunderstood both the trend of the reform undertaken by the Kremlin throughout the party and military structures and the quantitative difference between those institutions and the industrial apparatus. Malenkov’s reform utilized the fig leaf of interparty democracy and empowerment of the grassroots as a vehicle of centralizing influence and a tool able to undermine the established power structures of the regional party bosses and the suborned commissars. Stul’nikov’s schema, on the other hand, envisioned an actual collectivist power sharing arrangement. In fact, it evoked the uneasy ghosts of anarcho-syndicalists, Worker Councils, and trade-unionism, and in fact came perilously close to the very label of Trotskyism that was utilized against so many enemies of the regime for much less cause.

Moreover, as Elena Zubkova pointed out, dilution of the economic hierarchy of authority would remove an easily identifiable focus of responsibility. “The logic of the economic administration, founded on the principle of rigidly fixed responsibility and an elaborately structured hierarchy, was fundamentally incompatible with the idea of decentralization in any form whatsoever.”¹¹⁰ Neither Stalin nor Malenkov would fail to see that Stul’nikov’s idea essentially barred the party’s participation in the industrial management. Malenkov’s goal was not a separation of the party from the economy but rather the opposite—a merger of the two.

¹⁰⁹ Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, 143.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

Furthermore, while Malenkov was prepared to tolerate the decentralization of the economy as a necessary and unavoidable evil, he was as intent on maintaining the fundamental, overarching degree of central control as Zhdanov ever was. He strove to balance the imperatives of both halves of his construct, but even when he was willing to stipulate a degree of freedom for the economic and ministerial sector, Malenkov remained a man of the party. The newly redefined role of the primary party organizations in the 1952 Party Code, discussed above, exemplified this balancing act.

Yet there were inevitable and persistent problems with the power-sharing arrangement. “Relentless control is not compatible with individual initiative. Docility was a requirement, yet docility inhibits any energetic partner’s sense of achievement. Still, the regime wanted the producing partner content.”¹¹¹ Stul’nikov’s missive by itself would have presented little cause for concern. Yet throughout the postwar years, similar initiatives were being sent to the Kremlin from a variety of sources and many more held a similar opinion privately. As Fedor Abramov, for example, said, “the war showed that to manage the economy as we had before was impossible. The war revealed deep contradictions and flaws.”¹¹² At first, he recollected, his generation was kept going by the “inertia of wartime enthusiasm” but eventually it began to fade. And many of the veterans (and some among the civilian party members), having been allowed a measure of individualism and initiative thought they could and should offer suggestions on the democratization or liberalization of the economy (and in some cases the entire political system). This was as alarming to the system as the essence of the proposals themselves.

¹¹¹ Dunham, *In Stalin’s Time*, 187.

¹¹² Fedor Abramov, “A liudi zhdut, zhdut peremen” *Izvestiia*, 3 February 1990, 1.

Yet as the platform of the party revivalists was first stalled and then their faction as a whole was determinedly suppressed, the self-assurance of the white collar professionals and their technocrat allies within (and outside) the party was unlikely to dim. Thus Khorokhorin, a law student, felt that he could address the closed party session of his university and argue that while the general party line was absolutely correct, it was being perverted and misused by the leading party workers and this behavior was inevitably shaking the loyalty of the citizenry to the socialist regime.¹¹³

It was in response to this trend of the Experts to push the envelope and test the extent of their victory that Khrushchev was first elevated, and shortly thereafter Shepilov was put in charge of drafting the textbook that was to be for the political economy what the *Short Course* had been for the political history. What is notable about the Kremlin's initiative, however, is that the resurgence of the party revivalists was a very measured and conditional process. The overall sense of the new policy dynamic remained unchanged, however. The early 1950s were framed by the unchanging focus on the economic performance and the attendant predominance of the technocratic platform. The disinterment of the recently disgraced ideologues simply sent a warning shot across the bow of the opposition, delimiting their reach and illustrating the possible dangers of going too far.

Moreover the textbook produced by Shepilov and his colleagues emphasized that difficult-to-find balance rather than being utilized simply as a forceful counterattack against the technocrats. While pulling short the tendency of the managers to engage in a purely utilitarian approach to the problems of the economic, the text also sought to emphasize the new phase of the Communist struggle. As Stalin would later explain in his

¹¹³ "Spravka," RGASPI (12 September 1952) f.592, op.1, d.27, l.144.

own treatise, *The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, the attempts to swell the textbook with additional chapters on history, political science, or philosophy would be counterproductive. The new revolutionaries within the Soviet Union, as well as abroad, were most in need of “a reference book on Marxist political economy.” These new Communists had only a poor understanding of Marxism-Leninism. And a book educating them in the fundamentals of the political economy would have solved the problem.¹¹⁴

Such a measured response coming under aegis of the doyens of the party revivalists and reiterated by Stalin himself served to accomplish a number of goals in a rather elegant fashion. While making an implicit threat through the rehabilitation of some of the ideologues, Stalin also outlined what the party would consider a legitimate and (from his perspective) generous proposal for acceptable terms of the debate. The Kremlin offered partnership—with the party as the senior partner of course.

By co-opting Shepilov and his cohorts as his mouthpiece, Stalin implicitly redefined the platform of the ideologues, making official their cession of the fundamentals of the debate to the technocrats. Similar stress on the necessity of partnership and synergy—rather than separation and specialization—between the party and the economic management was promoted at the several conferences and congresses of the early 1950s all devoted to the architecture of the economic policy of the USSR.

The textbook was a graphic illustration of a more widespread policy that emerged with considerable synergy both among the regional party organs and the central authorities. Following the demobilizations and as the Soviet Union settled into the postwar recovery phase, the system was faced with the challenge of a society that was no

¹¹⁴ Bruce Franklin, ed., *The Essential Stalin: Major Theoretical Writings, 1905–1952* (London: Groom Helm, 1973), 451, 480.

longer amenable to being mobilized through naked patriotism and by the perpetual crisis. The economic demands were common to a variety of groups. According to Mark Edele, for example, the feeling that they were entitled to material compensation for their exploits at the front was the only commonality strong enough to unite the disparate castes among the veterans of the war.¹¹⁵

Expressed in a variety of ways, the sentiments that the economic privations of the postwar period were no longer acceptable and it was the duty of the party-state to eliminate them, were notable in a multitude of other venues as well. “Groups of workers from Penza and Kuznetsk wrote letters to Politburo members . . . complaining of the difficult material conditions of life and the absence of the majority of necessary goods from the market.”¹¹⁶ The tremendous growth of the party ranks during the war years meant that the party was more aware of such social pressures than ever before in its history.

