

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TERROR

by *EDDY*

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INTRODUCTION

The word "totalitarian" was created in the twentieth century to describe a new and unique form of government. The old idea of autocracy or dictatorship did not adequately describe the type of rule found in Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. The revolution in technology, particularly in the fields of transportation and communication, permitted a degree of control not possible under the old Tsarist or Prussian autocracy. With the technological changes came a new theoretical basis for loyalty. Margret Boveri has successfully described this move from allegiance to the nation state to loyalty to the ideology.¹ An individual in the present century is expected to totally adhere to one ideology whether it be Fascism, Communism or democracy, and if he should shift his allegiance from one to another, he is considered a traitor to the cause. This new requirement is especially obvious in totalitarian countries where the demand for conformity is absolute, but it can also be observed at times in democratic nations. The post war treason trials were based to a certain extent on this principle, as were the investigations and innuendos of the McCarthy Era in America.

Within this theoretical formulation totalitarianism has been described as unique, because it alone enforces uniformity through a secret police system of terror. Individuals are guilty of treason without having acted against the state. A disloyal thought or association with a group that is considered potentially

¹Treason in the Twentieth Century, (New York, 1961), Part I.

a threat by the leadership is sufficient for arrest, imprisonment or even death. Through denunciation, a network of spies, and arbitrary arrest the Secret Police create an atmosphere of fear that is sufficient to forestall any incipient opposition, thereby ensuring through terror the theoretical loyalty of the populace. Thus a new definition of treason provides the ideological justification for a system of terror.

This whole concept of treason and terror has generally been applied to two twentieth century regimes considered totalitarian -- Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany. They, more obviously than any others, fit the totalitarian concept with their demands for absolute loyalty to an ideology that applies to all areas of life, and their system of terroristic police control. Several works have been written describing the governmental and party system of one or the other, but books of comparison on specific aspects of their society have been rare. A comparative study of the system and practice of terror in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany can shed some light on the validity of generalization about terror and thereby the whole concept of totalitarianism.

SOVIET TERROR

From 1936 to 1938 the Western world was astonished at the public trial and conviction of a leading group of Russian Bolsheviks for treason. As the situation became clearer, it was established that the public trials were merely an outward manifestation of a Great Purge that probably claimed the lives or

led to the arrest of millions. Lack of documentary evidence on the reason for this terror led to the formulation of various explanations, some relating specifically to the Russian situation, others more general statements about the function of terror in totalitarian government. While the ideas of scholars vary as to the purpose of the purge, there is agreement that its victims were by and large not guilty of treason in the traditional sense. However, since so many victims (the overwhelming majority) were charged with some kind of hostile activity against the Soviet state, perhaps a new definition of treason is warranted. An investigation of terror and the purge in Russia may help to clarify the situation and re-define the term "treason" so that it has some meaning and relevance in Soviet History.

Terror began in Soviet Russia almost immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution. On December 20, 1917 the Council of People's Commissars appointed Feliks Dzerzhinski the head of a new security agency, commonly known as the Cheka, to deal with counter-revolutionary activity.¹ From the beginning the Cheka was responsible only to the party leadership, and it never lost this high degree of autonomy. Initially the Secret Police hunted and arrested enemies of the state, but by the summer of 1918 with the Civil War underway and an attempt on Lenin's life, terror against the bourgeois counter-revolutionaries became its avowed policy. Lenin defended its excesses: The Cheka, he said,

¹For a brief history of the Secret Police 1917-1956 see, Simon Wolin and Robert S. Slusser eds., The Soviet Secret Police. (New York, 1957), Part I.

is "...putting into practice the dictatorship of the proletariat, and in this respect its role is invaluable, there is no other path to the freeing of the masses than the suppression of the exploiters by force."² By 1922 and the change of its name (GPU and in 1923 OGPU) the Secret Police had infiltrated many areas of Soviet life. Its first duty was still the suppression of counter-revolutionary acts, but it now also supervised the railroads and waterways, guarded the frontier, maintained its own army, had representatives in the Regular Army, and carried on espionage work. By the end of the twenties and the consolidation of Stalin's power, no area of life in the Soviet Union whether cultural, political or economic was free from the scrutiny of the police. There were no laws to curb its power, its responsibility was strictly and solely to the Party leadership, represented first by the Politbureau and later by Stalin alone. The Secret Police because of its autonomy became almost a state within a state, with its own hierarchy and ruling group, but more important, it became the tool of the leadership, the instrument of terror, the hated and feared symbol of Soviet totalitarianism.

Terror in the history of the Soviet Union seems to divide into two distinct phases, one before the assassination of Kirov in 1934, the other after.* While any periodization is somewhat

²Ibid., p. 6. Quoted from V.I. Lenin, Sochineniya (works), 2nd ed., XXIII, p. 273-274.

*A division could also logically be made around the year 1930 as Hannah Arendt in The Origins of Totalitarianism argues. She chooses 1930 as the beginning of totalitarianism in Soviet Russia when the leadership began to use terror to atomize society. However, the evidence indicates that Stalin did not decide until the Kirov assassination to completely overturn the leadership structure that culminated in the Great Purge.

artificial and obviously not absolute, there are differences in the two eras that make it useful. For instance, the early terror appears to have been directed primarily at groups hostile to the Bolshevik regime while in the later period almost the entire, ruling group was dispossessed. Furthermore during the early phase, reprisals generally took the form of arrests, exiles, sentences to slave labor camps etc., while during the later period executions were widespread. A perplexing difference in the two phases concerns the strength of the leadership. By 1934 the Bolshevik leadership appeared to have stabilized its control and eliminated the opponents of the regime, yet the terror unleashed in the second phase was so intense that it made the reprisals of the first era seem almost insignificant by comparison. It is the later period known as the Great Purge that has so puzzled the Western World, but it would be a mistake to consider it alone. Terror is terror whether mild or intense, and it has always been a tool of Soviet totalitarianism. Moreover there is definitely a relationship if not an identity in purpose behind the purge in the two periods despite the difference in scope.

A theoretical analysis of the Russian purge must begin with a brief description of its history. In the Soviet past it is difficult to differentiate purge and terror. Brzezinski maintains that the two were separate though closely connected phenomena that "coalesced" in the Mass Purge of 1937-38. In this sense he asserts that terror was applied to the population and the purge to the party and administrative apparatus.³ This

³Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Permanent Purge. (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), ch. 5.

seems to be an unnecessary division. If the purge is described as a cleansing process in Soviet history, it certainly applies equally to society and the party who were both in this sense purified. Furthermore to discuss the purge as separate from terror is not logical. The purge by its very purpose terrorizes. The object of the elimination of certain officials either from the power structure or society is partly to remove individuals who might pose a threat to the existence of the regime, but it is also designed to create an atmosphere of fear that would forestall any grouping together of discontented elements. To be expelled from the party as was common in the early days while it obviously did not inspire the terror of the 1937-38 era, still promoted insecurity about the future, fear of the Secret Police, uneasiness about employment possibilities etc. To be an expelled member of the party in the Soviet Union could not have been comfortable, and to say that this type of purge was not a form of terror seems illogical. Brzezinski further states that the purge was only practiced against groups that arose within the totalitarian state.⁴ For instance he states that the Kulaks were exterminated not purged, because they had been earmarked for elimination from the beginning. Again this is a somewhat artificial distinction. If the purge cleansed the party by eliminating the stagnant or opportunist elements because they no longer lent vitality to the group, it is surely the same process when the Kulaks are eliminated because society needs to be

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

purified from contaminating influences.* Thus purge and terror apply to both society and the party, and together are an important element of Soviet totalitarianism.

