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Amir Weiner: Making Sense of War

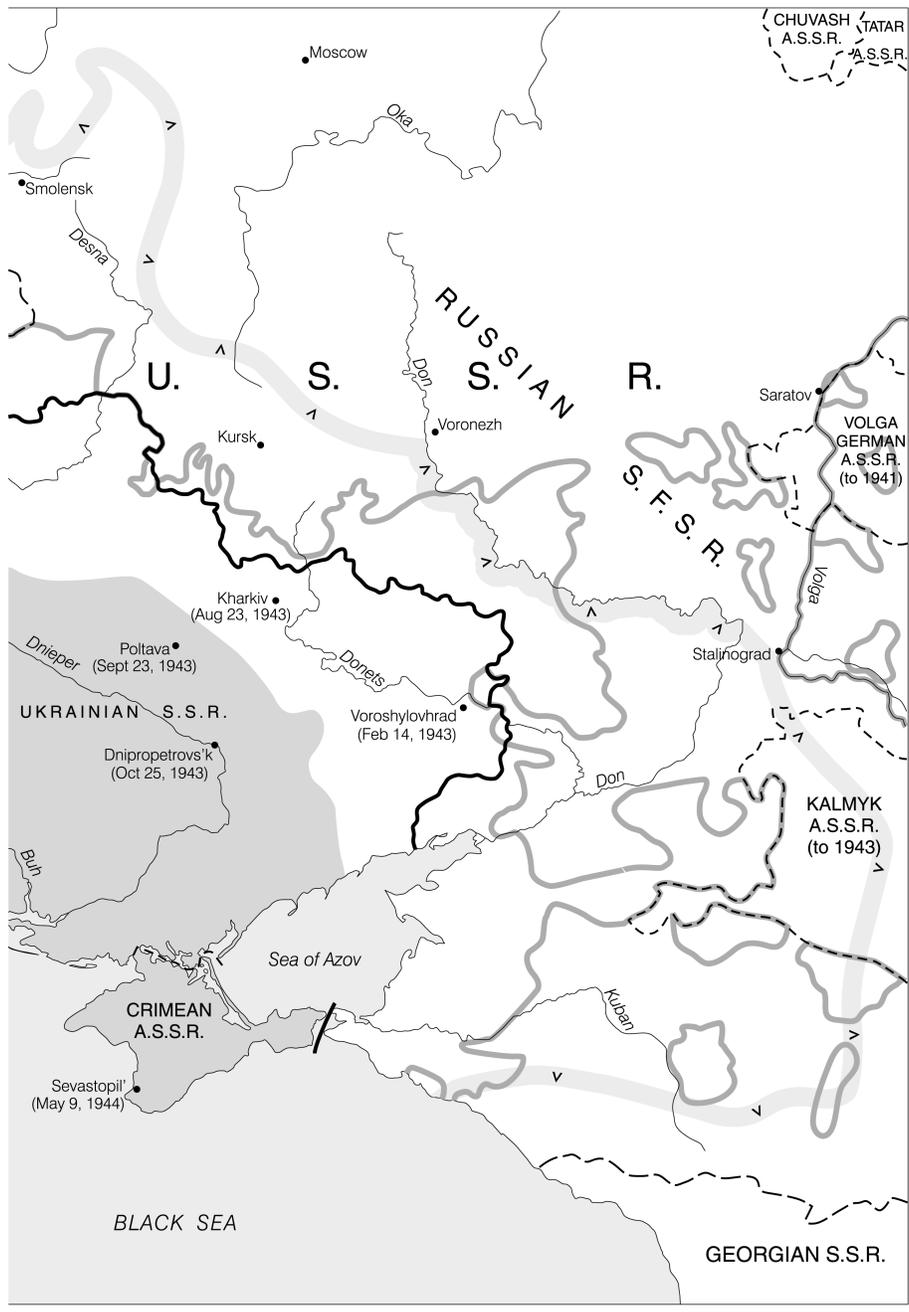
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Introduction

THE SECOND WORLD WAR was an unprecedented cataclysm that rocked the entire European continent. It shook institutions, identities, and convictions that, until then, appeared to be solidly entrenched. This book explores the war's impact on the ideology, beliefs, and practices of the Soviet regime and its subjects by examining the ways in which various segments of the polity strove to make sense of this traumatic event.

The "Great Patriotic War," as the war was heralded within the Soviet Union, transformed the Soviet polity physically and symbolically. It served to validate the original revolutionary prophecy while at the same time almost entirely overshadowing it; it appeared as proof—and perhaps the cause—of both the regime's impotence and its legitimacy; it redefined the party according to the ethos of veterans' sacrifices; it advanced the ethnicization of the Bolshevik "purification drive"; it rearranged the "fraternal family of Soviet nations"; it forced and inspired individuals to reassert themselves, take up new roles, and make new claims; and it forever divided Soviet history and life into two distinct eras.

Not surprisingly, an event of this magnitude invited different interpretations from Soviet citizens. Some saw the war as the Bolshevik Armageddon, a final cleansing of elements that had intruded on the desired socialist harmony, ushering in the era of communism. Others considered it a bloody sacrifice necessary to redeem the regime's past evils. Still others viewed the war as the long-awaited death blow to an evil enterprise. But for all, the war signaled the climax in the unfolding socialist revolution, sanctioning the ever changing methods employed to reach the ultimate goal of a homogeneous and harmonious society.

Understanding the ways in which Soviet people coped with the experience and legacy of the war requires an in-depth look at the institutions that informed their world. To begin, the Soviet world was not an anomaly, nor did it emerge in a vacuum. Soviet contemporaries, party-state officials, and ordinary people alike were always attentive to the universal roots of their world even when they carved their own path to socialism and communism. The Soviet ethos was ingrained in the politics that shaped the modern era where states sought the transformation of societies with the help of scientific models and a myriad of institutions charged with managing all social spheres. The Soviets co-opted or juxtaposed their ideology and practices to this phenomenon, and often did both, but never lost sight of it. The war reinforced the Bolshevik enterprise as part of the modern political universe. The direct encounter with competing ideologies and

movements, the prolonged exposure of large segments of the population to alternative rules, and the increasingly apparent proximity between the Soviet methods of social engineering in the wake of the war and that of its rivals, particularly the Nazis, compelled both the regime and its citizens to reassess the state of the Revolution and its distinct features at the very same time that socialism had finally managed to break its isolation.

Second, contemporaries could not conceive of the war as detached from the permanent, unfolding socialist revolution. For Soviet citizens, the war was a crucial, integral link in the ongoing Bolshevik revolutionary enterprise. The war reinforced key institutions of the Soviet system, primarily the socioeconomic order, the endurance of the party, and the drive to purge the polity of elements that hindered the desired social and political harmony. But it also shifted conceptions and practices of the Revolution, superimposing a new set of tropes onto prewar categories. Social origin no longer served as the dominant criterion of sociopolitical status, as former class enemies were allowed to redeem themselves through wartime exploits. The unprecedented deportations of entire ethnic groups, the replacement of temporary incarceration with eternal exile, and the extermination of separatist nationalist movements qualitatively altered the post-war drive for purity along ethnic lines.

Within the pantheon of myths that endowed the permanent revolution with legitimacy and historical relevance, the Great Patriotic War loomed large. Juxtaposed against other heroic tales within the Bolshevik narrative of the Revolution, the war superseded other foundational myths, such as the civil war and the collectivization of the countryside, which were increasingly viewed as distant, irrelevant, and, in some cases, too controversial because of their traumatic legacy. Yet like the myths it displaced, the myth of the war defined criteria for legitimate membership in and exclusion from the Soviet family. As many discovered, Communists included, the stigma of passivity in the struggle against the Nazi evil was detrimental to one's standing in the community. Similarly, being perceived as intruding on or challenging the official universal version of the war experience could lead to collective exclusion, as Jews who sought to advance their own version of the genocide and wartime contribution learned.