An illustrative example occurred in Novosibirsk at the very onset of the Malenkovite resurgence. At the party conference of a local plant, one of the junior party leaders, Rylov, pointed out to the collective that “those who talk with the aktiv, listen to the workers can easily overhear the conversations where the people complain about the lack of bread or other necessities All blame the Central Committee and the other organs.”¹¹⁷ Rylov was speedily reprimanded and punished for spreading libel, but that did little to change the facts or the party’s awareness of its dilemma. The discontent meant

¹¹⁵ Mark Edele, A “*Generation of Victors?*”: *Soviet Second World War Veterans From Demobilization to Organization 1941–1956* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, **2004**), 564.

¹¹⁶ Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, 36.

¹¹⁷ “O rabote mestnykh partiinykh organizatsii,” RGASPI (26 June 1948) f.17, op.88, d.900, l.161.

that the regime had to engage in violent repression of such impulses on a wide scale or attempt to fulfill them.

Having eschewed mass terror, the party had to transform itself into an instrument capable of delivering tangible economic improvements in order to fulfill the popular demands. Thus it is not accidental that the rhetoric of the regional party organizations increasingly moved beyond the discussion of raising the party-political level of their interparty work and toward the debates on how to better organize the “socialist competitions.”¹¹⁸ Similarly, the *obkoms*’ focus on the provision of welfare often grew to the point that it elicited complaints they were turning into another ministerial organ.¹¹⁹ Conversely, they were also being bombarded with criticism that their main flaw consisted of not providing “adequate education to the *raikoms* in the correct management of the economy.”¹²⁰ Thus, by the beginning of the new decade, the center and the periphery were finally in sync in terms of their priorities and goals.

Uneasy Partners: The Party and the Army

The tribulations of the power-sharing arrangements between the ideologues and the pragmatists, and the subsequent redefinition of the Reds-Experts dynamic could not help but affect the military. Clarification of the party policy vis-à-vis the Red Army became increasingly important as the Cold War began to stabilize as a long-term situation, punctuated by the flashpoints in Greece, Iran, and finally Korea. Parallel to the investment in the heavy industry, there was a momentous effort to channel new resources into the rapidly remobilizing military organization.

¹¹⁸ “Spravki,” PAKO (1950-1953) f.147, op.5, d.1242, l.86, l.87, l.90, l.91, l.93.

¹¹⁹ “Otchet,” RGASPI (December 1950) f.17, op.88, d.958, l.259.

¹²⁰ “Velikolukskii Obkom,” RGASPI (September 1950) f.17, op.88, d.962, l.9–10.

“A major turning point in policy appears to have taken place not long after the commencement of the [Korean] war, at a conference of Soviet and East European leaders that took place in Moscow in January 1951.”¹²¹ The Soviet chief of staff, General S. Shtemenko, served as the point man for the wishes of the USSR, instructing their allies to match the Soviet Union’s commitment to rearmament. The Kremlin fully intended to lead by example, and the capital investment jumped dramatically—by 60 percent in 1951 and another 40 percent yet again in the following year.¹²² Concurrently a special bureau was established by the Politburo. Tasked with coordinating the work of all the ministries and enterprises related to the war industry and production, it was placed fully under the purview of the Council of the Ministers. The lack of the party link in this chain of responsibility was conspicuous as the focus centered on the professionals of the state apparatus.

The situation within the armed forces per se, however, was more complex. Even as the party revivalists were purged in Leningrad, Zhdanov’s associates were also swiftly losing their hold on the military-political apparatus. In March 1949, Bulganin was transferred out of his post as the Minister of Defense and replaced by Alexander Vasilevskii. Unlike Bulganin, who was widely—and with cause—seen as a political appointee and Zhdanov’s protégé, Marshal Vasilevskii was a professional soldier.

The focus on the professionalization of the military apparatus continued with the demotion of I. V. Shikin from his chairmanship of the Main Political Administration. Shikin was tied even closer to Zhdanov than Bulganin and was seen as the embodiment of the party revivalist reform agenda. His replacement, however, was Kuznetsov, which

¹²¹ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 98.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 99.

sent at best a mixed signal. Kuznetsov's prewar career had been built within the MPA structure; he was a professional commissar. Yet any hopes by the officer corps that he belonged to the faction of the political officers that had been suborned by the esprit de corps of the army would have surely been undermined by the fact that he spent most of the 1930s as one of the closest aides to Mekhlis. Kuznetsov, thus, played a key role in the execution of the purges within the army.

On the other hand, the same era saw the fortunes of Mekhlis—Kuznetsov's one-time patron—take a strong turn for the worse. First he was strongly upbraided by the Politburo when Mekhlis overstepped his bounds in conflict with the Azerbaijani Council of Ministers.¹²³ And shortly thereafter, in 1950, this old bane of the army was to suffer the same indignity as had befallen Marshal Zhukov only a few years before. Losing his position as minister of state control, he was quietly sidelined until his death a few years later.¹²⁴ Moreover, throughout the war, Kuznetsov moved beyond his previous role as the propagandist and rose quickly through the ranks of the GRU, eventually assuming command of that organization in 1945.

Although the soldier and the spy have never been easy bedfellows, it was easier for the officer cadre to accept a veteran of military intelligence as the head of the Main Political Administration as opposed to the previous holders of that position, who often came buttressed primarily by their standing in the party apparatus. Kuznetsov's willingness to cooperate with Malenkov was farther demonstrated by his tenure at the MPA. He oversaw immediate institution of the measures that essentially dismantled most of the reformist platform put in place by his predecessors under the guidance of Zhdanov.

¹²³ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 61.

¹²⁴ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 226.

Paralleling to a considerable degree Malenkov's restructuring efforts in the Secretariat and the party apparatus, the Kremlin reversed its decision and dismantled the centralized Defense Ministry that was so laboriously put together by Zhdanov and Shikin in 1946. Once again the reform presented an ambiguous message. It resembled the old party phobia of Bonapartism and fear of concentrating too much military authority under a single rubric. On the other hand, the division of the Defense Ministry into its component parts (the Navy and the Army) was accompanied by a parallel split of the Main Politician Administration. The MPA was separated into two branches matching their military charges.

Once again, despite the traits specific to the military subculture, the wider sociopolitical platform could not help but echo in the military apparatus. The division of the Defense Ministry closely resembled Malenkov's approach to the reforms within the Secretariat. It drew on the same fundamental idea of finding a careful balance between centralization and utilitarian autonomy, between professionalization and maintenance of ideological and political control. Zhdanov's attempt to combat the insidious tendency of the military identity to affect, and sometimes to subsume, that of the party apparatchiks within the military-political apparatus suffered a substantial blow with the adoption of the new organizational structure.

