

The Degeneration of the Soviet Secret Police From Guardians to Executioners

One unintended result of Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost has been a rash of books by and about people who had been on the inside during the Stalin/Khrushchev/Brezhnev years. None of these offerings provides an analysis of Stalinist rule from a revolutionary perspective, and many of them have a decidedly anti-communist bias. However, they do provide a more detailed picture of how the October Revolution was betrayed, and how the workers state founded in 1917 degenerated within a decade into a regime of bureaucratic corruption and police-state repression.

The degeneration of the Bolshevik Revolution and the rise of Stalinist absolutism was a process which molded every element of political life in the Soviet Union. The information which has come to light as a result of glasnost helps illuminate the inter-relationship between the destruction of the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International (Comintern) as revolutionary organizations, and the transformation of the security police and the state bureaucracy. This was most evident in the increasing use of the State Political Directorate (GPU) against party members who opposed Stalin's faction and its anti-Leninist doctrine of "socialism in one country."

As the nascent bureaucracy, with Stalin at its head, solidified its control over the party, the revolutionary-internationalist traditions of the early years of the regime, when Lenin and Trotsky stood at the head of the Soviet state, were destroyed. The Comintern became a tool for the *destruction* of revolutionary cadres as it lurched from rightist opportunism in the mid-1920s, to the lunatic sectarianism of the "Third Period" and then, in 1935, to the abject class-collaborationism of the Popular Front. The Soviet security apparatus paralleled this de-generation at every step. From the revolutionary days of the civil war, the political police came under the control of a series of increasingly sadistic and amoral Stalinist thugs. By the mid-1930s the GPU specialized in pathological lying, petty score-settling, torture and mass murder.

Bolsheviks Confront Counterrevolution

The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was a remarkably bloodless affair, and the period that immediately followed was notable for the leniency shown to the defenders of the old regime. Many of those arrested who gave assurances that they would not take up arms against the new government were simply released under little or no supervision. But as the White armies readied themselves for civil war, the coalition government of the Bolsheviks and the Left Social Revolutionaries (SRs) found it necessary to resort to extraordinary measures in defense of the young workers state.

On 21 February 1918, as the German army continued to advance prior to the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Soviet government issued a decree entitled

"The Socialist Fatherland Is in Danger." The decree included the following three points:

"(5) The workers and peasants of Petrograd, Kiev, and of all towns, townships, villages and hamlets along the line of the new front are to mobilize battalions to dig trenches, under the direction of military experts.

"(6) These battalions are to include all able-bodied members of the bourgeois class, men and women, under the supervision of Red Guards; those who resist are to be shot.

"(8) Enemy agents, profiteers, marauders, hooligans, counter-revolutionary agitators and German spies are to be shot on the spot."

—*First Decrees of Soviet Power*

The "Cheka"—the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation, Sabotage, and Misuse of Authority—was the agency that carried out the directives of the Council of People's Commissars. Established in December 1917, the Cheka grew out of the Petrograd Soviet's "Military Revolutionary Committee," which, under Trotsky, had organized the October uprising. The Cheka was instructed, as its name implies, to suppress crime, bureaucratic abuse and counterrevolution.

Anticipating an imminent eruption of proletarian revolution in Western Europe, the Soviet leadership initially saw the Cheka as a temporary expedient until the workers state was consolidated. As the civil war against the Whites dragged on, leading Bolsheviks and Left Social Revolutionaries began questioning the severity of the Red Terror. Throughout 1918, Nikolai Bukharin, Lev Kamenev, Maxim Gorky, Victor Serge and I.Z. Steinberg (a Left SR and Commissar of Justice and Home Affairs) were among those who voiced misgivings over the growing power of the Cheka to operate free of any independent review. Lenin and Trotsky dismissed their concerns and asserted that responsibility for the use of terror lay with the enemy.

In 1919 Bukharin again approached Lenin to urge that the Cheka's power to impose capital punishment be reined in. At Lenin's initiative he was appointed to the Collegium of the Cheka "with the right of veto" over executions. According to Stephen Cohen in *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, Bukharin supported the use of coercive measures against counterrevolutionaries, but "worried about the recurring mistreatment of non-Bolshevik political figures and intellectuals" and often intervened on their behalf. He perhaps began to reconsider some of his misgivings when, on 25 September 1919, anarchists bombed a meeting in Moscow where he was speaking. Twelve people were killed and 55 wounded in the attack, including Bukharin himself.

