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The Popular Mood in the Unoccupied Soviet Union: Continuity and Change during the War

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The adherents of the social system created in the USSR during the 1930s, having retreated within their own country in view of ferocious criticism of Stalinism, have fallen back on the victorious war against Hitler's Germany as their last defensive position. Their logic runs this way: even if Stalin himself did everything wrong, his model of social structure secured the victory over fascism, and by that token alone it was the right structure. But an approach to the issue that strictly follows the historical documents shows something else: the system that, it seems, was created for the conduct of war and that was justified in many people's eyes by the expectation of a coming war unveiled its incapacity in the first weeks and months of the fighting.

The big shots of the Soviet system at the time, having already taken massive repressive actions against the people, strengthened their power as the German invasion began at the price of the submission of the whole country to the secret police. The leadership achieved the alienation of those people capable of thinking for themselves. The illusion arose that a monolithic unity had been created, but this monolith baked in the ovens of Stalinism, as quickly became evident in the fighting, was simply not in a position to conduct the war.

The first clashes with the Germans showed that many people who had been advanced to commanding positions after the purges and repressions of the 1930s were of poor quality, incapable of demonstrating initiative. The extraordinary situation of the early days of the war, both at the front and in the rear, required extraordinary action, not the blind fulfillment of an order no matter how petty. Independent and creative actions were required; blanket orders had no effect and sometimes led to disastrous results. A completely different kind of logic for action was required: the unconditional



Soviet collective farm families leave their village after their homes have caught fire. (Courtesy of the Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag, Munich)

fulfillment of an order but with freedom of choice of the means to carry it out. However, such thinking was absolutely contradictory to the logic beaten into the heads of the new stratum of commanders on the eve of the war. Time was necessary to allow those with some intellectual, cultural, and political potential to rise through the system.

Perhaps it was Stalin himself who was the first to sense this crisis of his brand of socialism. At the end of the war he let out a secret: in 1941 the people had the right to demand the government's resignation, but had not done so.¹ We can say today: yes, but not because the government had done such a good job. The "system" proved to be wrong for the war; it was fit only to strengthen Stalin's personal dictatorship. Fundamental changes were required to overcome the crisis of the first days of the invasion.

The rapidly shifting situation at the front and in the rear did not require giving up the hierarchical, inflexible mode of leadership. On the contrary, under wartime conditions power must be concentrated in a single center. But the problem was how to divide power and functions between the center and local authorities. The type of management that had been created by the end of the 1930s permitted no autonomy of action. Ordinary people were reduced to "little screws" of the mechanism.²

On the surface it seemed that all Soviet citizens were for the regime and for comrade Stalin. But that is a myth; reality was vastly different. Not the official, public documents, but others now available to researchers reflect the real feelings of the people. These new sources allow us to reconstruct a more accurate picture of the past in place of the one that Stalinist leaders and other Soviet officials into recent years so ardently desired.

The study of popular attitudes during wartime is extremely complicated. Such attitudes have meaning that one wants very much to understand, but which one should not judge. Although we have our own ideas and notions about World War II, we do not have the right to impose these views of history and life on the wartime generation, which after all operated under extreme pressure from various directions.

There is another, possibly even more serious difficulty in trying to draw a composite picture of people's mentality during the war. Frank accounts of popular attitudes for the years 1941 through 1945 have been saved in unusual and rare sources—namely, the closed channels of party and state information, intended only for the Stalinist elite. In its analysis of popular attitudes, Soviet historiography long relied on exclusively official sources: the central and local press and lectures and speeches from all types of meetings (usually censored in advance). All of these materials had a particular orientation, demonstrating social unity, patriotism, and loyalty to the party and Stalin. In this way, a unified picture of popular attitudes developed. Almost to the very end of the USSR's existence, its leadership considered discussions of diversity in popular wartime perceptions and reactions to be unacceptable. The party hierarchy therefore diligently kept much information on the war secret from all but a limited circle of high officials.

Documents made available in 1991 by the Communist Party Central Committee's Bureau of Propaganda and Agitation, preserved in the former Central Party Archive in Moscow, point toward a picture of widely varying responses, hopes, and criticisms expressed during the war. Who recorded social attitudes from 1941 to 1945? Answering this question identifies the main channels through which information reached the top authorities.