Having divided the MPA into subgroups matching the military branches, the Kremlin—purposefully or not—gave further impetus to the party workers of these organs to find a common identity with the members of their branch, rather than the party as a whole. To that familiar danger, the reform, however, added a new one. Now the dynamic of the industrial managers and the local party bosses was replicated within the military to

the greater extent than ever before. The underlying process of being judged by the results was not only still in place, but now formed the fundamental lodestone of the regime's rhetoric as the technocrats settled into their position of power.

Within this dynamic and given the inevitable competition for resources and recognition common to the military organizations, the party workers would now be faced with an impetus to compete even with their putative coworkers within the Main Political Administration. After all, even under the generous conditions of an unfolding arms race, the largesse of the state and the resources available were not limitless and the rivalry between the Navy and the Army was no less bitter than that of the military and the secret police or various industrial interests.

The same tendency was reinforced by the restoration of the military councils in July 1950. The Kremlin rekindled these organs by broadening their authority and transforming them from advisory organs to the commanders "into responsible collective organs authorized to direct all aspects of life and activities of the troops."¹²⁵ The political cadre was once again granted a seat at the table. This reform has long been interpreted as the reactionary initiative, stripping the hard-won autonomy of the commanders. And indeed that was the explanation offered by the party, and quite likely a truthful one—at least in part. Yet in the context of, and in combination with, the rest of the ongoing reforms, this initiative also strengthened the impetus for the party worker within the military council to work with and for the commander, as his political shield and, sometimes, *tolkach*.

¹²⁵ I. P. Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskoi armii i flote* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, 1964), 453.

On the other hand, in order to counterbalance the situation, the Kremlin also instituted a number of the reforms aimed at maintaining careful central control. Even as the MPA was weakened, the tool of interparty democracy was used to establish alternative and supplementing institutions. Thus, in 1950, the party organizations were moved from the battalion to regimental level. This reform was combined with the institution of the office of deputy political officer at company level.¹²⁶ “By moving the primary Party organization to the regiment and establishing *zampolits* in the company, Stalin was actually streamlining political controls throughout the chain of command, while ostensibly relieving the battalions of Party functionaries.”¹²⁷ Once again a compromise had been struck, the change giving a degree of autonomy to the battalion officers largely responsible for the formulation of tactical objectives, while keeping political oversight over the company commanders who would presumably be expected to execute those orders with little deviation.

To a large extent, the similarity of the reforms within the civilian and military sphere was explained by the fact that both were underpinned by similar social processes. By the end of the war, saturation of the army by the Communists was reaching considerable proportions. As much as 73 percent of the officers in the naval corps, for example, were party members.¹²⁸ Much as was the case throughout the society, however, the vast majority of the Communists were those who had entered the party during the war.

¹²⁶ Yosed Avidar, *The Party and the Army in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1983), 41.

¹²⁷ Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 77

¹²⁸ T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R, 1917–1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 255.

Moreover, within the military their number was as great as 85 percent—markedly greater than party as a whole.¹²⁹ And their grasp of Marxist-Leninist theory was no better than that of their compatriots in the civilian sphere. Yet, once again, their basic loyalty to the regime was no longer in serious doubt. Within that context, a certain slackening of the offensive for the re-Bolshevization of the military was called for—albeit only to a point. Thus, Malenkov maintained the party-education structure created by the Zhdanovites within the army.

Once again this achieved a fragile equilibrium. The schools continued to inculcate the new generation of enlisted Communists in the basics of the theory, but since much of their staff was provided by military professionals with only nominal Communist education, they also promoted increased specialization in the military affairs. Thus, in 1949, Lenin's Military-Political Academy graduated its first class of political workers with higher ideological education in seven years. Yet parallel to that achievement, the resources were also being funneled into Kalinin's Military-Pedagogical Institute, whose goal was preparation of the teaching cadre for the instruction of the “socio-economic disciplines” within the military institutions.¹³⁰

Zhukov himself was brought back from his exile—the process that some historians also tie to the Korean War. He was first returned into the public sphere through a few carefully calibrated speeches, and eventually an alternate member position at the Central Committee, deputy defense minister, and inspector general.¹³¹ Just as he blurred the line between the state apparatus and the party, Malenkov steadily proceeded to tie the army closer as well by acquiescing in the return to the professional autonomy enjoyed by

¹²⁹ Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 448.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 447.

¹³¹ Otto Preston Chaney, Jr., *Zhukov* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 351–52.

the military during the war. Reflecting the readjustment of the dynamic, at the Nineteenth Party Congress “an unusually large number of ranking military professionals were given membership in the Central Committee.”¹³² The Congress would serve as the celebration of Malenkov’s reforms, underlining and codifying the framework of the new equilibrium, not only between the party and the military, but the broader redefinition of the party’s identity and priorities.

The Congress of Victors: Foundation of the New Order

On 20 August 1952, the Central Committee plenum made public the party’s decision to hold the much delayed Nineteenth Congress in October of the same year. The first Congress since 1939 was to be a symbolic event in a number of ways. Its very scheduling—after a thirteen-year gap—illustrated the end of the flux wrought by war and the regularization of the party’s procedural routine. The Congress was also used to reflect and codify the fundamental change in the systemic approach to governance that occurred in the closing years of the war decade.¹³³

Yet the progress of the Congress was marked by a number of departures from the expected or established procedure. The most notable of these variations was the failure by Stalin to address the Congress as the bearer of the Central Committee’s report. Instead, widely seen as the anointment of him as Stalin’s successor, the report was delivered by Malenkov. The substance of the speech was a comprehensive summation of the reforms undertaken by the party technocrats over the previous three years.¹³⁴

¹³² Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*, 76.

¹³³ E. A. Rees, “Stalin as Leader, 1937–1953,” in *The Nature of Stalin’s Dictatorship: The Politburo, 1924–1953*, ed. E. A. Rees (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 227–28.

¹³⁴ A. Mikoyan, *Tak bylo*, (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999), 569.

Praising Stalin's economic treatise, Malenkov also made it clear in no uncertain terms that the focus of the party, in the foreseeable future, would remain centered on economic policy in general and the continued development of heavy industry in particular. He missed no opportunity to remind people of Khrushchev's failed agro-town concept and to, essentially, consign the agriculture to perpetual low priority by boldly announcing that the problems of that sector had been definitely and finally resolved.