By defining the purge as a cleansing of both society and/or the power structure, the early terror of the Civil War era clearly is part of the general picture. Both during the war and from 1922 to approximately 1929, the Secret Police worked at eliminating opposition or counter-revolutionary groups from society. At the same time the party periodically eliminated the passive, the unreliable, the self-seekers and the heretics.⁵ In this period neither the population nor the party were terrorized to any great degree. Expulsion did not necessarily mean arrest and the population in general felt relatively secure as long as they were not openly opposing the regime. Many authors have quite correctly shown that up to 1929 while the regime was authoritarian, it was not totalitarian. Lenin was not a dictator in the sense that Stalin was, and the leadership had not yet developed the absolute monopoly of power that is characteristic of totalitarianism. By 1929, however, the situation changed radically. Stalin had emerged triumphant from the succession struggle following Lenin's death, and a new class of Soviet educated technicians and specialists was emerging. Moreover the government was embarking on a new scheme to industrialize and collectivize Russian society that

*A simple definition of terror as any act of the state designed to create fear, and purge as a means of promoting terror, resolves the semantic difficulty.

⁵Merle Fainsod, Smolensk Under Soviet Rule. (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). p. 210.

necessitated the full support of the ruling group. Many of the scientific and technical intelligentsia, originally encouraged by the regime, were arrested, forced to confess, sometimes released if they had been sufficiently demoralized, often sentenced to labor camps.⁶ At the same time the party was purged of all those who opposed Stalin's economic policies.⁷ Tatiana Tchernavin categorized the women she met in prison at this time. The largest group consisted of wives of the intelligentsia (her own husband, a scientist who had worked for the Soviets, was also in prison), next were women who had been abroad since the Revolution or had applied for a passport or dealt with foreigners, third were religious women (either nuns or particularly pious individuals), and last were the criminals who comprised only 10% of the total.⁸ This is clearly the beginning of the identification of hostiles by their social or economic origin that was so much a part of the Great Purge. The same type of identification was taking place within the party. The Trotskyites were identified as hostile supposedly because they espoused permanent revolution and democratic centralism,⁹ and the followers of Bukharin became counter-

⁶F. Beck and W. Godin, Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession. (London, 1951), p. 16-17.

⁷Fainsod, p. 211.

⁸Tatiana Tchernavin, Escape from the Soviets. (New York, 1934), 119f.

⁹It is difficult in the case of Trotsky and his followers to determine how much Stalin was motivated by personal jealousy and revenge, and how much by opposition to the ideas of the group, particularly since Stalin incorporated many of their ideas into his own program. The personal motive was probably strongest in the case of Trotsky, but both played a part in his banishment and the identification of his group as enemies of the state. Also to be considered is Stalin's manipulation of the group and their ideas in his drive for power.

revolutionary or deviationist because they favored a slower, less harsh collectivization. This is also the period marked by the expulsion, recantation, and restoration of many old Bolsheviks including Kamenev and Zinoviev who were to become the principle defendants in the 1936 public trial.

This particular phase of the purge (the elimination of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia and the silencing of leading oppositionists within the party) lasted until approximately 1934 and the Kirov assassination. The facts concerning the murder are obscure. Kirov, supposedly a liberal in the ruling elite and director of party activities in Leningrad was assassinated in December 1934 allegedly by a disillusioned Bolshevik. Whether Stalin planned the murder as an excuse to launch the terror on the populace and party, or whether the death of one of his favorites convinced him that he had to permanently eliminate the opposition, is unclear. In either case the intensity and scope of the purge and terror increased gradually after this event culminating in the bloodbath of 1937-38. At this point the summary death sentence reappeared, it became the duty of individuals to denounce relatives and measures against families of the accused were legalized.¹⁰ With a cry for increased vigilance to safeguard the revolution, the party required each individual to publicly denounce his acquaintances.¹¹ People were accused of having an anti-Soviet attitude, supporting hostile elements,

¹⁰Beck and Godin, p. 28-29.

¹¹Beck and Godin, p. 29, reported that 100 denunciations were necessary to establish a person's vigilance.

collaborating or having relations with the enemy, loss of class vigilance, distorting the party line and deviationism in general.¹² These charges were put forth at meetings of the party cells, in the factories, the schools until they became a part of every phase of Soviet life. Arrests did not necessarily follow (especially in the early 1934-36 stage), but since the agents of the NKVD were everywhere they soon had accumulated a dossier on every citizen. By 1938 no individual was safe, and while it is impossible to determine how many people were arrested, it is certain that the figure rose into the millions. The Army, the nationality groups, the administrative personnel both economic and political, and the party were purged indiscriminately of all persons allegedly hostile to the leadership. By 1939 and the end of the Great Purge, the leadership group in every area of society had been almost completely dispossessed.

Bewilderment is one of the first reactions to a study of the purge. What could possibly be the purpose behind the deliberate elimination of so many individuals, especially those in key positions. That such a widespread conspiracy could have existed in a regime so outwardly stable is difficult to believe. That leading Bolsheviks could have been allied for years with Nazi or Japanese agents as the prosecution charged, is equally unacceptable to any observer of Russian history.¹³ That millions

¹²Beck and Godin, p. 29-30.

¹³Trotsky somewhat pathetically tried to prove his innocence and discredit the prosecution in the public trials, though the complete irrationality of the accusations made his attempt futile. See Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast. (New York, 1965).

of people could have been so hostile to the regime that they were prepared to commit treason and yet were successfully eliminated without threatening the existence of the leadership is hardly credible. There are obvious pitfalls in any attempt to find a rationale behind such an apparently irrational process, yet many theories have been formulated to explain either the function of terror under totalitarianism or the specific reason for the Russian purge. While it is impossible to discuss them all (Beck and Godin, for instance, mention seventeen different theories that were postulated by inmates of the NKVD prisons in 1937-38), there are a few that merit special attention because of the light they shed on this apparently irrational phenomenon.

One type of analysis describes the purge as a necessary and permanent function of totalitarianism in general. Called the "Theory of Social Supply" by Beck and Godin and forming the major thesis of Zbigniew Brzezinski's book The Permanent Purge, this theory asserts that the "cleansing" process is essential for mobility within the totalitarian ruling group. Only by constantly infusing new blood into the movement can the revolutionary zeal of the system be maintained. According to Beck and Godin by the thirties a bureaucratic caste of officials had emerged in the Soviet Union that aspired to become a hereditary ruling class. The leadership, sensing a threat to its own security, therefore liquidated its membership, replacing it with newly educated bureaucrats from the population.¹⁴ Because the

¹⁴Beck and Godin, p. 221.

Communist ideology stresses the need for progress with continuous striving toward new goals, only by eliminating the stagnant, opportunist and oppositionist elements from the administrative apparatus, can the movement continue its forward momentum thereby justifying its own existence. The constant reshuffling of personnel prevents rigid power lines from developing and promotes mobility within the system and an instability that insures the stability of the top echelon.¹⁵ The purging process is therefore permanent, primarily because it satisfies the needs of totalitarianism, but also because it eliminates the minority that is unable to adapt to this type of rule.

Another analysis that is related to the Social Mobility theory in the sense that it ascribes to the necessity of terror under totalitarianism, is one formulated by Hannah Arendt that might be called the Atomization Theory. Describing totalitarian governments in general terms Arendt asserts that "...their most conspicuous external characteristic is their demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member."¹⁶ This type of loyalty is achieved via terror and especially the system of denunciation that accompanies the purge. For instance, under Soviet totalitarianism no individual could feel safe in expressing his thoughts to another, no matter how close the friendship or the family relationship, since it was the duty of every citizen to spy on all his

¹⁵Erzezinski, p. 30.