Surveillance of public attitudes mainly occurred in small social groups and was led by party cadres and workers of the regional NKVD-NKGB, the security police. As a rule, on this level, the most pervasive, spontaneous, emotional, and often fluctuating feelings and opinions of simple people were recorded. In such records there is no precise personalization. Instead there are anonymous mass rumors, as well as rejoinders, slips of the tongue, and so on—everything that might be called "the voice of the people."

Reports to higher party echelons by leaders and members of the propaganda groups of the Central Committee (CC), which traveled around the country, were also clear and constant channels of information. The most interesting component in these reports is the voluminous lists of questions asked in very different places, from lectures on factory floors or collective farms to plenary sessions and meetings of active party members. All these questions were categorized according to standard methods and directed to the CC.

On the local level, spontaneous and unconscious moments rarely appeared, in proportion to the small share of anonymity accorded people as they participated in meetings. Yet the questions sometimes illuminate popular attitudes. In their content, these questions are much more valuable and interesting than the texts of lectures, which had to be approved in advance by central authorities.

The next traditional channel of surveillance was opening private correspondence. This process was carried out by the departments of censorship in the NKVD-NKGB.³ However, in spite of its wide use, this source of information yielded practically no ideological content. The summaries of correspondence prepared by the departments of censorship between 1941 and 1945 are filled with everyday materials as well as coverage of complaints about disastrous conditions, for instance, among workers of evacuated enterprises. This means that after the machinery of repression began to work well during the 1930s, people learned not to trust personal writings for the elaboration of their thoughts and ideological views.

It is possible to use anonymous letters (often signed with fake surnames) as an important source and wide channel of information. These letters were received in enormous quantities by central and regional party committees and by newspapers.

Of the relatively nontraditional channels of surveillance of popular attitudes, the following were most important: selective secret recording of conversations involving representatives of various elites (academic, military, etc.) by NKGB agents;⁴ reports to the authorities by security employees circulating among the population; and reports by magazine salespeople about discussions among people in line at kiosks.⁵

What were the main features of the secret information about popular attitudes? Throughout, this information reveals popular reactions to the major events of the war: the retreat of the Red Army, the opening of the second front when the western Allies invaded Normandy in June 1944, and so forth. The regime closely monitored anti-Soviet dispositions; dissatisfaction with the leadership; attitudes toward Germans and Hitler; attitudes toward the disso-

lution of the Communist International (Comintern, the organization to which all communist parties recognized by the Soviet party belonged) in 1943; perspectives for international revolution; attitudes toward collective farms and the private, commercial trade that was allowed during wartime and was traditionally associated in popular memory with the New Economic Policy of the more liberal 1920s; and views of postwar society and further developments in Soviet relations with the country's allies.

In principle, these subjects are also indicators of popular attitudes before the war. Having directed its attention toward these topics, the regime inadvertently found the weak places in its policy and doctrine. At these points lies the strongest confrontation, however much it was hidden, between society and the state.

Of course, popular thought hardly ended with the problems listed above. During wartime, human consciousness intensifies its consideration of questions about the meaning of existence, life, death, love, fear, aggression, treason, charity, and altruism. However, for the Stalin regime, these were questions about elevated subjects and were, consequently, superfluous and irrelevant.

The sources imply that some people fought for socialism, though perhaps not for Stalin's particular brand of it. Others fought not for socialism but for the homeland. Still other citizens seemed to act from bitterness accumulated in the long prewar years. At least at the start of the invasion the officials, the leaders of the "system," often did not act at all: they found themselves paralyzed in the face of the immense German attack.

When the war began, the Soviet people as a whole did not at once realize how fateful the situation was. As an engineer of the Leningrad Metal Factory, G. Kulagin, put it, "Who do they [the Germans] think they're fooling with, what's going on, have they gone completely out of their minds?! Of course the German workers will support us, and all the other peoples will rise. It can't be any other way!" There was no lack of happy prognoses. "I think," said one of the workers of the Leningrad Metal Factory, "that now our forces will thrash them, so that it will all be over in a week." "Well, in a week, maybe, it won't be over," answered another; "we have to go to Berlin. . . . Three or four weeks will be needed."⁶

This "domestic strategy," the expectation of a quick victory, was the fruit of ignorance of the real relationship of strength between the two sides. In fact the complete confusion of the first hours of the sudden German attack, when Stalin still could not believe in Hitler's "treason" in breaking the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 1939, cost uncounted victims and secured for the invaders their initial successes.