Finally, the war in the Soviet world also derived its meaning from the powerful presence of two key institutions. The first was that of personal networks of veterans of the Red Army and of the partisan movement. Personal bondings had been the primary mode of political association in the Soviet system, and as the war became the focal point in the lives of the majority of the population rather than the civil war or building socialism, these networks evolved around shared wartime experiences. Already during the war, veterans were taking over in localities throughout the Union, turning their understanding of the war into a litmus test for political legitimacy. A second and closely related institution was the regime's creation

of particular entities that were formed to advance the politicization of every sphere of life, yet often produced unintended results. I focus on the commemoration of the war in literature, where veterans successfully struggled to articulate their own narrative of the war; the collective farm assemblies, where peasants used their wartime sacrifice and exploits to assume more control over their lives and to integrate themselves as legitimate members in the polity; and the ethnonational territorial units, the Ukrainian Republic in this case, where indigenous populations made the most of the war cult, often co-opting it in the cultivation of their own particularistic identities.

These themes are examined as experienced in the rural western-central Ukrainian region of Vinnytsia. The history of the region offers a unique insight into the evolution of the Soviet experience vis-à-vis the war. The pastoral tranquillity of this relatively small region—a little more than twenty-seven thousand square kilometers stretched along the banks of the Southern Buh River—did not shield it from becoming the ultimate testing ground for the evolution of Soviet mythology and the quest for purity or a laboratory for social engineering for every political movement that gained the upper hand there.¹

The tale of wartime experience and legacy in Vinnytsia is told in three parts. Part 1 examines the impact of the war on the articulation of Soviet political identities. The first chapter traces the local political elite's quest for a legitimate historical past in a region whose history offered no easy answers, if only because of the legacy of Soviet prewar policies. At the height of the Terror in 1937–38, Vinnytsia was the site of mass executions by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), with more than nine thousand people shot and dumped into mass graves on the outskirts of the town. The massacre destabilized the local scene. The exhumation of mass graves by the Germans made the assessment of the Soviet past, the Nazi present, and a possible Soviet future an unavoidable dilemma. The massacre also reshuffled the local party organization, bringing to the fore a new generation of local leaders who would endure the ordeal of war shortly thereafter. The tension between the traumatic past that was all but erased from official memory and the cataclysm of war were largely responsible for shaping political identities in the postwar Soviet world. Local politics also witnessed a harsh battle over what the legacy of the war should be and who would define it—Red Army veterans or local partisans—a conflict with deep roots in Soviet history. Chapter 2 pursues the cleansing of the Communist Party rank and file when wartime conduct emerged as the key criterion in the evaluation of “party-worthiness.” Subjected to

¹ In spite of its tendentious tone, the historical survey of the region in *Istoriia mist i sil URSR: Vinnyts'ka oblast* (Kiev: Hol. Red. Ukrainskoi rad. entsyklopedii AN URSR, 1972), 9–75, is still a valuable and informative source for the pre-Soviet era in particular.

inquisitorial verification that raised questions such as “Where were you during the German occupation, and how did you survive?” (which often implied “Why did you survive?”), thousands of Communists saw their careers and beliefs assessed through the prism of the new legitimizing myth of the war.

Part 2 follows the evolution of the Soviet purification drive as it applied to the population at large and compares it to postwar settlements in other European countries that coped with similar problems. By war’s outbreak, the region’s inhabitants had already been exposed to mass cleansing acts. Like the rest of Europe, the modern era in Vinnytsia started with the Great War. By the end of 1915, Vinnytsia (then still part of Podillia Province) witnessed mass deportations of German settlers and Jews by the tsarist army.² This was followed by the upheavals of the civil war, collectivization, and the ensuing famine that hit this rural region hard; hundreds of thousands were deported or killed, or starved to death. Starting in the early 1930s, the population was subjected to consecutive waves of deportations, particularly the Polish and German minorities.³ But the worst was yet to come. On 19 July 1941 the invading German army occupied the city and remained there until 20 March 1944. A month after the invasion the region was partitioned: The territory between the Dniester and the Buh rivers was turned over to Romania and renamed Transnistria, and the remaining territory, including the city, became part of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine and was subjected to direct rule by the SS. Nazi policies of genocide, deportation, and starvation decimated the region. When the Red Army liberated the city, the population numbered less than one-quarter of its nearly 100,000 residents on the eve of the war. Barely one-seventh of the 140,000 Jews in the region survived the occupation. The ethnic German community practically ceased to exist. Twelve years after the war ended, the population had yet to recover its prewar level of approximately 2.3 million. Against this background, chapter 3 tells the story of the eradication of the Ukrainian separatist nationalist movement in Vinnytsia. What set this political-military movement apart from other insurrectionary forces was the Soviet application of punitive measures reserved for enemy nations during and after the war. The permanent exile imposed on all ethnic groups deported during and after the war by the 26 November 1948 decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was extended

² An estimated twenty thousand German settlers were deported from the region by the end of 1915. See Ingeburg Fleischhauer and Benjamin Pinkus, *The Soviet Germans: Past and Present* (London: Hurst, 1986), 67 n. 5; Eric Lohr, “Enemy Alien Politics within the Russian Empire during World War I,” Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1999, 163–64, 168.

³ See Valerii Vasil’ev and Lynne Viola, eds., *Kollektivizatsiia i krest’ianskoe soprotivlenie na Ukraine (noiabr’ 1929–mart 1930 gg.)* (Vinnytsia: Logos, 1997); Ivan Shl’ha *Holod na Podilli* (Vinnytsia: Prym, 1993); Vasil’ev, ed., *Politychni represii na Podilli (20-30-i rr. XX st.)* (Vinnytsia: Logos, 1999).

to members of the movement and their families in April 1950, as was done to the Baltic nationalist guerrillas a year before. This was in stark contrast to the rank and file of the Russian Liberation Army (“Vlasovites”), who, along with other collaborationist groups, were treated in a similar fashion to Red Army officers who fell in German captivity. They were sentenced to six-year terms, and most were released upon completion of their term in 1951–52.⁴ The extent of the pacification campaign and the introduction of the irredeemability of certain categories of Soviet citizens reflected a shift in the pattern of Soviet cleansing, namely, indiscriminate and irreversible excision of those stigmatized as wartime collaborators.

The radicalization of Soviet state violence triggered comparison with its Nazi racial counterpart, especially regarding the Jewish minority, who, in the wake of the war, found themselves targeted as the ultimate enemy within. Chapter 4 traces the war’s impact on Soviet-Jewish relations, and examines the specific forms of extinction the Soviets used against the Jews that differed from those employed by the Nazis. The presence of a substantial number of local Jews, who either survived the Romanian occupation or returned from evacuation to the Soviet rear and to service in the Red Army, guaranteed a fierce battle over the commemoration of the war and the Jewish genocide. The integration of the unique Jewish tragedy into the universal narrative of Soviet suffering and the simultaneous denial of Jews’ contribution at the front highlighted the process and outcome of the delineation of particularistic realms within the Soviet polity.

Part 3 analyzes the viability of the Soviet system during the trials of war and its aftermath. As a border region until 1939, Vinnytsia was the prime focus of the powerful separatist nationalist movement across the border. With the unification of the eastern and western regions under Soviet rule following the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, the region witnessed a clash between Soviet-style Ukrainianhood and separatist ethnocentric nationalism. Chapter 5 traces this struggle from the collapse of Soviet power in the region during the initial phase of the war to the power vacuum that

⁴ Viktor Zemskov, “Spetsposelentsy (po dokumentatsii NKVD-MVD SSSR),” *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 11 (1990): 17 nn. 18, 22. It appears that Soviet leaders, most notably Nikita Khrushchev, believed that Stalin would have liked to turn the postwar eradication campaign in western Ukraine into an anti-Ukrainian crusade per se. Throughout 1956–57 Khrushchev repeatedly suggested that only the sheer number of forty million Ukrainians prevented Stalin from deporting all Ukrainians after the war. Without doubt, Khrushchev was appealing to Ukrainian party officials for support in the leadership struggles at the time, but the scale of postwar repression in the Ukrainian Republic and the precedent set by the complete deportations in the Caucasus insinuated that somehow his claim was credible. See Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” on 20 February 1956, in his *Khrushchev Remembers*, trans. and ed. Strobe Talbott (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 652; and his comments during the special session of the Central Committee in June 1957 (Vladimir Naumov and Terence Emons, eds., *Rossia XX vek: Dokumenty; Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, 1957* [Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratiia,” 1997], 452).

existed throughout the first postwar year and exposed large segments of the population, for the first time in their lives, to a rival cohesive movement. First were the young activists of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), then the two factions OUN-M (Mel'nyk faction) and OUN-B (Bandera faction), and, later, the large and well-organized detachments of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)—each sustained by a coherent ideology that placed the rural Ukrainian populace at its center. The presence of competing alternatives turned Vinnytsia into a testing ground for the viability of the three decades of sovietization in the face of a formidable challenge. Chapter 6 studies the war's role in inculcating a workable framework of Soviet patriotism and Ukrainian particularism in the Vinnytsia countryside and bringing about a thorough sovietization of the peasantry, the Achilles' heel of Soviet society.

