Terror By Quota: State Security from Lenin to Stalin (An Archival Study)

Paul R. Gregory

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Yale University Press
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Introduction
Dictators, Their Enemies, and Repression

THIS BOOK TELLS HOW the Stalin regime dealt with its enemies: how it spied on, arrested, sentenced, and deported them, forced them to labor in its Gulag, and executed them. Unlike some short-lived regimes, the Soviet Union existed for three-quarters of a century. It endured for a quarter-century in its most extreme form, coinciding with Stalin's rule from his rise to power until his death in March 1953. With the opening of its state and party archives in the 1990s, the Soviet Union became history's best-documented totalitarian system. There is no better source for the study the interplay of dictatorship and repression. The system of repression was in place well before Stalin's one-man rule, but it was Stalin who applied this system with more force and brutality than his predecessors likely could have anticipated. That repression preceded Stalin is a significant fact that decouples it, to a degree, from the personality of Stalin, but he looms large in this study.

HOW AND WHY?

This book is about the "punitive organs" (*karatel'nye organy,* or simply "organs") and their state security agents, which, through various names changes, were called (in chronological order): the VChK (Cheka), OGPU, NKVD, MVD, and finally the KGB.[1] During their peak activity

(1937–1938), these punitive organs employed, according to official definitions and statistics, 270,730 persons.[2] We tell how these punitive organs were organized, who worked in them from the highest party officials to the lowest concentration camp guard, how their victims were chosen and punished, and what motivated their repressors. In a word, we explain the "working arrangements" of state security, or how these "organs" functioned.

Just as we study the working arrangements of Soviet enterprises, ministries, and state committees to understand the Soviet economy, so we must study the agencies of state security and their subdivisions to understand the role of terror and repression in the Soviet dictatorship. Most prominently, we must focus on how Stalin managed his secret police, how the system itself was organized, and how state security officials operated. But we must consider as well how repressive organs worked under Lenin and the "collective" rule prior to Stalin's victory in the power struggle, for the key pillars of repression were already in place under Lenin.

A deeper question is why the Soviet dictatorship, from the first days of Bolshevik power to its last days in late 1991, required more extensive and pervasive state security than other political systems. Insofar as the power and activity of state security organs peaked during the Stalin years, we must pay special attention to Stalin's use of state security—what did he wish to extract from them and was he successful?

In writing about Soviet repression, the highest priority should go to penetrating the shield of secrecy around the "organs" directly tasked with repression—the Cheka, OGPU, NKVD, and MVD. Although other agencies were involved in state security, such as the prosecutor's office, the courts, the civil police, and the military, they played subsidiary roles. To understand Nazi repression, it is necessary to know the workings of the Gestapo and SS. To comprehend Soviet repression, we must understand its primary "organs" of state security.

There is already a considerable archival literature on the Gulag administration,[3] but we still lack a comprehensive document-based account of its superior organization.[4] Robert Conquest (writing in 1985) noted: "It is a curious fact that, after nearly a half century, no real examination of the role of the NKVD . . . has been written" despite the fact that "the story of the NKVD in its period of maximum impact is of great moment."[5] The lack of such a study has been explained by closed

archives. In the 1980s, it was even difficult to determine major personnel changes within the KGB, much less how it worked or how its policies were changing. The most serious scholarly attempts were severely limited,[6] although relatively comprehensive accounts of the Cheka in the Civil War period of 1918–1921 could be constructed from published sources.[7] The main state security records were cloistered in the archives of the KGB and after the breakup of the USSR in those of the Federal Security Service (FSB). There are now enough chinks in this armor to write such an account.

STATES AND THEIR POLITICAL ENEMIES

All regimes have political enemies. Modern democracies must deal with domestic and foreign enemies, and this threat is magnified during periods of war or major international crisis. The United States took harsh action against suspected German and Japanese spies during World War II, government officials who had belonged to the Communist Party were removed from office in the 1950s, extensive antiterrorism measures were undertaken in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, and there were even rare cases of small-scale state action against presumed extremist groups (Waco, Ruby Ridge). Postwar Germany had to deal with a small group of radical urban terrorists (the Red Army Faction) in the 1970s, with the threat of infiltration by East German agents throughout the Cold War, and in the present with Neo-Nazi groups. National intelligence services from the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Germany, Pakistan, and some Middle Eastern countries cooperate against international terrorism.

In democracies, the battle against political enemies is conducted not by the regular police or military but by special police and intelligence agencies, such as the agencies under the U.S. Director of National Intelligence (the FBI, the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and others); the Federal Information Service (BND) and the Federal and State Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV and LfV) in Germany; or the Mossad and Aman Military Intelligence in Israel. Such agencies that protect against political enemies typically are granted wider powers and operate under less restrictive rules than their police counterparts.

Totalitarian regimes also combat political enemies with special polic-

ing organizations, but their approach to state security differs from that of democracies for a number of reasons.

First, democracies are more inclined to impose judicial or parliamentary oversight, whereas in a totalitarian state, state security is only answerable to the dictator.

Second, totalitarian regimes use broader definitions of what constitutes a political enemy. Accordingly, state security must deal with a larger number of state enemies, committing political "crimes" that would not be regarded as such elsewhere.

Third, whereas in democratic societies, there are administrative layers between state security and the chief executive, in totalitarian regimes, state security is a direct agent of the dictator.

Fourth, the methods applied against political enemies are less restricted in a totalitarian system by legal constraints, such as the need for judicial review, disavowal of torture, or rules of evidence.

Indeed, the archives confirm that these four fundamentals were firmly entrenched by the early 1920s, well before Stalin's dictatorship. The first Cheka minister, Feliks Dzerzhinsky, referred to the Cheka as the party's disciplined "warrior."[8] Even the highest party inspectorate could not monitor secret Cheka expenditures, and citizen complaints about illegal Chekist actions were turned over to its own presidium.[9] The Cheka disciplined its own and was directly answerable to the party and to no one else.

The decree of November 15, 1923 that founded the OGPU stated as its goals "the massing of the revolutionary forces of the republic in the battle against political and economic counterrevolution, espionage, and banditry."[10] Unlike other state security services, the OGPU's mandate covered both political and economic crimes, including some that appeared quite ordinary (such as banditry).

The Red Terror decree of September 1918 gave Cheka officers extraordinary powers, such as summary execution without a court proceeding. The 1923 OGPU decree "About Extraordinary Measures for the Defense of the Revolution" gave it the power to declare a state of emergency.[11] Soviet state security was not to be impeded by legal rules, but could use "simplified procedures" when it felt these to be necessary.

These features, as summarized by the editors of a major documentary series on state security, meant that "the real meaning of a central institution of state security was always broader than the function of a secret

police. It was oriented towards the resolution by extraordinary methods of a whole series of current political or economic tasks."[12]

Soviet punitive organs, at times, combined interior ministry functions, such as civil policing, border control, and fire services, as well as (the object of this inquiry) state security, such as counterintelligence, codes, foreign intelligence, and protection of state and party leaders. They housed sinister subdivisions, or "main administrations" (*glavks*), which symbolized their excesses, such as Gulag (Main Administration of Camps); GUGB (Main Administration of State Security), later to become an independent ministry; and GUKR (Main Administration of Counterintelligence) or Smersh ("Death to Spies"). During those periods when the state punitive organs combined interior ministry and state security functions, they had more employees than any other state agency, but their core consisted of a much smaller number of party "warriors" who investigated, arrested, and punished enemies of the state under the direct orders of the supreme authority.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF REPRESSION

This book is not a political history. Rather, it is a political-economic analysis of two interrelated issues: the role of state security in a communist, or Stalinist, state, and the manner in which the communist, or Stalinist, state organized and motivated state security to carry out its tasks in an effective manner. We study how and why the party, as represented by Lenin, the Politburo, or Stalin alone, used state security to achieve its objectives. Our political-economic analysis assumes that the dictator's goals are well defined and that he organizes, utilizes, and motivates state security to achieve these goals.

Following the tradition of past studies of "working arrangements" of Soviet enterprises, we study Soviet state security agencies to understand their inner workings. Industrial ministries and their subordinated enterprises produced steel, grain, and machinery for the dictator. The OGPU, NKVD, and MVD produced another product for the dictator—repression.

Repression in Soviet parlance connoted punishment of persons who commit acts against the "worker and peasant" state. It was not a term applied to ordinary murderers, rapists, or armed robbers.[13] The most severe repression was reserved for those who "threaten the Soviet or-

der." *Terror* denoted extreme repression in terms of numbers of victims and brutality, applied to specific groups, such as Polish or German nationals or kulaks.

Principals and Agents

To apply a political economy approach to this subject, we must divide state security actors into principals (the ones issuing orders) and agents (the ones fulfilling orders). The underlying assumption is that "rational" actors on both sides make cost-benefit calculations based on self-interest. The actors in our state security drama are the "dictator" and his state security agents. The dictator's enemies close the circle.

Dictator. The dictator is in theory the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as represented by the Communist Party. Insofar as the party, as represented by its Politburo or, more broadly, the Central Committee (both under Stalin's control after 1930), automatically represented the working class, its enemy was an enemy of the people by definition. As Lenin declared: "Dictatorship of the proletariat is not possible other than through the Communist Party," and: "There is dictatorship of one party. We stand on this and cannot move from this foundation." Old Bolshevik Grigory Zinoviev expressed the same principle: "We should not be ashamed of what does not need to be concealed. Dictatorship of the party is that instrument we cannot refuse." And Stalin even more succinctly: "The party is the class."[14]

The party was the direct representative of workers and peasants; by definition, therefore, any enemy of the party, especially of its supreme leader, was an enemy of the worker-peasant state. As stated by Stalin in a letter to a trusted deputy (V. M. Molotov): the party, "occupied with the magnificent creation of socialism, . . . leads the proletariat into new battles, fighting against class enemies."[15] No one was allowed to ask whether Stalin was leading in the right direction.

"Dictator" hence refers to the person (Lenin, Stalin) or group of persons (the Politburo or the Central Committee) that made the key policy and personnel decisions of the country. Lenin, until his incapacitation, was the key decision maker for the party, although he appeared to accept input and debate from other top party leaders. In 1920, Lenin's Politburo consisted of five full members and three candidate members. The Central Committee had nineteen full members (including all Polit-

buro members) and twelve candidate members. After Lenin's departure from the political scene, party decisions were dominated by troikas or majorities of Politburo members, whose most important decisions were, on occasion, ratified by the Central Committee. In 1926, the Politburo had nine full members and five candidate members, while the Central Committee had expanded to fifty-two full members and thirty-four candidate members.[16] After Stalin's consolidation of power, the 1934 Politburo had ten full members and five candidate members, while the Central Committee burgeoned to seventy-one full members and sixty-eight candidate members.[17] Insofar as the power of the Politburo had been largely emasculated, the "dictatorship" of these years would have been Stalin and his inner circle.

Agents. The agents were *Chekists* or *Chekist-operational workers*—the "warriors" who carried out the battle "against distortions of the party line" on behalf of the dictator.[18] Chekists were distinguished from the military or police by their application of brutal force and their use of summary justice. Their broad mandate extended from suppression of foreign and domestic enemies to matters of economics. One party directive would call for a purge of Mensheviks in Azerbaizhan,[19] while another would order the protection of state supplies of precious metals "by experienced Chekist-operational workers."[20] When the party needed a special task carried out, be it political or economic, it turned to its Chekists.

In a multilayer organization, agents of the highest principal are principals to their agents, who are principals for their subordinates, and so on down the administrative chain. The Minister of State Security would be the direct agent of the dictator, his department heads would be his agents, and their section heads would be agents of department heads. The sequence of links between the top and the bottom is called the agency chain.

Enemies. The dictator's enemies are those who the dictator determines pose in some way a threat to political and economic stability. The early Bolsheviks first focused on enemies from the old regime, such as landlords, clergy, members of banned parties, and specialists. As time passed, Stalin's list expanded to party members who did not support his policies "in their hearts," the unemployed and homeless, minor criminals, slackers, gossips, and other "marginal elements" who did not meet the standards of the "new socialist man." During the Great Terror

Stalin's enemies became the Communist elite who failed to meet his standards and needed to be replaced.

Stalin's list of enemies constituted a disparate group, but the majority of them were treated as political enemies, even if their offenses appeared divorced from politics. If Stalin had limited himself to those actively seeking to remove him from office or to undermine socialism, his enemies would have been few in number. As it was, of the 4.8 million arrested by the OGPU or NKVD between 1921 and 1938, 3.3 million were charged with counterrevolutionary crimes.[21] The overwhelming majority of these were charged under Article 58 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code "On Counterrevolution."

We must be perfectly clear about the meaning of "enemies." An enemy is anyone who falls under the dictator's definition of enemy, whether or not outside observers would agree that that person in some way poses a threat. With this semantic approach, persons are "innocent" if they do not meet the dictator's definition of enemy. Therefore, it is conceptually possible to divide Stalin's victims into "guilty" or "innocent." An innocent victim would be one repressed by state security who failed to meet any of the dictator's criteria of enemy. Accordingly, a former Menshevik, even one trying his best to support the Soviet regime, was an enemy, A common worker caught up in a sweep to meet repression quotas would have been innocent.

The principal-agent problem. A "rational" dictator would wish to organize state security so as to avoid principal-agent problems; that is, instances where his agents act contrary to his interests. Principal-agent problems arise when agents have different goals or objectives from the principal and possess more information than the principal, which allows them to conceal from him their opportunistic behavior. Simple theory, therefore, suggests that the Soviet dictator could minimize principal-agent problems by choosing agents who shared his goals, by rewarding agents who carrying out his orders faithfully, and by monitoring agents closely to detect opportunism.

The dictator must also settle on an organizational structure for state security that limits opportunistic behavior. Organizing state security should be less complicated than organizing production. State security produces one basic product—arrests and convictions of state enemies, while an economy produces hundreds of thousands or millions of products and requires a more complicated structure. Simple logic suggests

that the dictator would opt for a state security administration with as few links as possible—a "short" agency chain. In the economy, the administrative distance between Stalin and an enterprise manager was great, with a planning commission, a minister, and a branch administration standing in between. In this case, Stalin's ability to exercise tight control over plant managers was weak. Presumably, in the crucial matter of defending against hostile forces, Stalin would have wanted to minimize the administrative distance between himself and the actual executors of repression.

Rationality

Rational choice theory rests upon three assertions: that people are not driven but choose; that their choices are in conformity with their preferences; and that "when a person chooses to incur a cost that could otherwise be avoided, there must be some expected benefit . . . that is equal to or greater than the cost."[22] Soviet enterprise managers were "rational" when they hoarded inputs, distorted output mixes, or reduced quality; they were simply responding to the incentives and punishments of the planned system. The rationality assumption, as applied to repression and state security, claims that the actors—the dictator, Chekists, and enemies of the state—made cost-benefit calculations in conformity with their preferences. Their behavior was the outcome of weighing costs and benefits of alternative actions.

Stalin's state security agents may have been perfectly rational in arresting innocent parties, fabricating confessions, hiring flawed associates, or competing with each other for increases in execution "limits." They, like their economic counterparts, were simply weighing costs and benefits of their actions in the framework of prevailing incentives and punishments.

Stalin's execution, imprisonment, and deportation of millions of Soviet citizens have been interpreted in different ways. Some attribute his actions to paranoia or even worse forms of mental illness.[23] Others argue that, for Stalin, whose formative years were spent in the violent Caucasus, terror was "business as usual."[24] Stalin chose repression because he knew of no other options. Yet others interpret Stalin's repressions as the logical acts of a rational totalitarian dictator, designed to maximize political power and economic achievements.[25]

The assumption of rationality places logical priority on motivations that are general, such as "Stalin killed a million people in 1937 because he believed this would ensure his regime" over those that are idiosyncratic ("Stalin killed a million people in 1937 because of a quirk in his personality").[26] Although both interpretations may be true in some sense, the possibility of generalization offered by rational choice allows us to apply one historical experience to a broad range of applications. Most importantly, rational choice allows us to "test" the hypothesis that Stalin and his repression agents were rational by examining whether his repression policies and the actions taken by his loyalists in executing them were consistent with the behavior of a dictator who has well defined goals (such as remaining in power or economic growth) and of agents who wish to keep their jobs, be rewarded, and avoid repression themselves.

Rationality versus Reason and Morality

In political economy, "rational" does not denote "having reason or understanding." Rather it means taking actions that optimize stated objectives or goals, moral or immoral. Altruists are rational when they organize their resources effectively to distribute goods to the poor. They are irrational if they foolhardily use expensive intermediaries who divert excessive amounts of donated funds to their own pockets. Bank robbers are rational when they design and execute clever plans that allow them to steal large amounts of cash with a low probability of being caught. They are irrational if they enter a bank with no plan of escape. The suicide bombers of the World Trade Center will have been rational if their actions raise the chances of spreading radical Muslim ideology. In these instances, rationality is judged in terms of goals, in one case laudable, in the second case, criminal, and in the third case barbaric. A dictator whose goal is the accumulation of total power in his own hands may be rational in executing rivals or imprisoning huge numbers of his citizens; he is irrational if these policies increase the likelihood of overthrow. The rationality of behavior is judged simply by whether it is designed ex ante to promote goals in an effective and efficient manner. The goals themselves, no matter how extreme or unpalatable, are not the subject of assessment. Nor does rational choice claim the dictator's actions will always lead to the desired result ex post. Dictators, like others, can make mistakes.

Rationality is by no means to be confused with morality. Stalin's arrests of the wives and relatives of his closest associates—often taken as a proof of his extreme paranoia and savagery—were morally repugnant and sadistic. However, for a dictator who must be assured of the absolute loyalty of his closest subordinates, their continuing loyal service after the arrests of those closest to them was the ultimate test.

Among others, Stalin arrested the wives of his loyal deputy, V. M. Molotov, of his personal secretary, A. N. Poskrebyshev, and of his titular head of state, Mikhail Kalinin. The impending arrest of Nikolai Yezhov's wife was thwarted by her suicide in November 1938 using poisons supplied by Yezhov himself, who in his own confession declared: "I was afraid that after her arrest she would tell all."[27] Stalin arrested the brother of his industrial czar, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, and the impending arrest of Lazar Kaganovich's brother was also thwarted by his suicide.

All, except the fiery Ordzhonikidze, passed the test by agreeing to the repression.[28] Molotov at first refused to vote for his wife's arrest, but belatedly gave in: "I acknowledge my heavy sense of remorse for not having prevented Zhemchuzhina [Molotov's wife], a person dear to me, from making mistakes and from forming ties with anti-Soviet Jewish nationalists . . .[29] Kaganovich did not take one step to defend his brother, stating that it was a "matter for competent authorities."[30] Both Molotov and Kaganovich lived to an advanced age and remained staunch supporters of Stalin until they died. Stalin's bizarre loyalty test may have made some sense after all.

THE MODEL

If a dictator's actions are "rational" in the above sense, his behavior can be modeled. Modeling means that we can formulate theories or propositions about how any dictator in such circumstances will behave, such as creating rules that promote excessive zeal or adopting distinctive recruiting practices to ensure loyalty. Models of dictators offer a powerful tool to generalize about dictatorial behavior, as they can be applied to different times and places.

It is extremely important for the reader to understand that we do not believe that such modeling will capture all or even most of reality. The model may explain 20 to 40 percent; the rest is explained by chance, initial conditions, or historical accidents. What we are testing is whether the model explains a portion of reality in a systematic and consistent

fashion that can be applied in other settings, which are themselves affected by different factors of chance and preconditions. In the language of statistics, we are not testing whether our model produces a good fit; that would be a difficult task. Rather we are testing whether the variables in our model are statistically significant.

There is a young but rich literature on the theory of dictatorship produced by economists and political scientists.[31] We use a series of models found in this literature to capture the specific phenomenon observed, such as the recruitment of Chekists, the organization of state security, and motivation and rewards. We begin with one model, Wintrobe's political exchange analysis of authoritarian dictatorship. Wintrobe defines such dictatorships as involving "massive government intervention into the economic and social lives of the citizenry, motivated by utopian goals of one kind or another and exemplified by communist dictatorships, Nazi Germany, and possibly contemporary Iran."[32] It is a model of political exchange because the dictator offers the citizenry goods, such as roads, hospitals, schools, food, cars, vacations, and privileges to specific persons or groups, typically in the form of rents. By "rents" we mean offering something at less than its market value and perhaps even at no charge. Such transactions constitute political exchange because the dictator expects political benefits in return.

Political exchanges are costly to the dictator; providing goods to citizens consumes the dictator's limited resources and rents could have gone to other purposes. The dictator uses political exchange to achieve benefits, which, as a first approximation, we assume to be political power. Such power ensures the dictator's authority and protects him from rivals. The dictator produces "power" by combining loyalty and repression. The more loyalty or repression, the greater his power.[33]

The dictator may wish to accumulate enough power to just stay in office, or he may want to maximize power—for him there can never be too much. But a dictator cannot produce infinite power, for four reasons.

First, insofar as resources must be expended in political exchanges to purchase loyalty and to pay for repression, the dictator will be limited by his budget constraint—his tax base, broadly defined.

Second, the dictator may have other goals besides political power. He may wish a luxurious lifestyle for himself and his immediate circle, or he may need a surplus for investment. An economy without investment will not grow, which limits the future resources of the dictator.

Third, the amount of loyalty "supplied" by the population may have an upper limit, which is dictated by the interaction with repression. At low levels of repression, citizens and special groups satisfied with the dictator's provision of goods or rents are content to offer their support and loyalty. However, as repression increases and applies to broader segments of the population, some former loyalists will fear that they themselves could be repressed, especially given that the dictator may have trouble distinguishing loyalists from enemies. At high levels of repression, loyalty is maximized, and the dictator cannot expand power beyond that point.

Fourth, the dictator may not be able to expand repression beyond some limit over the short run. It takes time to recruit and train Chekists. If he orders an immediate doubling or tripling of repression, it may take time to expand state security's capacity. Until that happens, he is limited in the amount of repression he can apply.

The Power-Maximizing Dictator

We begin with a model of authoritarian dictatorship that ignores the first, second and fourth constraints (which are considered in later chapters). In this variant, the dictator wishes to maximize power subject only to an upper limit on loyalty. In this variant, the dictator can expand repression at will. We illustrate with a diagram in Appendix 1 that can be skipped (by those who dislike such tools) without loss of continuity. The text adequately describes how the model works.

In this case, the dictator increases his power by expanding both repression and loyalty. At first, loyalty continues to expand with repression, but then expands at a diminishing rate as citizens worry about being repressed themselves or conclude that widening repression is unfair. Eventually, at high rates of repression, loyalty reaches a peak. If repression is expanded further, loyalty will actually decline. The power-maximizing dictator chooses that combination of loyalty and repression which yields the greatest amount of power. If the dictator expands repression beyond that point, the ensuing loss of loyalty will cause his power to decline.

Predictions about dictatorial behavior can be extracted even from this simplest model of dictatorial behavior: It suggests that the dictator may try to relax the constraint on power through policies that exogenously increase loyalty, such as propaganda, a successful economic program,

or the allocation of more goods to the citizenry. Also the power-maximizing dictator might try to expand power by improvements in the "efficiency" of power generation; that is, by finding ways to generate more power from the same combinations of repression and loyalty.