¹⁶Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism. (New York, 1951). p. 316.

acquaintances. This system of citizen spying became so widespread during the Great Purge that each individual became in a sense the agent provocateur of everyone else. As a result of this type of terror society became atomized, each individual became isolated. No personal or group relationships could be formed for fear that the chance remark or the misreading of one's thoughts would be reported to the Secret Police. Since individuals were required to denounce others, even the knowledge of another's existence might lead to a completely fabricated denunciation, so most people tried to be as inconspicuous as possible and as remote from others as his particular circumstance would allow. Unable to ally with any person or group all that remained was the government, and in his utter isolation and loneliness the individual therefore turned to the state for personal identification. The system of denunciation also fostered loyalty to the government in another way. Every office holder who got his job via the purge of a superior was the beneficiary of the crimes of the state and in this sense its accomplice. This necessitated loyalty to the state to eliminate one's guilt.¹⁷

The two preceding theories of the function of the purge and terror are extremely important to an understanding of totalitarian government. The first shows very clearly the positive functions of a process that can appear completely negative. The second illustrates what happens to an individual under

¹⁷Arendt, p. 409.

governmental conditions that demand complete conformity of the populace. What is disturbing about these two analyses as an explanation of the motivation behind the purging process is their neglect of the personal factor. Both agree that the cult of the leader is an ingredient of totalitarianism, but neither discuss the personality of the ruler as an important motivation. That the will of Stalin was law in the Soviet Union is now certain. Krushchev in his secret speech to the twentieth Party Congress denouncing Stalin, described how absolute and personal were his powers of control: "Stalin acted not through persuasion, explanation and patient cooperation with people, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his will."¹⁸ There is no question that Stalin personally ordered the Purge and was the mastermind behind the Moscow Trials. Thus to discuss the purge as one of the needs of totalitarianism without mentioning the personal motivation of the leader is somewhat inadequate despite the light it sheds on the system in general.

A more recent examination of the purge focuses on Stalin's personality as the motivating force behind the terror. In an essay introducing the transcript of the last Moscow trial Robert C. Tucker asserts that Stalin's own needs both personal and political unleashed the terror. He contends that the trials were a web of fact and fiction about a great conspiracy resembling "...textbook description of a paranoid delusional

¹⁸Leo Grulicw ed., Current Soviet Policies. II, (New York, 1957), p. 173.

system."¹⁹ Refuting the stability via instability argument of Brzezinski and Arendt, he describes the purge as instead a wrecking operation that had dire results in view of the loss of key personnel essential to the preparation of Russia's defenses.²⁰ He asserts that Stalin's position was not secure in 1934 in view of the existence of the Old Bolsheviks and their long standing habits of criticism, and that this situation coupled with the dictator's paranoia prompted the elimination of the Old Guard.

Tucker's theory is substantiated by two former Soviet officials. Alexander Orlov, a NKVD agent who defected, claimed that there was no organized opposition in 1934, but that the country was in a turmoil as a result of the horrors of forced collectivization and industrialization, that even though the Old Bolsheviks were silent they were merely biding their time waiting for the Stalin era to pass so they could again assert their leadership. Stalin, realizing the widespread discontent, decided to eliminate all his rivals and thereby increase his personal power.²¹ Orlov, who knew the dictator personally, also discussed Stalin's constant fear of assassination and the elaborate precautions he took to assure his personal safety,²²

¹⁹Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen, eds., The Great Purge Trial. (New York, 1965), p. xxiii.

²⁰Ibid., p. xxvii.

²¹Alexander Orlov, The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes. (London, 1954), p. 40-45.

²²These included the wearing of a bullet proof vest during Red Square parades, keeping the route and day of his departures from the Kremlin a secret, traveling in a train of armoured steel, having the road to his villa (35 km. long) guarded day and night by 1200 men, etc. Ibid., p. 20.

a description that lends support to the paranoia idea. Krivitsky, a former high ranking Soviet intelligence officer also described the rebellious mood of the population and claimed that this had affected the rank and file of the party. The only possibility of leadership for this discontent lay with the Old Bolsheviks who held the sympathy of the masses. Stalin, impressed by Hitler's blood purge of June 1934 decided to forestall any coalescence of the opposition by eliminating them completely.²³ Krivitsky described how Stalin's personal thirst for power resulted in the elimination of the leadership of both the Army and the party:

The old differences of opinion with the high command of the Red Army remained in his memory as "opposition". This "opposition", when dragged into the meshes of his OGPU machine, became a "conspiracy". Such conspiracies are the rungs on the ladder on which Stalin climbed to absolute power. In the process critics became "enemies," sincere opponents "traitors", all honest and zealous oppositional opinion - with the expert aid of the OGPU - "organized plots". On the corpses of his former comrades and fellow Revolutionaries, creators and builders of the Soviet state, Stalin has mounted step by step to solitary control over the peoples of Russia.²⁴

Krivitsky's book supports another theory put forth by Tucker to explain the purge. The former intelligence officer in 1940 contended that Stalin as early as 1934, observing that the Nazi dictatorship was strengthened by the purge of the SA, decided it was in Russia's best interest to come to terms with Hitler as soon as possible. Respecting the Nazi power and Germany's superiority, Stalin therefore joined the League and worked for collective security pacts with the West to strengthen her

²³W. G. Krivitsky, I Was Stalin's Agent. (London, 1940), p. 203-205.

²⁴Ibid., p. 264.

international position, all to convince Hitler it would be advantageous for the two dictators to conclude an agreement.²⁵ Krivitsky felt that the Red Army, especially officers like Tukhachevsky, would have objected to an alliance with Hitler, therefore they had to be eliminated.²⁶ Tucker carries this idea even further. He felt that Stalin envisioned a sphere of influence in East Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East as a result of a treaty with Hitler. Both the Old Bolsheviks and the Tukhachevsky group were not only anti-Fascist but also anti-imperialist and, according to Tucker, would never have agreed to the dictator's new line. Stalin therefore needed absolute power to enforce his policy within Russia and also without to silence in advance his critics in the Comintern.²⁷ As evidence for his views Tucker compares the speeches of Bukharin and Stalin at the seventeenth Party Congress in 1934. Bukharin, the accepted intellectual leader of the Old Bolsheviks closed with a warning against Hitler. Stalin in his speech stated that he did not exclude an agreement with the Nazi Dictator just because of the Fascist ideology. Tucker further states that Hitler's successful occupation of the Rhineland in March 1936 strengthened Stalin's resolve that there must be a pact and thereby led to an intensification of the purge.²⁸

²⁵Krivitsky, p. 17-20.

²⁶Ibid., p. 246-247.

²⁷Tucker and Cohen, p. xxxiv-xxxvi.

²⁸Ibid., p. xxv-xxxvi.

It is impossible to either completely accept or reject Tucker's thesis on the prospective German pact as a cause for the purge. There are little pieces of evidence that seem to support him. For instance Beck and Godin reported that some prisoners were discussing this theory, and further stated: "We even met prisoners who were prophesying the Hitler pact in 1938 simply on the basis of the 'categories' which had been arrested."²⁹ Witness also the shock and disbelief that a defector recalled spread through the Siberian city where he worked when the new foreign policy line was announced. He stated that Stalin's control was so absolute that only an instinct for survival caused party members to ardently support the pact.³⁰ A lack of concrete facts increases the temptation to try to read Stalin's mind. He might have contemplated the German alliance as an alternative, if all attempts at collective security failed. With his own very strong instinct for survival and his belief that he alone knew what was best for Russia, he would have foreseen the widespread resistance that might materialize at such a shift in policy and therefore decided to forestall such opposition. It is credible

²⁹Beck and Godin, p. 198.

³⁰Victor A. Kravchenko, I Chose Freedom. (New York, 1946). p. 332-334. See also Markoosha Fischer, My Lives in Russia. (New York, 1944), p. 244-246. A Russian married to an American who lived in Moscow from 1927-1939, Mrs. Fischer describes her gradual disillusionment with the Soviet leadership during the purge era, but claims the final break in her allegiance came with the announcement of the Hitler-Stalin pact. Her book is a good, personal description of what life was like in Moscow during the Great Purge, especially the effect of the terror on friendship and family relationships.

that at some time between 1934 and 1939 part of Stalin's motivation behind the purge of the party was a possible future agreement with Hitler, but because of the lack of evidence it is impossible to wholeheartedly accept this thesis.