Finally, I conclude the discussion by posing two questions fundamental to the Soviet experience in general, and to the aftermath of the war in particular: Was there a venue for Soviet citizens to make sense of the war with tools other than those offered by Soviet power? Could the powerful myth of the war survive the Soviet trademark yet tenuous coexistence between universal and particularistic identities? The afterword answers these haunting questions and, in doing so, sheds light on the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system in the wake of the war.

The Making of a Revolutionary Myth: War and Thermidor

The Revolution has a beginning. It has no end.⁵

The Second World War affected every Soviet individual, family, and community. The sheer magnitude of this unprecedented cataclysm touched all, whether at the front or in evacuation, anti-German resistance or collaboration. It is no surprise that participants from all walks of life set out to record their experience, and Soviet historians responded in kind by producing many memoirs and histories. One community, however, seemed determined to avoid the subject of the war: American students of Soviet history. Among the voluminous writings on the October Revolution, the civil war, the Great Break, the Terror, and the cold war, the few social and political histories of the Soviet-German conflict reflected a reading of this event as an inexplicable intrusion on more important processes that shaped the Revolution and the Soviet polity.

⁵ *Nikto ne zabyt, nichto ne zabyto: iz opyta raboty komiteta komsomola Vinnitskogo meduchilishcha imeni akademika D. K. Zabolotnogo po voenno-patrioticheskomu vospitaniiu uchashchik-*

This was not always the case. During the first postwar decade, students of the Soviet Union seemed well aware of the centrality of the war in Soviet politics and in the lives of Soviet citizens. Already in the first major study of the Soviet postwar polity, Julian Towster highlighted the impact of the recent war on the makeup of political and social institutions.⁶ The study of the war and its consequences appeared to be off to a promising start, with Towster's work followed by several seminal monographs that have stood the test of time, and all written, not incidentally, by a now practically extinct school of political scientist-historians.⁷ The impact of the war and its emerging cult were too powerful to be ignored by scholars. Remarkably enough, however, they soon were. When the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end was commemorated in 1995, the dearth of publications by Western scholars about the Soviet theater stood in glaring contrast to the avalanche of monographs and memoirs on practically all other theaters of the war. This disparity was only magnified by the fact that some of the best of these few works were written by outsiders to the Soviet field, British specialists in German and European wartime history who do not even command any Slavic languages.⁸

An effort to recover the war as a central theme in Soviet history requires an inquiry into the reasons it was relegated to the margins of historiography. Lack of sources could hardly account for this drought in the study of the war and its aftermath. On the contrary, the Soviets as well as émigré

hsia (Vinnytsia, 1986). This is a slogan from a propaganda brochure prepared by a Komsomol cell in Vinnytsia.

⁶ Among other things, Towster noted that the awards for wartime performance turned the Soviet people into the greatest title-bearing nation in the world. By 1 October 1944 there were already nearly 2.9 million people decorated with government orders and medals (Julian Towster, *Political Power in the USSR, 1917–1947* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1948], 329 n. 52).

⁷ See John Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism, 1939–1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955); John Armstrong, ed., *Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945: A Study of Occupation Policies* (London: Macmillan, 1957); Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953); and Barrington Moore, *Soviet Politics: The Dilemma of Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950). Alexander Werth's classic *Russia at War* (New York: Avon, 1964) is still an indispensable study of the private and public sentiment during the war years.

⁸ See Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad* (London: Penguin, 1998); and Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet War Effort, 1941–1945* (London: Penguin, 1997). One unfortunate caveat about these otherwise superb studies, especially Beevor's study, is the lack of a rounded, nuanced examination of the Soviet soldier at the individual level. One cannot escape the thought that, despite the impressive use of a wide range of sources, both authors were limited by the lack of command of the Russian language (and their primary specialization in German and European history), requiring them to rely on selective material and the good will of Russian colleagues. The result is a much fuller account of the German side.

communities have produced a multitude of histories and memoirs of the war, and the contemporary Soviet press and government decrees were available to Western researchers. The same types of sources that furnished the voluminous literature on the first two decades of the Bolshevik Revolution were there for interested scholars, and in a much greater number.⁹ Moreover, the Germans left voluminous and meticulous documentation of Soviet society under their occupation, ranging from an analysis of local power structures and politics to populations, moods, and reactions to Soviet power, their own policies, and wartime changes.

Alas, few were interested. The dominant voices in Western historiography have argued for the primacy of socioeconomic structures and have subscribed to the view that the experiences of the 1920s and early 1930s constituted the formative and enduring moments in the Soviet polity. Within the dichotomy drawn between socioeconomic structures and political-ideological domains, the war was accorded the status of a mere *événement* in the *longue durée*. It was thus relegated to studies of military operations devoid of social, political, or ideological context,¹⁰ and to a handful of monographs mainly by students of Soviet high politics, science, and literature. In this light, it was not surprising that the 1985 publication of a collection of essays on the impact of the war on Soviet society and politics hardly made an impact on Soviet historiography—largely because of the interpretive thrust of some of the contributors' other writings.¹¹

⁹ A guide for Soviet publications between 1941 and 1967 dealing with the war cited more than eight thousand items (A. I. Babin et al., *SSSR v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny [iiun' 1941-sentiabr' 1945]*, 3 vols. [Moscow: Nauka, 1977–81]). In 1950 alone, the Soviets published 7,831 newspapers, 1,408 journals and periodicals, and 40,000 books, a rather impressive body of literature on contemporary politics and society (Timothy Dunmore, *Soviet Politics, 1945–1953* [New York: St. Martin's, 1984], 3).

¹⁰ See, for example, the immense body of work by David Glantz, such as *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1995); and the more rounded study by Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War, 1941–1945* (New York: Praeger, 1971).

¹¹ Compare, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick's incisive "Postwar Soviet Society: The Return to Normalcy, 1945–1953," in Susan J. Linz, ed., *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), 129–56, to the main body of her work, where the war and its aftermath are either beyond the realm of the revolutionary narrative or, when dealt with, are dismissed as merely an era of continuities of prewar policies and structures (Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1982; 2d ed., 1994]; Fitzpatrick, "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite," *Slavic Review* [September 1979]: 377–402; Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1996], 313–20). The same applies to Moshe Lewin's *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Interestingly, in his review of Lewin's writings, Roland Lew noted that despite Lewin's having experienced the war personally and having been motivated by the war to study Soviet history, he nevertheless downplayed the significance of this event in his analysis of the Soviet experience (Roland Lew, "Grappling

The study of the war and its aftermath turned out to be another casualty of the paradigm of *Thermidor*, the term assigned to the demise of the revolutionary drive in late-eighteenth-century France and applied to all subsequent revolutions. Reluctant to accept the legitimacy of the Stalinist claim of having enacted the fundamentals of the revolutionary premise—the abolition of the market, the establishment of partocracy, and the destruction of alien classes—historians followed Trotsky’s footsteps in declaring the Revolution over by the mid-1930s, when the Stalinist regime enacted a series of policies in favor of consolidation and stability at the expense of radical experiments on both the domestic and international fronts. The Revolution was pronounced dead, too young and innocent to bear the responsibility for the atrocities that were later committed in its name.¹² Thus the Soviets were informed by foreign scholars that the Revolution was over at the very time it was gathering momentum and consequently that the impact of the war the Soviets were so keen to highlight actually amounted to nothing.¹³ Nor did the turn to “cultural” history or the rediscovery of ideology, both of which extended the chronological boundaries of Soviet historiography, encourage a reevaluation of the war and its legacy. The war has still been viewed as an isolated event, albeit interesting, bereft of any long-standing impact on the structures of Soviet life and irrelevant to the evolution of socialist ideology.¹⁴

Nevertheless, when read closely, the Thermidorian framework is critical to the reintegration of the war into the history of the Revolution. Thermi-

with Soviet Realities: Moshe Lewin and the Making of Social History,” in Nick Lampert and Gabor Rittersporn, eds., *Stalinism: Its Nature and Aftermath: Essays in Honor of Moshe Lewin* [Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1992], 11).