The most important prediction of the basic model is that the dictator must perform a fine balancing act to maximize power. Maximum power is achieved at those values of loyalty and repression where loyalty has actually begun to erode. If from this point the dictator allows the repression to get out of control—in a frenzy of agent enthusiasm—he risks a significant loss of power that can threaten his regime.

The ability of the model to generate predictions about dictatorial behavior expands as it is made richer by adding new considerations. Each addition to the model, however, adds complications, which will be dealt with in future chapters.

THE STYLIZED FACTS OF SOVIET/STALINIST REPRESSION

With relatively few historical examples, it is difficult to "prove" any model of repression; rather we can only show it to be consistent with the most important historical facts, often called "stylized facts." As an example, we show immediately below that one stylized fact of repression from Lenin to Stalin was its cyclicality—that it came in ebbs and flows. The task therefore is to determine whether our political economy model of repression predicts or explains this cyclicality or whether a more likely explanation lies outside the model. If the model fails to explain the most important stylized facts of repression, it must be discarded. We could only "prove" the model if we had a large enough number of historical examples to employ formal statistical testing. As it stands, we can only operate at a much lower level of "proof"; namely, consistency with the observed stylized facts.

We use modeling to explain a number of stylized outcomes—among others, the huge numbers of victims of political repression, many apparently posing no real threat, its cyclicality, the equation of economic crimes to political crimes, and the harsh treatment of political crimes, including widespread use of capital punishment. We use modeling also to explain the dictator's interactions with state security subordinates, such as patterns of hiring and firing, recruitment, and rewards and punishments, and the behavior of Chekists as they responded to the dicta-

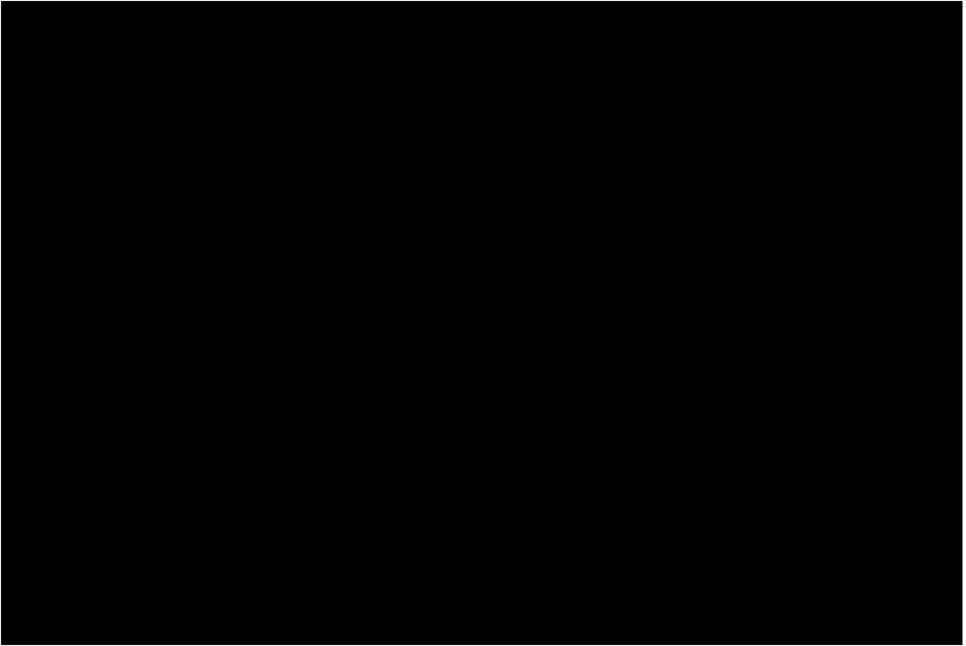


Figure I.1. Total Number of Persons Convicted by OGPU, NKVD, MVD Extrajudicial Tribunals, 1921–1953. Source: These figures were compiled in 1953 by the head of the First Special Department (Colonel Pavlov of the MVD) in a report entitled "Report of the Special Department of the MVD USSR about the Numbers Arrested and Convicted by the VChK-OGPU-NKVD-MGB SSSR, 1930–1953." A portion of Pavlov's figures is cited in N. Vert and S. V. Mironenko, eds., *Massovye Repressii v SSSR,* Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga, ed. V. P. Kozlov (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), pp. 608–609. The figures for the period 1921 to 1929 are from Pavlov, "Report about the Numbers of Those Sentenced According to Cases of Organs of the NKVD," December 11, 1953; GARF, Fond 9401, op. 1, del. 4157, l. 205.

tor's rules of the game. We also consider the rational behavior of victims. What actions could they take to avoid repression?

Stylized Fact No. 1: Cyclicality of Repression

Figure I.1 gives the total number of *extrajudicial* convictions, executions, Gulag sentences, and deportations for *counterrevolutionary offenses* levied by *OGPU-NKVD-MVD tribunal*s between 1921 and Stalin's death in 1953. These figures were prepared by the MVD itself shortly after Stalin's death and use the dictator's own definition of polit-

ical enemies.[34] As such, they should exclude convictions for other crimes that have no political relevance such as ordinary homicide or theft of private property.

The mass violence of the Civil War during which the number of violent nonbattlefield deaths numbered almost 150,000, is not recorded in these figures.[35] The first episode of mass violence recorded in the chart was the wave of arrests and concentration camp sentences between 1930 and 1933 that accompanied the forced collectivization of agriculture. Although usually separated into two campaigns—forced collectivization and dekulakization—the two were intertwined. The kulaks arrested and deported were largely those rural residents who opposed collectivization. In the two peak years (1930 and 1931), 610,413 persons were arrested and tried by OGPU tribunals, of whom 388,705 were convicted, 220,126 sentenced to the Gulag, and 122,025 deported to remote regions of the USSR. Execution was not then the punishment of choice. In 1930 and 1931, a total of 30,852 persons, or 7.5 percent of the total, were executed. These figures understate the repressions of 1930 to 1932; hundreds of thousands of rural households were forcefully deported or resettled without any sentence or judicial process and were not recorded in the above statistics.

The second campaign of "mass operations" began to build in 1935 and 1936, as the annual number of counterrevolutionary convictions by NKVD tribunals rose to a quarter million, most sentenced to the Gulag. This campaign, often called the Great Terror, exploded into "mass operations" or the "Yezhovschina" in July 1937 with the NKVD's arrest of 936,750 for counterrevolutionary crimes, of whom 790,665 were convicted. In the following year, 638,509 were arrested, of whom 553,898 were convicted. The savagery of 1937–1938 is reflected in the fact that about half of those arrested were executed—the sentence of choice during the Great Terror—for a two-year total of 681,692 executions. A total of 634,820 persons were sentenced to the Gulag and smaller numbers were deported.[36] The Great Terror ended as quickly as it began, when Stalin halted it on November 17, 1938.

The years 1942, 1945 and 1946 saw final spasms of terror against political enemies as more than 100,000 deserters, presumed collaborators, members of suspect nationalities, and returning POWs were deported, sentenced to the Gulag, or executed in each of these years. Deportations from border regions continued into the early 1950s, albeit at a slower

pace. For the entire 1940–1952 period, 3.5 million persons were forcibly deported to remote regions of Siberia or Central Asia.[37] The MVD's official statistics suggest that mass executions ended in 1938, but they miss the 157,000 Soviet soldiers summarily executed between 1941 and 1945 and the large numbers of victims of operations in border areas during the war and in its immediate aftermath. In Ukraine alone, 150,000 partisans were killed by army and NKVD forces, many by summary executions not recorded in NKVD statistics.[38]

Stylized Fact No. 2: Most Arrests Were for "Political" Crimes

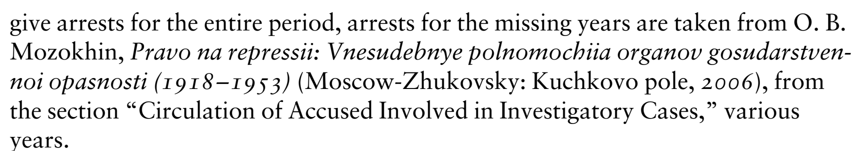
The task of the state security agency was to "battle against political and economic counterrevolution, espionage, and banditry."[39] This broad mandate allowed the OGPU, NKVD and MVD to tackle a wide variety of "crimes against the state" that would not be regarded as "political" in other societies.

Figure I.2 shows that the overwhelming majority of arrests by the state security agency were classified as political crimes, generically referred to as "anti-Soviet activity." In the early 1920s, between 1930 and 1936, and during the war, the attention of the "organs" was also focused on "other crimes," but throughout the entire period arrests for anti-Soviet activity overwhelmed other types of arrests. The list of anti-Soviet offenses varied over the years, but if we take 1950 as an example, it included "espionage, terror and terrorist intentions, diversions and diversionary intentions, wrecking, sabotage, joining the enemy, flight abroad, treason, anti-Soviet agitation, banditry, illegal crossing of the border, contraband, and being a socially dangerous element." "Other" (non-anti-Soviet activity) offenses, prosecuted by state security, included "revelation of state secrets, desertion, military crimes, the wrecking of trains, ships and airplanes, occupational crimes, and diverse crimes."[40]

Noteworthy in the above figures is the sheer volume of arrests for political crimes, which underscores the broad definition of anti-Soviet activity and the broad mandate of state security forces.

Stylized Fact No. 3: Foreigners as Enemies of the State

Foreign nationalities (Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, etc.) were more likely to be the subjects of state security repression than USSR national-



give arrests for the entire period, arrests for the missing years are taken from O. B. Mozokhin, *Pravo na repressii: Vnesudebnye polnomochiia organov gosudarstvennoi opasnosti (1918–1953)* (Moscow-Zhukovsky: Kuchkovo pole, 2006), from the section "Circulation of Accused Involved in Investigatory Cases," various years.

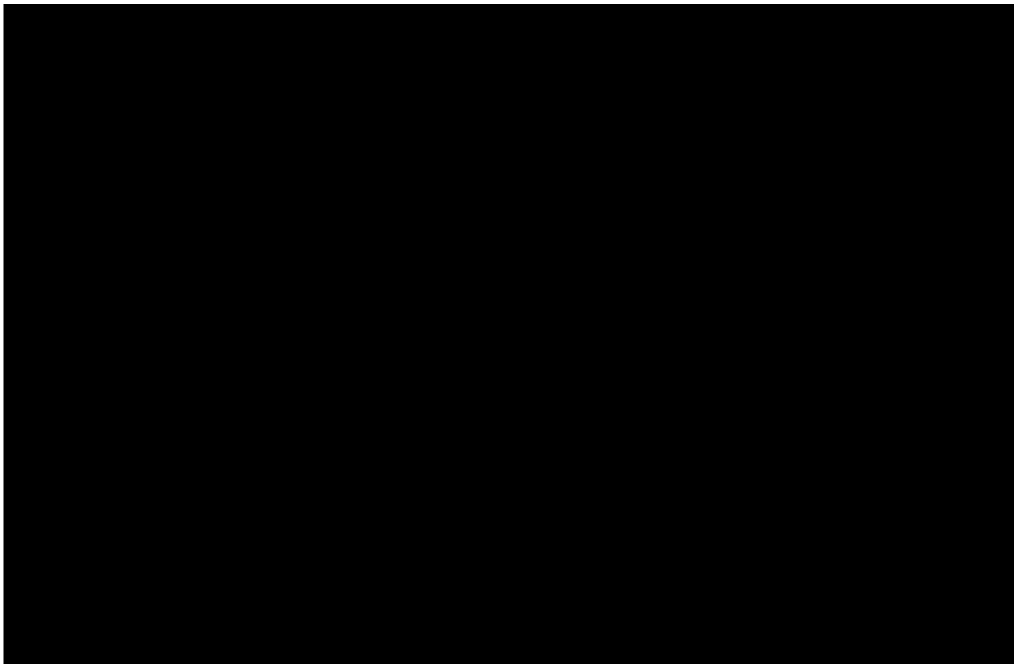


Figure I.3. Foreign Nationalities as a Percent of All Arrests, 1926–1952. Source: Mozokhin, *Pravo na repressii,* section: "Information about National Characteristics," each year. For the postwar years, we use the section "Nationals of Other States." For the prewar years, we add the separate categories of nationalities together where the major groups are Poles, Germans, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Jews, Greeks, and Iranians, among others.

ities (Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Kazakhs, Turkmens, etc.). Figure I.3 shows the number of foreigners arrested by the OGPU, NKVD, and MVD for years in which data are available.[41]

The proportion of foreigners in total arrests by state security ranged from 8 to 23 percent between 1926 and 1951, while the proportion of foreigners in the population (in 1937) was less than 2 percent.[42] It is noteworthy that the percentage of foreigners in total arrests was high (in 1926) even before Stalin consolidated power. Although Stalin took the repression of foreign elements to new extremes, he was continuing a general policy begun much earlier.

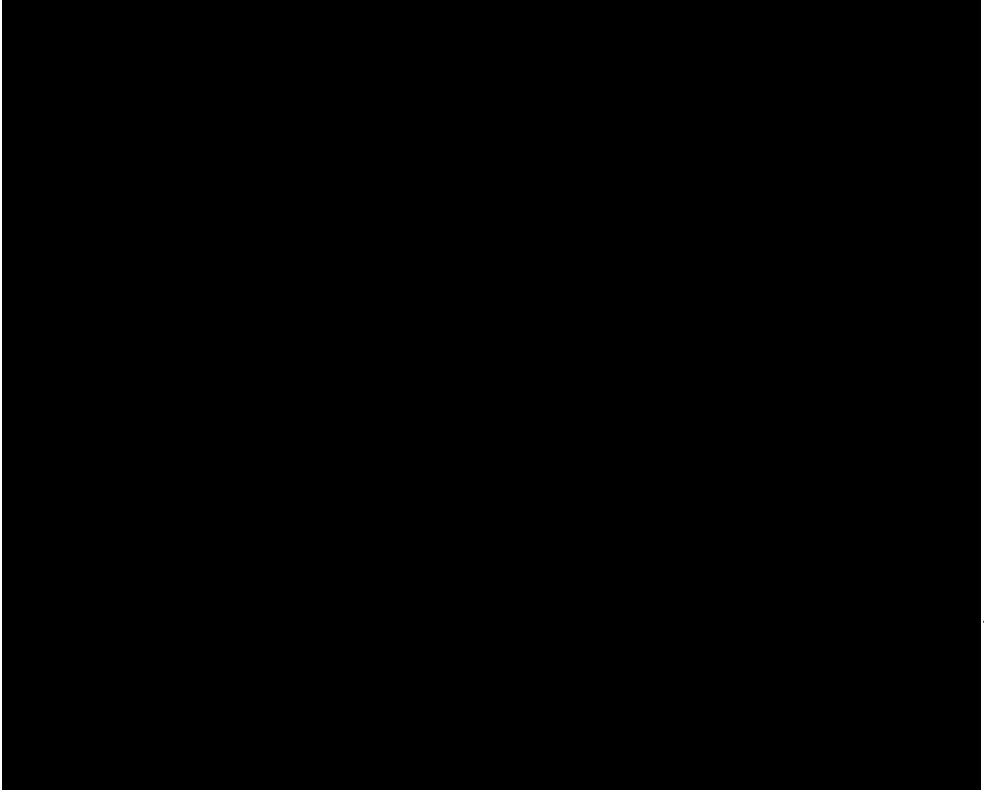


Figure I.4. NKVD/MVD Sentences, 1935–1952. Source: The major source of data is again the Pavlov report, which gives the number of capital punishments and prison terms. For 1939 to 1953, Pavlov reports prison terms such that sentences of five years or less can be separated out. For 1937 and 1938, he reports sentences of ten years or less and for 1930 to 1936 reports only prison and camps sentences. We use Mozokhin, *Pravo na repressii* (section "Measures of Punishment Applied to Those Convicted by Courts, Special Assemblies of the NKVD, and Troikas, Excluding Court Sentences:) to approximate the number of sentences of five years or less. We are able to do this only for the period 1935 to 1938 and errors are to be expected, but we feel these figures are reasonable approximations.

Stylized Fact No. 4: Harshness of Punishment

Persons convicted by OGPU, NKVD, and MVD tribunals were punished harshly. Figure I.4 divides sentences by state security tribunals into death sentences (euphemistically called "the highest measure of punishment"), prison terms of five years and above (which guaranteed a term in a "corrective labor camp" of the Gulag), and "lighter sentences," defined as prison terms of less than five years, corrective labor sentences, deportation, fines, and other administrative punishments.

State security tribunals were generally not in the business of issuing light sentences. Immediately prior to the Great Terror, however, about half of their sentences were "light," but in 1937–1938, they sentenced almost a quarter-million persons to "the highest measure," and a roughly equal number to the corrective labor camps of the Gulag. During the war years, fewer people were sentenced and "light sentences" were more prevalent to free people for the front. As the war wound down and the early postwar period began, the MVD sentenced fewer people but virtually all were sentenced to terms long enough for the Gulag. The death sentence was abolished in 1947 and was replaced by an obligatory twenty-five-year term (the equivalent of a life sentence). From 1948 to 1951, more than 100,000 persons received twenty-five-year sentences.

Throughout the entire history of the United States, fewer than 40 persons have been tried for treason.[43] During World War I and its immediate aftermath (the Red Scare of 1919–1921), some 1,500 persons were arrested under the 1919 Espionage Act and its precursors.[44] During World War II, 112,000 to 120,000 Japanese residents, of whom 62 percent were U.S. citizens, were interned, along with 11,000 persons of German origin. From the years 1950 to 2000, the number of spies active in the United States averaged only fifteen and peaked at thirty-five.[45] Only two persons (Ethel and Julius Rosenberg) were executed for espionage under civil authority between 1930 and the present.[46]

Stylized Fact No. 5: Extrajudicial Tribunals for Extraordinary Times; Regular Courts for Regular Times

With such a broad definition of political crimes, it was difficult to determine whether a crime should be investigated and tried by the "regu-

lar" justice of the prosecutor's office and the courts or by the extraordinary justice of the OGPU, NKVD, or MVD. Large-scale campaigns against political enemies, such as dekulakization or the Great Terror, were specified to be carried out by state security. Large-scale campaigns against less serious offenses, such as theft or workplace violations, on the other hand, were left primarily to regular justice.

Figure I.5 shows the distribution of convictions by extrajudicial tribunals and by regular courts for crimes that could potentially be considered crimes against the state. These figures exclude crimes against individuals and their property. It shows that the regular courts were used during periods when no major repression campaigns were underway, such as 1933 to 1936. Stalin used the extrajudicial tribunals of his state security forces to convict state enemies during major campaigns, such as the mass operations of 1937–1938. The percentage of extrajudicial convictions was also higher during operations at the front and in border regions. Starting in 1939 and 1940, emphasis shifted to "lesser terror," which focused on punishment of theft of socialist property (even petty theft) and on workplace violations. These offenses were left to prosecutors and courts, shrinking extrajudicial convictions to relatively small proportions.

The dividing line between state security and the regular justice system was often blurred. After arrest and preliminary investigation, state security could decide to turn jurisdiction over to the regular courts. In 1926, for example, as a consequence of the OGPU's investigatory work on 71,435 cases, 39,909 were turned over to the courts, 17,804 were tried by OGPU tribunals, and 13,722 suspects were freed (seventeen died in custody and twelve escaped).[47] In 1937, of the nearly 1 million persons arrested, only a handful were tried by regular courts.[48] In 1942, of the quarter-million persons arrested, the vast majority were tried by regular and military courts, although more than 10,000 died in custody.[49] By 1950, of the 65,000 persons arrested, more than 90 percent were tried by regular courts.[50]

The stylized fact is clear: when the dictator needed a mass campaign against his most dangerous enemies, he turned to extrajudicial tribunals. When he wished to move against less dangerous, but possibly more numerous enemies (such as thieves or slackers), he relied on the regular justice system.

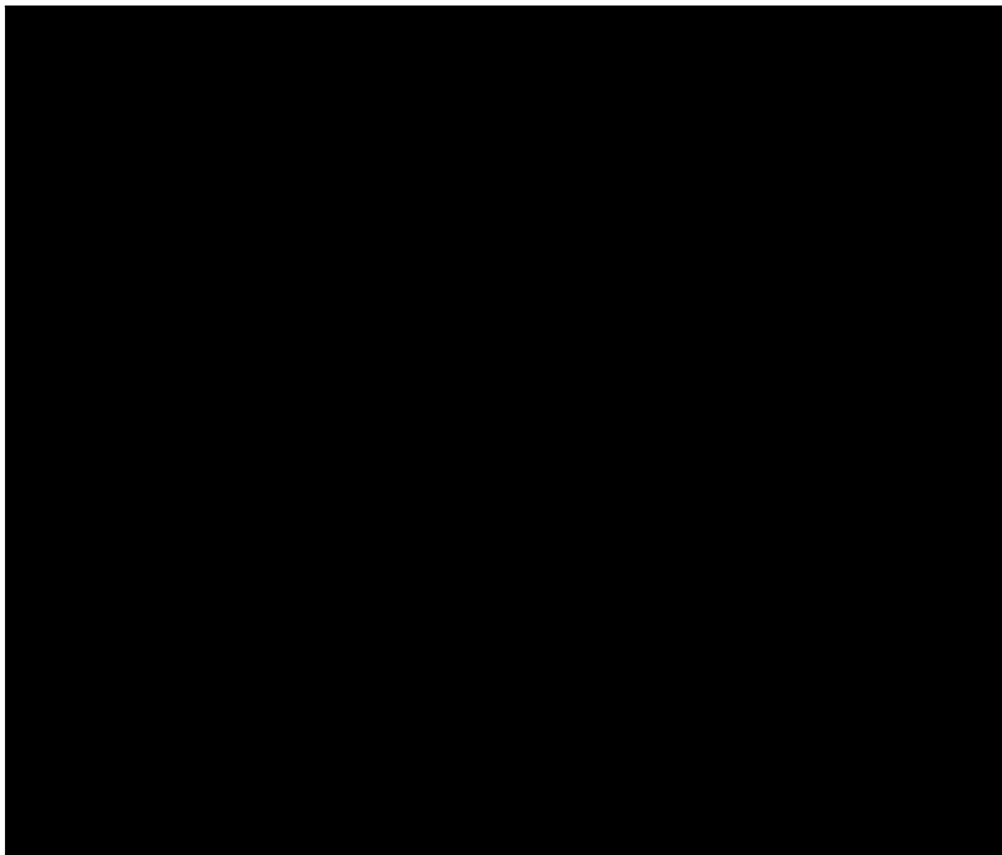


Figure I.5. Regular Justice versus Extrajudicial Proceedings, 1933–1852. Source: For the period 1940 to 1953, we have the total number of sentences by all courts and tribunals, from a report prepared by deputy head of the statistical department of the department for preparation for rehabilitation petitions of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, cited in Vert and Mironenko, *Massovye Repressii v SSSR,* p. 610. For the period 1930 to 1939, we use data from Mozokhin, *Pravo na repressii,* on the number of cases turned over to the Ministry of Justice (which appears to correspond to the figures reported for the OGPU by Pavlov; see for example pp. 292, 299, 314, 319). The pre-1940 figures are approximations but they should be reasonably accurate. For convictions by regular courts, we use the "General Number of Convictions by Judicial Organs of the Union Republics for 1933–1935," from GARF, Fond 3316, op. 64. We calculate the missing year 1936 as the average of 1935 and 1937. We subtract out ordinary crimes by assuming them to be 400,000 a year (the figure for 1937). Obviously, the resulting figures for the period 1933–1936 are approximations, but they are unlikely to miss by a wide margin.