This public slap in Khrushchev's face delivered from the most prestigious podium of the occasion with an implicit seal of approval from Stalin provided another departure from the traditional structure of such events. Instead of opening a harmony of supporting speeches, it was answered almost immediately by Khrushchev himself, who had been entrusted with announcing the newly modified version of the party's Code along with a slate of other, far-reaching reforms within the party structure.¹³⁵ Khrushchev was unable to utilize his time to launch a riposte equivalent to Malenkov's attack, since—in yet another demonstration of the continuing predominance of the latter in the current hierarchy—Malenkov, along with Beria, was essentially allowed editorial power over the draft of Khrushchev's speech.¹³⁶

Yet the very fact that for Khrushchev's first performance on such a scale he was entrusted with the elucidation of the momentous changes facing the party bespoke the continuing search for equilibrium within the system. The same quest was reflected by the changes being announced. Thus, the candidate period allotted for the testing and vetting of the hopeful party members was shrunk to a year in a parallel to the wartime changes that compromised ideological expertise in search for technical competence. In an attempt

¹³⁵ S. Khrushchev, ed., *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 3 vols. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State Press, 1999), 2: 106–7.

¹³⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 230.

to bridge the need for a regularized operating model and the demands of the overworked party organization, which was once again faced with a steadily increasing sphere of responsibility, the intervals between the mandated plenums and Congresses were extended.¹³⁷

The most significant announcement, however, came with the declaration that the Politburo and the Orgburo were to be superseded by a new governing body—the Presidium of the Party Central Committee. The Presidium was to have twenty-five full members, including a significant number of the state leaders in the highest party organ.¹³⁸ The Presidium was as much a living symbol of the new balance as a governmental innovation. Moreover, “an analysis of the composition of the Central Committee elected by the 19th Congress also indicates a high proportion of economic directors.”¹³⁹

In order to counterbalance the gains of the technocrats, however, the party also enlarged the Secretariat, which was doubled in size. The composition of the Secretariat was dominated by Khrushchev’s faction and solidified his control over the cadre policy within the party apparatus.¹⁴⁰ Within months of the Congress, Stalin had also ordered a formation of “a standing commission on ideological questions.” Working under and directly subordinated to the Presidium, it was still a clear reminder to the pragmatists not to go too far outside the bounds of the party system.¹⁴¹ Yet, once again, the members of the committee were instructed to pay attention primarily to the issue of economics and its place within the philosophical theory.

¹³⁷ Elena Zubkova, *Obshchestvennye nastroyeniya v poslevoennoi Rossii, 1945–1953* (Moscow: Izdatel’skii tsentr Instituta rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2000), 125–27.

¹³⁸ Rees, “Stalin as Leader,” 228.

¹³⁹ Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism*, 230.

¹⁴⁰ Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 151–52.

¹⁴¹ Shepilov, *The Kremlin’s Scholar*, 239.

Conclusion

The interlude of the years between Zhdanov's and Stalin's deaths was a time of tremendous strides made by the managerial apparatus and the professional classes within the Soviet society. Having finally recognized the impasse that facilitated the cyclical patterns of the Soviet factional politics, Malenkov (with the approval of Stalin himself) was given rein to break the deadlock.

Through the destruction of the premiere leaders of the ideologue faction and a broad-based slate of reforms in party education, organization, and its relationship to the state, a new paradigm was established. This new balance saw the emergence of a new elite consensus based on the co-optation by the party of the technocrats' economic and industrial agenda as the premiere role of the party. This shift in the party's identity was undertaken as the necessary price of maintaining political and central power—both over the provincial bosses and the state apparatus.

In the long term, however, the effects were essentially what the party revivalists had predicted. Although it would take time, the diminished role of ideology robbed the party of its core value system and steadily eroded its legitimizing and self-energizing power. Over time, Malenkov's new consensus would undermine the very foundations of the party-state construct he took for granted. Yet the pragmatists were correct as well. If the USSR was to survive as a modern, industrialized state, the accommodation with the technocrats was necessary. The contradiction inherent to the system demanded an eventual choice between the long-term health of the state and that of the party. Under Malenkov, the resolution to the paradox was articulated in its inchoate form as the merger of the state and the party took place.

Conclusion

The unique role of the Great Patriotic War in the collective psyche of Soviet society is a well-documented phenomenon. Nina Tumarkin, in her exploration of that phenomenon, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*, ably problematized this issue, illustrating the somewhat distorted approach to the history of the conflict in Russia and the damage done to historiography both by the pervasive interference of the regime and the inordinate significance placed on the idealization of the war by many Soviet citizens. The strength of the emotions surrounding this era is great enough to justify Tumarkin's characterization of the war's memory as a kind of a cult.¹ The post-Soviet scholarship, however, has seen a blossoming of work concerned with the impact of the war on Soviet society. The studies of wartime propaganda, such as Richard J. Brody's *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front During World War II*; the individual soldiers' experience of the war, as explored by Catherine Merridale's *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945*; or the civilian experience shown by John Barber and Mark Harrison in *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II*, have all contributed greatly to our understanding of the conflict and its repercussions. Yet, paradoxically, the effect of the war on the central feature of the Soviet regime—the Communist Party—has not benefited substantially from the newly available archival evidence.

¹ Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 135.

This dissertation was concerned with identifying the main trends that emerged in party policy during the Great Patriotic War and the immediate postwar decade. It traces the degree to which they proved to be new challenges, provoked original responses, or induced substantial changes and adaptation by the party-state. Most of these processes proved not to be fundamentally new phenomena, prompted by the war for the first time. Rather, a substantial degree of continuity was maintained, as the issues already present within the Soviet dynamic were increased and deepened by the conflict. Consequently, the regime's responses were also usually drawn from the cache of already tried approaches. Yet although the war did not induce any truly original modifications to the regime's practices, it was characterized by a severity of scale on which these processes now took place.

This aspect, combined with the demands of the postbellum emergence of the Cold War framework, did eventually force on the Soviet leadership a considerable departure from their traditional policy initiatives. This readjustment would take place during the last five years of Stalin's reign, under the aegis of Georgii Malenkov. Malenkov's role in the formation of the postwar Soviet state, however, has been substantially underestimated by the current scholarship. As illustrated in chapter five, the consequences of his tenure in power are wide-reaching in terms of the development of the Soviet postwar elite pattern.

While this work is not intended to be an exhaustive resource on the war's impact, it engages with the fundamental features of the conflict's impact on the contemporary Soviet polity vis-à-vis the examination of the Red/Expert dynamic, the role of the demographic changes induced by the admission of the new Communists, and the political

relationship between the center and the periphery (both in geographic terms of the capital and the provinces, but also between the party and state structures).