Dzerzhinsky and the Cheka

The first head of the Cheka (which in 1922 was reorganized as the "State Political Administration" or GPU) was Felix Dzerzhinsky, a Polish intellectual and a found-

ing member of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL). Dzerzhinsky, who joined the Bolsheviks in the summer of 1917 following his release from Moscow Central Prison, was known as “Iron Felix” for his dedication and powers of endurance. He led the Cheka until his death in 1926.

There were abuses in the early days of the Cheka, and some of the original Chekists were little better than adventurers. Under Dzerzhinsky, however, abuses were generally punished when exposed. In his *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, Victor Serge reports one infamous exception to this policy. In January 1920, as the civil war and the threat of internal counterrevolution were receding, Dzerzhinsky, with the approval of Lenin and Trotsky, proposed the elimination of the death penalty except in areas where military operations continued. A decree was promptly passed by the government and signed by Lenin, but before it could take effect, defiant Chekists in Moscow and Petrograd hurriedly executed several hundred prisoners. Serge reports, “The Politbureau...deliberated the question without daring to answer it.” Apparently Dzerzhinsky (and Lenin) felt unable to punish the culprits.

Personally incorruptible, Dzerzhinsky sought by example to have each Chekist conduct him or herself as a “Knight of the Revolution.” In his first year as head of the Cheka he worked, slept and ate in his office. An “Old Chekist,” Fyodor Fomin, eulogized Dzerzhinsky’s determination to refuse any privilege denied to other Chekists:

“An old messenger would bring him his dinner from the common dining room used by all the Cheka workers. Sometimes he would try to bring Feliks Edmundovich something a bit tastier or a little bit better, and Feliks Edmundovich would squint his eyes inquisitively and ask, ‘You mean that everyone has had this for dinner tonight?’ And the old man, hiding his embarrassment, would rush to answer, ‘Everyone, everyone, Comrade Dzerzhinsky.’”

—quoted in *KGB: The Inside Story*, Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky

Dzerzhinsky’s record was not pristine: he allied himself with Stalin in seeking to strengthen the central apparatus at the expense of the national rights of the non-Russian peoples of the USSR, notably the Georgians. On 30 December 1922, Lenin wrote that in the resurgence of Great Russian chauvinism: “The rashness of Stalin’s administrative zeal and his spite have played a fatal role. I fear that Dzerzhinsky too...has distinguished himself by his truly Russian state of mind (it is well known that Russified aliens are always much more Russian than the Russians themselves).” When Lenin was on his deathbed, he appealed to Trotsky to carry out a fight in the Central Committee against Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and Ordzhonikidze.

In May 1940, Trotsky recalled that, “Dzerzhinsky was brought into the Political Bureau after Lenin’s death. This step was taken by Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev in order to attract to their side the honest but vain-glorious Dzerzhinsky. They succeeded completely.” But despite his political support to Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and the organization he headed take an honorable place in Soviet history as defenders of the world’s first workers state

against those who sought to restore the old regime. Under “Iron Felix,” the Cheka/GPU existed to protect and advance a new and just world order—not, as under Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria, to terrorize the Soviet working class and guarantee the despotic rule of a privileged caste.

Dzerzhinsky died as the conservative bureaucratic faction headed by Joseph Stalin was consolidating its grip on the USSR. While he had a long personal friendship with Stalin, Dzerzhinsky opposed the growing arrogance of the bureaucracy. Three hours before his death, in a speech delivered to the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, he said: “When I look at our apparatus, at our system of organization, our incredible bureaucracy and our utter disorder, cluttered with every conceivable sort of red tape, I am literally horrified” (cited in *Stalin: A Critical Survey of Bolshevism*, Boris Souvarine).