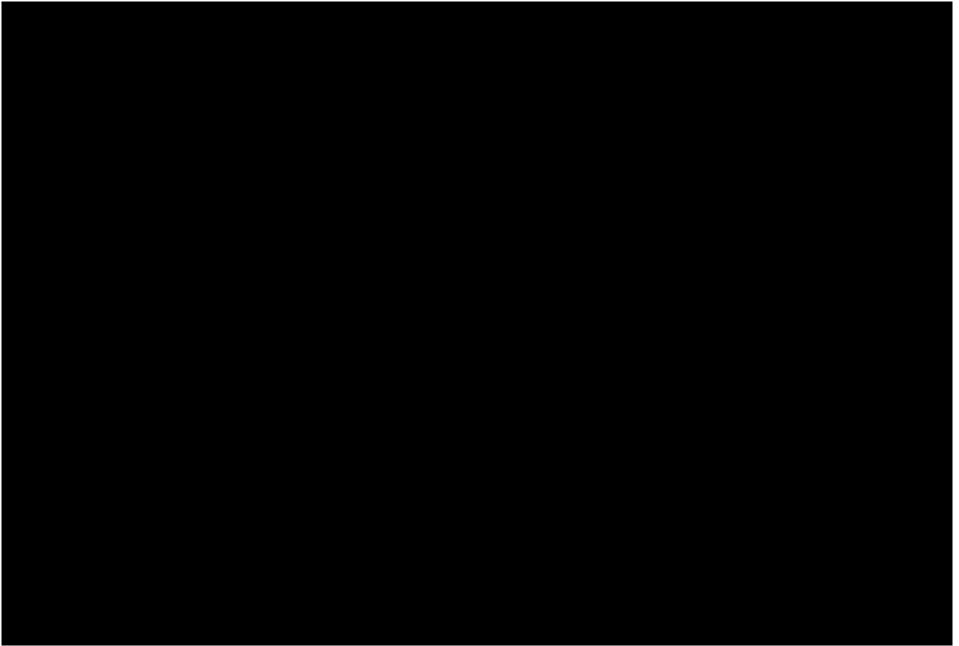


Figure I.6. Number of Top State Security Leaders Arrested, 1936–1954. Source: Calculated from the biographies of Chairmen of VChK-OGPU, Commissars/Ministers of Internal Affairs and of State Security and Chairmen of the KGB and their deputies from 1917 to 1991. From Kokorin and Petrov, *Lubianka,* biographical registry.

Stylized Fact No. 6: High Risks for Leaders of State Security

The Ministers of State Security and their deputies were the highest leaders of the OGPU, NKVD, and MVD.[51] Between 1917 and 1953, a cumulative total of 99 such leaders attained such positions in state security under Stalin or his predecessors—an exclusive club, but a risky one to belong to.[52]

Figure I.6 shows the number of top state security leaders repressed between 1936 and 1954, recorded by the date of arrest. The overwhelming majority of those arrested were executed, but some committed suicide or died (perhaps from beatings) in prison. The cumulated total of those repressed equals thirty, which is 30 percent of the total and a third if we do not count those who died of natural causes, such as Cheka head Feliks Dzerzhinsky or OGPU head Vyacheslav Menzhinsky.

Repressions of top state security leaders tended to bunch after changes in leadership. NKVD head Genrykh Yagoda was fired in late 1936, and the repression and execution of him and his deputies followed in 1937. Yagoda's successor, Nikolai Yezhov, was fired in late 1938 and the repression of him and his deputies followed in 1939 and 1940. Yezhov's successor, Lavrenty Beria, was arrested in 1953; the execution of Beria and his deputies followed in 1953 and 1954.

After Stalin's death, there were no further executions (other than of Beria and his top deputies). Thereafter there were cases of dismissal for "discrediting the organs of state security," which probably carried with it the loss of pensions and other privileges.[53] One former minister was temporarily deprived of his pension as a consequence of being on the wrong side of a power struggle.

Stylized Fact No. 7: Chekists Recruited from Nationalities That Were Repressed

We noted above that foreign nationalities were more subject to repression than other groups. Among the least favored (most disliked) nationalities were Poles, Germans, and those with Baltic origins. Jews also had high rates of repression.

Surprisingly, among the roughly one hundred top NKVD officials between 1934 and 1941, a substantial percentage were from non-Soviet nationalities, with Jews holding roughly one-third of the top positions between 1935 and 1938, and Poles and Latvians combined occupying another 12 to 14 percent. By the end of the Great Terror, Poles, Latvians, and Germans had entirely disappeared from leadership positions while Jews had shrunk to about 5 percent.

Stylized Fact No. 8: Reorganization, Reshuffling, and Job Changing

It takes more than 125 pages of a standard study to describe the multitudinous reorganizations and reshuffling of state security agencies.[54] Although there are no comparative studies, a relatively safe guess is that state security was reorganized more than its civilian or military counterparts. The Cheka of 1918 was subordinated to the Council of People's Commissars which Lenin headed. It was folded into the OGPU in 1923. The OGPU was folded into the NKVD USSR in 1934, the first state se-

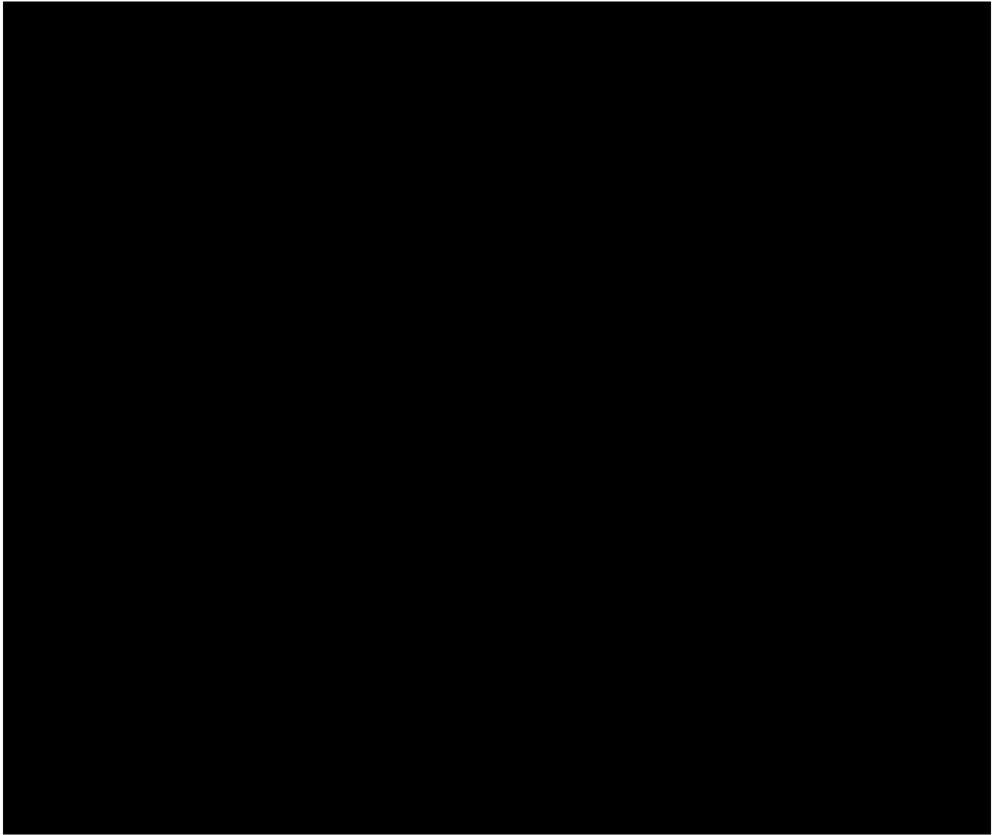


Figure I.7. Nationalities of Leading NKVD Officials, 1934–1941. Source: Petrov and Skorkin, *Kto rukovodil NKVD,* p. 495.

curity agency designed by Stalin. In 1941 and again in 1943, the NKVD's state security administration became a separate ministry, until Beria brought it back into the MVD shortly after Stalin's death. It is not important to follow such changes at this point, only to note that there was considerable experimentation as the Soviet leadership sought an optimal state security organization.

We cannot measure the pace of organizational change, but we can measure a concomitant of such change; namely, the reshuffling of state security personnel. Figure I.8 captures the period 1934 to 1939. During more "normal" periods, such as 1934 and the first half of 1935, be-

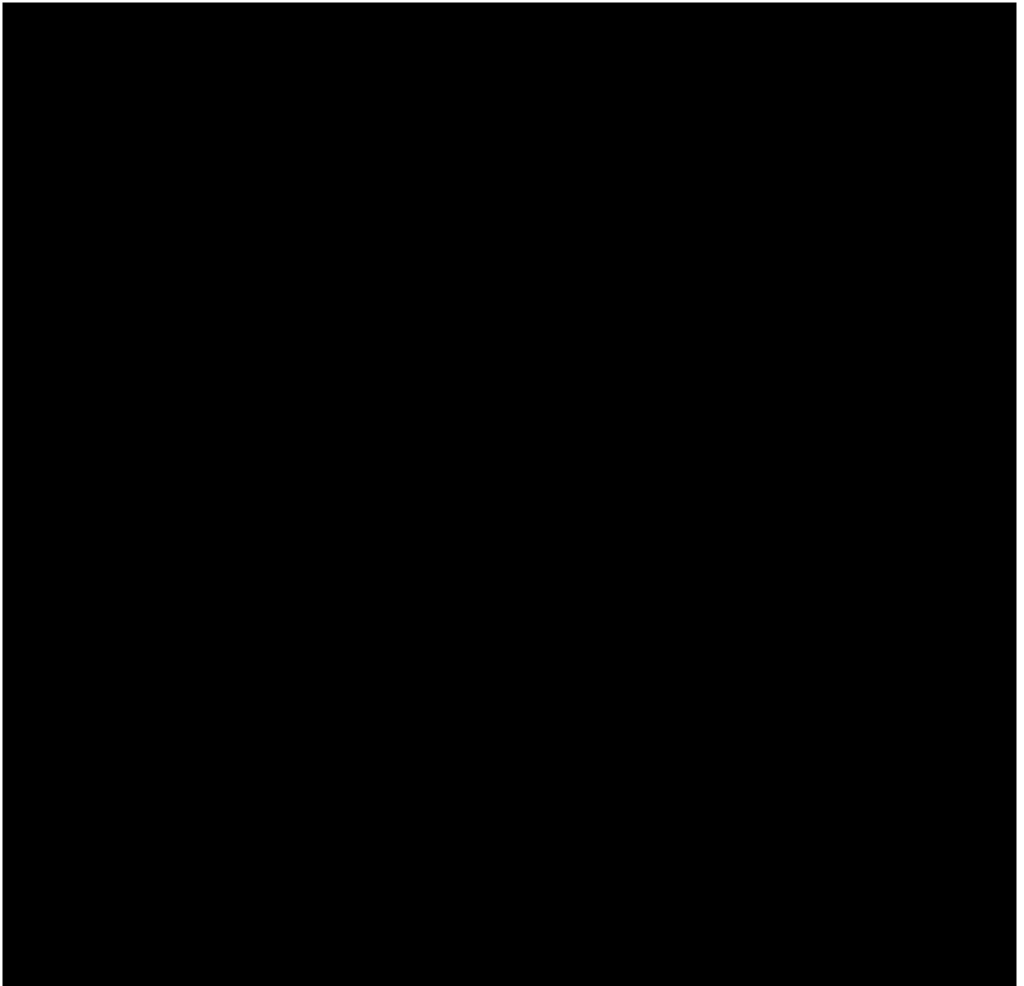


Figure I.8. Top NKVD Leaders Transferred or Removed from Jobs, by six-month periods, 1934–1940. Source: Petrov and Skorkin, *Kto rukovodil NKVD,* p. 495.

tween 8 and 15 percent of NKVD leaders were fired or transferred every half-year. As preparations were made for mass operations, this turnover percentage rose to 30 percent. During mass operations turnover was around 50 percent (half of the top NKVD leaders were transferred or fired every half-year), and rose to 60 percent in 1939 as the new Beria administration was installed.

Stylized Fact No. 9: Innocent Victims

Anglo-Saxon law exercises extreme caution to prevent criminal conviction of the innocent. The accused must be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. "It is better to let ten guilty parties go free than to convict one innocent person." This judicial philosophy imposes harm on democratic societies by freeing guilty parties who do not have to "repay their debt" to society and who commit additional crimes, but its benefits are perceived to outweigh its costs.

Bolshevik judicial philosophy argued, to the contrary, that society (the dictator) is better served by a judicial system that errs on the side of convicting the innocent than of letting the guilty go free. As Dzerzhinsky noted in the first days of Bolshevik power: "The defense of the revolution cannot take into account that it may harm particular individuals. . . . the Cheka must defend the revolution and defeat the foe even if in doing so its sword might chance to fall on innocent heads."[55] Stalin enunciated this policy twenty years later in a speech to the Military Council on June 2, 1937, almost two months before the initiation of mass operations, in which he advised that vigilant Bolsheviks should report enemies even if they were right only 5 percent of the time.[56]

The dictator is free to define guilt and innocence. Therefore, Dzerzhinsky's "innocent heads" would be those repressed who do not fall within the dictator's definition of enemy. A new dictator can also disagree with the old dictator's definition of enemy. Stalin's successors decided that the vast majority of his victims were indeed innocent. In his famous secret speech of February 1956 to the Twentieth Party Congress, Nikita Khrushchev denounced the atrocities committed "against worthy people, against Old Bolsheviks, and Young Communists. How many honest people had perished!"[57] Whereas Khrushchev proclaimed the innocence of the purged party elite, it was left to the Minister of Interior, Sergei Kruglov, and the General Prosecutor, Roman Rudenko, to quietly inform Khrushchev in December 1953 in typical bureaucratic language "of cases of unsubstantiated sentencing of citizens" that had occurred "in the absence of the accused and witnesses, which created the opportunity to conceal the deficiencies of preliminary investigations and lead sometimes to the most crude distortions of Soviet laws."[58] The repression of "innocent" party leaders was condemned in public. The persecution of "innocent" ordinary people was communicated in secret internal memos.

Stylized Fact No. 10: Continuous Repression

Brutal repression preceded Stalin. It is difficult to compare the number of executions under Lenin with those that followed under Stalin. A ballpark figure for the period December 1917 to February 1922 would be 280,000 violent deaths, some half of which occurred in battle, leaving 140,000 executed in the course of the Bolshevik takeover and the Civil War, for an average of 28,000 per year. Although the average number of executions under Lenin was well below that of the peak years of Stalinist repression, it is on a par with executions from other years of Stalin's reign.

The Red Terror Decree of September 2, 1918, calling on the Cheka "to execute immediately those attempting to organize uprisings or attack guards, to execute summarily all persons in Cheka custody who possess firearms or bombs . . . and those involved in counterrevolution, conspiracies, and uprisings against Soviet power,"[59] was echoed almost twenty years later by Stalin's July 3, 1937 telegram, calling on the NKVD to: "immediately arrest and shoot according to troika procedures the most hostile returning kulaks and criminal elements . . . and to report the number to be executed within five days."[60] Lenin's April 1919 deportation of Cossacks bears a remarkable resemblance to Stalin's deportations of national groups in the 1940s.[61] Lenin initiated the repression of intellectuals as one of his last acts before an incapacitating stroke. Deportation of writers, scholars, professors, and economists began during the "liberal" period of NEP.[62] These repressions affected hundreds of intellectuals; Stalin's later repressions touched thousands. From the earliest days of Soviet power, free thinkers of any kind were feared.

Nor can it be argued that harsh repression was simply a continuation of tsarist policies. Under the tsarist regime from 1866 to 1917, the number of executions was at most 14,000 for the entire period.[63] The first five years of Soviet power saw 28,000 executions per year. The average figure for 1921–1953 was slightly over 23,000 per year. The post-Stalin leadership was aware that Stalinist repression was not simply an extension of past policies. A December 1955 report prepared on the eve of Khrushchev's secret speech cites the most authoritative study of the death penalty in tsarist Russia and concludes that the "number of people executed for political offenses by regional-military courts between 1901 and 1912 [gives numbers for each year] equals 4,191."[64]

Table I.1. Sample of Repression Decrees, Legislation, and Events, 1917–1953

Decrees	*Purpose*
September 2, 1918, Decree "About Red Terror"	Suppress, prosecute, and liquidate counterrevolutionaries
April 1919, Lenin's written instructions to deport Don Cossacks	Deport 300,000 Don Cossacks to concentration camps or forced labor
March 8, 1921, Lenin's order to Tenth Party Congress	All factions must be dismantled and anyone opposing party decisions punished
April 25, 1922, "About the Organization of Assistance Bureaus"	Gathering of systematic information about any form of anti-Soviet activity and counterrevolutionary elements
May 23, 1922, Directive of Lenin to the Central Committee to evaluate the Conference of Physicians	Investigate Conference of Physicians for anti-Bolshevik attitudes
Electoral Commissions for campaigns of 1926–1927, 1928–1929, 1930–1931	Deprive citizens of voting rights and also of rights to housing, ration cards, and education
June 8, 1927 Politburo decree "About Measures in Connection with White Guard Actions"	Arrest and punish and in some cases execute those who fought in White army
May–July 1928 Shakhty show trials	Execution of engineers for wrecking and arrests of engineers and specialists in Donbas coal region
February 2, 1930 directive of the OGPU, No. 44/21, "About the Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class"	Operational instruction for the imprisonment, execution, or de portation of peasant households
August 7, 1932, "Law of Protection of Collective (Socialist) Property"	Punished thefts of state property by execution and long prison sentences
December 27, 1933, "About the Introduction of a Passport System"	Deport from cities undesirable elements such as former kulaks, gypsies, and unemployed persons
1933, Purge of Communist Party	Expulsion of 18 percent of all Communist Party members
July 30, 1937, operational decree of the NKVD No. 00447 "About Operations for the Repression of Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Other Anti-Soviet Elements"	Operational decree initiating the Great Terror

June 26, 1940, decree "About the Change to an Eight-Hour Day, a Seven-Day Week, and about the Prohibition of Willful Departure by Workers and Employees of Enterprises"	Criminalized workplace violations
August 10, 1940, decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet "About the Responsibility for Petty Theft at the Place of Work and for Hooliganism"	Punished petty theft at place of work and hooliganism with one-year prison sentences or more.
August 27, 1941, NKVD order for the resettlement of Volga Germans	Beginning of mass deportation of Soviet Germans to remote regions
February 28, 1944, NKVD order for the completion of operations of deporting Chechens and Ingush	Mass deportation of Chechens and Ingush to remote regions
April 13, 1944, NKVD order to purge the territory of the Crimea of anti-Soviet elements	Mass deportation of Crimean Tatars
August 18, 1945, decree of State Defense Council to deport Red Army soldiers taken prisoner by the Germans and serving in the German army	To deport to special settlements in remote regions of the USSR returning POWs, with severest punishment for those aiding German forces
June 4, 1947, Supreme Soviet decree "About Criminal Responsibility for Theft of State and Collective Property"	Imposed minimum five-year sentences for any theft of state and collective property
June 2, 1948, decree "About the Deportation to Remote Regions of Persons Refusing to Work or leading Anti-Soviet Parasitic Forms of Life"	Deportation of uncooperative peasants from collective farms
January 29, 1949, decree of Council of Ministers "About Resettlements from Lithuania, Latvia, and Lithuania	Mass deportation of Baltic nationalities to remote regions
January 23, 1951, decree "About the Deportation of Kulaks and Their Families from (specified) Provinces of Ukraine"	Permanent resettlement of Ukrainian kulaks and their families in Krasnoiarsk region

Table I.1 shows that throughout the entire 1918–1953 period, repression was "permanent." In almost every year some decree or order would be issued that resulted in deportation, imprisonment, or death. The only question was severity. Was the latest decree one that would repress small or large numbers of victims, and would their sentences be severe or mild?

SUMMARY

This book is a political economy study of the working arrangements of repression from Lenin through Stalin. The fundamentals of repression were in place before Stalin, but Stalin carried it to magnitudes not anticipated by the Bolshevik founders, many of whom perished in his purges. We are interested in how—the working arrangements of repression—and why—the reasons that totalitarian regimes require an overarching state security apparatus.

We use a rational choice model of totalitarian dictatorship that assumes the dictator's goal is to maximize power subject to loyalty and resource constraints. We use this model to extract predictions about dictatorial behavior. Insofar as the dictator's repressive policies must be carried out by agents working with subordinates, we consider as well how the totalitarian dictator deals with his agents of repression. We define the "dictator" as those in the Communist Party who dictate its policies and decide personnel appointments, Chekists as the operational workers who form the core of state security, and enemies of the state as those who the dictator concludes are hostile to his regime.

Our model of repression must explain the ten stylized facts of repression enumerated above, or, if not, be discarded. To repeat, these facts include the cyclicality of repression, the predominance of political crimes, the singling out of foreigners, the harshness of punishment, the use of extrajudicial tribunals for mass campaigns, the high risks for leaders of state security, the recruitment of compromised state security leaders, the frequent reorganization of state security, the large number of innocent victims, and permanent repression. We do not expect any political economy model of repression to explain "everything." Clearly, most of what happened was due to chance, personalities, and historical preconditions. Instead, we are trying to capture that portion of "reality" that follows distinctive patterns as suggested by a rational choice model. It is this portion of reality that can be generalized to other times and places.

The first chapter turns to the dictator's state security agents—to his Chekists.

3 Organizing State Security

THE PREVIOUS TWO CHAPTERS discussed how a power-maximizing dictator selects heads of state security and their subordinates. He must be concerned about their loyalty because to perform their jobs they must be extremely powerful, and they could turn this power against him. We devoted particular attention to Stalin's appointments of NKVD leaders during the period leading up to, during, and in the immediate aftermath of the Great Terror.

A dictator can secure loyalty by appointing the "right" people. He can also assure loyalty by creating an organizational structure that maximizes monitoring and control. This chapter analyzes the evolving structure of the Cheka, OGPU, NKVD, and MVD from Lenin through Stalin and his immediate successors. We show why the organizational structure of state security changed frequently as the dictator sought an arrangement that fit his changing needs.