¹² Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1936); and Nikolai Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: Dutton, 1946).

¹³ The war’s impact is, of course, examined in the few monographs that treat popular reactions to mobilization, evacuation, and siege. However, these studies limit their assessment of the impact of the war to the war years and assign an unconditional primacy to social conditions and survival over the political-ideological domain in daily life. The result is that contemporary Soviet citizens, party members included, are deprived of the very beliefs and biases that largely shaped their reactions to the calamity of the war. See John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (New York: Longman, 1991); Richard Bidlack, *Workers at War: Factory Workers and Labor Policy in the Siege of Leningrad*, *The Carl Beck Papers*, no. 902 (March 1991); Richard Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front during World War II*, *The Carl Beck Papers*, no. 1104 (October 1994).

¹⁴ Richard Stites, ed., *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995). The war does not figure prominently in the two main works that have done more than any others to dismantle the paradigm of Thermidor. Martin Malia’s *Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994) loses its narrative momentum at this particular time, regaining it only with the begin-

dor in history has gained a dual meaning. For French contemporaries, it meant merely the end of the revolutionary terror. Not surprisingly, the renunciation of mass terror as an alien phenomenon to France's original cause in 1793 and that of the Soviet Union in 1953 were literally identical. "This cannibal horde / Which hell vomits from its womb / Preaches murder and carnage! It is covered with your blood!" proclaimed a Thermidorian song in France.¹⁵ "A meat-mincer, butchery, and blood bath," echoed Nikita Khrushchev, referring to the terror of 1937.¹⁶ In both representations the terror was excised from the revolutionary myth, hand in hand with the reaffirmation of the rest of the revolutionary principles. The removal of the terror was the ultimate affirmation of the just Revolution. Neither the French nor the Soviets advocated a return to the prerevolutionary world; instead, both claimed to salvage the Revolution and continue its progress, only on a more popular and civil basis. In neither case, however, was a pluralistic political arena imagined. The mythology of a homogenized sociopolitical and national body, the most acclaimed achievement of the terror, continued to be the pillar for the post-terror order. For contemporaries, in a word, ending the terror did not imply the end of the Revolution.

As Bronislaw Baczko aptly observed, the terror in France had an after-life in which, as institutions and personnel were further dismantled, the question shifted from *how to finish with the Terror* to *how to terminate the Revolution?* This, however, required the articulation of a new, positive institutional and constitutional order, an inconceivable notion for Soviet rulers and ruled alike until the very end of the Soviet polity. Thermidor could not be partial. The moderation of certain revolutionary concepts and means did not alter the fundamentals of a single-party system, a nonmarket economy, a welfare system from cradle to grave, and, not least of all, the obsession with the purification of the polity. And as long as the outside world was perceived as an actively hostile antithesis to the socialist utopia, there was hardly any room for a substantive change in the domestic arena.¹⁷

ning of the Soviet decline, and Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995) ends on the eve of the war.

¹⁵ Bronislaw Baczko, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre*, trans. Michel Petheram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 212.

¹⁶ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 82, 89.

¹⁷ Baczko, *Ending the Terror*, 224, 251. This was bound to change when external ethical and political systems turned from antitheses into sources of inspiration. It was an irony of history that in both France and the Soviet Union the revolutionary order was on its way out once the American arrangement of a bicameral, representative system was invoked in debates over the future order of society, instead of the usual mimicking of American production methods and popular culture. In this sense, Thermidor as a full-blown alternative could not have occurred before December 1991, when the communist leadership acknowledged that

The war, in this light, was not only a part of the revolutionary era but, in more ways than one, the postwar and the post-Stalin eras epitomized the undiminished impetus for revolutionary transformation. These decades were marked by grandiose plans to transform nature and to abolish the last residues of market relations in the national economy. Khrushchev, in turn, launched the Virgin Lands campaign in 1954–56, revived the late Stalinist concept of “communism in our lifetime,” advanced communal surveillance to an unprecedented degree, and set out to convince the collective farm peasants to give up their household plots. The war and its aftermath could not be distinguished from the Revolution at large. As long as the revolutionary ethos retained its viability, it was the prism through which Soviet contemporaries made sense of the cataclysmic events that shaped their lives.

The Revolution, as experienced by contemporaries, members of the political elite, and ordinary citizens alike, was a constantly unfolding enterprise with the imposition of a linear evolution toward the ultimate goal of communism. The road to communism was punctuated by a series of traumatic events that both shaped and were shaped by the revolutionary project. Within this chain of cataclysms, the war was universally perceived as the Armageddon of the Revolution, the ultimate clash dreaded yet expected by the first generation to live in a socialist society, the event that would either vindicate or bring down the system, depending on one’s views and expectations.¹⁸

the Revolution had exhausted itself and that they, the revolutionaries, were unwilling to start it all over again or even try to resuscitate it. The myth of social and political harmony and partocracy gave way to political and economic pluralism as the pillars of any future arrangement. For an insightful analysis of the final exit of the Soviet regime, as witnessed by political insiders, see Stephen Kotkin, “In Search of the Nomenklatura: Yesterday’s USSR, Today’s Russia,” *East European Constitutional Review* 6, no. 4 (December 1997): 104–20.

¹⁸ The present argument contrasts with the sole book-length study of the cult of the war, Nina Tumarkin’s *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Tumarkin views the cult as a typical heavy-handed Soviet attempt to impose a single meaning onto a complex and diverse human experience. The state-orchestrated veneration of the war is depicted as a manipulation designed to mobilize support for a failing political and economic system steadily losing its legitimacy. This crude and increasingly bombastic enterprise erased the blunders of early defeats, desertion, collaboration, and the sense of emancipation in the trenches of the front, and the unique Jewish fate at the hands of the Germans. All true, except that such an explanation deprives the articulators of the war’s myth of any belief but for holding on to power. Similarly the dichotomy drawn between the public and the private domain is rather tenuous for a system that endured for such a long time to a large degree because of an effective fusion of personal and public imagination. Such an admission, however, was unlikely from Tumarkin’s main sources: Moscow and Leningrad intellectuals during the swan song of the Soviet polity. One is left wondering what their view was at the time of the event and its immediate aftermath. Nor, as we shall see below, was the Soviets’ belated engagement of the traumas of defeat and

Hence the first step in understanding the role the war played in the articulation of Soviet political identities entails a shift in focus to the politics of myth. Whereas Marxist eschatology and millenarianism provided the Soviet polity with historical meaning by situating it in the context of a perceived human destiny, that polity was legitimized by certain myths, such as those of the civil war, the collectivization and industrialization drives, and the Great Patriotic War, which related it to concrete historical situations. These mythical representations were often referred to as historical turning points and constituted frameworks for meaning that ordained them with a structure for both understanding and accepting change.¹⁹ Significantly these myths have been major tools in the perennial rearrangement of social and political hierarchies within the Soviet world. The narration of Soviet myths, like practically all other political myths, was rather simple, yet politically explosive. To paraphrase the colorful words of Isaiah Berlin, since mankind was assumed a priori to be divided between good sheep and dangerous goats, social and political life was propelled by evil conspiracies and cataclysmic struggles in which the liquidation of the irredeemable goats was viewed as a service to humanity.²⁰ And each triumph brought the millennium closer, none more than the Great Patriotic War.