A different mood soon emerged. In October 1941 the enemy was approaching Moscow. In Privolzhsk, a town in the Ivanovo region some 175 miles (265 kilometers) to the northeast of the capital, two to three hundred workers started a strike. The workers were dissatisfied with the methods of mobilization, the construction of defensive positions in the area, and the lack of consumer goods. They voiced their complaints openly. From 15 to 20 October, a critical period in the fighting around Moscow, disorder broke out in Ivanovo, the district capital. Shouts rang out: "Every boss has run away from the town, while we are left alone"; "The People's Commissariat of Light Industry, the NKVD, the *obkom* [provincial party committee] have evacuated their families, while we are still here"; "they didn't let us dismantle and remove the equipment"; "they didn't ask us and started to take down the work benches on a day off"; "they didn't let us take the benches apart [for evacuation]."⁷ When local party officials tried to disperse the workers who were spreading these rumors, people shouted, "Don't listen to them, they know nothing, they have been deceiving us for 23 years now!"⁸ Such words could not have been spoken before the war.

These incidents occurred in the birthplace of the country's first soviets, which sprang up during the turbulent year 1905, an area where the capacity for critical, sober views of things had not been completely expunged. But negative comments about the course of the war appeared elsewhere as well. The former director of a rural primary school, the party member Koniakhin, who had served in Latvia, appeared in Tula province, south of Moscow. He told collective farmers there that the Red Army was not ready for the war, that Soviet airplanes were sitting at the aerodromes without gasoline, and that not one of them got into the air.⁹

The mood was bad in Archangel province: "Everyone said that we would beat the enemy on his territory. It turned out the other way around. . . . Our government fed the Germans for two years, it would have been better to have saved food for our army and for the people, but now all of us expect hunger."¹⁰ Such conversations occurred not only among rank-and-file peasants and workers; a former partisan of the civil war and a party member, Ia. S. Romanov, announced that, "The Germans are squeezing us badly, while our people don't have the enthusiasm they had during the Civil War, especially among us partisans. We went ourselves and fired people up. The present leaders are incapable of organizing and raising the masses."¹¹

Attitudes like these were officially called "defeatism" and "alarmism," but were in fact neither. A worker from the Kaluga region named Balakin declared

in July 1941 that he would defend the Soviet land but not those sitting in the Kremlin.¹² That is, he distinguished between the Soviet system as a whole and the current evil and inept leaders in the Kremlin. To him the Soviet system was *nash*, the Russian term that can simply mean “ours” but often connotes a deep division between what is “ours” and what is foreign, with a great deal of affection and loyalty attached to the first category. Balakin hardly considered Stalin and his cronies to be “ours,” yet his statement suggests that he would fight hard for what he had come to believe was his Soviet homeland.

At first the regime did not respond to people as human beings but instead tried its usual levers of control. All radio receivers were removed; Moscow was stricken with “spy-mania.” Distrusting the soldiers at the front, the leadership restored the institution of “military commissars,” whose job was to oversee the regular officers in the army. “Political departments” in the rural machine and tractor stations (which managed and allocated large farm machinery), abolished several years earlier, were also restored. Stalin did not trust the rear either. In prisons and labor camps mass executions took place. Inmates of camps knew that mass executions meant that another city was taken by the Germans or that another army was defeated. Yet soon it became clear that “screw-tightening” in order to intimidate people and to support the unstable system was possible only in peacetime. In wartime, however paradoxical it may seem, repression was the shortest way to a collapse of the system. Overly zealous control, like tightening a screw too much, could break key parts of the political structure and render it unable to respond effectively to emergencies. Serious changes in approaches to the extreme demands of war had to occur, and they soon began. This trend started spontaneously among the people but was quickly co-opted and directed from above.