PRINCIPAL-AGENT PROBLEMS

Principal-agent problems arise in hierarchical organizations when the principal and agent have different objectives and the agent possess more information about local circumstances than the principal. The CEOs of corporations may want to maximize profits; their vice presidents may

want an easy life. The rank-and-file members of labor unions may want higher wages and job security; union leaders may want to feather their own nests. Principal-agent problems are attacked by organizational arrangements that limit opportunism through monitoring or by reward systems that cause the agent to act in the interests of the principal, such as performance-based bonuses.

Stalin was beset by principal-agent problems from all sides. One of his most bitter disappointments was that his most trusted associates represented the "narrow" interests of the industry or region which they headed.[1] Stalin wanted his economic subordinates to represent what he called "encompassing" interests; namely, his own goals.

The pursuit of "narrow" goals by economic agents threatens the dictator's (in our case Stalin's) goals of rapid growth, military power, or economic modernization. The consequences of a state security head pursuing "narrow" goals could be more serious, such as a weakening of dictatorial power, or worse, an overthrow attempt. Because of the greater danger of state security opportunism, we expect the dictator to organize state security so as to optimize control and monitoring.

In an ideology-based system, the dictator is the official interpreter of orthodoxy. Like a pope issuing dogmatic pronouncements from the Vatican or a council of mullahs issuing fatwas, Stalin dictated the official ideology of the Soviet Union. Unlike Lenin, who allowed some dissent among his immediate associates, Stalin branded any disagreement with his "unified party line" as a sin of "deviation," colorful language that derived from Stalin's formative years in the seminary.[2]

The "encompassing" goal of state security was to protect the dictator and his regime, where the dictator himself defines his enemies. State security promotes this encompassing goal by gathering information about "sins of deviation" and capturing and punishing the "deviationists." The encompassing goal could be dictated as Politburo decrees, related in private conversations, or even conveyed as subtle hints. As Stalin's alter ego, state security had no room for error in interpreting him. State security officials required an experienced ear to detect nuanced changes that Stalin may not have wished to articulate directly. As Stalin's former secretary, Boris Bazhanov, wrote (from exile after narrowly escaping an assassination attempt): "Stalin had the extraordinary gift of silence and, in this way, was unique in a country that said too much."[3]

SHORT AGENCY CHAINS

Organizing state security should be less complicated than the organization of production. State security produces one basic product—arrests and convictions of state enemies, while an economy produces hundreds of thousands or millions of products. The dekulakization campaign divided class enemies into three categories, and Stalin's mass operations of 1937–1938 placed political enemies into two categories (category 1 for execution and category 2 for imprisonment). Although law enforcement can be subdivided into a larger number of categories—political crime (for which state security is responsible), ordinary crime, white-collar crime, and so on, it does not have to be broken down into hundreds of branches according to product type, location, or technology, as in the economy.

A dictator's order for more steel will go through a number of bureaucratic layers. If the dictator wishes someone's arrest, he can order it himself (in the case of high-level enemies) or turn the matter over to state security. If he wishes to have specific numbers of citizens executed in each of his regional divisions, his state security chief can issue the necessary targets for each regional administration.

Organizations can be characterized by their "agency chain," which measures the number of links between the top and bottom officials of the organization.[4] In the Soviet administrative-command economy, there was normally a four-link agency chain between Stalin and a steel mill:

Stalin → Council of Ministers → Minister of Metallurgy →
Director of Steel Administration → Manager of steel mill

In this case, the dictator can manage an enterprise only indirectly through its superiors. The dictator can shorten the agency chain in some cases, such as the strategic enterprise that produced the USSR's first atomic bomb, by issuing orders directly to its manager or by placing a personal deputy in charge. Georgy Malenkov and Lavrenty Beria, for example, played such roles during World War II and the early years of the Cold War. But the dictator can shorten the agency chain in only a few cases; otherwise he would be in charge of hundreds of enterprises.

Given the simpler "production function" for repression, the dictator can organize a shorter agency chain for state security:

Stalin → Head of state security → Head of regional administration

A regional organization of state security is inevitable because enemies are dispersed throughout the country (although they may be concentrated in particular locations). They must be investigated and arrested and perhaps tried and punished in the city, town, or village where they are located. The dictator must still decide on the number of regional administrative links, a matter that will be discussed below.

For high-level cases, Stalin could even bypass the head of state security to shorten the chain. Although in most cases, Stalin worked through Yagoda, Yezhov, or Beria, in some instances he inserted personal emissaries. He dispatched Politburo members to the provinces on special assignments, such as Andrei Andreev, who requested from Sverdlovsk in March 1937 Stalin's "approval to arrest seven district party chairmen against whom there are serious accusations and whose conduct tells us they are Rightist Diversionaries. We can find replacements on the spot."[5] Stalin wrote to the itinerant Andreev, now in Saratov, on July 28, 1937: "The Central Committee agrees with your proposal to send to the courts and to execute the former workers of the Machine Tractor Station."[6] Stalin also used trusted officials, such as L. Z. Mekhlis, editor of *Pravda* and head of the Political Administration of the Army, who requested from Irkutsk on October 25, 1938 higher execution "limits" for Ulan Ude because "their prisons are filled with nationalists and counterrevolutionaries."[7]

As Stalin concluded in 1937 that enemies had penetrated the ranks of the regional party administrations, he sent his deputy, Lazar Kaganovich, into the field to conduct purges. Kaganovich organized meetings of regional party committees, arrested the current party secretaries, and introduced the new secretaries brought in from Moscow to the assembled party workers. In the evening, he would telephone Stalin in Moscow to brief him on the day's events.[8]

The dictator also could appoint a watchdog to watch his main watchdog. Nikolai Yezhov, served as Stalin's eyes and ears within the NKVD from his position as a secretary of the Central Committee until he replaced Yagoda as its head at the end of 1936. It was Yezhov's NKVD

that oversaw the mass operations of the Great Terror.[9] When Stalin's trust in Yezhov waned, he appointed Beria to watch over him as his purported "deputy."

The need for a direct link with state security was not lost on Lenin. An early party communiqué described the Cheka "as the direct organ of the party according to its directives and under its control."[10] Lenin kept a firm grip on the Cheka, although Politburo support for it was far from unanimous. Despite his many other responsibilities, Lenin spent hours closeted behind closed doors with Feliks Dzerzhinsky.[11] As Lenin moved against "non-Soviet" physicians and intellectuals in May 1922, he immediately directed "Dzerzhinsky's OGPU to work out measures . . . and to report to the Politburo."[12] Keeping the OGPU on a short agency chain continued after Lenin's incapacitation. The Politburo decreed: "To give S. Yenukidze [a Georgian associate of Stalin] responsibility to ensure that not one issue associated with OGPU is transmitted to the government without agreement with the Politburo."[13] The short agency chain for state security was endemic to the system; it was not Stalin's invention. The directness of the link between dictator and the state security agency was most evident during the mass operations of 1937. Yezhov spent 527 hours behind closed doors in Stalin's office receiving direct orders on the terror campaign.[14]

ORGANIZING RELATED STATE SECURITY SERVICES

The organization of state security is defined not only by the length of the agency chain. "Repression" requires "core inputs" which are provided by Chekist-operational workers, who, at a minimum, identify potential "enemies of the state." The full repression cycle requires investigation, arrest, trial, conviction, sentencing, carrying out the sentence, and guarding those incarcerated. Should related inputs be done "in house" or outsourced to other organizations?

Judges or special tribunals are needed to sentence enemies. Police are needed to maintain public order, conduct investigations, and arrest or assist in arrests. Border guards prevent enemies from escaping or entering the country illicitly. Firemen extinguish fires caused by wreckers. Camp guards watch over those imprisoned. Should these functions be under one roof or divided among a number of agencies?

The consolidation of these functions "in house" could divert state se-

curity from its core functions. But subcontracting could also weaken state security. Civil judges may be too lenient or slow. Civil police may focus too much on common crime and ignore political crimes. A regular prison administration may not guard enemies of the state as closely as Chekists.

The search for an optimal structure addressed two basic issues: the appropriate length of the agency chain between the dictator and his repressors; and the repression functions to be directly controlled by state security or delegated to other organizations.

THREE ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

More than two hundred pages of text are required in the standard guide to the organization of Soviet state security to detail the chronology of "the organs of internal affairs and state security, the structure of organs of internal affairs and state security, the directory of name changes and chronology of structural administrations" from 1917 to 1991.[15] But against this background of change, we can define three basic organizational models for state security.

The OGPU Model

From the first days of Bolshevik power, it was clear that state security was to be the responsibility of a special agency, despite Trotsky's argument that his Red Army could handle this task.[16] The result was the founding in early 1918 of the Cheka with Dzerzhinsky as its head, and its growth to an organization employing 90,000 persons, not counting 60,000 "secret" workers, by the end of the Civil War in 1921. With the formation of the OGPU in February 1922, state security employment fell to 60,000, not counting 30,000 secret workers, falling further to 33,152 workers and 12,900 secret workers in 1923.[17] In 1926–1927, the OGPU employed 18,725 people apart from secret workers.[18] OGPU special troops numbered 117,000 as the Civil War wound down in 1921 and 78,000 in 1923. The central office employed 1,415 officials in 1921, 2,649 in August 1923 and 2,419 by 1929. In short, Dzerzhinsky's OGPU was a state security empire, which, in the relatively calm year of 1923, numbered approximately 125,000 (33,000 employees plus 13,000 secret employees plus 78,000 special forces).

The Cheka, however, shared the task of protecting the state with other security organizations. Camps and prisons were operated by the justice ministry and by the NKVD of the Russian Republic. The OGPU operated a special camp, the Solovetsky Camp of Special Designation (SLON), for political prisoners, which served as a prototype for later "corrective labor camps" of the Gulag. The militia was largely under the control of and financed, albeit poorly, by local governments.

Genrykh Yagoda served as deputy to the ailing OGPU head, V. P. Menzhinsky, who was appointed after Dzerzhinsky's death in 1926. Although listed as first or second deputy, Yagoda, in effect, ran the OGPU throughout much of its history. He officially became the leading state security official with Menzhinsky's death in May 1934 and the folding of the OGPU into a new revitalized NKVD in July 1934, which he headed as the first security head selected directly by Stalin. It was the OGPU, under Yagoda's direction, that conducted Stalin's first major terror campaign—dekulakization—between 1930 and 1933.

In 1930, the OGPU had some 33,000 operational workers to carry out dekulakization, aided by OGPU border militia and special forces; the latter, at last published account (January 1925), numbered 10,898, including 2,468 elite "special designation" troops.[19] Most operational workers were deployed in the twenty-three territorial administrations called PP OGPU. They will be discussed later in this chapter.

Under Yagoda, the OGPU expanded its control over the civil police, or the Worker-Peasant Militia, as it was called. The civil police had been officially subordinated to local soviets, but they were told "to conduct work under the direction of local OGPU organs."[20] Under Yagoda, police hiring and staffing were controlled by an OGPU Inspectorate, following Yagoda's plan to convert the militia into a national police force. Reorganizations of late 1929 and 1930 placed the Worker-Peasant Militia increasingly under the control of the OGPU. By 1932, the number of police was 98,000.[21] The Worker-Peasant Militia became an official Administration of the OGPU in 1933.[22]

Yagoda's OGPU also gained effective control over prisons and special settlements as the Gulag began in the early 1930s to construct major infrastructure projects, the first being the White Sea–Baltic Canal. By 1931, the Gulag was also entrenched as a Main Administration within the OGPU.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the organization of the OGPU prior to its fold-

Figure 3.1. The OGPU Organizational Model

ing into the NKVD in 1934. It shows a core "operational administration" complemented by two "service" administrations (Gulag and militia). The territorial administrations (PP OGPU) are subordinated to the operational division.

The NKVD Model

On February 20, 1934, Stalin appointed Yagoda and two Politburo members to design an all-Union NKVD, which would have its own republic and regional administrations. The "new" NKVD USSR was established by the Politburo on July 10, 1934 and Yagoda was named its first minister.[23] The OGPU was folded into the new NKVD as its State Security Administration (GUGB). Yagoda served as head of the NKVD for slightly over two years; he was replaced by Yezhov on November 24, 1936.

The new NKVD was a horizontally integrated undertaking which consolidated under one roof interior ministry (fire services, militia, border patrol, citizen records) and state security functions. The battle against political enemies was the responsibility of the GUGB (the NKVD's Main Administration of State Security), whose departments included special operations, secret political operations, foreign espionage, and protection of the economy and transport from sabotage and

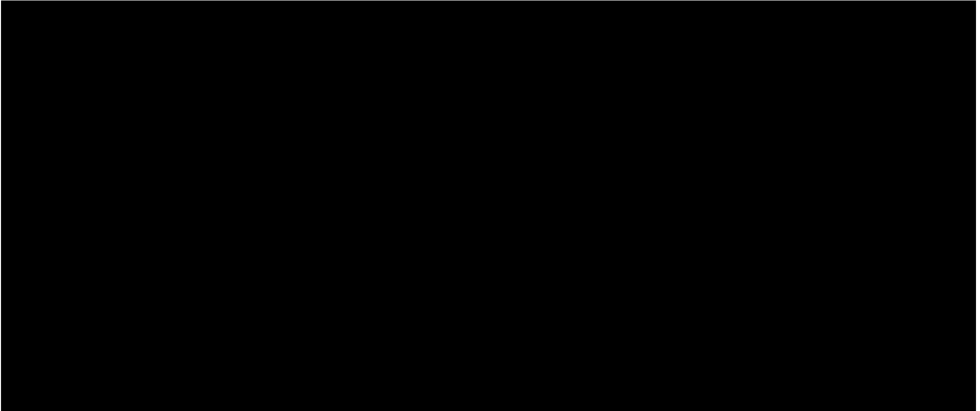


Figure 3.2. The Organizational Model of Stalin's NKVD, 1934–1943

wrecking (on NKVD administrations and GULAG departments in the 1930s, see Appendix 2, Table A.1). Other key main administrations were the GULAG, or Main Administration of Camps, which, as of 1935, guarded and managed one million prisoners[24] and main administrations for militia (GUPRKM) and internal and border guards (GUPVO).

The NKVD that Stalin created in 1934 and that three years later oversaw the Great Terror was a massive organization, whose central staff of almost 10,000 officials oversaw a huge state security empire, spearheaded by the feared GUGB. The NKVD's other main administrations provided indirect support in the battle against state enemies. The Gulag guarded and worked the prisoners arrested, processed, and tried by Chekist-operational forces. The Worker-Peasant Militia conducted investigations, kept order in the cities, and arrested less dangerous enemies. The Fire Administration protected the nation's factories and buildings from wreckers and saboteurs. Clerks in the Citizen Records Department kept track of citizens. Such activities are typical functions of an interior, not state security, ministry, but Stalin's conception was to place these forces under one command—initially that of Yagoda, then Yezhov, and then Beria.

Figure 3.2 depicts the organizational structure of the NKVD from its founding in 1934 to its reorganization in 1943. The figure shows the NKVD's four divisions: the "core" State Security Administration, the

militia, the Gulag, and interior ministry functions. The territorial (UN-KVD) divisions are subordinated to the State security administration.

We do not have official figures for NKVD employment prior to 1945, but our indirect calculations suggest that the NKVD employed between 82,000 and 117,000 people in 1934 and between 325,000 and 466,000 people in 1940 (not counting special troops).[25] The NKVD USSR was a huge organization that likely more than tripled in size between 1934 and 1940.

Beria assumed command of the NKVD as Stalin shut down the Great Terror and arrested Yezhov in November 1938. Beria, as party secretary of Georgia, had caught Stalin's eye for his bloodthirsty campaigns there in 1937, arresting 12,000 class enemies.[26] Stalin named him Yezhov's first deputy in August 1938 and then head of GUGB at the end of September. Beria became, for all practical purposes, the head of the NKVD. Communications from the NKVD to Stalin were signed either jointly by Beria and Yezhov or by Beria alone as "deputy minister of the NKVD."[27]

The NKVD that Beria inherited from Yezhov had the same basic structure as in 1934, but the task changed to the deportation and arrest of hundreds of thousands of "national contingents" and to special military operations during World War II. Under Beria, the NKVD between 1939 and 1941 arrested 134,000 people; 200,000 were exiled, and Beria carried out some of the greatest atrocities of the war, such as mass executions of Polish officers, notably in the forest of Katyn.[28] Between 1941 and 1946, NKVD forces (including its counterespionage operations) arrested 700,00 people and executed 70,000.[29]

Separating State Security and Internal Affairs

In February 1943, after an abortive attempt two years earlier, Stalin, with Beria's active support, transformed the NKVD's State Security Administration (GUGB) into a separate ministry, the Peoples' Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) under Beria's deputy, V. N. Merkulov. This action partially retuned state security to the OGPU model with separate ministries for state security and internal affairs.

According to its charter of April 1943, the NKGB was charged "with guaranteeing the state security of the USSR" by carrying out "foreign intelligence, combating the espionage, diversionary, and terrorist activ-

ity of foreign agents within the country, battling any and all kinds of anti-Soviet elements, and the protection of leading cadres of the party and state."[30] Like the NKVD, the NKGB had republic and regional offices throughout the country. In March 1946, both the NKVD and the NKGB's names were changed from "Peoples' Commissariat" to "Ministry." The NKVD became the MVD and the NKGB became the MGB.[31]

After the 1943 divorce of the NKGB from the NKVD, the current and future ministers of state security (V. N. Merkulov and V. S. Abakumov) continued to be listed as Beria's deputies and a number of Chekist departments, such as intelligence, counterintelligence, secret political activity, and codes continued to be listed as NKVD administrations.[32] Starting in 1944, neither Merkulov nor Abakumov were listed among Beria's deputies, but, notably, the archives of the state security departments were kept in the NKVD, and Beria retained control of the foreign intelligence organization, Smersh.[33] On January 1, 1945, Beria's last year as NKVD minister, the NKVD employed 655,000 people and by year's end it employed 846,000.[34] NKVD employees were distributed among almost fifty departments or administrations in a vast bureaucratic empire (on NKVD departments in 1938 and NKVD/MVD employment in 1945 and 1953, see Appendix 2, Tables A.2 and A.3).[35]

Figure 3.3 shows the separation of interministry and state security functions, each having their own territorial administrations.

At the end of 1945, Beria relinquished his position as NKVD minister to work as deputy head of state. Beria's first deputy, S. N. Kruglov, a longtime security official but not a Beria insider, was appointed NKVD minister, a position he held until Stalin's death in March 1953. Kruglov was reappointed MVD minister after Beria's arrest in June 1953, a position in which he served until 1956. The Ministry of State Security, under V. N Merkulov (1943–1946) and V. S. Abakumov (1946–1951), continued to operate as a separate entity. In 1946, the NKVD's successor, the MVD, employed slightly over one million persons and had 900,000 troops.[36]

Under Kruglov, the MVD lost power and influence to the MGB. In July 1950, Stalin transferred the administration of special settlements to the MGB.[37] In August of the same year, the MGB established administrations within special camps of the Gulag.[38] Between 1949 and 1953, the militia was gradually transferred to the MGB.[39]

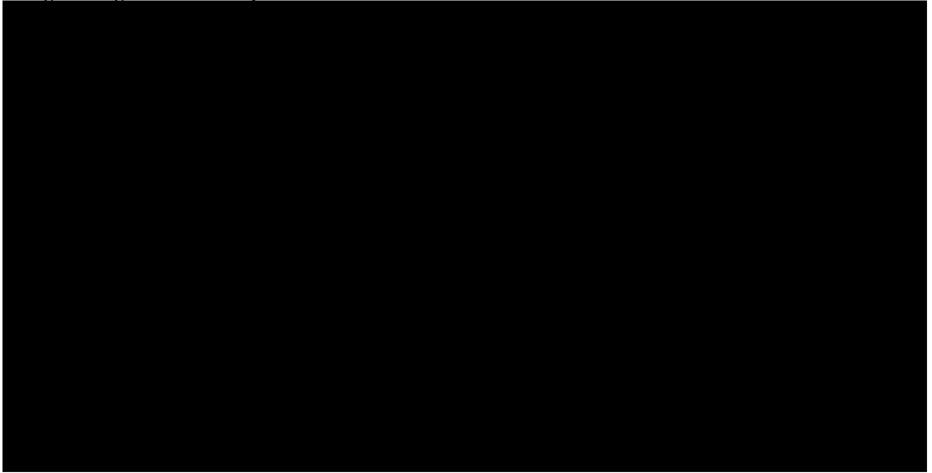


Figure 3.3. The NKVD (MVD) and NKGB (MGB) Organizational Model, 1944–1953

While Stalin consulted regularly with Yagoda, Yezhov, and Beria when they headed the NKVD, Kruglov met only four times in person with Stalin during his seven-year tenure. Also, most of the correspondence on state security issues after Beria's departure was with Merkulov and Abakumov, not Kruglov. Stalin's lack of interest may explain Kruglov's longevity. He was one of the few leaders of internal affairs to die of natural causes. Although Kruglov escaped Stalinist repression, he did not escape the milder form of repression practiced under Khrushchev. He was fired and deprived of his pension.[40]

On the day of Stalin's death (March 5, 1953), Beria moved to consolidate power and to position himself as Stalin's successor. At the March 5 joint plenum, the MVD and MGB were again consolidated into one ministry—the MVD—under Beria. Beria was also named the first deputy of the chairman of the Council of Ministers (Georgy Malenkov). All the functions of state security (counterintelligence, political espionage, protection of state leaders, etc.) were again under Beria's direction.[41] The newly consolidated MVD employed 1,095,678 people with a central administration of some 20,000 people on May 15, 1953,[42] giving Beria a power base so unprecedented that it united other leaders against him, leading to his arrest in June 1953 and his execution in December 1953.

Beria's replacement after his arrest (the ubiquitous Kruglov) wasted no time in again separating the MGB from the MVD, claiming in February 1954 that "the current organizational structure of the MVD and its organs is too large and is not in a position to guarantee the necessary level of agent-operational work in light of the tasks that have been placed on it by the Central Committee and the Soviet government."[43] By 1955, the MGB had morphed into the KGB, the sinister state security agency that dominated Soviet life until the end of the Soviet Union.

THE CHEKIST CORE

We have described the three state security organizational models used from the early 1920s through the end of Stalin's reign. Irrespective of the model, its core remained the Chekist-operational elite.

Repression of the Soviet citizenry was not carried out by the NKVD or MVD per se. True, the minister of the NKVD or MVD (Yagoda, Yezhov, or Beria until the separation of internal affairs and state security) was in charge of "Chekist-operational work,"[44] but the minister also managed a number of other large administrations. Actual repressions were carried out primarily by Chekist-operational workers of the Administration (later Ministry) of State Security. The State Security Administration made up only a small proportion of NKVD employment (about 6 percent in 1945) and in its various manifestations (GUGB, NKGB, and MGB), constituted the "Chekist core," which carried out espionage, secret political operations, protection of party and state leaders, and the defense of industry and agriculture from enemies of the Soviet state.