The ordination of the war as a climactic watershed in the Soviet epic originated from none other than the Soviet authorities. In a speech to the Tenth Plenary Session of the Union of Soviet Writers on 15 May 1945, Nikolai Tikhonov, the Union's secretary, went out of his way to mark the war as a transformative event for Soviet Man. "The war is over," Tikhonov told the writers. "The man of our country confidently looks to the future. Each tied his fate to the cause of the victory, each was at his military post.... This man with weapons in hands marched the long road from Stalingrad to Berlin on the roads of the war. Not only did the landscape change along

collaboration unique when compared to other societies that went through even less traumatic experiences. Finally, if one can infer from the adoption of the day Minsk was liberated from German occupation as Independence Day in Belarus or the centrality of the 9 May (V-Day) in present day Ukraine and Russia, the myth of the war is alive and well.

¹⁹ For an incisive treatment of the structure and role of myth, see Leszek Kolakowski, *The Presence of Myth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). See also the excellent studies in Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in the Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995 [Vol. 1]; 2000 [Vol. 2]); and Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

²⁰ Isaiah Berlin, "Marxism and the International in the Nineteenth Century," in Berlin, *The Sense of Reality* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), 116–67, esp. 139, 141–42. See also David Kertzer, *Politics and Symbols: The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 16–40.

these roads, but so, too, did he. His inner world came to light.” If Tikhonov focused on the impact of this singular event on the makeup of the Soviet Man, he by no means viewed it in isolation from the Soviet experience as a whole. “The Soviet Man, the soldier-liberator, created by the great land of the Soviets, molded by the party of Lenin-Stalin, carries in him the high principles of our progressive Bolshevik idea, embodies the best features of a man of the Stalinist era.”²¹

The theme was picked up by Andrei Zhdanov in his famous speech on 21 September 1946, which became the canon for the rest of the Stalinist era. Zhdanov’s lecture, in Katerina Clark’s observation, elevated the war “to the status of a second revolution in the roster of Great Moments—a revolution that had wrought a *qualitative* change in Soviet man.”²² “With each day our people attain an ever higher level,” stated Zhdanov. “Today we are not the people we were yesterday, and tomorrow we will not be as we were today. We are already not the same Russians we were before 1917. Russia is not the same, and our character has changed too.”²³ The war, in Zhdanov’s formulation, had its own singular input into the shaping of the New Man, but it derived its meaning from the revolutionary eschatology. It was, in a word, a weighty link in the revolutionary chain.

Bolshevik myths, however, were subjected not only to periodic redefinition but, as happened to most prewar myths, to repudiation. To understand the changing fate of core Soviet myths, we must examine how a myth is made, starting with the experience and expectations of those on whom it was supposed to operate, as well as the mechanisms that sustained and subverted its hold on the population. Thus the myth of the war built on the evident failure of civil war methods during the early days of the war, the ambiguous legacy of collectivization, and the absence of exposure to a viable and attractive alternative from without. By no means were these unprecedented circumstances in history. Unlike most other movements and regimes, however, the Soviets operated for an extensive period in a thoroughly Manichean world, endured long enough, and preserved an undiminished will to carry the logic of their enterprise to its conclusion.²⁴

²¹ Nikolai Tikhonov, *Pered novym pod'emom: Sovetskaia literatura v 1944–45 gg.* (Moscow: Literaturnaia gazeta, 1945), 2, 4.

²² Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 198.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ In their discussion of the viability of dominant myths, both Stephen Kotkin and Richard Wortman convincingly establish the link between perceptions of viable competing myths in the international arena and the cohesion of the ruling elites at home. Just as the global crisis of the 1930s elevated the appeal, cohesiveness, and steady course of the Soviet messianic drive at home, so did the rhetoric and imagery of the French Revolution and the diminishing influence of Russia in Europe trigger the erosion of belief among the Imperial Russian elite. See Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; and Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*.

Cataclysmic events are naturalized and integrated into the lives of men and women through an elaborate set of rituals, many of them so banal that they are hardly noticeable. This is also the source of their tremendous power. Almost from the moment of commencement the myth of the war became a central feature in the world of Soviet citizens through a myriad of rites and rituals that shaped daily calendars from cradle to grave and constantly reminded people of the war, turning them into *ex post facto* participants in this event. The Soviet landscape was plastered with monuments, choreographed cemeteries, collective farms, and streets that bore the names of battles, heroes, and dates of the great event. Literature, music, and cinema witnessed an avalanche of war anthologies, memoirs, poems, albums, and films that celebrated this epic event.²⁵ The war was impossible to ignore.

Finally, if the initial appeal of a new myth draws its power from the erosion of old ones, its endurance depends to a large degree on the political power of the social group with whom it is associated. Changes in the political fortunes of the articulators and transmitters of the myth often lead to its reevaluation, or at least some of its components, as seen through the fate of the Soviet civil war ethos and heroes.²⁶ The hegemonic status of the myth of the war cannot be traced solely to the Soviet state and its propaganda machine, but at least as much to the identity of the articulators of the myth in the localities, the peasant-soldiers, for whom the war turned

²⁵ The Commission for the History of the War was established by a decree of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR as early as 15 January 1942, under the supervision of a Central Committee's commission. The gathering of commemorative material on the war was initiated by Shcherbakov in the wake of the battle of Moscow in the winter of 1941 (A. A. Kurnosov, "Vospominaniia-interv'iu v fonde komissii po istorii Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Akademii Nauk SSSR," *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1973 g.* (1974): 118–32; and N. S. Arkhangorodskaia and A. A. Kurnosov, "O sozdanii komissii po istorii Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny AN SSSR i ee arkhiva," *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1981 g.* (1982): 219–29.) For original studies of the commemoration of the October Revolution, see Frederick Corney, "Rethinking a Great Event: The October Revolution as Memory Project," *Social Science History* 20, no. 4 (1998): 12–28; and James Von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Following George Mosse's pioneering *Nationalization of the Masses* (New York: Fertig, 1975), scholars of Italian history in particular point the way in a series of remarkable studies of rituals. See especially Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *The Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Kerzer, *Politics and Symbols*.

²⁶ Such a phenomenon modifies Karl Mannheim's influential paradigm in which he identified the formation of sociological generations, as distinguished from biological ones, as the reaction of young people as a group to cataclysmic events in their youth. The inapplicability of traditional means to solve a given crisis forced the articulation of a new and distinctive reaction that shaped the worldview of the group for the rest of their lives (Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952], 276–322).

into an autobiographical point of reference and point of departure.²⁷ This somewhat populist assumption, less than obvious at first glance in the context of the highly stylized Soviet system, points to a powerful institution that allowed for particularistic expressions: personal bonding in the making of elites. Students of the non-Russian republics, in particular, noticed that the Soviet system was marked by weak (impersonal) structures and strong (personal) ties. Power was often exercised on a personal, familial, and clan level. Common background and experiences prevailed in the formation of elites and political alliances.²⁸ The powerful presence of the war in the lives of so many guaranteed that the myth would eventually outlive the Soviet polity itself.

The Armageddon of Revolution: Aesthetic Violence and Soviet Millenarianism

If they will not understand that we are bringing them a mathematically infallible happiness, we shall be obliged to force them to be happy.²⁹

This book situates the Second World War firmly within the overarching feature of the Soviet enterprise: the revolutionary transformation of society from an antagonistically divided entity into a conflict-free, harmonious body. The war was followed by an acceleration in the continuous purification campaign that sought the elimination of divisive and counterproductive elements. Exclusion and violence, in this light, were not random or preventive policing measures that delineated the boundaries of the legiti-

²⁷ Referring to the impact exercised by “the kind of history that common men carry in their heads,” Carl Becker noted that it was particularly noticeable “in times of excitement, in critical times, in time of war above all. It is precisely in such times that they form (with the efficient help of official propaganda!) an idealized picture of the past, born of their emotions and desires working on fragmentary scraps of knowledge gathered, or rather flowing upon them, from every conceivable source, reliable or not matters nothing” (Carl Becker, “What are Historical Facts?” in Phil L. Snyder, ed., *Detachment and the Writing of History: Essays and Letters of Carl L. Becker* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958], 61–62).