Stalin participated personally in this change, however forced upon him it was by the situation and however late it came to save millions from death and occupation. In his address to the country on 3 July he touched the people’s feelings, ignored hitherto: “Brothers and Sisters!” he began, instead of the usual “Comrades.” He pretended, of course, that the situation was improving, saying that “the best divisions of the enemy and the best units of its air force are destroyed.”¹³ Soviet propaganda took the same line at the time, announcing to the populace that Red Army losses had not been severe. Despite these lies Stalin himself became a necessary, uniting factor when the fatherland was in grave danger. There was no other choice.

Ordinary citizens began singing that “the people’s war is going on.” After a while the decorations of Suvorov and Kutuzov, great commanders of tsarist Russia, were introduced. The slogan of the socialist mass media, “Workers of

the world, unite!” was replaced by the slogan “Death to German occupiers!” All these facts meant a collapse, not of the people, but of the system of repression, not of a patriotic idea, but of the official ideology. The command system—with its bureaucratic nature, supremacy of careerism, and ignoring of people’s interests—had collapsed.

Stalin had to rely on the people who had taken the place of those removed in the 1930s. Merit in battle became the key criterion for command appointments, in sharp contrast to the recent system of promotion according to political loyalty. The heavy fighting of the summer and fall of 1941 forced the removal of incapable commanders in favor of those with talent and ability.

Contrary to the usual tough repression, some prisoners were released from the camps. Following decrees of 12 July and 24 November 1941, issued by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, over 600,000 people were freed from the labor camps; 175,000 of them were mobilized.¹⁴ And they were true champions of the USSR. They coped with their new military tasks, since the liberation of the homeland was their personal concern. As for the former leaders, they did not disappear, of course. They hid, entrenched for the time being. Stalin needed them too, though for a different purpose—as spies to remember the creative, independent individuals who were to be disciplined later on.

The Soviet state began to resemble any other state at war. The regime could only step aside and let the people display all their might. After the fighting the people would have to be put back in their place. In the meantime, an important change had happened in the people’s consciousness.

Let us take the Ivanovo region in the center of Russia. The regional newspaper, *Rabochii Krai*, received about six thousand letters in 1942. In one of them, a woman wrote, “I have never thought that I could hate our leaders so much, the leaders who have their party-membership cards in their pockets. They have exemptions from military service that give them the right to hide like mice in holes. But when we defeat the fascists, they will be the first to shout about their merits. They will assert that they are victors. And they will again use the advantages of their position.”¹⁵

What was the direct reason for this woman’s anger? It was the fate of her husband. He had an exemption from military service, but volunteered and perished at the front. The war indeed brought grief and privations to people, but it also awakened them. Under such extreme conditions, the people’s instinct of self-preservation made them behave differently from before the war: the woman’s husband had made a deliberate choice instead of obediently following orders. His wife then dared to severely criticize local *apparatchiki* (party or other bureaucrats) who had hidden from military service, and had signed

her name, Zhalkova, on her letter. This name could be a pseudonym based on *zhaloba* (complaint), *zhalkii* (pitiful), or *zhalit'* (to sting). Even if she did use a pseudonym, not necessarily much protection if the police wished to find her, the very sound of the name has a painful ring in Russian and thus added emotional weight to her protest.

People were learning to think independently. Tragic events at the front determined the nature of changes in the minds of many people. The fate of the USSR was a matter of life and death that touched everyone, that produced a degree of freedom and helped people to rise above *klassovaia obida* (class offense). Referring to the way grievances had to be expressed as those of an entire class, this term had been applied to any independent opinion and action before the war and had helped to create a herd mentality. But now people were beginning to think for themselves. A woman who before the war had earned good pay making children's toys quit work and moved to a defense plant, in violation of the labor laws, when the fighting began. She explained, "Our leaders [at the toy enterprise] made a lot of noise. Two weeks of the war went by, but we were still knocking out some kind of idiotic toys. . . . They threatened to take me to court for leaving without permission, but I didn't even dignify them with a glance. Having come to work here, I'm learning how to weld. What kinds of things I'll weld here, I don't know, but I'm sure that these 'toys' will have their effect."¹⁶

Thus the initial period of the war witnessed a crisis in governing, a huge effort by society as a whole to respond to the invasion, and the abandonment of repressive and punitive socialism spontaneously from below and deliberately from above. When this stage passed, by November 1941, Moscow had been saved. A first strategic offensive against the Germans was organized. But despite the great enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of the Soviet people, it became clear that the war would be long. The battles before Moscow had inflicted heavy losses on the German army, but not on German industry. The Reich used the economic and manpower capacity of occupied countries and, as it turned out, continued to be a powerful military opponent. In the summer of 1942 the situation at the front again grew serious. A Soviet strategic initiative failed. The military measures undertaken were not enough to change the course of the war, and once more an impasse arose.