The leaders of the State Security Administration were less well known than Yagoda, Yezhov, or Beria. Under Yagoda, the GUGB was headed by Yagoda's first deputy Ia. S. Agranov. Under Yezhov, it had its own head (first Agranov, who was replaced by M. P. Frinovsky in 1938). In Beria's NKVD, the GUGB was headed by his first deputy V. N. Merkulov, who became its first minister when it shortly became the NKGB in February 1941. Merkulov served as NKGB/MGB minister from 1943 to 1946 and was replaced by V. S. Abakumov, who served from 1946 to 1951.[45] Like Yagoda, Yezhov, and Beria, all four were executed—Agranov in 1938, Frinovsky in 1940, and Merkulov in 1953 along with Beria, while Abakumov was arrested in 1951 but executed only after Stalin's death, in 1954.[46]

Table 3.1. Chekist-Operational Workers and Civil Police, 1930–1952

	1930 OGPU	*1933 OGPU*	*1934 GUGB*	*1939 GUGB*	*1945 NKVD operations*	*1952 Operations estimated*
A. Operational Workers						
Central apparatus	1,927		1,410	11,560		
Republican and Regional Offices	17,476		23,618	20,633		
TOTAL	19,403	20,898	25,022	32,193	40,000	80,000
B. Militia/Civil Police						
	87,000	98,000	124,000	197,000	200,000	259,061

Sources: Figures for the central apparatus of the NKVD are from Appendix 2, Table A.1. Figures for total employment are from Kokurin and Petrov, *Lubianka*, p. 56; and from Petrov, *Karatel'naia sistema*, p. 173 (calculated from the information that the 7,372 persons removed from state security equaled 22.9 percent of the 1939 total). Due to such indirect calculations, there may be minor errors in these figures. The figures for the OGPU do not distinguish operational from office workers, although full-time staff of the OGPU in this period were largely operational. We adjust by removing prison administrators and those involved in various OGPU schools from operational workers. The 1930 data are from V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin, *Kto rukovodil NKVD, 1934–1941* (Moscow: Zvenia, 1999), pp. 34–35. The civil police figures are from Shearer, "Social Disorder, Mass Repression, and the NKVD During the 1930's." The 1952 figures are the 1946 figures doubled, given the doubling of the state security apparatus reported by Nikita Petrov, "Les transformations du personnel des organs de securité soviétiques, 1922–1953," *Cahiers du Monde Russe,* 42, nos. 2–4 (April–December 2001), p. 396.

Table 3.1 gives figures for approximate employment in core Chekist-operational branches in selected years from 1930 to 1952. The OGPU (1930 and 1933) employed primarily operational workers.[47] In 1934 and 1939, employment in the GUGB of the NKVD approximates the number of Chekist-operational workers. For 1945, we use the NKVD's own report on the number of "operational workers." For 1952, we double the 1946 figure as a crude approximation based upon the doubling of employment in the Ministry of State Security during this period.

According to Table 3.1, the hard-core operational workers who spearheaded dekulakization in 1930 and 1931 numbered some 20,000 "Chekists," supported by OGPU special forces and by party activists from the cities. The Great Terror was conducted largely by GUGB state

security officers, who numbered between 25,000 and 32,000. These "deputized operationals" ("operupolnomochie") spearheaded the execution, imprisonment, and exile of almost 2.5 million people during collectivization and executed nearly 700,000 victims in 1937 and 1938.

During periods of peak activity, such as the mass operations of 1937–1938, the distinction between operational and interior ministry workers often broke down. Due to manpower shortages, some militia officers headed operational groups. Party workers had to be called from the "Chekist reserves," and militia and army officers served as executioners.[48]

Under Yagoda, the Moscow office of the OGPU accounted for 10 percent of the total, but Yezhov centralized operations during his three-year tenure as NKVD head, and when he was fired, GUGB's Moscow office accounted for one-third of Chekist-operational workers. Even after Yezhov's centralization, most operational employees were still located in the field.[49] Interestingly, the level of centralization chosen by Yezhov was identical to that of Caesar Augustus, when he first established the Praetorian Guard. Of the nine cohorts of Praetorian Guards, three were stationed in Rome.

Chekist-operational workers were supported by special troops. As the Civil War wound down in 1921, special troops numbered 117,000, and in 1945, near the end of World War II, they numbered 653,000.[50] In between these two dates, the number of NKVD forces is not given in available official sources but still would have represented a significant number. The massive peasant uprisings in Ukraine in 1930 and 1931 were defeated by well-trained and equipped OGPU special forces.[51] The battle for the countryside in 1930 was largely decided by the use of special forces, 4,200 of whom were especially selected from the Red Army.[52]

THE GULAG AND CIVIL POLICE

The Gulag administration dwarfed the Chekist-operations division in size. Its task was to isolate prisoners in remote camps and to exploit their labor in the interests of the state. Of the 1.1. million MVD employees (including special troops) on May 15, 1953, Gulag employees accounted for slightly less than half the total (445,693). Only after Stalin's successors transferred Gulag operations to civilian ministries

was the Gulag cut back to the size of the militia (about a quarter-million in October 1953).[53] The heads of the Gulag administration were relatively faceless administrators, kept by their jobs from public view. The three Gulag heads who served under Yagoda and Yezhov (L. I. Kogan, M. S. Berman, and I. I. Pliner) were all executed in 1939. Their immediate successors who served under Beria and Kruglov (V. V. Chernyshev, and V. G. Nasedkin) escaped repression.

The civil police of the Worker-Peasant Militia, who since the days of Yagoda fell under the jurisdiction of either the minister of interior or state security, outnumbered Chekist-operational workers by an approximate factor of five to one from 1930 to 1945 (Table 3.1).

As the civil police were incorporated into the NKVD,[54] they were given increasing powers of investigation, arrest, and surveillance. Although formally the police were to protect state property and Chekist-operational workers to battle political enemies, their roles intermingled as Yagoda increasingly regarded organized crime as a political offense.[55] The first integrated joint campaign of the OGPU and worker-peasant militia was the passportization campaign of 1933 to cleanse the cities of hostile elements—a campaign that caused almost a half million people to flee the cities.[56]

Militia officers also assisted in arrests during the mass operations of the Great Terror, and some headed operational groups.[57] A head of a militia department recounts being ordered to a nearby city to arrest a political enemy, who happened to be one of his oldest friends. When he objected, he was told by the state security head: "No enemy of the people can be a friend."[58]

REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

Whereas economic planning was done in Moscow, repression had to be conducted locally, where the enemies lived, worked, and had their families. Of the several million persons arrested by state security operations, only a minuscule fraction was arrested by the Moscow office.

How state security was regionally organized affected the length of the agency chain. If there were republic offices, to which were subordinated provincial offices, to which were subordinated regional offices, to which were subordinated district offices, the agency chain would not be short. The actual executor of repression in the city, town, or village would be a

number of steps removed from the dictator. Such "distance" could promote opportunism. Having a relatively small number of major regional administrations introduced yet another threat. Their heads might collude or even organize against the dictator. The larger the number of regional administrations, the lesser this threat.

From the OGPU through the MVD, the organizational principle for regional administrations was to have a large number of separate administrations, receiving their orders directly from Moscow rather than through regional superiors.

The OGPU (in 1931 during the peak of the dekulakization drive) was divided into twenty-three regional administrations or PP OGPUs. Collectivization and dekulakization primarily was conducted in agricultural regions and in remote regions that received deportees, so the majority of operations were handled by the Ukrainian, Moscow, Northern Caucasus, Trans-Caucasus, Central Asian, and Kazakhstan administrations.[59] Presumably, each administration distributed tasks to district and village offices, but the responsibility for fulfilling orders rested with each of these twenty three administrations.

The OGPU's twenty-three administrations grew into sixty-five NKVD regional administrations (called UNKVDs) by 1937. Instructions were sent directly from Yezhov to each of the sixty-five district offices. Notably, the agency chain was shortened in that both Ukraine and Kazakhstan were each broken up into eight separate regional administrations. Moscow and Leningrad provinces remained single regional administrations, administering multiple district administrations. Combined they received orders to repress almost 50,000 persons in July of 1937. Both Moscow and Leningrad were located close to the center of power and could be monitored more closely than outlying regional administrations.[60]

In 1946, after Chekist-operational work was transferred to the MGB), the latter was divided into eighty regional administrations (called UMGBs). (The annexation of new territories by the Soviet Union as a result of the war only partly explains the expansion.) Ukraine was returned to one administration, which in 1946 accounted for 43 percent of all arrests.[61] By 1951, the number of MGB regional administrations had fallen to seventy-one.[62]

The fact that Ukraine, Moscow, and Leningrad were huge administrations covering large populations meant that their heads had to be se-

lected and monitored with extreme care. From 1934 until his arrest in 1938, the Moscow province administration was headed by S. F. Redens, Stalin's brother-in-law. After his arrest, the position changed hands four times.[63] After repressing the head of the Ukrainian administration (I. M. Leplevsky), Yezhov replaced him with a close associate (A. I. Uspensky), who served until his arrest along with Yezhov.

The focus on regional and local organizations explains the ability of Chekists to bring arrest, intimidation, and execution to virtually any location in the vast Soviet Union. Chekist-operational workers worked in regional departments and in remote machine tractor stations that had direct contact with the public. The assistant political officer in machine tractor stations was, by designation, a Chekist officer. These regional officers provided immediate and direct information about the municipality or countryside where they served to their superiors.

The remarkable reach of Chekists into the most remote areas is illustrated by terror operations in the remote Siberian town of Bodiado near Irkutsk. A minor "deputized operational worker" wrote to his superiors the following account in 1937: "Upon my arrival, I established that the local administration was not prepared. Besides some lists, they had practically no other material. We had to operate on the basis of feel."[64] His solution was to arrest all but one of the local Chinese population within a radius of two hundred kilometers, and, within a few weeks, assisted only by a small armed troop, he had crowded one thousand prisoners into the local prison. The docility of his victims was remarkable. A poorly armed stranger rounded up a thousand locals into an antiquated prison (in which many died from the poor conditions) with no apparent resistance. This lowly Chekist submitted his execution requests to Irkutsk and had to wait their confirmation. Apparently, Irkutsk had to add up requests from its districts to make sure that it did not exceed its own limit.

STALIN AND THE SHORTEST LEASH

The most direct link between a principal and an agent is personal meetings in which the superior gives orders and receives information directly. One-on-one meetings allow the dictator to look his security head in the eye, to hear his answers, and to judge his reliability and effectiveness. Stalin was a persistent and curious questioner in meetings. In his

stenographed meeting of November 15, 1934, Stalin addressed thirty direct questions to the visiting Mongolian party head, ranging from issues of irrigation and cattle holdings to dealing with state enemies.[65] Yagoda, Yezhov, and Beria would also have been peppered with Stalin's inquires.

Detailed schedules were maintained of meetings with Stalin in his personal office (although they fail to capture the private meetings in his dacha that were common in the postwar period).[66] Frequent meetings suggest extremely short agency chains and characterize Stalin's (as well as Lenin's)[67] personal handling of state security, despite his massive operational duties as head of the party.

Figure 3.4 shows how Stalin allocated scarce time for meetings in his private office between party and state affairs (which he handled primarily through his first deputies, Molotov and Kaganovich) and state security (which he handled either singly or jointly with Yagoda, Yezhov, or Beria).

As Stalin consolidated his power in 1931 and 1932, he spent one-eighth the time with his state security heads as with his deputies. This ratio increased to one-third of his time in 1933 and 1934. As he began the attack on high-level rivals after Kirov's assassination in December 1934, Stalin spent half as much time with his state security heads as with his deputies. In the relatively tranquil year of 1936, he met with his deputies four times as often as with his state security heads. During the mass operations of 1937 and 1938, he again spent half as much of his time, or even more, with his state security heads as with his deputies.

During mass repression campaigns and purges of top party leaders, Stalin, who was responsible for a vast state and party bureaucracy, appointments, economic policy, and ideology, devoted one-third of his time or more to dealing with state enemies. In more "normal" years, he spent one-fifth to one-quarter of his time on state security as measured by this simple indicator.

We can imagine what was discussed behind closed doors from the written communications between Stalin and his security heads, which likely reflect the tone of private meetings. Stalin closely monitored Yagoda's and Yezhov's investigations and interrogations, as is evidenced by interrogation reports from Yagoda (or his first deputy Prokoviev) to Stalin between May 1935 and July 1936, and 115 "special communications" from Yezhov to Stalin between January 1937 and November

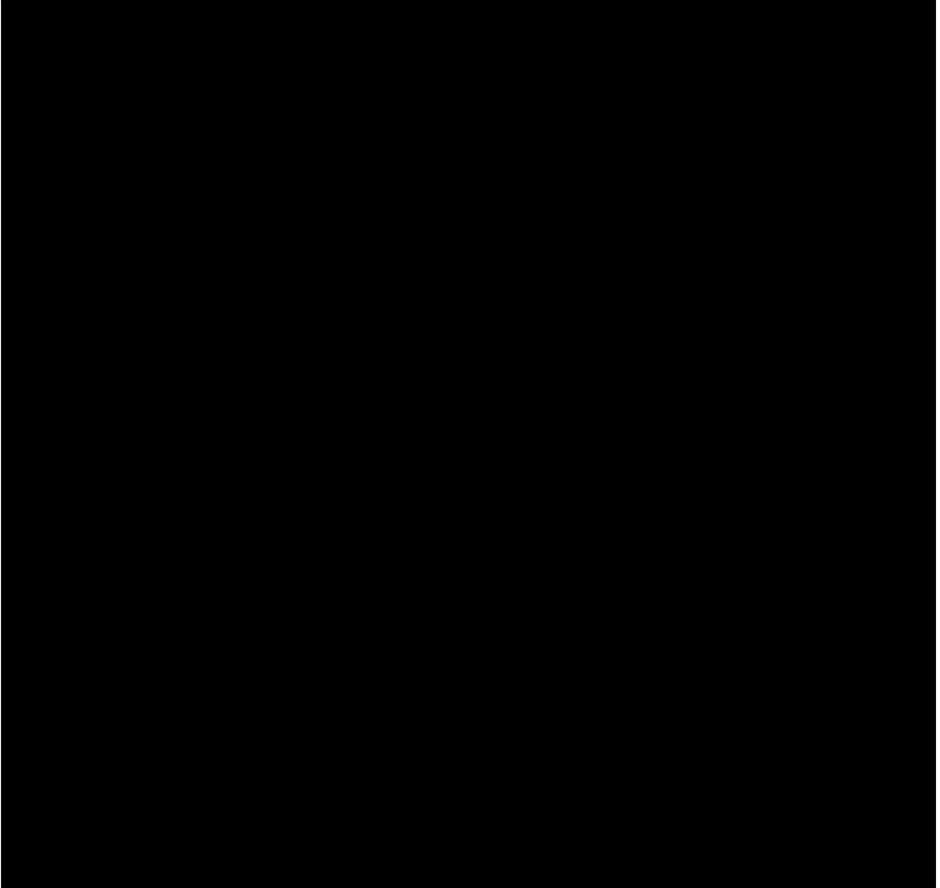


Figure 3.4. Stalin's Meetings with his First Deputies and with State Security Heads, 1931–1939. Source: Melbourne Gateway to Research in Soviet History http://www.melgrosh.unimelb.edu.au.

1938.[68] In Yezhov's case, there were flurries of special communications, such as eight sent in the ten-day period May 19–29, 1937 or eleven in the twelve-day period November 3–15, 1937.

Stalin sometimes shared Yagoda's memos with Politburo colleagues: "To Molotov, Kaganovich, Orzhonikidze, Yezhov, Zhdanov. Get acquainted with this material and then discuss—we need to talk this over. I. Stalin." Each party would reply, such as Molotov "Read, need to dis-

cuss," or Ordzhonikidze "It is necessary to shoot all these villains."[69] Stalin offered advice freely, such as to Yagoda's deputy (Prokoviev): "It is necessary to determine who gave Ivanov information about aviation, to whom he gave this information (Japanese, Poles, Finns, or someone else), when he joined the party, which organization accepted him and who recommended him?"[70] Stalin's instructions to Yezhov were even more frequent and detailed: "Comrade Yezhov. I am for the removal of the book but, in addition, I insist that its authors be examined and arrested;" or: "Comrade Yezhov. It is necessary to arrest Nodel. Maybe he can tell us something about Uzbek nationalists and Trotsky"; or "Comrade Yezhov. Have the Chekists Salyn' and Staiko been arrested? Report!"[71] Or: "Comrade Yezhov. Is. Yoffe arrested?[72] Or: "Comrade. Yezhov. Which Mikhailov? They did not even ask for his full name. What good interrogators!"[73]

Private meetings were used to discuss highly confidential matters, but not to conceal arrest and execution orders, which were passed back and forth routinely as official documents. To save time, Stalin wrote his orders directly on the original document by hand. Stalin circled on interrogation protocols the names of persons to be arrested, and he, along with other Politburo members (such as Molotov and Kaganovich) approved execution lists. His note on Yezhov's report "About the Physicians' Plot" reads "For arrest. Stalin." Stalin scribbled execution orders usually in pencil, such as on Yagoda's memo "About Measures of Punishment for the Participants in the Counterrevolutionary Group (The Kremlin Case) of May 12, 1935: "Shoot all six members of the counterrevolutionary, terrorist, Trotskyite group of military workers."[74]

Figure 3.5 shows meetings in Stalin's private office with Beria and the heads of the new state security ministry from 1940 to the early 1950s. We must be careful in using these figures insofar as personal meetings with Stalin moved to his Moscow suburb dacha, where Beria was a regular visitor.

In the war years Stalin met about as regularly with Beria as he had with Yagoda and Yezhov during dekulakization and mass operations. During the war, Beria was Stalin's point man on the front. Beria's NKVD arrested and deported "anti-Soviet" Belorussians, Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Chechens, Tatars, Greeks, and Armenians. Beria's NKVD conducted brutal actions in the rear, arresting hundreds of thousands of deserters, collaborators, and persons without proper papers. It

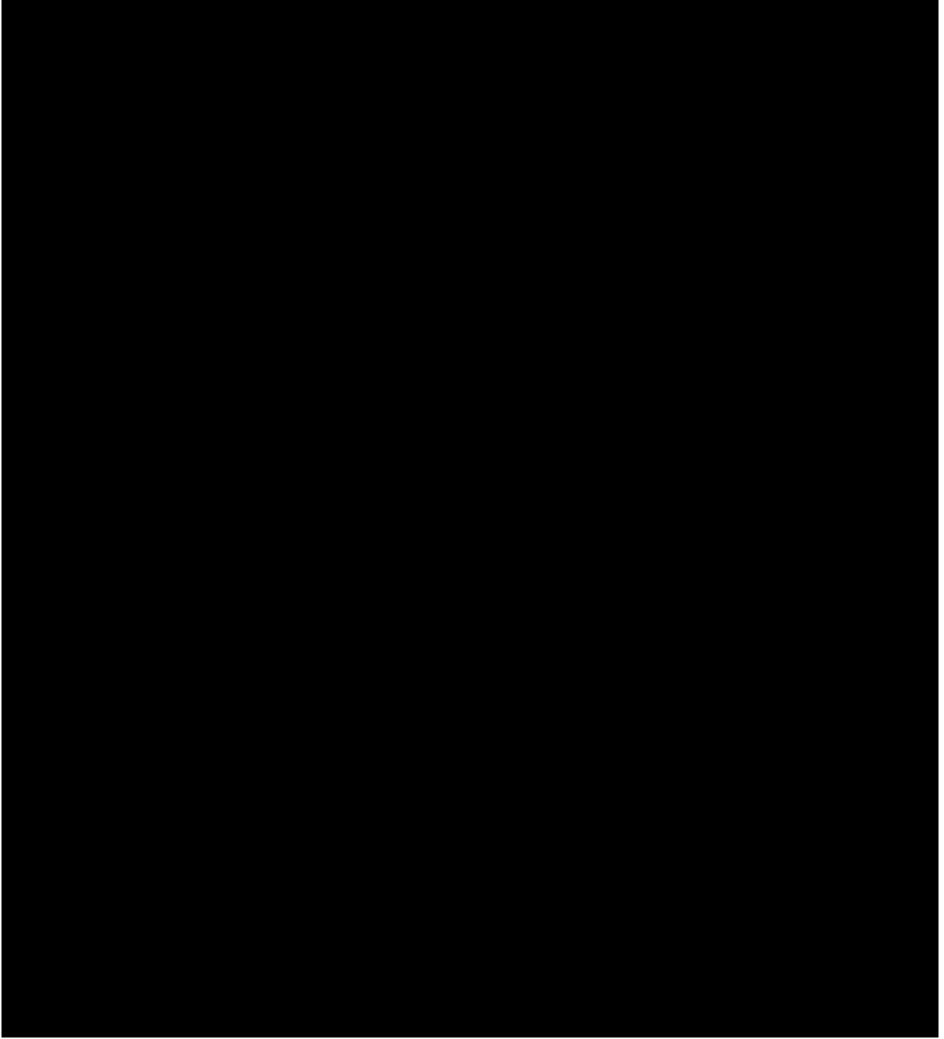


Figure 3.5 Meetings in Stalin's Private Office With Beria and Heads of State Security, 1940–1952. Source: http://www.melgrosh.unimelb.edu.au.

punished the families of "traitors," and it established "filtering points" for the hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens seeking to return to homes in newly regained territory. As the Red Army recaptured territory, Beria conducted purges, reporting to Stalin on January 8, 1944 that he had arrested 931,549 persons of whom 582,515 were soldiers and the rest civilians.[75] As the war ended, the NKVD and NKGB fought against armed elements in liberated areas and the newly annexed regions of the Baltic states, carrying out massive arrests and deportations of Ukrainians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. Stalin also met regularly with Beria in the early postwar years, but these meetings were likely devoted to Beria's work with state and economic affairs (although we imagine that Beria always kept an eye on state security issues).

Stalin met infrequently with the heads of the state security ministry in his private office, never more than twenty-five meetings per year. We can speculate as to the causes of the low frequency of such meetings. The task of state security may have become less important to Stalin after the war. After all, the Great Terror was supposed to have taken care of enemies "once and for all time." Stalin may not have developed the trust in Beria's successors that he had in Beria. A third factor may be that Beria continued to be de facto state security czar behind the scenes.

Beria's apparent transfer of power to the state security agency in 1943 seems out of character, but he, more than anyone, would have understood the advantages of separating state security from the NKVD. (Also Stalin may have wished to keep, not execute, such a trusted associate as Beria). In the aftermath of the Great Terror, it was primarily officials from the GUGB who were executed along with Yezhov. A separate state security ministry gave Beria a buffer and a possible scapegoat. This move (planned by Beria or not) paid off. Until Stalin's death, prosecutions targeted primarily officers of the Ministry of State Security (NKGB/MGB). Less than one month after Stalin's death in 1953, Beria professed shock at "learning" of the "crudest violations of Soviet laws [by the MGB]," including the harsh beating of arrestees, round-the-clock handcuffing of hands twisted behind the spine, in some cases lasting several months, lengthy deprivation of sleep, and incarcerating naked prisoners in cold cells."[76]

CONCLUSIONS

As Stalin geared up for the "once and for all time" extermination of political enemies, he created a massive state security empire (the NKVD USSR) headed by a loyal subordinate who either shared his ideals or would be removed for not doing so. The NKVD which executed the party purges and mass operations was a one-stop instrument of terror that could arrest and sentence, carry out normal policing, guard borders and inmates located in the Gulag, and process civil records. Dekulakization had been carried out by a less complex, albeit extremely powerful, organization, the OGPU. The OGPU started out as a relatively small number of Chekist-operational officers; other functions such as prisons and police were located under other administrations. Under Yagoda, it had expanded its scope to include the civil police and the prison system, principally the Gulag camps. By 1943, Stalin was again ready for a separation of interior ministry functions from those of state security, and the state security czar, Lavrenty Beria, voluntarily transferred out of state security into state and party work (but presumably kept informed about security). Thereafter, the state security ministry expanded its scope to capture control over the civil police and even extended into the inner reaches of the Gulag until it was again swallowed by Beria's MVD shortly after Stalin's death.