Many of these issues were deeply interconnected, forming integral parts of the general framework that provided the background for the Kremlin's decision making paradigm. Although some of these processes have been examined, often in minute detail,² much of the scholarship has explored them in relative isolation from each other, rather than as part of a mutually reinforcing system.³ A more holistic, broad-based approach, thus, presents an opportunity for a fresh look at some of the issues that have defined the historiography of the era.

It is the contention of this work that the core issue found at the center of the above paradigm was the persistent shortage of qualified manpower afflicting the Soviet elite. This problem did not originate with the establishment of the USSR. Rather, as discussed in chapter one, it was in fact an inherited dilemma that afflicted the Muscovite state and the Imperial bureaucracy before them, as the Russian state had to deal with the problem of governing a society spread over vast distances, connected by poor infrastructure and afflicted by low literacy.

Although the eras of pre-Petrine and post-Petrine Russia presented substantially divergent sociopolitical systems, they maintained considerable continuities as well, particularly in their approach to resolving the dilemma of cadre recruitment.⁴ Specifically, even as the Muscovite state outsourced the education of its service elite to the gentry, and Imperial Russia invested considerable resources into evolving a

² Jonathan Harris, *The Split in Stalin's Secretariat, 1939–1948* (New York, Lexington Books, 2008);

³ Susan J. Linz, ed., *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), 173.

⁴ Richard Hellie, "The Structure of Modern Russian History: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Russian History* 4, no. 1 (1977): 22.

professional bureaucratic caste, both had to come to some sort of accommodation with the social stratum from which they had to recruit the members of the governing caste. The expenditure of resources required to achieve the necessary education level severely limited the pool of human reserves suitable for recruitment.⁵ Just as the tsars had to compromise with the gentry and military autocracy, the Romanovs had no choice but to seek a certain accommodation with the emergent professional classes.⁶

Building on the existing scholarship, this work attempted to demonstrate the extent to which the cataclysm of the October Revolution and the civil war reversed many of the gains made by the state in producing a self-sustaining, professionalized service elite.⁷ Moreover the traditional problem of the qualified cadre scarcity was exacerbated by the unique features of the new political system. The pre-Revolutionary professionals and intelligentsia were not only scattered and decimated physically by the Revolution and the war, but also delegitimized by the changed ideological structure.⁸ The nonparty experts, unversed in the intricacies of the Marxist-Leninist discourse were immediately suspect in the eyes of the new regime.

This component to the new process of elite formation produced a twofold effect. Significantly it set up an enduring dichotomy in the party's policy-formation paradigm. A conflict would thus be germinated between the fundamentalists and the reformers, the ideologue faction and the pragmatists.⁹ The tendency of the pragmatists was to adhere to

⁵ Donald Ostrowski, "The Facade of Legitimacy: Exchange of Power and Authority in Early Modern Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 3, (2002): 542.

⁶ B. N. Shaptalov, *Rossia v poiskakh effektivnosti* (Moscow, 2003), 106.

⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 62–65.

⁸ William G. Rosenberg, "Introduction: NEP Russia as a 'Transitional' Society," in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed., Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 6.

⁹ David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-War Russia* (New York: Oxford University press, 2007), 37.

the traditional method of Russian policy and come to an accommodation with the social stratum capable of supplying the members of the administrative elite. This propensity would periodically clash with the insistence of the fundamentalists on ideological purity and literacy as the overriding and paramount marker of belonging to that elite.

This, in turn, contributed to another consequence of the ideological framework of the new order. In effect, the dual nature of the governmental structure of the Soviet state established a new competitor for the already scarce resource of the educated, literate professionals. Whereas under previous Russian regimes, this social stratum was simply pressed to provide suitable members of the service elite, the situation within the ideological framework of the USSR was uniquely different. The would-be member of the *nomenklatura* was now faced with a double burden of acquiring not simply the professional education, but also functional literacy in the Bolshevik theoretical precepts.

This situation, of course, contributed to the conflict between the ideologues and pragmatists, and would become even more complex due to the compromise following the Great Break. In the wake of that process, the regime reached a consensus with the white collar professionals and the intelligentsia, allowing considerable numbers of them to join the ranks of the party.¹⁰ Yet this was an imperfect solution that simply served to internalize the dichotomy even deeper within the interparty dynamic itself. The tension between the nonparty experts and the Bolsheviks never fully disappeared, but following the inclusion of a great many technocrats into the party, the primary focus of the conflict shifted. It now resided mainly within the confines of the elite, of which the technocrats

¹⁰ Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917–1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 116.

were now part. Distrusted, suspected of disloyalty, and subject to purges, yet they were now unmistakably a faction of the ruling class.¹¹

This work attempted to demonstrate that despite widespread opinion among some scholars that politics were put on hold during the war, this cyclical pattern of policy disagreement was maintained. As chapters four and five demonstrate, the competing platforms of the two factions continued to exert their influence on the course of the Soviet domestic initiatives, escalating as the conflict began to reach its denouement and continued well into the postwar era culminating in 1952.

In fact, the dilemmas produced by the compromises of the 1920s became an integral part of the policy-formation dynamic within the party. There remained significant continuities in the issues facing the Kremlin and the solutions attempted by the party. The tension between the Reds and the Experts was progressively strengthened, as the pragmatists increasingly adopted the technocratic outlook of the new members of the elite. The process was not one-sided of course, especially prior to the war. Although it was often imperfect and simplistic, the technocrats admitted into the party substantially adopted the ideological framework of the system. As Stephen Kotkin elucidated in his work, the Soviet elite's fundamental commitment to the creation of a socialist society unencumbered by the uncertainty of the market system never truly wavered.¹² That essential commonality formed a solid foundation that tied together the new members of the elite, as well as the rival factions of pragmatists and the ideologues.

¹¹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 91–92.

¹² Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 31.

As shown in chapter two, however, the war rapidly accelerated the trend of an influx of white collar professionals into the party. The unprecedented level of devastation inflicted by the German onslaught started a chain reaction, of sorts, that produced a wide-scale turnover of cadres within the party ranks. Ironically, the system worked and the institutions prepared in the regime's anticipation of a conflict were able to substantially fulfill the demands of the moment by mobilizing vast numbers of the apparatus to the front. In fact, they continued to do so throughout the war, spurred by the necessity of maintaining a cohesive Bolshevik presence among the troops. Yet the continuing and consistently massive casualties suffered by the Red Army did not spare the conscripted apparatchiks. Within the first two years of the war, the demographic profile of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was dramatically changed.