Dzerzhinsky’s successor, Vyacheslav Menzhinsky, was not originally part of Stalin’s faction. During the civil war he had visited Trotsky at the front and warned him that Stalin was conducting “a very complicated intrigue” against him. When he joined the Cheka, Menzhinsky was, according to Fomin, already fluent in twelve languages, and he went on to master Chinese, Japanese, Persian and Turkish. He was a polymath as well as a polyglot, an intellectual of great scholarly breadth, and his interests included physics, chemistry, astronomy and mathematics. But he was a machine man who lacked the political authority of Dzerzhinsky, and often acquiesced to Stalin’s intrigues. Under Menzhinsky, in the fall of 1927, the GPU began to play a larger role in the internal factional disputes in the party. When Stalin wanted Trotsky and Zinoviev expelled from the Central Committee in October 1927, Menzhinsky obligingly produced a report implicating them in a non-existent military plot involving a White officer who was, in fact, a GPU operative. In his biography of Stalin, Trotsky relates how, when Kamenev confronted Menzhinsky, and asked him if he thought Stalin had the political capacity to lead the revolution forward: “Menzhinsky dodged the issue. ‘Why then did you let him grow into such a formidable force?’ he answered question for question. ‘Now it is too late.’” After an extended period of ill health, Menzhinsky died under mysterious circumstances in 1934.

With Menzhinsky gone, effective control of the GPU was in the hands of his deputy, Henrikh Yagoda. Yagoda, who had originally supported Bukharin in the intra-party faction fight, was a crude, unsophisticated careerist. However, he was also efficient, energetic, and ambitious; and he would—within limits—do what he was told. The inveterately anti-Semitic Stalin never completely trusted Yagoda, due as much to his Jewish background as to his political loyalties.

The Kirov Assassination and the Great Purge Trials

The assassination of Sergei Kirov on 1 December 1934 provided a pretext for unleashing a wave of purges in which millions of Soviet citizens perished. Kirov, as

head of the Leningrad party organization, had acquired a substantial independent base and, next to Stalin, was perhaps the most powerful individual within the bureaucracy. Kirov, an Old Bolshevik who had supported Stalin in the factional struggles of the 1920s, was considered a liberal within the bureaucracy. He favored a relaxation of pressure within the party, and a policy of reconciliation with the defeated political opponents of the ruling faction.

A large section of the party tops were worried that Stalin had concentrated too much power in his own hands. They considered him ill-suited for a period in which the repression that had accompanied the forced collectivization of the peasantry should be eased. In the elections for the Central Committee at the 17th Party Congress in February 1934, Kirov polled almost 300 more votes than Stalin. He was approached by a group of senior cadres who proposed that he replace Stalin as General Secretary. This story, long retailed by various samizdat historians, was confirmed in the 13 December 1987 issue of the Soviet magazine *Ogonek* (cited in *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*, Robert Conquest). When Stalin was informed of this approach, some say by Kirov himself, he set to work arranging the latter's assassination.

Kirov's death provided a justification for launching a series of show trials and mass purges that consumed tens of thousands of party activists and whole layers of the Soviet population. Stalin, seeking to appropriate the authority of the Bolshevik Revolution, deliberately targeted the old party cadres whose political authority posed a potential obstacle to his absolute power. Virtually all surviving members of Lenin's Central Committee were branded as anti-Soviet traitors and murdered.

In the course of the purges, a majority of the delegates to the 17th Party Congress (exclusively composed of the top layers of Stalin's own faction) were liquidated. Of the 139 Central Committee members elected at the Congress, 110 were shot or sent to the camps. At the next Congress five years later, only 59 of the 1,966 delegates of 1934 reappeared.

The first of the great show trials began in January 1935: Grigorii Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, who in 1926-7 had briefly joined forces with Trotsky in opposition to Stalin, were tried, and "confessed" to, among other things, "moral responsibility" for the death of Kirov. In August 1936, Zinoviev and Kamenev were convicted again, with Trotsky as co-defendant *in absentia*. This time they took *direct* responsibility for the Kirov murder and for setting up a "Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center."

At the second trial some of the "confessions" also implicated Alexei Rykov, Mikhail Tomsky and Bukharin, leading figures in the rightist faction of the party in the 1920s. However, in September 1936, when Yagoda was given the assignment to frame Bukharin, his former leader, he balked. He was quickly replaced, via telegram from Stalin's summer villa, by the homicidal Nikolai Yezhov.