More profound changes unconnected to military action had to be introduced. Such changes occurred in 1942. Some rights of the people, the defenders of the Fatherland, were stipulated, though never formally or in writing. People recognized as defenders, usually a result of excellent work records, could, for example, make frank comments about production plans in their

factories; offer various ideas and initiatives on their own; criticize the factory administration freely and without fear; or go to the front on their own account, without waiting for orders from the military command. In short, they had various opportunities to cut through or circumvent existing regulations.

An army drawn from the whole eligible population was created. Elite guards units, similar to those under the tsar, were restored. The dual command system of regular commanders and political commissars was abolished in 1942. Something great and significant seemed to manifest itself. This trend is evident in the tone of party propaganda and instructions to its own cadres in the summer of 1942: "The party is interested in having people think"; "stop instructing the masses, learn from them"; "the main object of party work is not the [production] plan, but those who fulfill it"; "don't whitewash the danger, don't downplay the difficulties, don't hide the unavoidability of serious deprivations and sacrifices"; "we can't underestimate the strength of the Germans, they are strong and organized."¹⁷

Some serious steps almost bordering on real reforms were taken, such as a rapprochement with the church and the dissolution of the Comintern. Of course, these moves were far from constituting substantial reform. Reform presupposes a system of action, an overall conception. Such a course is impossible under wartime conditions. Stalin was simply taking the actions necessary at the moment to change the course of the war. For this purpose he leaned on the new people who had come to the fore. Nevertheless, the image of a "monolith" was broken by the war.

In 1943-44 a highly differentiated public atmosphere arose, a real mosaic of moods. During a church ceremony in the village of Nikolo-Azias, Penza province, peasants cried out to passersby, "If there weren't any collective farms, you wouldn't see such torment."¹⁸ In the same area the opinion that churches had to be reopened was widespread.¹⁹ A collective farmer from a village in Kuibyshev province said, "I want to live the way I want to." When asked what he had in mind, he replied, "This way, that I don't have all sorts of chairmen and brigadiers above me giving orders. Just let the government give me as much land as I can work."²⁰ In Rostov province, party lecturers from Moscow were asked: "When will the kolkhozy be divided?" "When will trade in manufactured goods be free?" "When will there be freedom for various political parties?"²¹ There was a rumor that not only would other parties be allowed but that free trade would open and even that a new tsar would be elected, while America and Britain "will rule the world after the war."²² Thus peasants, speaking more freely than they had for many years, indicated their ardent desire to see the end of the collective farms and the reopening of free trade for their produce.

However, workers still indicated interest in some of the standard socialist notions about the future. In Sverdlovsk province rumors and questions asked of party cadres in one factory pointed in this direction: "Will the slogan 'Workers of the world, unite' still be used?" "Well, so what, it's the price of the second front [an invasion of Western Europe by the United States and Britain] that we are giving up the Comintern, so they, of course, are preparing the second front." "Who will lead the world revolution now?"²³ These workers accepted more of the Soviet system as theirs than the peasants did, although some of the workers, like their peer Balakin cited earlier, may well have distinguished between that system and Stalin.

The intelligentsia, the brain of the nation, had been persecuted for years. Many were expelled from the country or to remote places, left to rot in labor camps, shot, and so on. Only a small part of the old intelligentsia survived. But the sprouts of a new one were shooting up vigorously. Of course, the new intelligentsia did not match the old one in the quality of its education; however, the school of war could not but form an independent way of thinking. All these developments had profound implications for the future of the country; they were forerunners or preconditions for later liberalization.