The overwhelming majority of the new Communists admitted during the war were comprised of soldiers, utilizing legislation passed in 1941 that changed the parameters of acceptability for the *frontoviks*.¹³ These new rubrics were a result of the renewed prominence of the pragmatist outlook within the elite. Faced with the crisis threatening the very survival of the party-state, the worthiness of a perspective Bolshevik was now measured by the solid, practical potential of the candidate. Ideological purity now mattered less than one's bravery at the front or professionalism as a warrior. A similar ethos was rapidly adopted by the civilian apparatus as well.

The process of increasingly recruiting from among the professional classes, which was subject to reverses during the 1930s, regained its full vitality as the party's focus changed toward practical results of economic success. As the archival documents

¹³ *KPSS v Resoliutsiakh i Resheniakh s'yezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* (Volume 7: 1938–1945) (Moscow: Politizdat, 1985), 238.

examined in this work indicate, the Kremlin was fully aware of the danger presented by the new recruits, whose grasp on the theoretical fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism was uncertain. They were, after all, drawn from the “shallow reserve,” to use Lev Mekhlis’s memorable phrase.¹⁴ Moreover, the compromise of ideological standards did not deliver universally beneficial results. Due to the scale of the new admissions, prompted by the lack of manpower necessary to engage in thorough vetting, many among the new Communists were as deficient in the practical aspects of their duties as they were in the theoretical basics.¹⁵

In effect, the party was engaged in a vast dragnet. This phenomenon, largely overlooked by the scholarship of the era, created far-reaching implications both for the contemporary and postwar sociopolitical evolution of the system. The admission of an unprecedented number of people from potentially useful social classifications signified a hope that some among them would be able to be effective in their new posts with little further investment by the state. The work with the new Communists was minimal, the rest of the apparatus simply too overwhelmed by other demands on their time.¹⁶ This situation reverberated and combined with another aspect of the wartime policy—the center-periphery dynamic.

The scarcity of qualified personnel and the poor infrastructure traditionally resulted in the necessity of the Russian state delegating a certain amount of autonomy to the local grandees. The war could not help but affect the relationship between the central party organs and the provincial party committees. Forced to economize the qualified

¹⁴ “Prilozhenie k resoliutsii TsK o roste partii,” RGASPI (14 June 1946) f.17, op.122, d.189, l.149.

¹⁵ B. Borisov, *Zapiski sekretaria gorkoma* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1964), 33–34.

¹⁶ Richard J. Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front During World War II* (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers, 1994), 12–13.

manpower more than ever, the Kremlin had no choice but to extend the autonomy of the local party bosses in order to maximize their ability to marshal the necessary resources. Yet the provincial apparatus had to deal with limitations similar to those afflicting the party as a whole. Faced with a paradoxical situation of swelling party ranks and a continuing shortage of qualified manpower, several trends that had been stringently condemned and combated as recently as the Great Terror were not only reborn but accelerated. As discussed in chapter two, the effect of the demographic revolution was especially visible in the tendency of provincial leaders to “cocoon.”

Put in the position of strict responsibility for fulfilling the often unrealistic agricultural and industrial goals, the local party bosses saw no choice but to engage in ruthless prioritizing. There were simply no margins for error, no spare resources for investment in the education and training of the new generation of the apparatchiks. Instead, the minority of visibly competent (and personally loyal) cadres were identified and brought into the patron-client network centered on the local *obkom* secretary. As a result, the authority of such party grandees within their bailiwicks grew considerably, reaching near-absolute proportions and inevitably resulting in increasing levels of corruption and malfeasance.¹⁷ The center had little recourse and stood apart—as long as the plans were being fulfilled.

Especially troubling to the ideologues was the fact that such networks were not, as a rule, limited to the party apparatus. Just as the provincial party chiefs saw little reason to extend their patronage to the (from their perspective) useless secretaries of the primary party organizations, they also viewed the separation between the state and party apparatus as purely nominal. The demand for genuine professional expertise was simply too great,

¹⁷ Ibid.

and this demand pressured the components of the Soviet edifice, theoretically intended as mutual counters, into increased proximity, cooperation, and eventual confluence. Worse yet, the process was distinctly dominated by the co-optation of the party members into the technocratic ethos of the managerial elite.¹⁸

Viewed from this perspective, a new avenue is opened to address the ongoing debate about the centralizing vs. centrifugal effect of the war. Defying simple labels, the Soviet system engaged in a complex process of adaptation. This approach combined a degree of political initiative being ceded to the provincial party leaders, yet it also prompted a growing codependence between various branches of the system—state, party, and the industrial/economic complex. This produced a centralizing effect, paralleled both at the locales and on the grander scale of the USSR as a whole. In both schemas, the party served as the overarching, coordinating authority able to facilitate economic processes. This approach to centralization of party authority, however, would not be fully embraced until Malenkov's ascension in 1948.

As the war reached its turning point in 1943 and the immediate specter of collapse steadily receded, the regime rapidly shifted its position, attempting to severely limit the recruitment and to purify the party ranks. Yet, as illustrated in chapter three, the momentum and the inertia of the extant trends, combined with the continuing demands on the party apparatus for plan fulfillment and increased industrial production, made any gains by the ideologues ephemeral. The closing years of the war and the immediate postbellum era were dominated by the attempts of the party-state to come to terms with

¹⁸ Viktor Cherpanov, *Vlast' i voina: Stalinskii mekhanizm gosudarstvennogo upravleniia v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Izvestiia, 2006), 233.

the phenomenon of the new Communists and the linked issues. Their first, instinctive reaction was to turn to the ideologues for solutions.

Andrei Zhdanov, who rose to power in 1943–1944, represented the resurgence of the fundamentalists and their platform. That platform was based on the traditional conviction that the solution to the problem would be found in the combined processes of limited recruitment, increased political education, and a more rigid separation of the party from the immediate day-to-day responsibilities of managing the economy. The place of the party as the ideological overseer would thus be reasserted, and the pressure on its members to split their focus between professional and political literacy would cease, allowing a re-Bolshevizing effect to take place. Concurrently, since it was Moscow that maintained the monopoly on framing the ideological policy and educational institutions, these reforms would limit the centrifugal tendency and bring the provincial party organizations under stricter central control.

Yet, as discussed in chapter four, such reforms could not, and did not, succeed, as long as the Kremlin was not willing to either relinquish control of the economy or accept a decline in its performance. The size of the administrative elite was simply insufficient to supply two, rigidly separate governing classes. Combined with the institutional propensity of the party to consistently increase its penetration of society, and consequent responsibility for the ever-growing array of managerial duties, Zhdanov's reforms failed to substantially change the new face of the party.