Under Yezhov, all restraints that hindered the liquidation of Stalin's enemies were removed. In the next two years, the terror, known in the USSR as the *Yezhovshchina*, swept across the land. Seventeen of Yagoda's

eighteen commissars of state security were arrested and shot. The remaining one was poisoned. Yuri Pyatakov, Karl Radek and fifteen others were eliminated in a trial in which Trotsky was alleged to have been an agent of the secret services of Nazi Germany and militarist Japan. The last of the show trials were held in March 1938: Bukharin, Rykov, Nikolai Krestinsky, Christian Rakovsky and Yagoda were all convicted of being members of the "Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites," and participating in plots against Stalin, acts of sabotage and various other crimes. For good measure Yagoda was also charged with murdering Menzhinsky and planning to kill Yezhov. Tomsky did not wait to be convicted, and instead committed suicide.

The purges also decimated the leadership of the Red Army. It has recently been revealed that Hitler's Gestapo, playing on Stalin's paranoid delusions, leaked information in Czechoslovakia to suggest that Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, hero of the civil war and the USSR's pre-eminent military leader, was plotting a coup. Stalin took the bait and seventy-five of the eighty members of the Supreme Military Council were shot. Half of the officer corps, more than 35,000 men, were liquidated along with them. The early success of Hitler's 1941 invasion of the USSR is at least partly attributable to the Stalinist scythe which had cut through the Soviet military cadre.

The trials and frameups swallowed wave after wave of new victims—including those who had carried out earlier purges. In a secret report to the Politbureau in 1956, the KGB revealed that approximately *19 million arrests* had been made in the period from 1935 to 1940; of those, at least seven million people were shot or perished in the gulag.

The *Yezhovshchina* destroyed what remained of the idealism and revolutionary dedication inherited from the early Cheka. The new recruits who filled the ranks of the GPU under Yezhov, and later Beria, were mostly careerists with little or no political understanding of what was happening. The lowest level of the GPU were the executioners. Most of these were alcoholics who were given a glass of vodka when they checked out their weapons in the morning. They then proceeded to pits dug by criminal convicts, lined up their political prisoners, and began shooting. Some became so hardened to what they were doing that they would line up prisoners sideways and try to see how many they could kill with a single bullet. At the end of the day, they turned in their guns and were given as much free vodka as they could drink ("The Executioner's Song," *Moscow News*, 1988, No. 41, quoted in *KGB: The Inside Story*).

Yezhov also supervised the hunting down and murder of many members of the Trotskyist movement in Europe. A GPU agent, Mark Zborowski, managed to infiltrate the inner circle of the fledgling Fourth International in Paris. He arranged the murder of Trotsky's son, Sedov, and also of Rudolf Klement, who was in charge of organizing the International's founding conference. Zborowski was also probably responsible for the assassination in 1937 in Switzerland of former Soviet intelligence agent Ignace Reiss (Poretzky), who only a few weeks earlier had broken with the counterrevolutionary

Stalinist murder machine and declared his solidarity with the Fourth International.

Eventually Yezhov too outlived his usefulness to Stalin, possibly because he knew too much, and was replaced by Lavrenti Beria. Once again the GPU was purged: by 1940, Yezhov and 101 of his top 122 officers from the 1937-38 period had been liquidated. Beria, without doubt the most sinister and blood-soaked of the Stalinist butchers, was free to indulge himself in depravities that rivalled those committed by the Nazis in the territories they occupied. Aside from the murder and mayhem that had become standard practice, he would frequently have attractive young women—frequently schoolgirls—snatched from Moscow streets for his own sadistic sexual purposes. Husbands or parents who complained were likely to end up in the gulag.

In retrospect, the degeneration of the party and government bureaucracy can be charted by the quality of the leaders of the GPU in the 1930s. First the uncertain Menzhinsky; then the crude but effective careerist Yagoda; next, the bloody Yezhov; and finally the monstrous Beria. At each step, more absolute and arbitrary power was concentrated in the hands of Stalin.

The GPU's International Terrorism

Terror against Stalin's supposed political opponents in the USSR abated somewhat under Beria, more for lack of new victims than any other reason. However, the persecution of the Left Opposition in exile continued. Throughout the 1930s Trotsky had been hounded from France to Norway to Mexico. Finally, in 1940, a GPU agent recruited in Spain, Ramon Mercader, infiltrated Trotsky's compound in Mexico and struck him down with a mountain-climbing pick.