Much of the Soviet intelligentsia had been closely connected with the pre-war regime and had become suffused with Stalinism. But this was far from true of the entire intelligentsia. The articles of the Ukrainian writer and film director Aleksandr Dovzhenko differed little from any official Soviet publications during the war. Yet in his "Notes for Myself," published in 1989, he wrote, "The quality of war reflects the quality of the organization of a society, of a nation. All our falsehood, all our dullness . . . all our pseudodemocratism mixed with satrapism—everything turns out badly. . . . But over all this—'We will win!' . . . We had no culture of life before the war, [now] we have no culture of war."²⁴

As the war began, Vladimir Vernadskii wrote in his diary,

1) . . . the real power is the C[entral] C[ommittee] and even dictatorship by Stalin. . . . 2) [There is] a state within a state, the power—the real power—of the GPU [the political police, called NKVD after 1934] and its decades-long transformations. *This is a growth, gangrene, which is driving the party in all directions—but without which it cannot get along in real life.* As a result—millions of prisoner-slaves, among whom are . . . the flower of the nation, the flower of the party, who created its victory in the civil war. . . . 4) the removal by the GPU and the party of [the country's] intelligentsia. . . . The party was "stripped of people" [*obezlidilas'*], many from its [leading] staff—this presents a riddle for the future. . . . Simultaneously with this [removal] has been created 1) a tradition of such a pol-

icy, 2) a lowering of the moral and intellectual level in comparison with the average level . . . of the country. (emphasis added)

In October 1941 Vernadskii added, "the weakness of our army's leaders is clear to all." In November he found that "the great defeats of our power—are the result of its cultural weakening: *the average level of the communists . . . is lower than the average level of non-party people.* . . . The flower of our nation is comprised of affairists and career-ration seekers" (emphasis added).²⁵

Vernadskii commented that the alliance with "the 'Anglo-Saxon states'" was of "huge significance." They are "democracies in which the ideas of freedom of thought, freedom of faith, and forms of great economic changes have been profoundly established. . . . In the global conflict we are a totalitarian state—despite the principles which drove our revolution forward and [which] are the cause of the at[tack] [on us by the Germans]. . . . The near future will bring us much unexpected and basic change in the conditions of our life. *Can we find people for this?*" (emphasis added).²⁶

Other citizens began to look at the future more fearlessly and practically. In liberated Khar'kov in 1944 a university professor named Tereshchenko said, "After all that we have lived through, the government must change its policy. In the political life of the country must take place, in fact are already proceeding, serious changes [the agreement with capitalist England and the United States, the disbanding of the Comintern, the division of educational institutions into male and female, the creation of the church committee, private trade, and others]. The changes taking place should go *further, in particular, toward more democratization in the life of the country*" (emphasis added).²⁷

An assistant professor, Seligeev, expelled from the Communist Party for disagreeing with its policy, reasoned this way: "In the process of future [post-war] reconstruction there will occur what might be called diffusion: *the best thoughts, the ideas of western culture not only in the sphere of science and technology, but also in the area of morals and politics, in the area of worldview* will unavoidably begin to penetrate to us and will leave their stamp on our entire life" (emphasis added). The "keystone" to this "moral-political, ideological reconstruction," he thought, would be "the refusal to realize any kind of socialist ideas by force of arms" together with "the general penetration" of the ideas he had mentioned in their "best western sense."²⁸

What is most striking about these ideas is that they were expressed in 1943, when the Commissariat of State Security was highly active both in liberated towns and behind the front lines. It took considerable bravery for the innovators of new actions and ideas to speak out. Nevertheless their voices were heard;

V. A. Malyshev, the people's commissar of the tank industry, told executives of the Uralsmash plant, "I assume that for you now and in the future a legal basis for displaying bravery will be necessary, so to speak."²⁹

Other industrial leaders began to think about making self-responsibility possible for all citizens, not to pay wages according to a standard scale but according to what work was worth, and not to shift responsibility to a higher level. These notions contained the threat of weakening the planned and centralized nature of the economy. The director of Moscow's important Stalin Auto Factory, I. A. Likhachev, said, "the time will come when we will forget altogether about [specified] funds [to be used for determining pay and allocating resources in production], and the consumer will deal directly with the producer." Likhachev wanted a type of national economic management that would not limit freedom of movement for the sake of socially important goals, but would "create the basis for the appearance of broad technical and economic initiatives." In 1944 he decisively refused to allow production shops in his plant to do their accounting separately, using the fixed prices and costs assigned from above. Instead Likhachev demanded assignment of work tasks according to the rule that production of each part should at least pay for itself.³⁰ Likhachev did not suffer for his views, but continued in his place as one of the USSR's most prominent industrial managers until his retirement in the 1950s. His ashes are buried in the Kremlin Wall, the USSR's highest honor for its dead.