Tucker is on much stronger ground when he talks about Stalin's possible paranoia. Many facts support his thesis: the irrational nature of the purge itself, the fact that people were arrested who could not possibly have been considered dangerous or even potentially hostile to the leadership, the fact that Stalin saw treason in every critical remark, the evidence that after the Old Bolsheviks were eliminated the purge extended to the young men who had been reared and promoted by the leader himself. There are certain explanations for the element of irrationality in its initiator. The wild story of the Doctor's plot, a new purge forestalled by Stalin's death, adds great validity to Tucker's thesis. In reading about the alleged scheme of the Jewish doctors to poison Stalin, the aura of unreality is striking. The charges at the public 1936-38 trials were so absurd that they fit a pattern of irrationality. The seclusion in which Stalin lived, the elimination of his closest friends, the suicide of his wife can all be seen in retrospect as fitting the paranoia pattern. Again as with the German-pact-theory there are no concrete facts, but the amount of circumstantial evidence is sufficient to conclude that Stalin probably had paranoid tendencies, and that his illness was a significant motivation for the purge.

Unfortunately Tucker's arguments focus almost exclusively on the era of the Great Purge. He makes no attempt to explain

the earlier or later purges of either society or the party. His paranoia thesis can, of course, be applied to Stalin's entire reign, but in scoffing at the instability theory he goes too far. There could be an explanation of the purge as a process that fits both the needs of totalitarianism and the personality of the leader.

There is one idea that is found in all the explanations of the purge but emphasized only by a few. Beck and Godin called this idea the "Social Prophylaxis" theory and claimed that it was widespread in the Soviet Union, especially in NKVD circles.³¹ This is very simply the concept that to maintain power the totalitarian government must eliminate not only the hostile but also the potentially hostile elements from society. This logically leads to the identification of groups which might have a potentially dangerous, political frame-of-mind, and emphasizes the need for denunciation to discover the element of dissent. Thus the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia had to be eliminated because they were not really supporters of the regime, the Kulaks and all who fought the collectivization had to be exterminated etc. As to the Old Bolsheviks, a leading scholar, asked by Beck and Godin why so many Communists were arrested, replied that Party members had criticized their own government and were therefore most capable of taking action against it.³² Following

³¹Beck and Godin, p. 193. See also Jerzy G. Glickman, "Social Prophylaxis as a Form of Soviet Terror" Totalitarianism. (Cambridge, Mass., 1954). p. 61 ff.

³²Beck and Godin, p. 90.

the same thought but personalizing it, Isaac Deutscher reasoned that it was necessary for Stalin "...to destroy the men who represented the potentiality of alternative government, perhaps not of one but of several alternative governments."³³ Explaining the number of victims, he claimed that once those capable of forming another government were eliminated, their associates and subordinates had to be included because of their potential for vengeance.³⁴ Deutscher's emphasis is therefore on prevention in the era of the Great Purge, whereas "Social Prophylaxis" focuses on prevention in the total picture.

In essence the social prophylaxis theory describes a new kind of treason. Historically treason has been defined as betrayal of the state by one of its citizens. Under the totalitarian concept, the individual is guilty before the act, guilty of being capable of treason, guilty of being a member of a group that is potentially hostile to the state. Many analysts have described totalitarianism as a unique system of government based on a monopoly of physical force used to perpetuate power, and made possible by modern technology.³⁵ Within this relatively new form of government traditional definitions and terminology often lose their validity.³⁶ Obviously most of the people

³³Isaac Deutscher, Stalin. (New York, 1949), p. 375.

³⁴Ibid., p. 380.

³⁵George F. Kennan, "Totalitarianism in the Modern World" Totalitarianism. (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 20-22. See also the other essays and comments in this collection for a discussion of totalitarianism's uniqueness.

³⁶Tucker, discusses for instance the Aesopian language of the Old Bolsheviks. He claims that Bukharin used this symbolic language to indict Stalin in the final, public purge trial.

convicted during the Great Purge were not guilty of treason traditionally defined even in the broadest sentence, but they were forced to confess and were convicted of activity hostile to the state. This is equally true for the other purges even when there was no trial in the legal sense. As long as the leadership represented either by an individual or an oligarchy is presumed to be infallible, its word is law and any deviation from its principles either actual or potential is treason. The degree of guilt, and thereby the penalty for the crime, varies with the degree of security felt by the leadership which in turn depends on the nature of the groups within the society in so far as they exist. Once the pre-revolutionary elements and the opposition within the party had been eliminated from Soviet life, terror logically abated because the goal of absolute loyalty and conformity had been reached. As a principle, however, the totalitarian definition of treason had not disappeared and it reappeared in the post war era³⁷ and again in the power struggle after Stalin's death.

This concept of totalitarian treason while it cannot answer all the questions on the purge is particularly useful because it fits all phases of the Soviet terror. The intelligentsia and the Kulaks were eliminated because they would

³⁷During the war, controls were greatly relaxed and the idea grew among many Russians that the result of their sacrifice would be a more democratic government after the Germans were defeated. To dispel this idea and to restore his absolute power, Stalin inaugurated another purge which eliminated all those who had had contact with democratic West and thereby forestalled any incipient opposition to his regime.

naturally oppose the policy of the leadership, in the one instance because the regime had decided to dedicate itself to the goal of industrialization whatever the cost, and in the other case because the leadership decided on forced collectivization. In both cases the hardships involved were to be so severe that only a dedicated Communist committed to socialist progress could willingly acquiesce. By the same logic, the Old Guard would oppose the cult of the leader as a violation of basic Marxist-Leninist principles, the German alliance, and in some cases Socialism in One Country and the rapid pace of industrialization-collectivization. In a more general way the concept of totalitarian treason fits the needs of the system as well as the personality of the leadership. Totalitarianism itself is necessarily paranoid, but the degree of its suspicion depends to a great extent on the leader. This explains the different intensity of the terror and is useful in understanding whatever the future may bring. Totalitarianism will always have to eliminate the discontented from its hierarchal structure, though the form and the degree of this elimination will depend on the top echelon. A change in leadership or strategy will necessitate a shift in personnel throughout the administrative apparatus, but as long as the security of the top is not threatened by real or potential enemies, there is no necessity for widespread terror. As long as the Soviet Union develops in an evolutionary way, free from radical change, a high degree of conformity is assured. However, should a drastic shift in policy occur or should a new leader with the paranoid tendencies of

Stalin triumph, the concept of potential treason and the terror that is implicit in it can be reactivated.

NAZI TERROR

The Western world has witnessed in the twentieth century another government which because of its totalitarian nature, invites comparison with Stalinist Russia. Germany under the Nazi regime was characterized by a leadership system that was absolute in its control over the populace. Terror, through the secret police and the methods implicit in such an organization, were a recognized policy of the government. Nazi totalitarianism was of course unique, but because of its similarity to the Soviet regime in its methods of control of the populace, its tactics and history require examination. Particularly worth examination are the theories formulated about Soviet totalitarianism to determine whether they have any validity when applied to a similarly governed society.