The state security system that began under Lenin and evolved under Stalin is what one would expect from a power-maximizing dictator who must ensure the system's loyalty. There was an extremely short agency chain between Stalin and the actual executors of repression. There were extremely close contacts between the dictator and his security czars. There was no complex regional hierarchy to speak of, and the number of regional administrations expanded, thereby reducing any concentrations of power or collusions.

The degree to which Stalin micromanaged state security is evident in the vast amount of time he spent with his security chiefs and also the detailed manner in which he supervised their work. The amount of attention Stalin devoted to state security ebbed and flowed, but the peak activity occurred as Stalin liquidated the state and party elite in the period 1935–1938. After Yagoda's and Yezhov's imprisonment and execution and Beria's departure as head of the MVD in 1945, Stalin dealt with less well known figures, now heading the state security administration. Al-

though he continued to micromanage them, it was at a much lower level of attention than under Yagoda and Yezhov.

Perhaps Stalin's reduced attention to state security after the war reflects the fact that his major potential enemies had been, to use the Chekist expression of the Civil War years, "transferred under the ground." Clearly the enemies being persecuted under the Lesser Terror—petty thieves, slackers, and drunks—could not compete for Stalin's attention as had the kulaks, Trotskyites, Right-wing Deviationists, and German spies a few years earlier.

6 Planning Terror

IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS, we examined how a power-maximizing dictator aka Stalin selected and organized his Chekists and identified political enemies. In the last chapter, we used the selectorate model to frame Stalin's purge of the party and state elite. We studied how Stalin eliminated potential rivals from the bodies charged with selecting the nation's leadership—the Politburo and the Central Committee. In this chapter, we study how Stalin "eliminated" large numbers of citizens, presumably to solidify his power.

This chapter examines the planning and execution of three major terror campaigns: dekulakization (1930–1932), mass operations (1937–1938), and national operations that also began in 1937. We focus on the periods 1930 to 1932 and 1937 to 1938. According to official state security statistics, 715,272 persons were executed and 928,892 persons were imprisoned in camps by extrajudicial tribunals in the years 1930–1932 and 1937–1938.[1] These astonishing figures cumulate to 1.5 percent of the adult population.

A DICTATORIAL ELIMINATIONS MODEL

Although Soviet economic planning gave the impression of chaos and arbitrariness,[2] Stalin and his economic planners used a "rational

choice" planning model. He and his Politburo consistently sought to maximize investment subject to the constraint of supplying enough consumer goods to preserve worker morale.[3]

We began this book with the proposition that the Soviet dictator combined repression and loyalty to enact his policies and remain in power. Stalin's degree of control over repression was much greater than over goods and services. "For Stalin, terror was the simplest and readiest instrument with which to govern the country," and there is no doubt that "plans of repression were of his personal design and under his personal control."[4]

Stalin's repression of high-level rivals was not extraordinary by historical standards. Any number of monarchs, dictators, and assorted despots have waged bloody battles to survive and prevent palace coups, some taken to extremes. It is more unusual for a monarch or a dictator to repress large numbers of his own people, who are scarcely distinguishable from other citizens.

At first glance, Stalin's mass repressions appear chaotic and irrational. They were too large; too many ordinary citizens were affected. Specialists with essential skills were executed. Death penalties were issued in haste with little or no deliberation. The NKVD's mass operations "conveyer" spit out more than a million and a half victims in fifteen months of 1937 and 1938, few if any posing an immediate threat to Stalin or to the nation. There is no question of excesses and irrationalities, but we are interested in Stalin's overall design. Were Stalin's mass operations "rational" in the sense that they were designed to further in a systematic and deliberate way his overriding objective of securing his person and regime?

Stalin's mass operations offer the strongest challenge to the rationality assumption. Even though his high-level victims may have seemed impotent at the time of their repression, they would have willingly overthrown Stalin if they had the chance. Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, who hated Stalin, would have not hesitated; after witnessing the United Opposition's defeat, Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky must have understood the consequences of a total Stalin victory. The fact that his victims put up so little resistance and that his inner circle did not produce a challenger constitutes a tribute to Stalin's maneuvers. His tactics worked; maybe he overdid brutality, but perhaps one should not be circumspect in such circumstances. Stalin's imprisonment and deportation of hun-

dreds of thousands of peasants (yes, some were better off than others) in 1930–1932 and then his slaughter and imprisonment of more than a million "ordinary" people (yes, some did have suspect pasts) represent a stronger challenge to the rationality assumption. Perhaps he was just crazy or too much the product of a brutal upbringing.

The rationality assumption, as applied to mass repressions, requires that we be able to "model" the behavior of a Stalin-like dictator confronted with what he perceives to be disloyalty from his own population. Unlike democratic politicians, who adjust policies to the median voter in order to be elected, brutal dictators can adjust their constituents by eliminating their "enemies" (by execution or jailing, or, to a lesser extent, by deportation). Would a dictator, whose goals were that of a Stalin, engage in eliminations of large numbers of his population? What would he gain from such eliminations? How would he decide how many to eliminate and of what type?

To explore such issues, we use a model in which the dictator's choice variable is the number of enemies to eliminate from the population. This model seeks to explain the circumstances under which a dictator would choose eliminations, and why the numbers of eliminations would change over time—the exceptionally high rate of eliminations (through execution and long Gulag terms) of 1937–1938, the substantial but lower rate of eliminations (largely through imprisonment and deportation) during dekulakization, and the "national operations" beginning in the late 1930s and stretching through the early postwar period, which relocated entire nationalities with extreme brutality. These spikes of mass repression took place against a backdrop of "normal" rates of repression, which were themselves exceptionally high by international standards.

Our eliminations model shifts from a power-maximizing dictator (who accumulates power levels more than sufficient to remain in office) to one whose objective is to accumulate enough power to secure his regime, but with resources left over for other activities. This dictator's goal is to remain below a *revolution constraint*, defined as the maximum threat that the dictator can tolerate without risk of loss of power. The actual threat depends on the *number of enemies* and their *potency.* Defining the threat level in this fashion allows trade-offs between more but less potent enemies and fewer but more potent enemies. A formal (simplified) eliminations model is given in Appendix 6.[5]

The dictator is the one to assess the threat level. Of course, there are strong subjective elements in this calculation. Remember that the dictator's enemy is anyone the dictator determines to be an enemy. An enemy can be an enemy due to the "social danger" he presents, his background, or his present or future actions.

Stalin made constant assessments of the threat level. He read intelligence reports, discussed the situation with his state security or with private informants, or evaluated alarms raised by regional party secretaries. He assessed the potency of his enemies by gauging the international situation, by measuring the intent of perceived enemies, and by classifying different enemies by the "social danger" they posed. An enemy working alone would be less potent than one working in a group. An enemy bent on assassination would be more potent than one that distributed antiparty literature. How the dictator assesses the threat cannot be known; rather we infer his assessment from his actions.

We do know that Stalin was obsessed with enemies and on public occasions revealed how he calculated their numbers. Consider his musings recorded verbatim at the March 5, 1937 Central Committee plenum:

> If you remember the last discussion was in 1927; the discussion was open; this was a real referendum. Seven hundred and thirty thousand members of the party (out of 854,000) participated, meaning 123,000 did not vote. Maybe they were on leave, on vacation, or had other reasons. Out of 854,000 party members 730,800 voted. Of these 724,000 voted for the Bolsheviks against the Trotskyites. This means 4,000 votes for the Trotskyites. This is half a percent. There were 2,600 abstentions. I think you would have to add the abstentions to the votes for the Trotskyites, which gives them a little over 6,000. I think from those who were not able to participate in the referendum, namely 121,000, it is possible to give 10 percent to the Trotskyites . . . this would add up to 11,000. If we add this 11,000 we get 18,000 Trotskyites. We can add another 10,000 for Zinoviev, giving us 28,000, Yes, let's reckon more than we need for objectivity—28,000. If we add rightists and others, let's raise the figure to 30,000. . . . We now have 1.5 million party members, 2 million with candidate members. From these cadres we have already arrested 18,000. If we take 30,000, this means there are 18,000 left.[6]

Thus Stalin did calculate the number of enemies. If we initially hold the potency factor constant, changes in the threat level will be due exclusively to changes in the number of enemies. If the number of enemies

is below the revolution constraint, the dictator needs no new repressive action. If the number of enemies rises above the revolution constraint, the dictator must eliminate a sufficient number to return to the revolution constraint.

We can illustrate the eliminations model with a simple numerical example in which we hold the potency factor constant at a "normal" level of 1. The initial number of enemies is 20 (each representing a potency level of 1), so that the threat level equals 20. If the total population is 100, 80 are "nonenemies" and 20 are enemies. If the revolution constraint is also 20, the dictator need not engage in eliminations.

If 10 previous nonenemies defect from the 80 to become enemies, the dictator now has 30 enemies (70 nonenemies) at a potency rate of 1, which places the actual threat level (30) above the revolution constraint (20). If he does nothing, he will be overthrown. But, the simple solution—eliminating the 10 new enemies—is not simple after all, because his enemies try to conceal themselves. He must be sure to eliminate the 10 defectors, but his ability to identify them depends on their skill in concealing themselves and upon the quality of intelligence. His agents can only identify enemies correctly with a certain probability. In our example, we use a two-thirds probability, which means that to eliminate 10 enemies, he must repress 15 citizens, only 10 of whom will be his enemies. The dictator must eliminate a certain number of nonenemies along with enemies to keep the threat level below the revolution constraint.

The eliminations model also suggests that repressions will increase if the potency factor increases (enemies become more dangerous) or if the ability to distinguish enemy from nonenemy diminishes. If, for example, the number of enemies is constant at 20, but the potency factor increases from 1 to 1.5, and the probability of detecting an enemy falls from two-thirds to one-half, the dictator must now eliminate an additional 20, only 10 of which will be enemies.[7] The sacrifice of nonenemies is a necessary evil of repression, but not without costs. In a labor-short economy, the loss of "loyal" or at least "neutral" able-bodied adults is a cost a rational dictator would wish to avoid.

This eliminations model is a rational choice model. The dictator "rationally" chooses to keep his enemies below the revolution constraint, and the model has two parameters: the potency of enemies and the probability of correct labeling of enemies. Despite its extreme simplic-

ity, it predicts certain regularities. First, the dictator will eliminate fewer citizens, the higher the probability of correct labeling. Second, he will eliminate more if he considers his enemies to be potent. Third, he will accept the repression of nonenemies as a matter of course. Fourth, the dictator will order a "normal" amount of repression when at the revolution constraint.

Were Stalin's mass repressions of the 1930s consistent with this eliminations model? First, we need to examine some institutional background.

PLANNING MASS REPRESSIONS: PROCEDURES

If the dictator perceives the threat to exceed the revolution constraint, he must order eliminations. In this case, the most important orders were issued by the Politburo. Under Stalin, the Politburo often did not meet in person; many issues were decided perfunctorily by written or telephone votes. Many proposals were prepared by subcommittees. Politburo members were required to sign. If things went wrong, all Politburo members would be held "collectively" responsible. This procedure protected Stalin after his death; to renounce Stalin meant explaining one's own complicity.

Procedurally, Politburo decisions were made in response to "questions" of agencies (such as the NKVD, the foreign ministry, or the trade ministry), of individuals, or of committees or commissions. Each question would have a sponsor (such as "Question of Menzhinsky and Yagoda," or more frequently "Question of the NKVD"). The Politburo would accept, reject, or delay the proposal in the name of the Central Committee. Decisions were signed by Stalin or a deputy such as Molotov, or were unsigned but on Central Committee letterhead. Classified decisions were placed in "special files." The decision would also contain a distribution list of persons who would receive all or part of the decision.[8] The number of questions depended on the frequency of Politburo meetings. In the early and mid-1920s, the Politburo met frequently. The January 28, 1925 meeting addressed 28 questions directly, 44 questions were handled by written or telephone vote (*opros*), and eight were placed in special files.[9] The January 5, 1930 meeting addressed 40 questions directly, and 24 were handled by *opros*, of which nine went into special files.[10] By the late 1930s, the Politburo met infrequently. Ques-

tions were accumulated and dealt with in large numbers in single sessions. The accumulated questions for the period September 23 to October 25 came to 139 questions handled directly, and 749 by opros of which 64 were for special files.[11]

The orders for the three mass operations campaigns, like other major decisions, were issued by the Politburo according to these procedures, starting with dekulakization.

DEKULAKIZATION: LIQUIDATION OF A CLASS

Dekulakization was the first mass repression. Prior to collectivization, there had been campaigns to repress thousands. For the first time, the Politburo and Yagoda's OGPU had to repress hundreds of thousands.

As collectivization began in late 1929, there was discussion within the party of what to do with the kulaks, who according to official statistics numbered over a half-million households containing two and a half million persons in the mid-1920s.[12] Stalin's order of December 1929 to "liquidate the kulaks as a class" confronted state security with a formidable task.

Collectivization and dekulakization set off a civil war in the countryside—a second Bolshevik Revolution. Peasants protested: "We don't need collectivization," "You are drinking our blood and are trampling on our spines and destroying the revolution," and "Away with the communists who are leading the country to ruin."[13] OGPU statistics counted 13,754 mass demonstrations in 1930 alone and 14,000 "acts of terror."[14] The OGPU's response was brutal. In 1930 alone, OGPU troikas executed 19,000. Once in the hands of troikas, chances of escaping a severe sentence were remote.[15]

The Bolsheviks won the battle for the countryside due to the lack of coordinated opposition and by mobilizing OGPU special forces and activist reinforcements. The OGPU shifted around more than 7,000 troops, supplemented by 4,200 troops formed from Red Army units.[16] The OGPU rounded up and transported deportees from collection points.[17] As the cowed peasantry succumbed to superior force, confusion prevailed as resisters were executed, jailed, or deported. More than 72,000 deportees attempted to escape upon arrival.[18] Almost 20 percent of Ukrainian kulaks escaped dekulakization by fleeing their vil-

lages.[19] Although the Politburo and OGPU decrees expressly exempted families of Red Army soldiers, hundreds or thousands of people belonging to these families found themselves exiled to Siberia or Kazakhstan, along with poor peasant families, who offered tax documents to prove their lowly status.

Planning Dekulakization

The dekulakization campaign, which started all this, was announced in the Politburo Decree "About Measures for the Liquidation of Kulak Households in the Regions of Continuous Collectivization" dated January 30, 1930.[20] The decree initiated "the policy of liquidation of kulaks as a class . . . and of decisive suppression of counterrevolutionary resistance of kulaks to the collective farm movement." It gave the order (in point 3) to "quickly liquidate a first category of counterrevolutionary kulak activists by confining them in concentration camps, not hesitating to carry out the highest measure of repression for organizers of terror acts, counterrevolutionary statements, and insurgent organizations"; and to "deport to remote regions or to remote districts within the confines of the territory a second category of kulak activists, especially from the richest kulaks and the quasi-landlords." A third category of prosperous but less dangerous kulaks was to be resettled within the region but outside their home districts.

The Politburo decree targeted 3–5 percent of peasant households to "concentrate the blow against actual kulak households and to prevent the application of these measures to middle peasant households." Regional minimum and maximum targets were set. Between 49,000 and 60,000 first-category offenders were to be sent to concentration camps (or executed) and 129,000 to 154,000 kulak households were to be deported to remote regions *within four months* (February through May).[21]

The decree stated that "lists of second-category offenders [for deportation] are to be drawn up by the local soviets on the basis of decisions made by poor and middle peasants." Twenty-five hundred party activists were assigned to the countryside and were to report by February 15, one thousand extra troops were assigned to the OGPU, and the district OGPU offices were authorized to dispense extrajudicial justice through troikas. Menzhinsky, Yagoda's official boss, instructed the troi-

kas "to examine these cases and pass sentences quickly." They should investigate only when it promised to yield something of substance.[22]

With Stalin as its guiding force, the Politburo's January 30, 1930 decree had been worked out by a Politburo commission headed by V. M. Molotov. A subcommittee that included Yagoda planned operations, extrajudicial troikas, and OGPU troop movements.[23] The number of kulaks had been heatedly debated within the Politburo in the mid-1920s.[24] Molotov argued that kulak households accounted for 5 percent of the rural population for a total of 1.2 million households, versus the statistical administration's lower figure.[25] The number of kulaks scheduled for repression changed in the course of drafting until the Politburo settled on the final range of 3–5 percent.[26] Regions were also asked how many kulaks they had, or how many they could receive, if resettled in remote districts.[27]

The Politburo approved the Molotov commission report on January 30, 1930 under the question "About Measures Related to Kulaks," and ordered Rykov, Molotov, and justice official Krylenko to prepare the necessary state decrees. An amendment was added (by Voroshilov) to "exempt Red Army soldiers and partisans from dekulakization except those who actively resist."[28] On February 15, 1930, the Politburo increased the secrecy of the operations by forbidding "the publication of executions of kulak elements in the local and central press without special permission of the Central Committee in every case."[29]

As would become typical of mass operations, Stalin's Politburo decree was put into effect by an operational decree of the OGPU, Yagoda's OGPU Operational Directive No. 44/21 "About the Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class" of February 2, 1930. Most of Yagoda's decree repeats the Politburo decree verbatim. Politburo decrees were top secret and could not be widely distributed; the operational decree provided the information that operational administrators on the ground needed to know.

Yagoda expanded the definition of kulaks to include just about anyone opposed to Soviet power[30] and ordered "the OGPU to take necessary measures concerning the first and second categories within four months" (February—May) and added: "Most of those arrested are to be confined in concentration camps; the most evil and fanatic activists . . . must be handled by the most decisive measures of punishment including VMN [the highest measured of punishment]."

Yagoda's decree focused on operational matters. He ordered "the expeditious creation of troikas in the regional departments of the OGPU [PP OGPUs]," which included a regional party and prosecutorial representative as well, to process first-category defendants in an extrajudicial format "without the slightest delay." Collection points were to be organized to dispatch deportees. OGPU reserves were to be formed, especially in the most sensitive regions. Each regional office was to submit its "final designation of the location of collection points and the numbers of deportees to be moved through these points no later than ten A.M., February 4." Yagoda ordered that "under no circumstances are units of the Red Army to be used, except in extreme circumstances" and ordered a "100 percent examination of letters going to the Red Army, and abroad."

Regional party committees had already approved dekulakization decrees between January 20 and 29.[31] District OGPU offices were also informed of the impending campaign through meetings in Moscow. Demands from regions, such as the Urals District OGPU office, for higher limits ("The 5,000 households given for the Urals in no way corresponds to the real needs to purge the province of kulak and counterrevolutionary White Guard—bandit elements")[32] were immediately denied: "The Central Committee directs attention to the fact that in some provinces there is an effort to raise the number of deported kulaks and thus violate the decree of the Central Committee. The Central Committee categorically demands the exact execution of its decision of January 30."[33] Warnings against excessive dekulakization continued: A March 10 Politburo order condemned high dekulakization rates in some regions as a "gross distortion" of party policy.[34]

As dekulakization proceeded, the Politburo issued orders to regulate its course. As Siberian regions objected to "accepting" deportees, the OGPU was directed "to reject telegrams of the Siberian committee and take measures to receive deportees." In the same meeting, a question "About Kulaks" raised by Stalin, Menzhinsky, and Yagoda, directed the OGPU "to coordinate settlements in Kazakhstan with the deputy head of state (Andreev) or in his absence, Molotov."[35] In a February 1930 meeting, Stalin's question "About Chechnya and Uzbekistan" ordered a slower pace of collectivization in economically backward regions and declared "unacceptable" certain methods practiced in various parts of Uzbekistan, such as water deprivation or use of military troops.[36]

Stalin's primary goal was the success of collectivization. He warned

on January 30, 1930 not to let dekulakization harm collectivization.[37] Accordingly, dekulakization proceeded in spurts as concern about violence and destruction in the countryside grew and waned. On March 2, 1930, Stalin published an article entitled "Dizzy with Success" which blamed local officials for excesses and called for voluntary entry into collectives. The pace of collectivization and dekulakization slowed until relative quiet was restored and another push could be undertaken. Similarly, there were cutbacks of deportations in late 1931 as receiving regions complained about lack of food and supplies for newcomers as the mortality of "special settlers" soared.[38]

Dekulakization: Plan Fulfillment

The January 30 Politburo decree assigned the OGPU a "plan" to imprison or execute 49,000 to 60,000 first-category offenders and to deport 129,000 to 154,000 second-category households to remote regions. Half of this task was to be completed by April 15 and in full by the end of May. The long-run plan called for the deportation of between 720,000 and 1.2 million households (3–5 percent of the rural population) either to remote regions or resettled within their home region.[39] No date certain was given for completion of this plan. Table 6.1 summarizes the fulfillment of the four-month plan (49,000 to 60,000 first-category executions and imprisonments) and 129,000 to 154,000 deportations of second-category households. These figures are approximations that adjust for punishments handed down prior to the dekulakization decree and for defendants processed by regular courts.[40]

Some 65,000 first-category offenders were executed or imprisoned between January and May 1930. The 49,000 to 60,000 limit was met within the four-month deadline with the caveat that only 44 percent were kulaks—a fact not inconsistent with the Yagoda decree which lists sectarians, merchants, speculators, and a wide variety of other enemies.

The target of 129,000 to 154,000 families for deportation and resettlement of second-category kulak households was not met. Second-category households could be either deported to a remote region, such as from Ukraine or the Black Earth region to the Northern Region, or resettled within an already remote region (such as within Siberia or Kazakhstan) but to an unpopulated area. By late May, the number of deported households approached 100,000. It rose to 135,000 (and met

Table 6.1. Dekulakization: Four-Month Plan, Arrests, and Fulfillment

	Category 1 (Camps or Death)	*Category 2 (Deportation)*	*Total*
	A. Plan (targets for May 1930)		
Middle Volga	3–4,000	8–10,000	
Northern Caucasus and Dagestan	6–8,000	20,000	
Ukraine	15,000	30–35,000	
Central Black Earth	3–5,000	10–15,000	
Lower Volga	4–6,000	10–12,000	
Belorussia	4–5,000	6–7,000	
Urals	4–5,000	10–15,000	
Siberia	5–6,000	25,000	
Kazakhstan	5–6,000	10–15,000	
Total original plan	49–60,000	129–154,000	
Revised plan (May 6)		115,000	
	B. Arrests (no plan targets)		
By April 15, 1930			140,000
By October 1, 1930			283,000
	C. Plan Fulfillment (May 1930)		
Camp sentences and executions[a]	65,000		
Deportations (families) (May 23, 1930)		99,515	
Deportations (families) Dec. 10, 1930		135,147	

Sources: Decree of OGPU No. 44/21 “About the Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class,” cited in N. Vert and S. V. Mironenko, eds., *Massovye Repressii v SSSR*, Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga, ed. V. P. Kozlov, vol. 1 (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), pp. 94–104. Arrests and plan fulfillment are from A. Berelovich and V. Danilov, eds., *Sovetskaia derevnia glazami VChk-OGPU-NKVD, 1918–1939: Dokumenty i materialy v 4 tomakh*, vol. 1: *1930–1931* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1998), pp. 373, 484, 533–534 (which includes both exiled households and those resettled within the territory).