Also in 1944 the engineer K. V. Belov wrote a memorandum to his superiors in the Commissariat of Lathe Construction in which he praised American industrial sociology and called for the introduction into the USSR of its principles of "human relations." Before the war Belov and his wife had traveled to the United States to take delivery of industrial equipment ordered there by the Soviet authorities. The Belovs returned impressed by American methods, which could be used to improve the organization of production in Soviet factories. Such methods would create optimum conditions for unfettering the capabilities of Soviet workers, allowing their inventiveness and initiative to flower.

K. V. Belov's superior found that the memorandum's ideas almost smacked of "cosmopolitanism," which in Soviet parlance meant inadequate patriotism, a dangerous charge. The memorandum, according to this superior, "lays out theories of bourgeois scholars concerned with issues of sociology and psychology of human relations which are alien to us."³¹ Yet the commissar of the lathe industry, A. I. Efremov, appraised the Belovs' work highly and deemed it worthy of serious attention. Still, the time for that consideration did not arrive quickly.

All the new ideas and innovations were crowned by the work of the economist N. I. Sazonov in his "Introduction to the Theory of Political Economy," presented in 1943 as his doctoral dissertation for the Institute of Economy of the USSR Academy of Sciences. In his opinion, ignoring such economic laws as the circulation of money and goods and the formation and movement of prices by the market had led to major mistakes and had held back the development of the country in the 1930s. The liquidation of trade by state and co-operative organizations in favor of a ration system in the early 1930s had affected the economy negatively. The absence of free trade in towns at prices set by the market brought forth a sharp decline in agricultural production by the peasants. This situation complicated issues of food supply to the cities, which led in turn to a lowering of labor productivity and to great labor turnover.

Sazonov believed that the main cause of the serious financial crisis in the country was that the largest portion of profits made by individual enterprises was not left to them but was taken by the state. Handling most of the income and expenses of the country through the state budget produced a huge increase in its size, which in turn led to the rapid growth of state institutions. This structure bureaucratized the whole financial arrangement of the country and was one of the most serious reasons for the large breakdowns in the economy in the first months of the war.

To fix these problems Sazonov recommended "reestablishing the work of economic exchange on commercial rails." Goods might be sold through a rationing system but according to the prices developed in a free market. He considered it essential to end interference in economic processes through national planning and the system of central funding. Enterprise directors should have the freedom to arrange expenditures for materials, the size of the work force, and pay as they saw fit. Central planning should be limited to the regulation of economic processes, record keeping, and prognoses of trends.

Sazonov also called for large foreign investments in the Soviet economy through the sale of stock in enterprises and concessions in various areas of the economy. Stocks could be both sold privately and held by the government, which should always retain a majority interest. The state's monopoly on foreign trade should be abolished. Sazonov commented that those who might oppose his ideas would do so because they operated from the point of view of "statistical well-being," which had already cost the country dearly in the war with Germany.

The Central Committee reacted by condemning his work as a "seditious attempt" to vilify prewar policy and to argue for the need to return the country to capitalism after the war.³² For his efforts Sazonov was subjected to par-

ty discipline—what, exactly, is not known—and was forbidden to defend his doctoral dissertation, thus depriving him of the USSR's highest academic degree. Nevertheless, the fact that someone of his stature had the initiative to think about the economy in a fundamentally different way than was typical under Stalin, and then to write up his ideas and present them to the party, is indicative of broader trends during the war. Once again, the great pressure of the fighting and its results throughout the country made people question their surroundings profoundly.

Dovzhenko noticed this tendency among more ordinary people. He wrote in January 1944, "I was very astonished at one of my talks with a soldier-driver, a Siberian youth: 'We live badly . . . and you know, every one of us looks forward to some changes and revisions in our life. We all look forward to that. Everyone. It's just that they don't say it.'" Dovzhenko commented, "The people have some sort of massive, huge need for some other, new forms of life on the earth. I hear it everywhere. I don't hear it and I won't hear it among our leaders."³³

During the war there were two interconnected but heterogeneous active forces, the people and the system. In the first stage of the war, the system was the leading but ineffectual force. It was the people who turned into the real leading force and produced talented commanders from their ranks. It was the people who sacrificed twenty-seven million lives.³⁴ The people made their contribution to the victory. But while the force of the people brought about victory, the force of the system gripped the victory in its iron vice.