Violence was associated with the Nazi movement from its very beginning. The Storm Troopers or SA which had its origin in the post World War I Freikorps were initially a private police force or auxiliary army to the Party and were associated with street brawls, gang beatings, etc. As might be expected in such a group, its members consisted of misfits of all descriptions. Criminals, ex-convicts, former soldiers unemployed because of the terms at Versailles, perverts, malcontents and fanatics seeking a new revolution that would restore German prestige, swelled its ranks. From the beginning the SA bands or troops were anarchical

in nature, clearly outside the law with terror and violence their avowed purpose. They were not so much a bodyguard or protective squad (this was to come later with the formation of the SS), but gangs designed to terrorize the opposition, to break up rival group meetings and to attract attention to their party and their leader.¹ Temporarily eclipsed during Hitler's term in prison and successfully outlawed when the Weimar Republic for a time succeeded in bringing some degree of stability to the state in the pre-depression years, the SA again became prominent in the early thirties and during the election campaigns of 1932-33 numbered around 400,000. Its function was the same: as before it marched in parades in the familiar brown shirts, it shouted praise to its leader, roving bands sought out known members of the opposition especially Communists, and larger groups broke up rallies of rival political parties. To the people it represented violence and the threat of revolution, but privately Hitler had decided after the failure of the Munich Putsch (1923) that while the threat of violence might be effective for blackmail purposes, he would rise to power by legal means.

The importance of the SA was thus the image it presented to Germany and the world of the movement it represented. Violence was a positive force, repellent to many but attractive to others. It identified the movement for exactly what it was and gave a clear picture of what such a party would represent once it gained power. For the Nazi philosophy was nihilistic in its

¹Alan Bullock, Hitler, A Study In Tyranny. (New York, 1964), p. 72.

belief, respecting violence for its own sake, for the results it attained in terms of power as well as its curative, cleansing affect. Commenting on this aspect of his movement Hitler was quoted as saying, "Brutality is respected. Brutality and physical strength...The people need wholesome fear. They want to fear something. They want someone to frighten them and make them shudderingly submissive."² And on another occasion the Fuhrer was reputed to have said, "I must drown Germany's enemies in a wave of terror, so that they may not bring the Reich to ruin with their humanitarian slogans."³ Outward, physical violence through the SA was the method of terror employed by the Nazis before their assumption of power. Once Hitler became Chancellor and had an opportunity to solidify his control, the situation changed. The SS became the instrument of fear, the network of concentration camps appeared, and the use of terror to control the populace became the policy of the government. Bureaucratized terror represented by the SS thereafter replaced the anarchical type of terror represented by the SA.

The SS was organized in 1922 as a private bodyguard, a small elite group, whose loyalty to the leader was to be absolute.⁴ In contrast to the SA it remained small and was nominally under the control of the Brown Shirts until 1934. In 1929 Himmler

²Hermann Rauschning, The Voice of Destruction. (New York, 1940), p. 82-83.

³Kurt Kreuger M.D., Inside Hitler. (New York, 1941), p. 298.

⁴Gerald Reitlinger, The SS: Alibi of a Nation. (New York, 1957), p. 13.

became its chief to be joined two years later by Heydrich who organized the SD, the intelligence unit of the party. In 1933 after Hitler became Chancellor Heydrich and Himmler, working from Munich, gradually gained control of the provincial police and in 1936 were finally given complete authority over all the enforcement agencies in the Reich. In 1933 Goering as Prussian Minister of the Interior had assumed control of the Berlin political police which had existed since 1919, and from this unit the Gestapo or Secret Police evolved.⁵ With the ascendancy of the SS in 1934 the Gestapo gradually came under its control. The administrative bureaucracy of Nazi Germany was complicated, but by and large it was the SD who spied on the party and the populace, both operating through a network of informers.

There was never any question of legality as far as the Secret Police were concerned. Himmler was responsible only to the Fuhrer and acts of the Gestapo were considered beyond the law. As early as March 23, 1933 in a speech to the Reichstag Hitler explained his philosophy. There was to be equality before the law only to those who supported the government.⁶ Under the theory of "protective custody" (a term for detention in a concentration camp) punishment would come to any who committed acts counter to the "sound feeling of the people", or what the people should feel if they were convinced National Socialists.⁷

⁵Charles Wighton, Heydrich: Hitler's Most Evil Henchman, (London, 1962), p. 38.

⁶William Ebenstein, The Nazi State. (New York, 1943), p. 69-70.

⁷Ibid., p. 73-74.

Therefore individuals were incarcerated to "protect" them from the righteous wrath of the citizenry. Unlike their Soviet counterpart who kept the sham of legality by their insistence on confession and trial, the German Secret Police rarely tried anyone, and while they might interrogate victims for information, they were generally unconcerned with the guilt or innocence of the individual. This type of justice is of course essential under the concept of totalitarian treason where the individual is presumed to be a potential enemy of the state merely by his group identification.

Both the theory of social prophylaxis and totalitarian treason discussed in relation to the Soviet terror apply equally well to the German situation. The principle function of the Gestapo was to identify and arrest potential enemies of the state before they became active enough to pose a threat to the leadership.⁸ Certain groups were the enemy merely by definition. Communists were publicly identified as the opposition at the time of the Reichstag fire, leaders of the Social Democratic party were arrested shortly thereafter, and by the summer of 1933 only the Nazi party was legal. Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz, explained why Jehovah Witnesses were "guilty". He said that enemies of Germany were using them and their beliefs to undermine military morale.⁹ Gypsies were biologically inferior and like the Jews were weakening the master race with an infusion

⁸Edward Crankshaw, Gestapo. (London, 1956), p. 113.

⁹Rudolf Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz. (Cleveland and New York, 1959), p. 97.

of their blood. In the case of the Jews there was in addition the "international marxist Jewish conspiracy" which aimed at the destruction of the natural, superior strength of the German people who were the only ones fit to rule. In addition to these categories of enemies there were individuals such as church leaders, educators, and scientists who were detained or forced to emigrate because of their opposition.

It is relatively easy to understand in the case of these latter victims why they were persecuted since they were openly in opposition to the Nazi regime. As for the Communists and Social Democratic leaders the social prophylaxis theory is applicable. Potentially they were a threat to the regime, and a totalitarian government to insure its survival must eliminate the possibility of opposition. The Jewish situation, however, was quite different. The Jews were a threat not in a real sense but only in an imagined one. No matter how irrational the Protocols might seem, the fact is that Hitler believed in an international Jewish conspiracy. There is no way of determining whether he first hated Jews because of some childhood experience with Freudian overtones as Dr. Kreuger suggests¹⁰ and then discovered the conspiracy idea, or whether he first sensed the need of an identifiable enemy to rationalize Germany's plight and consequently utilized his own anti-Semitic feelings, which coincided with the inclinations of his people, in the choice of a scapegoat. Whatever the origins of his emotion it is easily

¹⁰Kreuger, *passim*.

understood how, with a personality like the Fuhrer's, hatred of the Jews could be intensified until it reached the proportions that led to the Final Solution. Dr. Kreuger described Hitler's condition in more scientific terms: "The psychopath, with a paranoid mentality like that of my patient, needs the crutch of a devastating and continual hatred upon which to lean, and to use as a bludgeon against a world of imaginary enemies!"¹¹ Others in the movement were probably not impressed with the conspiracy idea, but the identification of an enemy is a useful weapon in a totalitarian society, and the Jews were a logical choice in a country where the roots of anti-Semitism ran deep. Thus, while on the surface, the social prophylaxis theory does not seem to apply to the identification of the Jews as the enemy, in reality it does. The leadership principle was paramount, the leader was convinced that the Jews represented a conspiracy against the rightful ascendancy of the German people, therefore, they were a threat that had to be eliminated.