²⁸ See John A. Armstrong, *The Soviet Bureaucratic Elite: A Case Study of the Ukrainian Apparatus* (New York: Praeger, 1959); Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); Boris Lewytskyi, *Die Sowjetukraine, 1944–1963* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch 1964); T. H. Rigby, “Crypto-Politics,” *Survey* 50 (1964): 192–93; and Michael Urban, *An Algebra of Soviet Power: Elite Circulation in the Belorussian Republic 1966–1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²⁹ Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 3.

mate and the permissible; rather, they were integral parts of the ongoing enterprise of community structuring.³⁰

I trace the rationale of the Soviet Marxist quest for purity through three crucial components: the correlation between the progression of the revolutionary time line and the measures taken to realize the socialist utopia, the impact of Nazism and capitalism on the Soviet political and social calculus, and the forms of excision employed. Undoubtedly, circumstances such as the brutal experiences of civil war, collectivization, famines, Terror, and, above all, world war exerted an undeniable impact on the evolution of the Soviet purification drive. As each campaign charged ahead, new enemies were created and eradicated. Similarly, institutions such as the political police and its GULAG empire had a vested interest in a permanent and ever expanding purge, if only because of the self-serving motives of increasing their budget, manpower, economic clout, or all three. Yet neither circumstances nor institutional interests explain why the Soviets reacted in the unique way they did to the same circumstances experienced by other polities, why their unique punitive organs were created in the first place, and why the regime pursued its purification campaigns well after the conditions that initiated them had dissipated.

The answers to these haunting questions lie in the ethos that shaped Soviet beliefs and practices. As early as 1896 Georg Simmel drew attention to the aesthetic nature of the socialist enterprise. Placing socialism firmly within the modern tendency to organize “all of society symmetrically and equally structured according to general principles,” Simmel pointed to the dual functions of socialism, that of control and coordination along with aesthetic urges and desire for harmony. Rejecting the popular view that reduced socialist utopia exclusively to the needs of the stomach, and consequently to the ethical dimension, Simmel pointed instead to the conflict between socialistic and individualistic tendencies as the origin of socialist aesthetics:

³⁰ For insightful treatments of the inherent relationship between violence and attempts to implement utopian enterprises, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. 1: *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), chap. 3; Peter Holquist, “To Count, to Extract, to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia,” paper presented at the workshop “Empire and Nation in the Soviet Union,” University of Chicago, 24–26 October 1997; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), chaps. 8–9; Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy*; and Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

That society as a whole should become a work of art in which every single element attains its meaning by virtue of its contribution to the whole; that a unified plan should rationally determine all of production, instead of the present rhapsodic haphazardness by which the efforts of individuals benefit or harm society; that the wasteful competition of individuals against individuals should be replaced by the absolute harmony of work—all these ideas of socialism no doubt meet aesthetic interests . . .³¹

Simmel prophetically concluded that “this general trait of socialistic plans attests to the deep power of attraction in the idea of a harmonious, internally balanced organization of human activity *overcoming all resistance of irrational individuality*. This interest, a purely, formal aesthetic one, *independent of all material consequences*, has probably always been important in determining the social forms of life.”³² The logic of the quest for harmony would crystallize when socialism crossed the threshold from being a protest movement into becoming a political power. The construction of a harmonious society in the Soviet Union would be defined by a constant and relentless campaign to eradicate the intruding elements.

In the wake of the cataclysmic war, social and political harmony became the motto in Stalinist self-representations. The party’s leading theoretical and political journals credited the war with forging a kinship of blood between Communists and nonparty people that was proclaimed to be the most important feature of a society already displaying communist characteristics. Yet the celebration of the liquidation of antagonistic contradictions and the establishment of *moral-political unity*—the favored Soviet term for harmony—was accompanied by an ominous warning. The serenity of the postwar world was still being violated by individuals who retained vestiges of the old world in their conscience, and, to make matters worse, were entrusted with leading positions. Hence postwar cleansing would acquire an additional edge.³³

³¹ Georg Simmel, “Soziologische Aesthetik,” *Die Zukunft* 17 (1896): 208, 209–10.

³² *Ibid.*, 210–11 (my emphasis). For pioneering studies on the aesthetic context of the Soviet experience, see Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Katerina Clark, *Petersburg*. It seems no accident that both authors are literary critics and not historians by discipline.

³³ V. Ozerov, “Obraz bol’shevika v poslevoennoi sovetskoi literature,” *Bol’shevik* 10 (May 1949): 60–61, 66. In postwar Soviet literature, the doctrine of “conflictlessness,” though not beyond contemporaries’ criticism, paraded social structures and incidents in which conflicts involved people who operated within the system, not outside or against it, and consequently were resolved in the establishment of harmonious relations. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 189–209; and Vera Dunham, *In Stalin’s Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Similarly political art conveyed the message that the polity was entering a classless world of serenity, beauty, and harmony. Soviet political posters advanced the notion of a climax, a final destination on a linear path that

Several years after the triumphant conclusion of the war, with the prospect of reaching communism seeming brighter than ever, a leading Soviet theoretician concurred with Marx and Engels:

A communist revolution is necessary not only to overthrow the rule of the exploiting classes and to liberate the working masses but also for the cleansing of people from the filth of the old world. The history of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the socialist construction in the USSR shows how systematically, step by step, this vital cleansing process is taking place, how in the course of desperate class struggles between the exploiters and exploited a new man is born—a man of the communist society, with a totally new worldview and a new moral-political makeup . . . Under the conditions of socialism the personality is molded, developed, and functions in the historically unprecedented atmosphere of the moral-political unity of Soviet society.³⁴

We shall soon return to the war. But even well before the outbreak of war, it became evident that the road to purity and harmony would be extremely violent, both reflecting and leading the way for cleansing policies in other political systems while carving its own unique path. Unlike Italian fascism, the Soviet aesthetic enterprise was much more than an urge to stylize social life; it literally cut into the flesh of its own subjects.³⁵ And unlike German Nazism, Soviet aesthetics did not gloss over residues of the old world in the souls and minds of the subjects. All had to be engaged in the purifica-

progressed through hardship, violence, and crudity until it reached its goal (Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997], 243–44).

³⁴ M. D. Kammari, *Marksizm-leninizm o roli lichnosti v istorii* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo. polit. lit-ry, 1953), 235. Looking back at the fate of the Revolution, Viacheslav Molotov, Stalin's most loyal lieutenant, observed with unconcealed disdain the false pretense of the post-Stalin leadership to reach communism via an evolutionary, peaceful path:

The task of elimination of social classes is arduous and revolutionary. But 'we are building communism' is only a lame excuse for avoiding this question and an effort to escape revolutionary tasks. Communism, they say there [at the top], springs on its own as classes are eliminated. This is a typical rightist position. There is no need to eliminate the kulak, he will do it himself. Here we have the morality of the rightists: 'Let us find an explanation for needless cruelty; we must be humanists, and laws must be obeyed.' But this morality is not revolutionary . . . The whole point is that you cannot arrive at communism without having resolved this question. (*Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: iz dnevnika F. Chueva* [Moscow: Terra, 1991], 483, 490)

³⁵ In her fascinating study of fascist aesthetics, Falasca-Zamponi, who projected Simmel's observations on socialism onto fascism, proceeds to discuss the central role of violence in Italian fascist aesthetics. Without downplaying the domestic brutality of Italian fascism, the fact remains that the most systematic violence was applied against external foes, as occurred in the Ethiopian campaign, rather than against internal opponents of the regime (Falasca-Zamponi, *The Fascist Spectacle*, 28–38).