They were also unsuccessful in inducing a more rigid separation between the party and the state. The prestige and importance gathered by the managerial apparatus throughout the war (especially through the vehicle of the ministerial institutions) retained

its durability, as did its connections with the local party structures.¹⁹ This too was a function of the Kremlin's inability to diminish the priority it placed on maintaining economic performance. Furthermore, since the problem of the qualified cadre shortage was still unsolved, the original impetus that prompted the convergence of the party and state structures was still in force. The circumstances thus continued to incentivize close cooperation between the members of these branches of the system.²⁰ The kinship of ability to get things done was proving stronger than identity based on common ideological education.

In that respect the ideologues were engaged in a losing struggle in support of the theoretical conception of the party as a pure lodestone of ideological knowledge. Such purity, required distance from the everyday realities of governing. Yet the features of the state the party inherited and the system they built resulted in the constant expansion of party's responsibilities, extending their direct control over ever-widening spheres of industry, agriculture, and military expertise. As a consequence of these trends, the apparatchiks increasingly placed a premium on acquiring technical, rather than ideological, competence and steadily moved away from the party's core strength and the ultimate source of their legitimacy.

As the background to these trends, the issue of the new Communists continued to loom, as this work attempted to underline. The early fears of this cohort becoming new Decembrists did not materialize. Instead, exhausted by the war and inculcated in the values of loyalty, the veterans and their civilian counterparts were often ardent supporters

¹⁹ V. D. Esakov and E. S. Levina, *Stalinskie "Sudy Chesti": Delo "KR,"* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 283.

²⁰ "Protokol zasedaniia Orgburo TsK VKP(b) o khode obsuzhdeniia zakrytogo pis'ma TsK VKP(b) o dele professorov Kliuevoi i Roskina v partiinykh organizatsiiakh," RGASPI (27 August 1947) f.17, op.116, d.317, l.2.

of the system whose victory they ensured. The ideological literacy of this generation of Communists was facile, often consisting of veneration of Stalin, who, to them, symbolized the regime as a whole. As Petro Grigorenko recounted, “The war’s end also brought complete spiritual reassurance. Doubts I had now disappeared. To me, Stalin was once again the ‘great infallible leader’ and ‘the brilliant military commander.’ I forgot the stupid mistakes and the crimes, or I saw them in a new light, as manifestations of Stalin’s brilliance.”²¹

While this outlook precluded any genuine, overt threat to the regime, it did factor into their view of the party-state and its responsibilities. And their demands could no longer be readily dismissed.²² The value-system shaped by their war experiences prioritized practicality and a focus on tangible, technocratic results. The importance of the ideological underpinnings of the system as a mobilizational tool within the nonmarket system of the Soviet Union had been significantly marginalized. Many of the new Communists witnessed, and were themselves part of, the popular impetus of the Soviet citizenry to engage in the struggle against Germany. This often appeared to be self-motivated to a considerable degree by the direct, universally understood, and shared desire to triumph against the hated enemy. Many implicitly assumed that the situation would continue indefinitely and further investment in ideology—at the expense of technical expertise—was unwise.

As *Zhdanovshchina* ran its course, dissatisfaction with its goals began to mount among the new Communists and, combined with its visible failure to achieve those goals, forced the regime toward an accommodation with the technocrats. Both the new members

²¹ Petro G. Grigorenko, *Memoirs* (London: W. W. Norton, 1982), 200.

²² Ibid.

of the party and the older apparatchiks—who were nevertheless shaped in similar ways by the war—provided support for the displacement of the ideologues in 1948 with the pragmatist faction led by Malenkov.

The impact of that interval in Soviet politics, between the fall of Zhdanov in 1948 and the death of Stalin in 1953, has been unjustly and substantially marginalized by historians of the USSR. The tendency among scholars is to treat that era largely as an interregnum, a footnote to the inevitable rise of Nikita Khrushchev. Malenkov is often simply dismissed as “a natural loser.”²³ Yet, as the last chapter of this dissertation discussed, although ultimately unsuccessful in the power struggle that followed Stalin’s demise, it was under the aegis of Malenkov that the party-state made significant gains in resolving the cyclical patterns inherent in the Soviet and dealing with the impact of wartime adaptations.

The ultimate responsibility of Malenkov for the reforms adopted by the USSR during this period is still in dispute. Certainly the power of Stalin continued to be central to any significant changes in the policy of the party. Yet, much as was the case with Zhdanov, the recent work done in this area suggests that while Stalin was the final arbiter, he picked the front men for such policy shifts carefully, identifying people with appropriate beliefs and allowing them a certain autonomy in the execution of the broad goals he set them.²⁴

Malenkov brutally decimated the remaining leadership of the ideologues and embarked on a far-reaching alternative policy. Rather than focusing on ideological education and attempting to maintain the separation of the state and the party, he

²³ Vladislav Zubkov and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: from Stalin to Khrushchev* (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 173.

²⁴ Nikolai Kremontsov, *Stalinist Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 130–35.

sanctified the very processes that Zhdanov attempted to reverse. Through the legislative changes codified by the Nineteenth Congress in 1952, the fundamental identity shift occurred as the party firmly assumed its role as the governmental institution directly involved in running the economy of the USSR. This necessitated a compromise with the technocrats, who would now be full-fledged partners within the ruling elite, rather than barely tolerated careerists, perennially suspected of disloyalty and impurity.

Conversely, by legitimizing the process of amalgamation between the technical intelligentsia, state structure, and the party apparatus, Malenkov ensured that it was the party that remained the centrally important feature of the system. He embraced the party's role as an economic coordinator and shifted the focus away from its wardship of ideological purity as the core value. As a result, Malenkov was able to utilize Moscow's control of the economic system and parlay it into the centralizing, political control of the provincial party bosses.

The purges of the Leningrad and Gosplan Affairs served to weaken the ideologues—already discredited by Zhdanov's lack of success—and forced them to adopt the fundamental precepts of the new party line. This process was made easier still, of course, due to the aforementioned commonalities between the two factions. Much like the pragmatists, the ideologues were interested in maintaining the industrial growth of the state, for example. Nor was Malenkov any less interested than Zhdanov in ensuring the success of the socialist experiment. Both were intent on curtailing the autonomy of the periphery in relation to the center.