The campaign directed against the Jewish people - the economic reprisals, the boycotts, the arm bands, the isolation and finally the concentration and extermination camps - can obviously be called terror. Many have commented on the meekness with which the Jews went to their deaths in the gas chambers, but actually they had been so terrorized before the decision for extermination at Wannsee in 1942 that their sheeplike behavior might almost have been anticipated. This particular

¹¹Kreuger, p. 436.

subject has been a controversial one since the publication of Hannah Arendt's book Eichmann in Jerusalem. Her reference to the docile behavior of the Jews and particularly the role of their own leadership in their extermination led to unwarranted assumptions about her position, which was simply that to raise the question of their lack of self defense was cruel and betrayed an ignorance of camp conditions in Germany.¹² While her explanation is somewhat inadequate, it in no way implies a fatal weakness inherent in the Jewish people. Bruno Betelheim's psychological explanation is more revealing. He contended that the guards had so depersonalized the trip to the gas chamber and their treatment of the victims that they could not have responded in any other way.¹³ The implication is, of course, that any people under similar circumstances would have reacted in a similar way. Polish prisoners in The Dark Side of the Moon¹⁴ evidenced a similar lack of response, and the eagerness with which Russian prisoners strived to manufacture acceptable confessions indicates that totalitarian police methods successfully remove all traces of human dignity from their victims. Jewish behavior in the extermination camps merely indicates that the terror campaign against them had been successful.

Defining terror as a government policy designed to promote fear in a part or all of the populace clearly puts the campaign

¹²New York, 1963, p. 283.

¹³The Informed Heart. (Glencoe, Illinois, 1966), p. 248-250.

¹⁴Anon., (London, 1946).

of 1933-42 against the Jews in this category. But could the genocide that subsequently occurred be considered a purge in the sense of the Russian phenomenon of the thirties? If purge is defined as one aspect of terror and interpreted as a government's attempt to cleanse society of an alien element that is harmful either immediately or potentially to its vitality or growth, then the term clearly applies to the program against the Jews. The leadership was convinced that Jewish blood sapped the vitality of Aryan Germany and its elimination was therefore a purgative for society. The situation is somewhat analogous to the extermination of the Kulaks in the early thirties in Russia, who were "removed" from society not only because they were potentially a threat to the leadership, but also because they represented an element that was foreign to a collective society. There was however a unique element to the Nazi racial policy, which was designed to promote a racial Utopia. The SS in particular had plans for breeding a racial elite which would begin with the extermination of Jewry to be followed by the Slavs and other biologically inferior groups.

German society was therefore in the eyes of the Nazis cleansed by the removal of the Jews as well as the extermination of the gypsies, the mentally ill, and the feeble minded. The party itself was purged on only one spectacular occasion, The Night of the Long Knives.¹⁵ By June 1934 the SA and its leader, Ernst

¹⁵The extermination of the opposition following the 1944 attempt on Hitler's life does not apply to this discussion since it was clearly an attempt to eliminate a group of traitors (Defined in the traditional sense of the word) and therefore has no connection to totalitarian terror, which is designed to forestall any grouping together of dissident elements.

Roehm, were becoming restive. It appeared that the revolution was over. The leader had become Chancellor of Germany, Nazis were now in key positions throughout the Reich, the opposition had been outlawed and virtually silenced. But thus far there was no established position for this huge private army. It was no longer necessary to publicly extoll the leader or terrorize the opposition - the SA had virtually become obsolete in the New Order unless it could find a new function. Its leader, a former army officer, wanted to incorporate his troop into the Reichswehr with himself in a leadership position. Furthermore, the radical wing of the party representing, in the name of Gregor Strasser, the more socialist aims of the movement had a following in the SA. This element was seeking a second revolution that would lead to greater benefits for the worker and a more egalitarian society. In direct opposition to Roehm and the SA was the Army and the Nazi party represented by Goering, Goebbels, Hess, Himmler and Heydrich.¹⁶ The German Army with its traditions of honor and respectability wanted no part of this rowdy, criminal group and its perverted leader, and Hitler needed the Army's support not only for his long range foreign policy plans, but also for his scheme to replace Hindenburg as President as soon as the old man died. Moreover the Fuhrer had little interest in the socialist views of Gregor Strasser, his major objective was always the realization and consolidation of power. The Nazi party feared the SA because it had no control over

¹⁶Hermann Mau and Helmut Krausnick, German History, 1933-45. (New York, 1963), p. 49.

its actions, and if it were allowed to merge with the Army Roehm would automatically assume the stature of a dangerous rival. Therefore on June 30, 1934, on the pretext that Roehm was attempting a Putsch, the Nazi movement was purged of its dissident elements by the murder of the SA and Socialist leaders.

Friedrich and Brzezinski in their excellent work on totalitarianism do not regard the Night of the Long Knives as a purge in the Soviet sense. They base their conclusion on the thesis that the Soviet process had by the thirties, become an institutionalized aspect of totalitarian society, highly organized and systematized, bearing little resemblance to the hurried and violent act of the Nazis. They feel, moreover, that since the purge is a necessary phenomenon in totalitarian society, that in both the German and Italian parties, with a further evolution of society and a change in leadership, the purge would have become an institution in the Russian sense.¹⁷ While their conclusions have validity, they overlook some of the similarities between the Roehm and Stalinist purges. In each case the opposition was potentially a threat to the leadership, and furthermore in each party there was definitely a dissident element. In Germany there was the radical, socialist element and in Russia the followers of Trotsky in the early stages, Bukharin in the later phase. In both cases the people eliminated had been loyal party members from the beginning of the movement. The German purge necessitated quick violence, because Hitler was not as tightly in control of

¹⁷Mau and Krausnick, p. 151-152.

the country as was Stalin by the mid-thirties. Moreover Roehm had an army under his command which precluded a public arrest and trial. The situation is analogous, in this respect, to the secret trial and execution of Tukachevsky. In both cases the leader's personal instinct for survival was greater than the need for public, legal justification of his acts.

Another area that must be considered in comparing the Roehm Purge and Nazi terror in general to the Stalinist era is the personality of the leader. While there is still some question about Stalin's paranoia, there can be little concerning Hitler's. It is evident in his identification of enemies both internal and external, in his increasing isolation from society (particularly intensified after the outbreak of war), his well known rages, his insistence on absolute loyalty and obedience to himself, and especially by the use of terror tactics as a deterrent for disloyalty. Privately Hitler admitted that the concentration camps and especially the cruelty associated with them had a deterrent value:

Terror is the most effective political instrument. The important thing is the sudden shock of an overwhelming fear of death. Why should I use different measures against my internal political opponents? The so-called atrocities spare me a hundred thousand individual actions against disobedience and discontent. People will think twice before opposing us when they hear what to expect in the camps.¹⁸

Totalitarianism, as mentioned above, is necessarily paranoid. Any latent opposition must be forestalled. The system of terror, the existence of a secret police are based on the premise that

¹⁸Rauschnig, p. 83.

a significant portion of the population are not supporters of the leadership. However, the extent of the violence must depend to a great extent on the fears of the leader. It is impossible when reading accounts of individuals who were personally acquainted with Hitler to ignore the fact that the Fuhrer was a psychopath with frequent fits of paranoia. Even his own writings, his speeches, and actions betray this dangerous malady. The violence of the movement, the Nazi ideology, the cruelty of the camps were all manifestations of Hitler's paranoid personality. In Stalin's case the evidence is not as obvious, but is sufficient to conclude that his personality was a significant factor motivating the terror of the thirties and post war years.¹⁹

It is in this connection that all theories dealing with terror and/or purge as a necessity in totalitarian government are weakest. Present day conditions in the Soviet Union show quite clearly exactly how significant was Stalin's personality to the terror of the thirties and post war years. It seems quite probable that had Stalin not been successful in his bid for power following Lenin's death, the Russian people might have been spared the horror of the thirties, and the government might have evolved in a more Social Democratic way.²⁰ In

¹⁹At the present date it appears that Svetlana's memoirs will confirm her father's paranoia and its increasing manifestation from the suicide of her mother in 1932.

²⁰Walter Laquer, Russia and Germany. (London, 1965). ch. 13. Laquer objects to Deutscher's view of Stalin as a "great revolutionary despot."