tion campaign, either as purgers or purged and often as both. It was practically inconceivable to expect in the Soviet Union anything like Himmler's speech in Posen in October 1943, in which the architect of the "Final Solution" emphasized the historical necessity of the extermination of the Jewish vermin—side by side with the acknowledgment of the survival of inhibitions among the perpetrators ("And then they come 80 million worthy Germans, and each has his decent Jew. Of course the others are vermin, but this one is an A-1 Jew"), the need to accommodate these inhibitions, and, above all, the need to maintain integrity and decency in their bourgeois sense ("We had the moral right, we had the duty to our people, to destroy this people . . . But we have not the right to enrich ourselves with so much as a fur, a watch, a mark or a cigarette or anything else").³⁶ These were not merely generalizations. Himmler was well aware of complaints by none other than SS officers against excessive brutalities in the course of deportation of Jews. The best way to prevent such excesses and the impression of blindly raging sadists, wrote one such officer in Berlin, would be adherence to form ("This does not exclude that, when time comes, with all due form, one can occasionally give a Jew a kick in the rear, but even then it should be done with decency") and compassion for certain categories ("Among the [beaten] Jews there were Jewesses with small children on their arm. This sight was both degrading and shameful").³⁷ In the Soviet polity entertaining much milder thoughts, let alone expressing them, marked people as internal enemies.

Long before the war, under the auspices of formidable state punitive institutions and extensive legislation, Soviet society evolved into a self-policing organ; a large part of the Terror was conducted in public deliberations, with citizens attaching their signatures to denunciations of their fellow citizens and having direct access to the coercive apparatus of the state in exercising such acts.

Each and every member of the Soviet polity was expected to be an active agent in the purification of himself and his surroundings. Power in the Soviet polity was privatized, in the apt definition of Jan Gross. When the regime launched its periodic cleansing operations, it invested both individuals and communities with the power to select the individuals who would fill the imposed quota for imprisonment, deportation, or execution. The community, observed Gross, was condemned to be all powerful and powerless at the same time. It could ruin a life or grant a stay of

³⁶ Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington, D.C., 1946), 4:563–64.

³⁷ See the complaint of an SS officer against the beating of Jewish deportees in Berlin, dated 4 March 1943, in John Steiner, *Power, Politics, and Social Change in National Socialist Germany: A Process of Escalation into Mass Destruction* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1976), 418–21.

execution in any individual case, but it could not lift the sentence: A certain number of its members had to be destroyed. The war, as we shall see below, was critical in advancing this policy.³⁸ Hence the Soviet drive to reconfigure society acquired its meaning not only from the unfolding logic of the party-state ideology and policies but equally from the daily practices of ordinary citizens who constantly sought to integrate themselves into the body politic via the institutions offered to them by the Soviet state.

Marxist regimes struggled with whether to assign primacy to either the “objective” category of class origin or the “subjective” criteria of conduct and experience. In polities founded on the Marxist premise of the primacy of acculturation, but simultaneously engaged in the constant eradication of social strata presumed to be illegitimate, the tension between nurture and nature was a constant.³⁹ It intensified as the Soviet polity advanced along the road to socialism and communism, and radicalized its purification policies both qualitatively and quantitatively. Following the Second World War, social and ethnic categories and practices were totalized in a marked shift: Enemy groups previously considered to be differentiated, reformable, and redeemable were now viewed as undifferentiated, unreformable, and irredeemable collectives. This totalization of the Marxist sociological paradigm challenged the commitment to the primacy of nurture over nature in the ongoing social engineering project, inviting comparison with contemporary biological-racial paradigms, most notably that

³⁸ Gross, 115–16, 120. See also Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), for a fine discussion of communal surveillance during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev years; and Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982–1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 55–58, for an incisive commentary on the deliberative operation of Stalinist terror in comparison to the Nazi counterpart. For a similar phenomenon in Nazi Germany that resulted in a further increase in the capacity of the state to pursue its racial policies, see Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); and Eric Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

³⁹ On the prevalence of this dilemma in Stalinist Russia and the struggles of individuals to cope with it, see Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, chaps. 5–6; Igal Halpin, “From Darkness to Light: Student Communist Autobiography during NEP,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 45 (1997): 210–36; and Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44 (1996): 344–73. On the tension between “class as political behavior” and “natural redness” in Communist China, see Lynn T. White III, *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China’s Cultural Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 222–25, 267; Richard Curt Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 89–141; and the contributions by Stuart Schram, Susan Shirk, Jonathan Unger, and Lynn White III, in James L. Watson, ed., *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). See also Arendt’s suggestive chapter “Race-Thinking before Racism,” in her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 150–84.

of Nazi Germany—a comparison the Soviets were well aware of yet wanted to avoid at all costs. The absence of genocidal ideology and institutions allowed for different modes and sites of total excision from the socioethnic body within the socialist utopia. Still, Soviet contemporaries continued to confront the ever-present shadow of the biological-racial ethos.

The Soviet purification drive operated on a universal-particularistic axis, combining the modern European ethos of social engineering with Bolshevik Marxist eschatology.⁴⁰ Their fusion created a stable menu of categories and practices, and a dynamic mode of applying them. The Soviet state emerged and operated within an ethos aptly named by Zygmunt Bauman the “gardening state,” which appeared ever more universal in the wake of the Great War. This cataclysm brought to fruition the desires for a comprehensive plan to transform and manage society, one that would create a better, purer, and more beautiful community through the removal of unfit human weeds. It was, in a word, an aesthetic enterprise. The unprecedented increase in the capacities and aspirations of the state went hand in hand with the view of society as raw material to be molded into an ideal image. The transformation—or removal—of the individual and the community became the accepted goal of the state in both its welfare and punitive policies.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For overdue and successful attempts to contextualize Soviet population policies within the ethos of the Enlightenment era, see, on the welfare state, Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; on the role of social-scientific disciplines, Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Francine Hirsch, “Empire of Nations: Colonial Technologies and the Making of the Soviet Union, 1917–1939,” Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1998; on the emerging “gardening” state, Peter Holquist, “Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work: Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context,” *Journal of Modern History* 69 (September 1997): 415–50; and, on the cross-ideological phenomenon of Romantic anticapitalism, Clark, *Petersburg*. In his intriguing analysis of political religion, Philippe Burrin concluded that totalitarian regimes (the political religions of communism, fascism, and Nazism) were incompatible with the course and demands of modernity, and were bound to disintegrate if only because their attempt to impose unanimity and undifferentiation went against the grain of centuries of European cultivation of the individual as an agent of his or her own salvation (Philippe Burrin, “Political Religion: The Relevance of a Concept,” *History and Memory* 9, nos. 1/2 [fall 1997]: 342). However, one cannot gloss over the fact that the social, political, and economic institutions employed by totalitarian regimes for managing their populations were the epitome of modernity.

⁴¹ See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 119–80; and Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 65, 91–93. For a recent impressive treatment of the “gardening state” in various societies and ideologies, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Scott, however, approaches the “gardening state” as a starting point in the practice of social engineering schemes, glossing over the ways in which multiple agencies—including those conventionally considered liberal and progressive—initiated and often launched transformative schemes. This pattern was particularly noticeable in pre-Soviet Russia before the party-state consolidated its role as the

The impetus to sculpt society developed boundlessly and across ideologies. From Russia, Maxim Gorky observed in late November 1917 that “the working class is for Lenin what ore is for a metalworker . . . He [Lenin] works like a chemist in a laboratory, with the difference that the chemist uses dead matter . . . [whereas] Lenin works with living material.”⁴² But Bolshevik Marxism was not alone in its refusal to accept human nature and society as they were. Rather, the premise of the primacy of nurture over nature was encoded within the larger pan-European view of modernity whereby increasingly omnipresent political authorities sought to define and manage virtually all critical public and private spheres. The expanding welfare state and the cleansing state were opposite ends of the inclusionary-exclusionary axis, which became the trademark of transformative modern politics.⁴³ Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the remapping of Europe evolved around so-called voluntary resettlement, population exchanges, or the unmixing of peoples, a rather polished, ex post facto legitimization of ethno-religious cleansing.⁴⁴

sole organ of transformation. For the role of ethnographers in the shaping of population policies in Imperial Russia, see Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 95–129; Holquist “To Count, to Extract, To Remove”; and, for the role of military reformers, David Alan Rich, *The Tsar’s Colonels: Professionalism, Strategy, and Subversion in Late Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), esp. 29–64. For the continual impact of ethnographers in the Soviet polity during the prewar era, see Francine Hirsch, “The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category *Nationality* in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses,” *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (1997): 251–78.