As this work demonstrated, the ideological component of the Soviet system remained central to the processes of framing both the dilemmas of the party-state and the

range of options available to it. Far from being a conflict between the blinkered Marxists and realistic technocrats, the struggle between the ideologues and pragmatists was fought within a strictly delineated theoretical paradigm, where even the pragmatists were separated by a deep mental gulf from any potential analogue outside of the confines of the Soviet system.

The Soviet Union remained a revolutionary state, committed to a very specific vision of modernity, the most modern modernity so to speak. This vision was of the perfectly egalitarian, collectivist state populated by a new type of citizen, qualitatively different than those of the bourgeois, liberal democracies. The path to that future was inherently dependent on the correct interpretation of the ideological tenets provided by the roadmap of Marxism-Leninism. The party was seen by its members as the integral and paramount feature of the modernizing project due to its unique expertise vis-à-vis the ideological inheritance.

Thus while Zhdanov and Malenkov differed as to the tactical accommodations available to the regime, neither ever proposed a truly radical deviation from the bedrock assumption of the final goal – a non-market, illiberal society governed by the party. The source of continuing contradictions was the dual nature of the party's legitimizing ethos, split between seemingly compatible commitment to remaining the pure carriers of Marxist blueprint for the future and its role as the modernizers of the state. Even the Reds among its members perceived themselves as utterly rationalist heirs of the positivist tradition of the Russian intelligentsia. The ideology was a practical rather than romantic feature of the Soviet Project; it was the plan for building a better future. The party's Marxist identity, in other words, was inextricably tied in with its view of itself as the

modernizing force within the society. This malleability of ideology even as its central tenets remained implicitly beyond questioning has been ably illustrated by Ethan Pollock, who is one of the few scholars who doesn't overlook Malenkov's tenure and impact in terms of establishing the foundation for the post-Stalin order.²⁵

The ultimate goals of the both blocs were thus broadly identical, the debate between them rooted in the two divergent paths toward achieving them. Nor was that debate one that either faction could claim to truly win. The inherent contradictions of the system and its governing ideology presented a congenital paradox to the elite of the USSR. From the beginning the revolutionary, nihilistic impulse of the Bolsheviks had to be tempered as they found themselves compromising with the remnants of the ancient regime and incorporating both the problems and the solutions of the Imperial Russia into the new socio-political matrix. Interaction between the traditional features and the new aspects of the party-state produced a contradictory and unstable equilibrium that had to be perennially renegotiated. The problems that seemed on the verge of being solved by the pre-Revolutionary state mutated into the dilemmas that defied easy answers within the Soviet "ideocracy." The regime's attempts to reconcile ideology and reality in the everyday business of governance resulted in the necessity of maintaining or adapting some of the traditional institutions to fill the gap between the two.

This process, subsumed within the inter-party philosophical debates, proved impossible to resolve as the party-state was faced with the fact that the ideological component of its foundation conflicted with the modernizing facet. The long-term health of the party demanded adaptations that threatened the long-term interests of the modernizing state, and vice-versa. Ultimately this was not a situation where a

²⁵ Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 214–15.

compromise solution could be reached, and the choice in favor of one of the legitimizing trends within the party's identity eventually had to be made.

Zhdanov was fundamentally correct when he charged that moving away from the party's role as a removed guardian of the ideological purity would, over time, weaken the system. As Stalin himself put it, without the theoretical underpinnings, any industrial or economic gains made by the party were "castles built on sand." In the long term, that proved to be a correct prediction, as the shifting focus of the new elite undermined the legitimacy of the party state.

Yet the pragmatists' counterarguments were equally compelling. Only through a co-optation of the technocrats and utilization of their focus on practical gains could the Soviet Union maintain itself as a modern, industrialized state. In that respect, the long-term interests of the party and the state were, in a very real sense, at odds. Malenkov's compromise laid the foundation that both extended the life of the system and contributed heavily to the process that hollowed it out, eventually ensuring its collapse. Even he and his supporters, however, were heavily ideological and committed to the success of the Soviet experiment within its rubrics.

In that respect, the underestimation of the role of Malenkov and the pragmatists is paralleled by the overestimation of Zhdanov. The customary focus on the career of this "last ideologue" is matched by the propensity of the scholarship to concentrate on the immediate postwar period of 1946–1948. A conflation of the emerging Cold War paradigm with the domestic policy decision making hinders the examination of the fact that Zhdanov's impact on the subsequent development of the Soviet Union was in fact rather limited. It was rather the last five years of Stalin's reign that saw an establishment

of the foundation that would define the postwar order. Thus Zhdanov represented the old framework, defining the cycle that, in fact, started during the war itself, in the fateful year of 1943. It hinged on the attempt by the ideologues to apply essentially the same tactics as they utilized throughout the prewar era to the problems of the new epoch. Their failure to adapt signaled their demise and transformation, which in turn marked a significant dividing line of the period all too often generalized as monolithic “late Stalinism.”

The synthesis forged by Malenkov did not represent a comprehensive resolution of the inherent contradiction of the party-state. The renegotiated equilibrium allowed the technocrats to function as a fully recognized part of the elite. Yet in the long term their ethos grew steadily at the expense of the ideological identity of the new service class. The Communist Party unquestionably saw itself as a modernizing force. Yet, as it grew into its role as the governing edifice (rather than its original conception as spiritual guardian and supervisor) the paradox continued to grow as well. The demands of commitment to ideological purity continued to conflict with the practical needs of running the state. Malenkov’s compromise bridged the gap growing within the party’s dual commitment to its modernizing impulse and its own philosophical survival. The conflict could not be masked forever, however, and the dissonance between the needs of the state and the long-term health of the party as the primary well of Marxism-Leninism would continue to manifest, increasingly at the expense of the latter.

The beacon of the alternative path to modernity lit by the Soviet Union proved irresistible to a multitude of pre-modern societies. The specter of a shortcut to the future was a great lure, made more tempting still by the fact that beneath the façade of a revolutionary state (utilizing mass politics, mass consumption, mass culture and social

welfare) the Soviet model offered a version of modernization that was composed of a compromise between traditional institutions and modes of behavior and those of the West. The cultural break required by this alternative was arguably less dramatic than the requirements of complete Westernization and the uncertainty and unpredictability of its individualistic, market-oriented organizing principles.

Yet the very endurance of the features, buttressed by the ideological necessities of the new regimes, that made adaptations to the totalitarian model of modernity (with its continuing promise of communal society, reliance on authoritarian rather than democratic principle of rule, continuing importance of personalized modes of association, paternalism of the governing institutions, etc) easier for some of the traditional societies, also made the choice offered by the Soviet Union a false hope and blind alley, rather than a shortcut.

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