[a]Camp sentences and executions are calculated by multiplying the number of 134,644 1930 executions and Gulag sentences (from Colonel Pavlov, “Report about the Numbers of Those Sentenced According to Cases of Organs of the NKVD,” cited in N. Vert and S. V. Mironenko, eds., *Massovye repressii v SSSR,* Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga, ed. V. P. Kozlov, vol. 1 [Moscow: Rosspen, 2004], pp. 608–609), by the approximate percentage of category 1 arrests taking place between January and May 15, 1930 from Berelovich and Danilov, *Sovetskaia derevnia glazami VChk-OGPU-NKVD,* 1:484.

the lower target) only by December. The deportation plan was underfulfilled because of shortfalls in both deportations and resettlements, but shortfalls were higher (around 50 percent) for resettlements.[41] As it became evident that the short-run deportation plan would not be met, the Politburo and OGPU engaged in a common planning practice: they lowered the plan target to allow the reporting of fulfillment. On May 6, the deportation plan was lowered from 160,000 to 115,000 families.

The long-term dekulakization of 3 to 5 percent of the 24.2 million rural households[42] ended officially May 8, 1933 with a joint decree of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars "About the Cessation of Mass Deportations of Peasants, the Regulation of Arrests, and the Relief of Places of Confinement." This decree declared the "full victory of collectivization in the village" and that "we no longer need mass repression" applied under the rule that amounted to "first arrest and then try to figure it out." The decree ordered the OGPU and militia to "expeditiously cease any mass resettlement of peasants. Deportations are to be allowed only on individual and specific orders and only for those households whose head is carrying on an active battle against collective farms."[43] At the time of cessation, there were 1,142,084 special settlers in remote regions, not counting those who died or escaped.[44]

In economic planning, operational plans were the quarterly and monthly plans. Annual plans were frequently "corrected," and five year plans were "visions of the future" of no operational significance. By analogy, we would expect the 3–5 percent long-run plan to lose operational significance as dekulakization was overshadowed by other things, such as the Law of August 7, 1932 against the theft of socialist property or the passportization campaign announced December 27, 1932 to rid the major cities of "marginal elements."[45]

That dekulakization was one of three major repressions by the end of 1932 complicates the calculation of fulfillment of the 3–5 percent target. OGPU execution, imprisonment, and deportation statistics include not only victims of dekulakization but also those of the antitheft law and passportization decree, both enforced, at least in part, by OGPU tribunals. From August 1932 to June 1933, almost a quarter of a million persons were sentenced to ten-year terms under the antitheft law, following instructions from Stalin and Molotov: "Arrest anyone; don't be lazy." Some 800,000 persons flooded into prisons built to hold

Table 6.2. Fulfilling the 3–5 Percent Dekulakization Targets[a]

	Execution	*Camps*	*Deported*	*Resettled*	*Total*[b]
OGPU tribunals, 1930 and 1931	30,852	220,126	241,000[c]	140,000	
OGPU tribunals, 1932[d]	2,728	51,569	36,067	21,000	
OGPU tribunals 1933[d]	2,154	35,515	54,262	32,000	
Totals (fulfillment)	35,736	287,210	331,329	93,000	847,275
Plan (Jan. 30, 1930)[d]					724,000–1,200,000
Percent fulfillment (relative to lower limit)					71–117

Sources: See Table 6.1 above and Pavlov. Sentences under the August 7, 1932 law are from Yoram Gorlizki, "Theft under Stalin: A Property Rights Analysis," PERSA Working Paper no. 10, 28 June, 2001. The figures for OGPU tribunal sentences (minus sentences under the August 7, 1932 law) and for those deported (both outside and inside their home regions) for 1930 and 1931 are from R. W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 46, 192. Their numbers are consistent with those cited by N. A. Ivnitskii, *Sud'ba raskulachennykh v SSSR* (Moscow: Sobranie, 2004), p. 43.

[a]We do not include self-dekulakization (fleeing to the city or selling property and blending into collective farms) in these figures. We include no dekulakizations for 1933, the year in which OGPU attention turned to ridding the cities of undesirables, including many kulak-refugees.

[b]See note to Table 6.1.

[c]We use the minimum targeted number of deportations/resettlements from the February 1931 plan.

[d]For 1932 and 1933, we deduct collective farmers sentenced under the August 7, 1932 law from the total sentenced to camps by OGPU tribunals. The 1932 and 1933 deportation figures are from Pavlov, "Report about the Numbers of Those Sentenced According to Cases of Organs of the NKVD," p. 609. We have no data on resettlements for 1932 and 1933, so we apply the 1930–1931 ratio of resettlements to deportations (.58) to the deportation figures to approximate the resettlement figures.

200,000.[46] The passportization campaign caused a half-million people to flee cities to escape imprisonment.

Table 6.2 provides a very rough approximation of the fulfillment of the long-term dekulakization plan. Many deportations took place without the target being brought before an OGPU tribunal, and the figures we cite after 1930–1931 include only those sentenced by OGPU tribunals. Moreover, we must simply make guesses about households resettled within their home region for 1932 and 1933. We speculate that there was no official effort to check fulfillment of the 3–5 percent limit.

In fact, there is no clear definition of what constituted a "dekulakization." It could vary from an expropriation of property to an execution. In Table 6.2, we count persons executed or imprisoned as dekulakized along with households deported or resettled. The total figures are somewhat like adding together apples and oranges, but any calculation of this sort must be regarded as illustrative. Our exercise may be pointless insofar as no one in power was interested in this accounting exercise. In any case, our approximations suggest that the lower limit (dekulakization of 3 percent of the agricultural population) was reached, but the upper limit was not.

Our overall conclusion is that the dekulakization plan was approximately fulfilled both in its four-month and in its long-term variant. It was better fulfilled than the economic plans of this period.[47] It was clearly not grossly overfulfilled (relative to the initial intent), and it appears that Stalin and the Politburo went to extra lengths to prevent local "enthusiasm" from pushing dekulakization beyond its intended limits.

MASS OPERATIONS, 1937–1938

At the January–February 1934 Party Congress, called the "Congress of Victors," Stalin claimed the success of collectivization and dekulakization of the countryside and industrialization of the cities. Stalin's battle against his enemies, however, was just starting. The purge of the party elite began in December 1934. By the spring of 1937, most of the high-level officials had already been arrested, although their trials lay ahead.

Stalin, in a speech to the military council on June 2, 1937, after the first two Moscow show trials, summed up what had been accomplished and what remained to be done. Stalin told his attentive audience that ten high party officials had been uncovered as spies of the Germans and Japanese. Bukharin and Rykov (whose trial still lay ahead) were "very close to the spies" and included the highest officials of the General Staff—Tukhachevsky, Iakir, and Uborevich—among the spies.

STALIN: Yes, even Tukhachevsky. You read his confession?
VOICES FROM THE AUDIENCE: Yes we read.
STALIN: He gave our operational plan—the operational plan, the holiest of

holies, to German intelligence. He had meetings with representatives of German intelligence.

VOICES FROM THE AUDIENCE: Spies?

STALIN: Yes, spies.[48]

Stalin characterized these conspiracies as a widespread failure of intelligence, which could not be tolerated further: "It is necessary to check our own people and others who come to us. It is necessary to have a widespread intelligence network, which checks every party member and every nonparty Bolshevik, especially the organs of the OGPU, along with the organs of intelligence, so that they widen their own network and are vigilantly examined." There were no longer any safe havens free from infiltrators. Yagoda's recent treachery (he was one of the supposed ten German spies) showed that even the NKVD was not immune.

The stage was being set for the mass operations that penetrated virtually every aspect of Soviet life starting in the summer of 1937. There may have been an organic link between the purge of the party elite and the impending mass operations. Arrested national and regional leaders were accused of massive conspiracies, but conspiracies must have foot soldiers. If a regional party leader was arrested, he must have had a gang of followers. Common people do not organize themselves against Soviet power. Someone must be responsible. After reading an alarmist June report "About the Discovery in Western Siberia of Counterrevolutionary Rebellious Groups among Deported Kulaks," Stalin appointed a Western Siberian troika "to apply the highest measure of punishment to all activists of rebellious organizations among deported kulaks."[49]

At the time of Stalin's June speech, ominous signs were coming in from the provinces. Deported kulaks were returning from the special settlements, as were those sentenced to the Gulag during dekulakization. Western Siberia NKVD boss Mironov reported: "In Narym and Kuzbas, there are 208,400 exiled kulaks; another 3,500 live under administrative exile and include White officers, active bandits and convicts, and former police officers . . . this is a *broad base* for an insurgent rebellion."[50] Regional party secretaries complained about large influxes of "alien elements" and about wrecking in collective farms.[51] It is unclear whether these alarmist regional officials were expressing their own views or simply telling Stalin what he wanted to hear. The head of the Perm city administration, in charge of preparations for the opera-

tion, was himself arrested and executed a week before its beginning. Ordinary citizens arrested in the course of mass operations were accused of belonging to the gangs of arrested regional party leaders.[52]

Even before the announcement of mass operations, Stalin took precautionary steps. The Politburo removed expelled party members from the military in its March 19–September 9, 1937 session.[53] The June 10, 1937 session sent expelled party members from cities to nonindustrial regions, and ordered active observation of those left behind.[54] Stalin's appointment of the ambitious Yezhov to replace Yagoda in late 1936 gave him the right lieutenant to annihilate his enemies "once and for all time."

Planning Mass Operations

Stalin set mass operations in motion with a top secret telegram of July 2, 1937 to regional party secretaries. The undated draft of the telegram "About Anti-Soviet Elements," written in Lazar Kaganovich's hand, was signed by eight Politburo members. Its key passage read: "It is noted that a large part of former kulaks and criminals, deported at one time to northern and Siberian regions and then, after serving their terms and returning to their home provinces, are the main source of all anti-Soviet and diversionary crimes in collective and state farms and in transport and industry. The Central Committee proposes to all regional secretaries and regional representatives of the NKVD to investigate all returnees so that the most hostile are immediately arrested and shot according to administrative measures via troikas, and the less active of them are to be reregistered and deported according to instructions of the NKVD. The Central Committee requires that the composition of the troikas be presented to it within 5 days along with the numbers to be shot and the numbers to be deported."[55]

The Politburo had days earlier sent orders to the regions to form troikas and to compile lists of enemies within a five-day period.[56] Shortly thereafter, more than one hundred troikas were staffed and ready for operations.[57] On July 8, for example, the NKVD head of Western Siberia (Mironov) gave lists of names of those to be arrested to the regional party boss (Eikhe). Such lists were thrown together hastily from existing catalogs of suspicious persons with no investigatory work.[58]

Stalin's July 2, 1937 directive, unlike the detailed January 30, 1930 dekulakization decree, gave only the basic outline: enemies should be divided into two categories, one for execution, the other to be sent to remote areas; enemies were labeled with the catch-all phrase "returning kulaks and criminals." Remarkably, the July 2 directive speaks of "reregistration and deportation" and leaves out prison as a punishment.

Subsequent operational decrees issued by the NKVD filled in the key blanks. Yezhov's July 30, 1937 operational decree was drafted by Yezhov's deputy M. P. Frinovsky, and Yezhov met fifteen times with Stalin (often with Molotov in attendance) between July 4 and July 29, 1937, sometimes in meetings lasting more than three hours.[59] Stalin more than likely dictated the scale and terms of operations to Yezhov during these meetings.

We do not know whether the initial regional "limits" came from the bottom up or top-down from Yezhov and Stalin. It was likely a combination. Yezhov's NKVD had extensive card catalogs of citizens (internal passport records, criminal records, expulsions from the party, and records of disenfranchised persons) from which victims could be drawn. The regional party and NKVD departments also had extensive records from surveillance, factory lists, and prosecutors.

The head of the Perm District NKVD (G. F. Cherniakov) received the order at a July meeting of district chiefs "to prepare in the shortest possible time a list of people from the kulaks and submit it to the NKVD office in Kudymkar." Lists were prepared on special forms, which were inspected by a militia officer who approved them for submission. In the beginning of August 1937, the Prikam'e regional NKVD boss (Revinov) examined lists prepared by assembled district NKVD leaders that had Roman numerals I or II (death or prison) next to each name. Another local Perm participant described the compilation of arrest lists: "Before the preparation of the arrest protocols, the commandant of the worker settlement called me in and told me that I had to choose people and find compromising material on them, after which we put together their characteristics, taking several facts from memory. For other names, we looked at work books and disciplinary records, such as absenteeism and so forth. After this, the investigator prepared the arrest protocol for signature."[60]

The sixty-five regions submitted their lists of category 1 and 2 victims

to the Politburo in early July. These lists were acknowledged by the Politburo under the common designation "About Anti-Soviet Elements." Western Siberia submitted 6,600 first-category and 4,200 second-category victims and named its party secretary (Eikhe), NKVD administration head (Mironov), and chief prosecutor (Barkov) to man its troika. Kazakhstan submitted 2,345 first-category and 4,403 second-category victims; Sverdlovsk 4,700 and 3,000. Moscow province named its party secretary (Khrushchev), NKVD head (Stalin's brother-in-law Redens) and chief prosecutor (Maslov) to head its troika.[61]

Stalin clearly was well acquainted with the contents of Yezhov's Operational Order of the NKVD No. 00447 of July 30, 1937 (issued twenty-eight days after Stalin's July 2 telegram). Upon its receipt, he sent a note to his secretary (Poskrebyshev): "I am directing to you Operational Order No. 00447 'About the Repression of Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Anti-Soviet Elements.' I request you send this to members of the Politburo for voting and send the results to Comrade Yezhov."[62] Stalin's decision to approve Order No. 00447 by *opros* suggests that it was worked out within a narrow circle and that Stalin did not wish further debate.

Order No. 00447 was a classic extraordinary decree:.[63] It began by stating the urgent need to put an end "once and for all time" to the "foul subversive work" of the masses of enemies at large in society. It then describes nine categories of "contingents" subject to repression and divides them into a first category of the "most dangerous and hostile" to "be shot" (capital letters) and a second category subject to eight- to ten-year terms in camps. (Note that Stalin's Politburo order had called for "deportation" of this category, which was now changed to imprisonment.) The order gives plan "limits" for forty-eight Russian and Central Asian provinces, eight Ukrainian provinces, eight Kazakh provinces, and the Gulag, for a total of sixty-five regional plans. (Gulag inmates were automatically placed in the first category; they were already in prison.) The totals for the sixty-five regions added up to 75,950 executions and 193,000 prison sentences. The operation was scheduled to begin August 5, 1937, that is within six days, and was to end within four months (similar to dekulakization), by early December 1937.

The dekulakization limits had been based on rough percentages of the number of kulaks in each of the nine regions, using Stalin's control figure of 3–5 percent of the rural population. The limits of Order No.

00447 were more complex because they were for sixty-five regions, and they varied from three-tenths of 1 percent to a low of one-twentieth of 1 percent of the population, depending on the region.

Yezhov's list of "contingents" for arrest gave regional party and NKVD officials considerable latitude in their choice of victims. Virtually anyone from a common thief to a foreign spy could be a target. Republic and regional troikas were ordered to "examine materials for each arrested person or group of arrested persons" and "prepare protocols of their meetings in which sentences are registered." The troikas were not to conduct proceedings but to approve the recommended sentences and to order the operational groups to carry out the sentences "under complete secrecy."

Unlike dekulakization where requests to exceed limits were notably denied, Yezhov encouraged requests for higher limits: "In cases where circumstances demand a raising of limits, peoples' commissars of the republic NKVDs and directors of regional NKVD administrations must present to me petitions justifying the request." No further instructions were given but in practice petitions were sent to Yezhov or directly to Stalin.

Yezhov's deputy and head of the GUGB (Frinovsky) was placed in operational charge of the "the magnificent task of destroying with the most merciless methods this band of anti-Soviet elements."[64] The GUGB was to submit reports every five days on the course of the operation.

Mass Operations Underway

Mass operations got off to a fast start. In the first half of August, 100,990 persons were arrested and 14,305 persons were sentenced. The first victims were the easiest targets—those already in custody. By the end of August, 150,000 had been arrested and over 30,000 executed. The first troika session took place August 5, 1937. There were not enough GUGB officers to head all operational groups; so militia leaders often served in their stead. Chekist reserves had to be tapped. The unsuspecting population did not know what was in store. One of the first Tatar victims was a Red partisan hero, whose wife gathered signatures in vain to protest his arrest. Likely those who signed the petition were themselves later arrested.[65] Operational groups carried out arrests until

their prisons were full and then submitted petitions for higher limits, which flooded into NKVD offices and to Stalin directly. In some cases, limit increases were the result of pressure from above, such as a circular letter from Yezhov, praising a "good" regional NKVD director who had come to see him to request a higher limit.[66]

The overworked troikas exceeded limits by diverting cases to military troikas. Although troikas were supposed to be manned by an NKVD, a party, and a prosecutorial representative, the latter two often played the role of mere extras. One troika met in full form only once.[67] Party representatives were hard to keep anyway, as regional party secretaries and their subordinates were themselves purged.

Although reports of arrests and convictions were supposed to be submitted every five days, the responsible Eighth Department of the GUGB had trouble keeping up. In some cases, executions were carried out without permission, such as in Turkmenia where 7,000 were shot without higher orders. In the rush to meet quotas, executions were carried out not by Chekist officers but by militia, army, and party workers.[68]

For the first time since his accession to complete power, Stalin did not take his lengthy annual vacation in the south but stayed in Moscow to personally monitor the slaughter. Stalin met one-on-one regularly with Yezhov, and the Politburo spent much of its time authorizing changes in the composition of troikas, approving executions, and replacing arrested state and party officials. Elite turnover was exceptionally high throughout mass operations.

Order No. 00447 scheduled mass operations to end the second week of December, and, as this deadline approached, no one knew whether the troikas would be furloughed and the operation shut down. Regional NKVD authorities lobbied Stalin, telling him that the battle was not over and that there were still many enemies at large. On January 31, 1938, Stalin ordered a second phase of mass operations and gave new limits of 48,000 category 1 and 9,200 category 2 repressions.[69] This second phase carried through until mid-November.

The extension of mass operations required changes in procedures. Already in mid-October 1937, the card catalogs of "class enemies" had been largely exhausted. Special troika boards now signed mass orders that authorized arrests first with the names to be filled in later. Officers who refused to continue arrests were themselves arrested. Frantic

Table 6.3. Decisions of Judicial Organs, by Types of Sentence, 1938

	Number	*Percent*
Execution	328,618	58.8
Execution commuted to corrective labor camp	545	0.1
Corrective labor camp: 25 years	797	0.1
20 years	1,178	0.2
15 years	3,218	0.6
10 years	155,683	27.9
5 years	36,135	6.5
3 years	7,953	1.4
Deportation or resettlement	16,842	3.0
Other sentences	3,289	0.5
Freed by procurator or judges	4,325	0.8
Total	558,583	100.0

Source: Oleg Mozokhin, "Statistika repressivnoi deiatel'nosti organov bezopasnosti na period s 1921 po 1940 gg." Posted at www.fsb.ru, "Avtory." These figures also include "national operations."

searches for victims were conducted among "dead files." Operational units began group arrests, such as of all managers from one factory, or simply picked people up from the streets.[70] In the Perm region, people were arrested simply because their names appeared on lists, such as of honored Stakhanovite workers.[71]

Table 6.3 summarizes the work of NKVD tribunals in 1938. They condemned over 325,000 victims to death, for almost 60 percent of the total number of cases. Another 155,000 were sentenced to ten years in the Gulag and 36,000 or 6 percent to five years. Unlike with dekulakization, deportation or resettlement were rare, applied only to 3 percent of tribunal cases.

The Great Terror ended suddenly on November 17, 1938, again with a joint decree of the Central Committee and the Council of Peoples' Commissars initiated by Stalin.[72] At that time, the cumulative number of convictions stood at 1.4 million, of which 687,000 were shot.[73] The November 17 decree criticized the "substantial deficiencies and distortions in the work of the NKVD and the procurator," the NKVD was forbidden to carry out further mass operations, and the troikas were furloughed.[74] Yezhov's arrest followed within six months.

Fulfilling the Mass Operations Plan

If a dictator's repression plan is grossly over- or underfulfilled, the dictator is not in control. If the result is something other than what the dictator ordered, the end result is not determined by the dictator but by the agents in charge of plan fulfillment.

In fact, there is a "revisionist" literature that blames the pressure from regional party heads for repression and uses the subsequent excesses at local levels as proof that the Great Terror had bottom-up roots: Stalin was simply acceding to pressure from below in his authorization of mass operations.[75] This was indeed the argument made by Stalin after mass operations were halted: mavericks in the NKVD led by Yezhov were to blame, a line of argumentation continued by Stalin's successors until Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956.

The undeniable fact that agents were demanding higher limits (discussed in the next chapter) does not mean that Stalin had to accede. The repression would have indeed "gotten out of hand" if executions and imprisonments took place without the dictator's approval or even against his will. There is no way to know for sure Stalin's true intentions. They could have been expressed in private conversations with Yezhov or with a "wink and a nod" to his deputies. All that we have are the original limits and official approvals of limit increases, some of which may be missing from the written record.

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 showed that dekulakization was kept broadly within the limits set by the dictator, and requests to raise limits were rejected. Were mass operations similarly kept under control? Did the number of repressions equal those authorized?

To answer this vital question, we have to differentiate victims prosecuted under Order No. 00447 from those processed under national operations, which (as will be noted below) began at about the same time. Given the chaos and confusion, we imagine that there was not a clear separation in the minds of the repressors themselves. Any attempt, therefore, to check the degree of fulfillment of Order No. 00447 and its amendments must be regarded as a gross approximation.