Germany, however, the situation was quite different. The ideology was nihilistic, violence and terror were not only functional but also curative. One of the purposes behind the sadism in the camps was the education of the SS, the premise being that humanitarianism was a weakness in the Aryan race that was fostered by contact with aliens such as Jews or Slavs. Thus, the ideology was a reflection of the leader's psychosis, an insanity he shared with the top echelon of the Nazi movement. In Russia the terror logically abated with the death of Stalin (following the liquidation of his key henchmen), while in Germany it would have continued as long as the Nazi ideology held sway. The indications were that the next group to be exterminated would be the Poles,²¹ followed no doubt by the entire Slav world. The Brzezinski thesis on the permanence of the purge under totalitarianism alleges that the cleansing process can exist without terror, in other words that there can be a peaceful turnover of leadership with a corresponding administrative shake-up. However, if the purge is non-violent how does it differ from the bureaucratic changeover in a democracy that follows the defeat of the party in power? Under this broad definition the purge cannot be considered solely a characteristic of totalitarianism.

The atomization theory that asserts that the terror is designed to isolate individuals to preclude any grouping together of hostile elements, appears to fit Nazi totalitarianism as well as the Russian. The agent provocateur was a well known tool of

²¹Arendt, Origins. p. 424.

Heydrich who was notorious for his "files" which contained a dossier on each prominent official in the Third Reich. Equally well known was the system of Block Wardens established among the populace for the purpose of spying, plus the instruction to children via the Hitler Youth to report their parents for disloyalty to the leadership. The evidence indicates, however, that despite these measures the isolation of individuals was not as extreme as might be expected. With the exception of the Jews and other groups that were specifically designated as the enemy, the populace was not particularly terrorized. The indications are that an individual who either supported the regime or kept his opposition silent could feel relatively secure.²² Initially Hitler found widespread support or at least acquiescence among the people. The average person interested in his own, private world saw living conditions improve after the Nazi takeover. As one of them said, "There were jobs and job security, summer camps for the children and the Hitler Jugend to keep them off the streets...Nobody went hungry, nobody went ill and uncared for."²³ Those who were not directly involved in the persecution of Jews or Communists could feel grateful that it was someone else who was being victimized and live secure in the knowledge that if they pursued their own lives and did not try to interfere with the state, they would be safe.²⁴ The situation was comparable to the NEP period in Russia

²²Milton S. Mayer, They Thought They Were Free. (Chicago, 1955), p. 57.

²³Ibid., p. 48.

²⁴Mayer, p. 57-58.

when the intelligentsia and even the Kulaks could live in peace as long as they did not directly oppose the regime. There were, of course, Germans in the thirties who because of their race, politics, or profession were antagonistic to the new ideology, and these were forced to emigrate, suffer increasing persecution.

In 1939 with the outbreak of hostilities many Germans became disillusioned with the leadership, but propaganda about the penalty for opposition was widespread enough to forestall any outward manifestation of discontent. Furthermore the war and particularly the early victories made opposition seem unpatriotic. As might be expected controls tightened during wartime, yet even with the closer surveillance several underground, opposition groups organized, some of whose members had close contact with the Nazi hierarchy. With the degree of atomization in Soviet Russia, a conspiracy of this type was virtually impossible. Isaac Deutscher asserts that the leaders of the Red Army led by Tukhachevsky planned a coup d'etat, that the plot was discovered by the secret police who smashed it with the arrest and execution of its leaders.²⁵ There is, however, no solid evidence that warrants acceptance of this allegation.²⁶ Deutscher cites Krivitsky, but the former Russian agent stated that the Army conspiracy was a product of Stalin's imagination.²⁷ Schellenburg who, with Heydrich, furnished the forged German documents that

²⁵Stalin, p. 379-380.

²⁶Tucker and Cohen, xxiv, fn. 13.

²⁷Krivitsky, p. 246.

were used to convict the Tukhachevsky group of collaboration with the German Army, stated merely that Heydrich believed the accusations but had no proof of their validity.²⁸ The strongest evidence against the plot is the nature of the terror itself. Conditions being what they were, with the Secret Police everywhere, with its representatives watching not only the Old Bolsheviks but also the Army, it seems incredible that a coup d'etat could even have reached the planning state.²⁹

Further evidence that atomization was not as successful in Germany as it was in Russia was the institutional structure of the Third Reich. Left intact after the Nazi takeover were two major groups, the Church and the Army. Initially these groups, at least outwardly, supported the Nazi revolution, yet even when a few of their leaders were suppressed for public opposition, the structure of the institution remained intact. Moreover, the property classes were not dispossessed, but were instead used in building the new order. With the increased prosperity brought about by rearmament the wealthy had good reason to be grateful and dependent on the state for future favors.³⁰ This situation differed markedly from the Soviet one. By the end of the Civil War Russia was in total chaos. The Church as an institution had withered away, the propertied classes had lost their wealth, the Army had been organized by the Bolsheviks

²⁸Walter Schellenberg, The Schellenberg Memoirs. (London, 1956), p. 46-49.

²⁹Krivitsky, *passim*.

³⁰Rauschnig, p. 161.

and was under their control. Social, economic and political life had completely disintegrated. There was considerable relaxation under NEP, but when the terror was gradually intensified in the thirties there were no groups left from the pre-war period that might offer the individual a refuge outside the state. Furthermore, there is no indication that the system of denunciation in Nazi Germany was as successful as the one in the Soviet Union. There was one important difference in the two systems. Denunciations were required in Russia and merely encouraged under the Nazis. When reading the memoirs of the victims of the Gestapo it is common to find that the individual was arrested for racial or political reasons or because the Secret Police spies uncovered evidence against the person, but rarely does the writer claim denunciation by another citizen or victim. This is quite different from what occurred in the Soviet Union where a woman whose husband was arrested quickly denounced him to try to protect herself and her children, usually to no avail. Mrs. Fischer recorded that she was unable to betray her emotions to her children because they were so indoctrinated that they would report her. This differs from the German couple in Brecht's "The Informer" who feared that their son would denounce them, but were not convinced of his betrayal. According to Mrs. Fischer individuals in Moscow were so isolated that they dared neither visit or telephone old and trusted friends. Furthermore the Harvard study on the World War II Russian refugees discovered the "almost universal belief that no one, explicitly including the party people, was free from the threat of the NKVD and

its personnel."³¹ It is quite possible that terror might have reached such proportions in Germany had the Nazis not gone to war thereby insuring their own destruction. It appears probable that Hitler would eventually have moved against the Church, perhaps supplanted the Army by the Waffen SS, continued the program of extermination until it touched a greater proportion of the populace, but as it was, terror in general never reached the extremes in Nazi Germany that it did during the Great Purge in Russia.

Interestingly the opposite was true within the concentration or forced labor camps of the two countries. The sadism and deliberate brutality of the German camps was not found in their Soviet counterpart, although the forced labor system made life grim and hardly bearable. Miss Arendt has characterized the former as Hell and the latter as Purgatory³² and the description is fitting though the differences between the two are worth noting. Polish prisoners recording their experiences in The Dark Side of the Moon³³ reported that while their guards seemed immune to their suffering, they were not deliberately cruel, and this was confirmed by Mrs. Buber-Neumann who was a survivor of camps of both systems.³⁴ The sadistic brutality of the German

³¹Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Bauer, The Soviet Citizen. (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 333.

³²Arendt, Origins. p. 445.

³³Anon. (London, 1946), passim.