After the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact and the dismemberment of Poland, the Gestapo and the GPU set about the task of ridding their respective zones of any potential political rivals. GPU targets included Polish communists who had survived the bloody purges in Moscow. Wladyslaw Gomulka, a future head of the Polish deformed workers state, decided that it was safer to take his chances with the Gestapo, and fled to the German-occupied zone.

The GPU routinely collaborated with the Nazis in this period, exchanging German communists from the gulag for Russian emigres and Ukrainians held in fascist prisons in Germany. One German communist, Margarete Buber-Neumann, was handed over to the Nazis at a bridge in Brest-Litovsk. Later she bitterly recalled the experience in an interview:

"When we were half-way across, I looked back. The [GPU] officials still stood there in a group, watching us go. Behind them was Soviet Russia. Bitterly, I recalled the Communist litany: Fatherland of the Toilers; Bulwark of Freedom; Haven of the Persecuted."

—*Deadly Embrace*, A. Read, D. Fischer (quoted in KGB: The Inside Story)

Many GPU agents who organized intelligence networks and partisan units during World War II were veterans of the Spanish Civil War. Major General Leonid Aleksandrovich Eitingon, second in command of partisan operations behind the lines of the German army after

Hitler's invasion, had been a GPU agent in Spain. He was also the organizer of Trotsky's assassination. Another GPU agent in Spain was Walter Ulbricht, the future head of the German Democratic Republic: his job was to hunt down and murder German, Austrian and Swiss Trotskyists in the International Brigades.

The Comintern sent the following message to the Spanish Communist Party in December 1936:

"Whatever happens, the final destruction of the Trotskyists must be achieved, exposing them to the masses as a fascist secret service carrying out provocations in the service of Hitler and General Franco, attempting to split the Popular Front, conducting a slanderous campaign against the Soviet Union, a secret service actively aiding fascism in Spain."

One of the most famous of the GPU's many leftist victims in Spain was Andres Nin, a founder of the Spanish Communist Party, a former close associate of Trotsky, and a leader of the Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista (POUM). In May 1937, Nin was kidnapped, tortured and finally flayed alive when he refused to "confess" to collaborating with the fascists.

Even in its so-called heroic phase, during and after the "Great Patriotic War" when the Stalinists gained new authority based on the Soviet army's defeat of fascist Germany, the GPU continued business as usual. Thousands of returning Soviet POWs were condemned to death in Siberia as "fascist collaborators."

Wherever the victorious Soviet army went as they drove across Eastern Europe they were followed by the NKVD (GPU). The "security forces," at the height of the war, had 53 *divisions* of its own, totalling nearly three quarters of a million troops. These divisions were used by Beria and Stalin to set up a string of regimes in Eastern Europe essentially identical to that in the USSR.

The Jewish Doctors' Plot

The final days of Stalin's life were marked by a witch-hunt orchestrated by the viciously anti-Semitic Beria: the Jewish Doctors' Plot. Stalin interpreted the death of one of his proteges, Andrei Zhdanov, as evidence of an elaborate "plot" against the state. On the strength of a letter from a junior Kremlin medical *apparatchik* (whom Nikita Khrushchev later described as "mentally unbalanced"), it was claimed that Zhdanov had been poisoned by Kremlin doctors. Dozens of doctors were arrested, beaten and forced to confess to Zhdanov's poisoning. In reality, according to Khrushchev, Zhdanov had died of the effects of acute alcoholism. Only Stalin's timely death saved the doctors.

After the "Doctors' Plot" investigation, the GPU was once again purged, this time of all "pro-Zionist" (i.e., Jewish) elements. None of those purged were rehabilitated after Stalin's death, and to this day there are virtually no Jews in the Soviet secret police, now known as the KGB.

Beria, Stalin's trusted hatchetman and obsequious stooge, secretly hated his master. Khrushchev described Beria on the night of Stalin's death as "spewing hatred" for his boss:

"But, interestingly enough, as soon as Stalin showed these signs of consciousness on his face and made us think he

might recover, Beria threw himself on his knees, seized Stalin's hand, and started kissing it. When Stalin lost consciousness again and closed his eyes, Beria stood up and spat."