Table 6.4 shows the original limits of Order No. 00447, the limit increases approved by the Politburo, and those approved by the NKVD but not by the Politburo. (These calculations are from the work of two German historians, Mark Junge and Rolf Binner, who have gathered all

Table 6.4. Fulfillment of Order No. 00447, 1937–1938

Action	*Category 1*	*Category 2*	*Total*
1. Original limits	75,950	193,000	268,950
2. Limit increases approved by Politburo	150,500	33,250	183,750
3. Limit increases approved by NKVD alone	129,655	170,960	300,615
4. Total limits	356,105	397,210	753,315
5. Total actual sentences (Junge and Binner)[a]	386,798	380,599	767,397
6. Total actual sentences (Pavlov)	434,517	433,264	867,781
7. % Fulfillment (5/4)	108	96	102
8. % Fulfillment (6/4)	122	109	115

Sources: Lines 1–3 and 5 are from Mark Iunge and Rol'f Binner, *Kak terror stal "bol'shim"* (Moscow: AIRO-XX, 2003), p. 136. Line 6 is from Pavlov, "Report about the Numbers of Those Sentenced According to Cases of Organs of the NKVD."

[a]Cumulated total of death and prison sentences by extrajudicial tribunals for 1937 and 1938. To adjust for sentences before July 30, 1937, we subtract one-half of the 1936 totals (assuming that the first half of 1937 was like the last half of 1936) and Iunge and Binner's estimate of executions and prison sentences under national operations (from Table 6.5).

available information on limit increases.)[76] The key figures in Table 6.4 compare total sentences approved with actual sentences (line 4 versus lines 5 and 6).

We have two measures of actual sentences under Order No. 00447: Junge and Binner's (line 5) and our own calculation (line 6) which subtracts from the official state security totals of prison and death sentences by extrajudicial tribunals (as reported by the famous Pavlov memo of December 1953) the numbers of sentences prior to August 1, 1937 and sentences under national operations. This second calculation yields higher numbers of actual sentences, but does not really change the overall conclusions.

The table shows that most sentences were actually approved either by the Politburo or by the NKVD (presumably its central office). If we take the category 1 and 2 totals, "overfulfillment" ranges from 2 to 15 percent depending on whether line 5 or 6 is used. Execution targets were

overfulfilled more than imprisonment targets. By Soviet planning standards, these are not large deviations. Most notably, 300,000 of the limit increases were approved *within the NKVD*. Stalin (the Politburo) approved only 184,000 (of which 150,000 were for executions). Some 60,000 of these were issued in one fell swoop with Stalin's extension of mass operations at the end of January 1938.

This gap between Politburo-approved sentences and those approved by the NKVD alone gave Stalin a wedge to blame the excesses of mass operations on Yezhov and his NKVD. In his interrogations, Yezhov claimed that he "kept Stalin informed of what was going on in the NKVD"[77]—an assertion that was rebutted by Yezhov's deputy, M. P. Frinovsky, in his interrogation: "Yezhov declared that he had never concealed or never would conceal anything from the party and from Stalin. In fact, he fooled the party in big and small questions."[78] Clearly, Frinovsky's interrogators wanted him to blame Yezhov for the excesses of the Great Terror, and he obliged.

Yezhov was selected by Stalin because of his extreme loyalty, and it is doubtful that he would have acted as a rogue element. He met with Stalin eighty-nine times (about once every three days) between January 30 and November 17, 1938, presumably at the time when his NKVD spun out of control.[79] Yezhov was gathering statistics on a daily basis from his subordinates and would have been in possession of up-to-date figures. For something as important as this to have escaped Stalin's attention defies credulity. The more likely scenario is that Yezhov kept Stalin informed and received verbal approval for the limit increases. The fact that Stalin could end mass operations and shut down the troikas with one decree also demonstrates that he remained in firm control.[80]

NATIONAL OPERATIONS

Yezhov's list of category 1 and 2 enemies did not specifically include "national contingents"—Poles, Germans, Koreans, Lithuanians, or other nationalities—who might provide aid and support to a foreign enemy. As clouds of war gathered in the late 1930s, it seemed a logical extension of the thinking behind the mass operations to target foreigners and ethnic USSR citizens. Technically, it was relatively easy for the NKVD to locate them. The nationalities of workers were recorded in enterprise records. Also there were enclaves of foreigners primarily in

border regions, such that a general order could be issued to repress ethnic residents of a particular region.

National operations were distinct from Yezhov's Order No. 00447 and were set in motion by a series of' extraordinary decrees aimed specifically against "socially dangerous" nationalities. Preceding Order No. 00447 by five days was NKVD Operational Order No. 00439 "About Repression Operations against German Citizens Suspected of Espionage."[81] On August 9, 1937, the Politburo called for the repression of Polish diversionary espionage groups, two days later there followed NKVD Operational Order No. 00485 against Polish military organizations, former prisoners of war, and political immigrants.[82] NKVD Operational Order of September 20, 1937 condemned former employees of the Chinese Eastern Railway (Kharbintsy) to repression.[83] In September and October 1937, Stalin ordered the resettlement of Koreans to prevent them from spying for the Japanese.[84] NKVD telegram No. 49990 of November 30, 1937 "About the Operation for the Repression of Latvians" ordered the arrest (starting on December 3) of all Latvians under surveillance, political emigrants, migrants from Latvia, members of specific organizations listed, and all Latvian citizens except members of the diplomatic corps. Arrestees were again divided into a first category for execution and a second category to be sentenced to five to ten years in the Gulag.[85]

The two nationalities that bore the brunt of national operations in 1937–1938, were Poles, whose victims numbered over 130,000, and Germans. Five percent of all German located in the USSR were repressed. To handle the large numbers of arrested national contingents, special troikas (often consisting of two persons and hence called dvoikas) processed such cases.[86]

There were no limits for national operations. Anyone falling into this category could be repressed; no central permission was required. There must have been considerable commingling of cases. National operations allowed local administrations that had exceeded approved limits to condemn victims under a special decree. Of the 4,142 persons arrested in the Prikam'e region under "German operations," only 390 were actually German.[87] One Polish employee described his "confession" as follows: "When I said that these were all lies, my interrogator answered: 'We in the NKVD know this and have nothing against you but it is necessary to sign the protocol because you are a Pole by nation-

Table 6.5. National Operations, August 1937–December 1938

Arrests	346,713
Executions	247,175
Prison	96,556
Total sentences	343,731
Mass Operations as a Factor of National Operations[a]	2.1–2.5

Source: Iunge and Binner, *Kak terror stal "bol'shim,"* p. 217.
[a]Based on the figures for mass operations in Table 6.4.

ality.'"[88] In another case, the NKVD arrested a Jew with a Polish-sounding name and listed him as a Pole. Of the quarter-million persons arrested in Ukraine in 1937–1938, 31 percent were arrested under national operations.[89]

Table 6.5 (taken directly from Junge and Binner) shows that national operations accounted for a quarter-million executions and 100,000 prison sentences from August through December 1938. The number of Order No. 00447 victims was between two and two and a half times that of victims of national operations during the period that the two operations were being carried out concurrently. It is our guess that the number of victims of national operations is overstated because of the lack of limits, causing repressors to reclassify victims under national operations.

After the outbreak of war, the campaign against ethnic groups changed from the arrest and punishment of spies, saboteurs, and other "traitors" who belonged to various ethnic groups to arrests and deportations of entire ethnic populations located primarily in border regions. The Politburo approved in 1941 arrests and deportations of Poles, Germans, Rumanians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Finns, and other nationalities in the western borderlands to remote regions.[90]

Such national operations were carried out quickly and on a large scale. By May 1941, Beria's deputy reported the arrest of 15,000 and the deportation of 25,000 Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians. Beria's special report to Stalin "About the Order for Resettling Germans from the Volga German Republic, Saratov, and Stalingrad" of 25 August 1941 reported the deportation of almost a half-million Germans; His February 1944 communications to Stalin targeted almost a half-million Chechens and Ingushetians for deportation, and his June 4, 1944 memo

targeted almost 250,000 Crimeans for deportation to Uzbekistan, Bashkiria, and Kazakhstan.[91]

Many more members of national contingents were deported to special settlements than were executed or imprisoned. According to a "completely secret" census undertaken by the MVD, there were 2,761,281 special settlers as of July 1953. Among these were 1.2 million Germans, 323,000 Chechens, 169,000 Tatars, and 140,000 Balts. Only 21,000 kulaks (of the more than one and a half million deported between 1930 and 1933) remained in special settlements;[92] many had returned to their home districts to fall victim to the purges, and others had died in their settlements or in the war.

THE ELIMINATIONS MODEL AND THE THREE REPRESSIONS

Our basic empirical finding is that the three mass repression campaigns of the 1930s—dekulakization, mass operations, and national operations—were carried out according to Stalin's plans. Although there was confusion, and some maverick actions, Stalin basically got his desired result from state security. Therefore the stylized facts of these repressions should provide insights into Stalin's model of repression.

A model adds to understanding if it points out things that would not otherwise be obvious. The eliminations model suggests that the magnitude of the repression should depend positively on the gap between perceived and tolerable enemy levels, the potency of enemies, and the difficulty of identifying enemies. We cannot use the stylized facts of these three repressions to "prove" this was Stalin's model. We can only determine whether they are generally consistent with the model.

Information and Labeling

The importance of labeling of enemies is the least intuitive but potentially most useful insight of the eliminations model. The massive repressions of ordinary people in 1937–1938 is often used as proof of Stalin's irrationality or insanity. Our model suggests, however, that any dictator who shares Stalin's goals will deliberately eliminate innocents when the quality of information is low.

There were strong informational differences among the three repres-

sions. Of the three, only dekulakization offered Stalin a natural experiment in identifying enemies. The dekulakization decree targeted for major repression (death or prison) those "most actively" resisting collectivization and dekulakization. The village of Platava served as an example in 1930. A crowd of twenty-three hundred villagers disobeyed orders to disperse and advanced against OGPU troops, women and children first. They were frozen in place by machine gun fire above their heads, while a detail went about arresting the leaders. A report from the field to Yagoda described other types of active resistance: "Yesterday I arrived in Tul'chinsky district; the entire territory is caught up in unrest and uprisings, 15 of 17 districts are affected and as of today there are uprisings in 153 villages. They are beating Communists, Communist Youth members, and activists. They are forcing activists to kneel before the church. . . . In a number of villages there are armed uprisings with trenches dug around the village. In one skirmish, shooting continued for three hours."[93] It was up to OGPU intelligence to identify and arrest those villagers who offered such resistance to Soviet power.

As "enemies" revealed their opposition to state policy, the definition of kulak expanded to anyone resisting collectivization or dekulakization. The majority of first-category offenders were "other anti-Soviet elements, such as speculators, merchants, or church officials, who were also active in agriculture."[94] Dekulakization, therefore, is a misnomer for a process that struck at such a wide range of political enemies. Notably, dekulakization's victims were chosen locally, rather than from lists submitted to higher authorities, such as during mass operations. Of course, many "nonactive resisters" were punished as category 1 victims, but the intent was to punish active resisters most severely.

Local authorities relied on denunciations for both dekulakization and mass operations. Denunciations were often motivated by feuds or workplace jealousies or the wish to feign loyalty. During collectivization, denunciations may have generated valuable information. They were commonly directed against households with assets—the very targets of dekulakization. During mass operations, they could scarcely have been an accurate source of information. In the main, denunciations led to the arrests of "simple people with loose tongues and gossips."[95]

Mass operations and national operations did not create natural experiments in uncovering enemies. Yezhov's July 1937 list of enemies was broad and vague, including socially dangerous elements, fascists, ter-

rorists, bandits, members of anti-Soviet parties, former officials, criminals, gang members, and counterrevolutionaries. Once the Great Terror began, there was no way to "actively resist" and reveal hostility towards the regime. Instead, the only alternative was to "revert to the mean"—to try to be like everyone else and not stand out in any way. Dekulakization elicited enemies; the Great Terror caused enemies to conceal themselves as best they could.

Not everyone could "revert to the mean" during mass operations. The approximately one and a half million party members who had left the party between 1922 and 1935 "represented a huge pool of self-declared 'enemies of the people.'"[96] Fifty million Soviet citizens had internal passports, which listed their nationality, class, and other characteristics.[97] Yezhov had 27,650 NKVD "residents" who received information from some 500,000 informants.[98] There was little former Mensheviks, priests, or landowners could do to conceal their pasts other than to acquire forged papers, which would not withstand careful scrutiny.

The national operations orders were very specific, identifying as enemies specific nationalities belonging to specific organizations, or working in specific industries, or living in specific locations. Under these orders, regional NKVD offices were charged with eliminating all of those belonging to a particular category, unlike other repressions where the "most fanatical" or "most active" enemies were targeted. A decree of August 1941 stated unequivocally: "To resettle *all* Germans from the Volga German Republic and from Saratov and Stalingrad province in the general number of 479,841 persons."[99] Similarly, Beria stated in a special communication to Stalin, "The NKVD considers it necessary to carry out the resettlement of *all* Bulgars, Greeks, and Armenians from the Crimea."[100] There was little a potential victim of national operations could do other than to flee. Beria, in a February 17, 1944 memo to Stalin, described how he planned to catch his victims off guard: "The population is noticing the arrival of troops. Some believe the official story that they are here for maneuvers."[101]

Lacking a revelation mechanism for mass operations, the dictator had to enunciate a strategy to take account of type 1 (false positive) and type 2 (false negative) errors. A type 1 error would be to identify a nonenemy as an "enemy." A type 2 error would be to conclude that a true enemy was not an enemy.

Stalin's attitudes towards type 1 and 2 errors differed according to the operation. His intentions were clear in the case of the Great Terror. He warned that "every communist is a possible hidden enemy. And because it is not easy to recognize the enemy, the goal is achieved even if only 5 percent of those killed are truly enemies."[102] In March 1937, Yezhov reiterated Stalin's rule: "It is better that ten innocent people should suffer than one spy get away. When you chop wood, chips fly."[103] Stalin's 5 percent rule illustrates how the quality of information can affect the numbers repressed. Taken literally, the 5 percent rule means that an error rate of 95 false positives to 5 true positives is acceptable.

Notably, there are no similar statements with regards to dekulakization or national operations. In fact, Stalin was careful to avoid false positives during collectivization. There was a genuine concern that poor or middle farmers would be dekulakized. On February 25, 1930, the Politburo issued the following warning: "In a number of localities there have been strictly forbidden instances of dekulakization of middle-peasant households, which constitute the crudest violation of the party line and will lead inevitably to difficulties in collectivizing agriculture."[104] A March 10 order complained of "distortions of the policy of the party," as a result of which "a number of middle-peasant households were dekulakized."[105] A March 18, 1930 directive from the Supreme Court complained about the "sentencing of a substantial number of middle and even poor peasants without any evidence establishing their guilt," and about "cavalier sentencing to death for counterrevolutionary offenses."[106] The OGPU itself processed complaints from dekulakized peasants claiming to be poor and middle peasants, and even examined tax and other documents in support of their claim.[107]

The number of false positive arrests of nonenemies can also be judged from varying citizen responses. As arrests multiplied in 1937, the Bureau of Complaints of the USSR Procurator was flooded at a rate of 50,000 to 60,000 complaints per month from relatives.[108]After four months of dekulakization, a total of 35,000 protests of false dekulakization had been submitted, of which 6 percent were validated.[109] Although repressed national contingents were equally terrorized, however, they could scarcely claim innocence. According to the national operations measures, they were automatically guilty simply because they were Germans, Poles, Koreans, or Lithuanians.

The Number of Enemies

Stalin's calculation of the number of enemies changed dramatically between dekulakization and mass operations. Dekulakization dates to the beginning of Stalin's Great Breakthrough, a time when Stalin was fairly optimistic about the support of industrial workers and of poor and middle peasants. The Civil War and its immediate aftermath had largely rid the country of supporters of the old regime, or at least of active resisters. The purge of specialists had reduced the old technical elite, leaving behind a country of workers and peasants. The Great Breakthrough offered workers, Stalin thought, a better life, and he devoted considerable attention to keeping them satisfied, especially those in priority branches.[110] The Great Breakthrough offered the poor stratum of peasants the economies of scale of collective farms, whose livestock, land, and equipment would be secured by expropriation of wealthy peasants, so that the latter were the only ones who would resist.

Thus Stalin approached the Great Breakthrough with the conviction that his enemies were limited to some 3 to 5 percent of the rural population. Virtually all of these would oppose collectivization and would have to be repressed, but Stalin targeted for severe repression only those who actively resisted, which he calculated at about 60,000. Clearly, Stalin did not think that there were only 60,000 "fanatical and active" opponents in 1930, but this was his estimate of the number of enemies needing to be dealt with immediately. Stalin's great disappointment with dekulakization was his failure to receive more active support from the poor and middle peasants.

By 1937, Stalin's perception of the number of enemies facing him had changed. Those repressed during dekulakization were mostly still alive and now embittered beyond redemption. Less than 40,000 first-category offenders had been executed. Those imprisoned were sentenced to terms that were to expire in the mid-1930s, and deportees were finding ways to return to their home villages both by legal and illegal means. As many as a quarter-million kulaks had "self-dekulakized" by fleeing to the cities or finding their ways into collective farms.[111]

Members of banned political parties had been removed from responsible offices but had not been liquidated. German and Polish workers were still employed in defense factories. The 1936 Stalin Constitution

restored civil and voting rights to "disenfranchised" citizens (*lishentsy*), who in 1935 constituted more than 2 percent of the adult population.[112] The newly appointed Yezhov was concerned about the high release rates of imprisoned kulaks, approaching 60,000 per month. Despite organized efforts to destroy religion, more than half the Russian population declared themselves believers according to the 1937 census.[113]

Stalin also added significant new entries to his enemies lists. Up until 1937, collective farmers had been largely off limits to repression. His July 2, 1937 instructions included them, however, as alarming reports about wrecking in collective farms and mass poisoning of livestock reached his ears.[114] According to data from nineteen districts of the Prikam'e region, forty-seven machine tractor station directors, fourteen state farm managers, and 168 enterprise directors were replaced (primarily arrested) by early 1939. Of those working in these positions at the start of mass operations, only seven remained.[115] Industrial workers also were a disappointment to Stalin as they continued their massive turnover, absenteeism, drunkenness, and slacking. Moreover, factories, in his view, had been infiltrated by wreckers and saboteurs, who were turning the workforce against Soviet power.

Most pernicious was Stalin's growing conviction that the stalwarts of Soviet power—the party and the NKVD—had themselves been infiltrated.[116] Stalin's deputy (Kaganovich) warned that the party itself had become a circle of enemies.[117] Even the Old Bolsheviks were showing signs of weakness, as Stalin's attack on A. P. Smirnov, in November 1932 showed. "*Stalin:* There is another group of comrades who are able to spend eight months on vacation or a year and if they are not reminded they don't even return. One group is wearing itself down, the other is lazing around." Smirnov's protest ("I worked 36 years and didn't leave for one moment") was brushed off by Stalin: "I don't speak about those years. I am speaking about now."[118]

In sum, the number of enemies in 1937 was perceived as being far greater than in 1930. Given the vague definition of enemy, the enemy could be anyone.

The number of enemies among the "national contingents" can be roughly proxied by the numbers of adult male Germans, Poles, and other suspect nationalities. In 1937, in the Russian Republic and Ukraine, there were slightly more than a million Germans and a half million Poles,[119] which would add up to about a half-million adult

males aged twenty to sixty for these two prime enemy groups. Stalin knew these numbers from the aborted 1937 census. He left it to the NKVD to get rid of them.

Potency

One cannot know for certain whether Stalin considered his enemies more potent in 1937 than in other periods. The fact that he chose relatively mild punishments for the victims of dekulakization (deportation versus execution and prison), however, suggests he considered them less potent than the targets of mass operations and of national operations between 1937 and 1938.

Furthermore, it is clear is that in the latter part of the 1930s, Stalin's ever-growing sense of alarm was fed by the fact of impending war, which meant that the USSR, with its vast borderlands, could be infiltrated by enemy agents, many of whom could be recruited from the ethnic minorities living in those regions.[120] Stalin's concern about the effect of war was not new. His OGPU and NKVD had monitored rumors of war by region since at least 1927.[121] Spreading rumors of war in the Gulag was considered a criminal offense.[122] As war became more likely, Stalin's worst nightmare of a vast coalition of domestic and foreign enemies could be realized. Whereas a kulak could incrementally harm Soviet power, a fifth-columnist could do severe damage; as Stalin's put it: "It takes one thousand to build a bridge and one to destroy it."[123] War was one of the few events that could shake Stalin's hold on the party. After the early disastrous defeats on the German front, Stalin was said to have feared dismissal by his Politburo colleagues.[124]

Accordingly, we would argue that Stalin's assessment of enemy potency rose throughout the 1930s as the war approached. The enemy of 1938 was more dangerous than the enemy of 1930 because the former enemy was likely to join forces with the foreign enemy.

The basic stylized facts of dekulakization, mass operations, and national operations are consistent with the dictatorial eliminations model. Mass operations were the largest and most brutal and had the largest number of "innocent" victims. The identification of enemies was most difficult, their potency the greatest, and their numbers the largest. Enemies were fewer, less potent, and easier to identify (in fact, the most active enemies revealed themselves) during dekulakization. The model

clearly suggests that a dictator following this model must accept a large number of repressions of nonenemies despite the costs, and this was indeed the case during the Great Terror.

CONCLUSIONS

Terror was planned much as the Soviet economy was planned. It was conducted in campaigns, initiated by Stalin's decrees and operationalized by the state security czar of the day. Other countries do not plan the number of spies, counterrevolutionaries, or seditionists they wish to prosecute. Rather they pass laws, employ police and espionage agents, and prosecute those who are discovered violating these laws. It would be very strange for the leaders of the world's democracies to set targets for the number of terrorists or spies they wished to arrest. Stalin did just that because he knew that he lacked popular support and that if the number of people of opposing him either now or in the future became too large, he could be overthrown. Although Stalin had firm control of the party and state apparatus and had subjected the population to a number of purges, there was still a sense that his enemies were out there and that he had somehow failed to get them all. Although the threat of war was routine throughout the early history of the Soviet Union, the rise of the Nazi and Japanese war machines made the threat more credible, and it also reinforced the threat inherent in a multiethnic Soviet Union, whose border region residents might welcome foreign invasion.

There are different views of why these forces converged in 1937 in a maelstrom of terror on a largely unsuspecting population, but the eliminations model is certainly helpful in explaining this phenomenon.

It is clear, first of all, that Stalin's three mass operations of the 1930s that culminated in the Great Terror were the result of careful planning, and that his state security fulfilled his operational plans, probably better than his economic plans were fulfilled. This conclusion allows us to look at the results of his mass repressions as mirroring his intent, hence to gauge whether the eliminations model is consistent with his behavior.

Our results are quite consistent with the model. The greater the difficulty of identifying enemies, the greater the number of victims and the greater the repression of nonenemies (mass operations). The greater the potency of enemies (less potent enemies in 1930 and increasingly potent ones thereafter), the greater the number of repressions and the greater

the brutality of repression. The greater the number of perceived enemies (more in 1937 than in 1930), the greater the repression. The model clearly suggests that a dictator following this model must accept a large number of repressions of nonenemies despite the costs, as was indeed the case during the Great Terror.

In this way the eliminations model provides, at a minimum, a framework for organizing and understanding events. At a maximum it provides fresh insights, such as into Stalin's indifference to false positives during the Great Terror and his great concern about improper dekulakizations in the period 1930–1932.