From late 1943, Stalin again began to be idolized in the press and other media. The defeats of 1941–42 were explained as the actions of "panic-mongers," "cowards," and "traitors." The victories of 1943–45 were ascribed to the genius of Stalin. The war still went on, while the renewal of the totalitarian regime was already regarded as an important task of the current moment. It was suddenly realized that ideological work had been neglected. Immediate measures were taken.

In our literature it has been popular to quote a famous toast that Stalin made in May 1945 to the long-suffering Russian people. But few remember that only a month later he belittled these same people by calling them "little screws," substituting a single word in the initial toast.

A tale about the end of the war still circulates among our people. They say that at a rehearsal held before the victory parade of June 1945, Stalin mounted a white horse to ride in the procession. The animal had the impertinence to throw him. This story is just a legend, but it shows more convincingly than truth what the people indeed wished to happen. Did they want to keep the

dictator and his system in the saddle? No, they wished a white horse to throw the dictator. They wanted to see Marshal Georgii Zhukov, George the Victorious, the symbol of the people's role in the war and their capabilities, riding the white horse, as he in fact did during the victory parade. Thus the people distinguished between the two forces on the scene, one worthy of their approval and one not, and in their minds placed one on the white horse of victory.

Notes

1. See Adam Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (New York, 1973), 614.
2. In a speech in June 1945, Stalin referred to ordinary citizens of the USSR as "little screws" (*vintiki*). *Pravda* (P), 27 June 1945.
3. Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii, formerly the Central Party Archive or Tsentral'nyi partiinyi arkhiv (RTsKhIDNI), fond (f.) 17, opis' (o.) 161, delo (d.) 92, listy (l. or ll.) 73–75; d. 102, ll. 80–87.
4. See for example *ibid.*, o. 125, d. 84, ll. 5–7; d. 310.
5. *Ibid.*, o. 121, d. 426, ll. 124–26.
6. G. Kulagin, *Dnevik i pamiat': o perezhitom v gody blokady* (Leningrad, 1978), 17.
7. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, o. 88, d. 45, ll. 8, 12–14.
8. *Ibid.*, l. 14.
9. *Ibid.*, f. 17, special opis', inv. N 6329s.
10. *Ibid.*, f. 17, o. 88, d. 31, l. 12.
11. *Ibid.*, d. 31, l. 35.
12. *Ibid.*, l. 12.
13. I. V. Stalin, *O Velikoj Otechestvenoj voine* (Moscow, 1948), 7.
14. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 84, l. 17.
15. *Ibid.*, o. 88, d. 119, ll. 2–3.
16. I. I. Gudov, *Sud'ba rabochego* (Moscow, 1974), 263.
17. *P*, 11 Sept. 1989.
18. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 181, l. 13.
19. *Ibid.*, l. 11.
20. *Ibid.*, o. 121, d. 310, l. 3.
21. *Ibid.*, o. 125, d. 82, ll. 12–24.
22. *Ibid.*, d. 181, l. 5.
23. *Ibid.*, ll. 3–4.
24. *P*, 11 Sept. 1989.
25. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16 Mar. 1988.
26. *Ibid.*
27. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 181, ll. 52–53.
28. *Ibid.*, l. 51.
29. V. Chalmaev, *Malyshev* (Moscow, 1987), 173.

30. *Direktor: I. A. Likhachev v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, ed. V. A. Krasilnikov (Moscow, 1971), 68.
31. I. Gudov, *Druz'ia na vsiu zhizn': dumy o materiakh* (Moscow, 1980), 166–67.
32. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, o. 125, d. 133, ll. 4–5.
33. *P.*, 11 Sept. 1989.
34. On the debate about the number of people lost in the war, see John Erickson, "Soviet War Losses: Calculations and Controversies," in *Barbarossa: The Axis and the Allies*, ed. John Erickson and David Dilks (Edinburgh, 1994).

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