³⁴Margarete Buber, Under Two Dictators. (New York, n.d.), passim. See also Solzhenitsy, for the Soviet side, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, (New York, 1963).

camps is well known, as are the gas chambers, the Einsatzgruppen, and the millions of dead, but the effect of the camp system on the prisoners is also worth noting for comparative purposes. Bettelheim, a psychoanalyst who was an inmate of Buchenwald for approximately one year, concluded that in order to survive the experience inmates had to undergo a radical personality change. The traditional middle class values were an insufficient defense against the brutality, and the men who stayed alive in the German camps often became replicas of their guards in their personality traits.³⁵ No such study of Russian forced labor camps was undertaken, but the absence of deliberate brutality in the Soviet system suggests while the inmates must have found it difficult to adjust to the harsh living conditions, their personalities and values need not have undergone the drastic change of their German counterpart. Differences in the work system are also worth noting. While the Soviets learned that forced labor was inefficient, at least prisoners were engaged in productive employment. Ivan Denisovich could take pride in the wall he was building, while his German counterpart might be ordered to build a wall and on its completion to tear it down. During the war Slavic prisoners were used to some extent as slave labor, but within the camps this was generally not the case.

Comparison of two such penal systems can be misleading, because it may appear to be an attempt to whitewash one or the other. Life in the Soviet camps, while not as brutalized as

³⁵Bettelheim, *passim*.

existence in its German counterpart, was, nevertheless, extremely severe. Conditions were primitive, disease was common, food was scarce, winters were unbearably cold without the proper clothing - in short, one had to be physically strong to survive. Most of these conditions existed in Germany, but added to these, was the dehumanization process practiced by the guards. Ivan Denisovich retained some of the dignity of a human being, but under the SS a man often became as deficient in humanitarianism as his oppressors.

SOME COMPARATIVE CONCLUSIONS

In comparing two totalitarian terror systems, certain generalizations are inescapable. Basic to both, are certain principles, namely that the leader is infallible, his will is law, and his survival (which is deemed to be a positive good) depends on the loyalty and conformity of the mass. Terror and purge are methods of insuring this conformity, and were largely successful in both the German and Soviet systems. Both required a secret police network to carry out the policy of the government and in both cases this agency was relatively autonomous, free from the restraint of law, and responsible only to the leadership. Analysis further reveals the significance of the individual leaders. Both Stalin and Hitler were paranoid, and this personality defect greatly influenced the degree of violence and repression within the terror system. Nazism was Hitlerism, and it is doubtful whether the movement would ever have gained power without his leadership or survived his death. Stalin was

less essential to Communism in Russia since Bolshevism was already established when he assumed the leadership, but it is questionable whether the Soviet Union would have evolved into the terror-ridden, authoritarian system of the thirties without his ruthless control.

Despite the common characteristics of the two systems, there were basic differences in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia that comparison tends to emphasize. The ideologies were obviously antagonistic. In Germany the creed was negative, nihilistic. The Nazi revolution could only move Germany backward because of the complete irrationality of the racist views. Moreover its commitment to "living space" in the East meant that its destruction was inevitable. The Communist ideology promised increased benefits for the masses no matter how tortuous the implementations of policy might be. Stalin, despite his twisted personality, was unable and unwilling to ruin Russia (e.g. the Great Purge ended in 1938) to a great extent because he was committed to a progressive ideology. With his death terror logically abated, but in Germany, because of the ideology, it would have continued as long as the Nazis held power.

As far as the terror itself was concerned, conditions were much worse in Russia than in Germany. Brzezinski's conclusion that the two totalitarian countries differed in their stages of development is a partial explanation for this disparity. No doubt conditions would have worsened in Germany had Hitler's foreign policy been successful, but it is likely that had Hitler died, instead of a party power struggle developing in Germany as

it did in Russia when Lenin died, the Nazi regime would have collapsed and a much wider struggle for the spoils with other political groups participating would have ensued. Another, more significant explanation for the difference in the terror is the amount of support each ruler enjoyed. Hitler was acceptable to the majority of the German people, but, more important, he was revered by his immediate entourage. There can be no question about the allegiance of Himmler, Goering, Bormann and Goebbels, whereas Stalin had reason for questioning the support of the Old Bolsheviks. There was no conspiracy in Russia as the prosecution alleged at the public purge trials, but the revolutionary group represented the possibility of an alternative leadership which had no counterpart in the Nazi top echelon. In both countries certain groups such as the Jews, the Kulaks, the Tsarist aristocracy etc. were by definition of the ideology the enemy, but only in Russia was there a group among the elite who represented a threat to the leadership. This situation, intensified by Stalin's paranoia and the natural, snowballing affect of a system of terror based on denunciation, helps explain the differences in the degree of repression in the two countries.

Among the theories concerning totalitarian terror discussed above, only one applies equally well to both systems. Under the definition of totalitarian treason an individual is guilty if potentially he is a threat to the leadership, either through his conscience or his association with others. This is the only theory broad enough to encompass the two dictatorships and still allow for the uniqueness of each. This type of formulation

is useful to an understanding of the irrational rule by fear, but it must allow for the limitations of specific, historical circumstance. The differences between the two totalitarian regimes are significant enough to limit the validity of any generalization. The whole concept of totalitarianism though descriptively useful at the time it was formulated, is becoming obsolete, largely because it was created primarily to describe the government of the Soviet Union which, since Stalin's death, has undergone great change. Thus, theoretical formulations are useful if they are examined in the harsh light of historical reality.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TERROR

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Under twentieth century totalitarianism, the traditional definition of treason lost its relevance. An individual became a traitor not by an act of disloyalty, but simply by definition of the infallible leadership, either by arbitrary definition or by membership in a group defined by the ruling elite as hostile or potentially hostile to the state. This new interpretation of treason was the theoretical basis for the system of terror found in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia.

Several theories have been formulated to explain totalitarian terror focusing generally on the Great Purge in the Soviet Union. One set, generalizing from the specific circumstances of the Russian situation, explains the elimination process as essential to the stability of totalitarian regimes. The overall validity of theories of this type is weakened when the Soviet terror is compared to the Nazi process or to conditions in post Stalinist Russia. The purging of the ruling elite in the Soviet Union is better explained by specific, historical circumstances, especially the existence of a group (the Old Bolsheviks) who were a potential alternative to the personal leadership of Stalin combined with the paranoid personality of the dictator. There was no comparable purging process in Nazi Germany, only the spectacular Night of the Long Knives (June 1934) when the dissident element of the Nazi party was exterminated. Moreover, present day Soviet totalitarianism utilizes alternative methods to control the populace. Therefore the purging process and the terror implicit in it, is not a necessary aspect of totalitarianism,

although it can be a useful tool of the leadership.

The atomization of society through terror to forestall any grouping together of dissident elements was used in both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, but was far more successful in Russia, again because of historical circumstances. Indications are that the average German was not nearly as isolated as his Russian counterpart, that institutions such as the Army and the Church were left intact, that the ordinary non-Jewish citizen was secure provided he did not actively oppose the regime. At the height of the Great Purge in Russia, on the other hand, personal life became disorganized, relationships were imperilled, families were disrupted. Therefore as a theory explaining totalitarian terror, the atomization theory is useful if considered within a unique historical situation.

In Nazi Germany the character and extent of the terror is best explained by the personality of the ruler and the basic tenets of the ideology. (For instance, the Jews were exterminated because they represented an element alien to the goal of an Aryan Germany.) Since the ideology was anti-humanitarian and geared to the purification of the race, terror against certain groups within the populace of both Germany and its area of control would have continued as long as the Nazis held power. In Russia terror logically abated with the death of the paranoid leader and was even restrained to a certain extent during his lifetime by his commitment to a progressive ideology. Therefore, although conditions for the individual were decidedly worse in the Soviet Union than in Nazi Germany, the Russian terror ended, while the

Nazi ideology promised a wider system of elimination with the passage of time.

Although generalizations about totalitarian terror are useful in understanding a process that seems totally irrational, they must be limited by historical circumstances. While superficially the German and Russian system of terror appear to have been quite similar, there were differences basic enough to limit the validity of any generalizations explaining terror under totalitarianism.