—*Khrushchev Remembers*

In the power struggle that followed Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev allied himself with Marshal Grigori Zhukov, hero of the "Great Patriotic War" against German fascism, and promptly had Beria arrested, tried and shot—not for his anti-working class crimes but, as was the fashion, for being an "agent of British Imperialism" who was "attempting to restore capitalism" in the USSR.

Personal Courage and Political Program

The USSR is a society with a profound contradiction. The collectivized property forms on which the Soviet regime rests were established by the October Revolution of 1917 and must be defended. But political power in the Soviet Union has, for over six decades, been monopolized by a corrupt elite answerable only to itself. To guarantee its own immense privileges, the parasitic ruling caste has resorted to extreme repression, often reaching insane proportions.

The connection between the criminality of the GPU and its successors under Stalin, and the degeneration of the October Revolution in the 1920s and 30s, was more than just a casual one. The failure of working-class revolution to spread to the industrialized countries of western Europe promoted the growth of bureaucratic tendencies within the Soviet state apparatus, which soon found their reflection in the Communist Party. Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria were very much the creatures of Stalin—but Stalin himself was also a creature of the bureaucracy. As Trotsky remarked in his unfinished biography of the provincial mediocrity who established himself as dictator:

"He is needed by all of them—by the tired radicals, by the bureaucrats, by the *nepmen*, the *kulaks*, the upstarts, the sneaks, by all the worms that are crawling out of the upturned soil of the manured revolution. He knows how to meet them on their own ground, he speaks their language and he knows how to lead them."

While the Soviet security services were guilty of horrendous crimes against the working class, they were, at the same time, part of the apparatus of a degenerated workers state under perpetual siege from a hostile capitalist world. On the basis of Stalinism's posture as a defender of socialism, many fine and idealistic young men and women were recruited to the Soviet security apparatus. Many Soviet operatives—such as Kim Philby, Leopold Trepper and Richard Sorge—showed great personal courage and performed heroic services in

the defense of the USSR against imperialism.

But the *decisive* role of the organizations into which they were absorbed was not the advancement of the international proletariat; rather, it was to ensure the survival of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy. The Kremlin oligarchy feared above all the prospect of successful proletarian revolution outside the "Socialist Fatherland," for this would inevitably spark independent working-class mobilizations in the USSR.

One of the most reprehensible crimes of Stalinism was that men and women who wanted to struggle for socialism were thrust into a crucible that turned them into moral worms, or liquidated them, and sometimes both. Many subjective revolutionaries in Stalin's time were hypnotized by an identification of the interests of world socialism with the rule of the Kremlin oligarchy. Many, who were initially disgusted by what they saw, came to accept the notion that to attempt to expose the crimes of the apparatus was to play into the hands of the imperialists and the enemies of socialism. This, as well as the cruder devices of torture and threats against loved ones, was why so many innocent victims at the purge trials confessed to absurd crimes. In his memoirs, Leopold Trepper, the organizer of an important Soviet intelligence operation in Nazi-occupied Europe, noted that in the 1930s only the Trotskyists upheld the ideals of genuine communism:

"Following the example of their leader, who was rewarded for his obstinacy with the end of an ice-axe, they fought Stalinism to the death, and they were the only ones who did. By the time of the great purges, they could only shout their rebellion in the freezing wastelands where they had been dragged in order to be exterminated. In the camps, their conduct was admirable. But their voices were lost in the tundra.

"Today, the Trotskyites have a right to accuse those who once howled along with the wolves. Let them not forget, however, that they had the enormous advantage over us of having a coherent political system capable of replacing Stalinism. They had something to cling to in the midst of their profound distress at seeing the revolution betrayed. They did not 'confess,' for they knew that their confession would serve neither the party nor socialism."

Today the once-powerful "international communist movement," headquartered in Moscow, is no more. All around the globe the Kremlin-loyal Communist Parties are disintegrating as the leaders of "actually existing socialism" quarrel among themselves over the timetable for capitalist restoration. While Trepper and others like him could only see Trotskyism as a noble but futile moral posture, in fact it represents the only "coherent political system" capable of advancing the interests of the oppressed and downtrodden. ■