⁴² *Novaia zhizn’* 10, 23 November 1917, as cited in Maxim Gorky, *Untimely Thoughts: Essays on Revolution, Culture, and the Bolsheviks, 1917–1918*, trans. Herman Ermolaev (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 89.

⁴³ Between 1935 and 1975 none other than the Swedish welfare state forced the sterilization of nearly sixty-three thousand people, mostly women, often because they were considered racially or socially inferior. About forty-five hundred mental patients were forced to undergo lobotomies under officially encouraged eugenics programs that started in the 1920s (Gunnar Broberg and Mattias Tyden, “Eugenics in Sweden: Efficient Care,” in Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen, eds., *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Sterilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland* [East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996], 109–10; *The Economist*, “A Survey of the Nordic Countries,” 23 January 1999; *New York Times*, “Sweden Plans to Pay Sterilization Victims,” 27 January 1999).

⁴⁴ The systematic uprooting of Muslims patterned after the conscious urge to reorder society and the increasing desire for ethno-religious homogeneity in the course of Imperial Russian consolidation of rule over Crimea and the Caucasus, along with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Balkan nationalism, is considered a turning point in modern population policies. See Willis Brooks, “Russia’s Conquest and Pacification of the Caucasus: Relocation Becomes a Pogrom in the Post-Crimean War Period,” *Nationalities Papers* 23 (1995): 675–86; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 152–56; Holquist, “To Count, to Extract, to Exterminate”; and Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 65–75. For a stimulating discussion on the emergence and evolution of corporate expulsions carried out by the secular

By the late 1930s the chronological starting point of our discussion, the transformation of society, had already been established as a cross-ideological phenomenon, involving liberal, socialist, and fascist polities alike.⁴⁵ Thus in 1942 Eduard Benes, the figurehead of liberal democracy in Central Europe, could state as a matter of fact that “national minorities are always a real thorn in the side of individual nations” and that the ideal state of linguistic and national homogeneity could be reached only by extensive population transfers.⁴⁶ About two years later, in a meeting with Stalin, Benes concluded that “the defeat of Germany presents us with the singular historical possibility to radically clean out the German element in our state,” a policy that was faithfully executed at the end of the war.⁴⁷ Tellingly, both American and British leaders who endorsed this massive population transfer were concerned mainly with its potential economic impact and orderly conduct. The uprooting of millions of people had already become an integral part of the political game, with everyone pointing to the successful Turkish-Greek precedent in the early 1920s as the proper example. Moral concerns were nowhere to be found. This powerful ethos would wane only in the mid-1950s, when exhaustion, exposure to the full magnitude of wartime atrocities, fears of continuous, limitless purges coupled with uprisings in the camps, and the rise of consumerism compelled European regimes and parties to accept some limits on their transformative powers.⁴⁸

state striving for purity of its realm, see Benjamin Kedar, “Expulsion as an Issue of World History,” *Journal of World History* 7, no. 2 (1996): 165–80.

⁴⁵ For an insightful analysis of this phenomenon, see Michael Geyer, “The Militarization of Europe, 1914–1945,” in John Gillis, ed., *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 65–102; and Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 148–78. Whereas the origins and frequent use of mass population transfers were unmistakably European, they were soon adapted by postcolonial non-European regimes as well. Despite the passage of time and the new research on individual cases, Joseph Schechtman’s work is still a good starting point. See his *European Population Transfers, 1939–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946); *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe, 1945–1955* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962); and *Population Transfers in Asia* (New York: Hallsby Press, 1949). Also see István Deák, “Trying to Construct a Productive, Disciplined, Monoethnic Society: The Dilemma of East Central European Governments, 1914–1956”; Gordon Chang, “Social Darwinism versus Social Engineering: The Education of Japanese Americans during World War II”; and Norman Naimark, “Ethnic Cleansing between Peace and War,” in Amir Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming 2001).

⁴⁶ Benes vowed that the mistake of 1919, when “idealistic tendencies” were governing, would not be repeated. This time it would be necessary to carry out population transfers on “a very much larger scale than after the last war” (Eduard Benes, “The Organization of Post-War Europe,” *Foreign Affairs* [January 1942]: 235–39).

⁴⁷ Benes to Stalin, 16 December 1943, quoted in Naimark, “Ethnic Cleansing.”

⁴⁸ The renunciation of mass terror in the Soviet Union, the abandonment of collectivization, and the acceptance of a *modus vivendi* with the church in East-Central Europe, along

Whatever its ideological coloring, social engineering possessed a tremendous capacity for violence. The mobilization of the legal and medical professions for the goal of perfecting society shifted the political discourse to new realms. The pretense of scientific criteria and measures to study and work on the population meant that the state would employ the most advanced and radical tools in its quest for a purer, better society. The urge to maximize the management of society gave birth to myriad institutions for activities such as passportization, surveillance, and physical and mental cataloguing, without which the radical transformation of the population could not have taken place.⁴⁹ And it was perfectly logical that the most radical forms of mass extermination were preceded by smaller-scale destruction of groups categorized as incompatible and irredeemable both medically and legally, then supplemented by military-industrial methods of operation.⁵⁰

with the abandonment of integral socialism by the German Social Democratic Party, were key markers of this shift. The various origins of the scaling down of state ambitions—self-imposed limitations by Stalin’s successors fearing another endless cycle of terror in the Soviet Union and the rise of effective civil societies in liberal democracies—pointed to a common reluctance to accept without challenge the costs of transformative drives. However, collectivization and the Cultural Revolution in China and the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, to cite two examples, were powerful reminders that elsewhere the urge for violent transformation still resonates.

⁴⁹ See, for example, the Nazis’ use of the meticulous Dutch registering and mapping of the population for the implementation of their anti-Jewish policies in Bob Moore, *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940–1945* (London: Arnold, 1997), 194–99; and Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 78–79. For the Soviet use of passportization in executing deportations in the annexed territories in 1939, see Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, 188–89. And for the defining and persecuting of internal enemies throughout the prewar era, see Holquist, “State Violence as Technique,” in Weiner, *Landscaping the Human Garden*.

⁵⁰ For the Pan-European discourse of degeneration, see Daniel Pick, *Face of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Among the voluminous literature on the lethal combination of legality and biological-medical science in the service of modern extermination campaigns, see especially Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), esp. 67–70; Ingo Müller, *Hitler’s Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Michael Stolleis, *The Law under the Swastika: Studies on Legal History in Nazi Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: “Euthanasia” in Germany, 1900–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Detlev Peukert, “The Genesis of the ‘Final Solution’ from the Spirit of Science,” in Thomas Childers and Jane Caplan, eds., *Reevaluating the Third Reich* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993), 234–52. For the culpability of the legal ethos and the legal profession in the persecution of French Jewry, see Richard Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); and, on the employment of reproductive policies and technologies in the service of social engineering in interwar

Where the paradigm of modernity falls short is by not providing a satisfactory explanation for the *evolution* of purification drives within totalitarian systems. If the urge to perfect societies stemmed from a universal axis of modernity, its implementation acted on clearly particularistic urges and a sense of limitation. First, “gardening states” blossomed throughout Europe, just as in the Soviet Union. In the wake of the Great War, the European political landscape was marked by planned economies, elaborate surveillance systems, and thoroughly politicized eugenics research. Yet the intrusions on public and private lives coexisted, albeit tenuously and reluctantly, with the acceptance of autonomous spheres, whose violation was considered either too costly, futile, or unethical, and often all three. The discourse on individual rights, the cultivation of institutional buffers between citizen and state, and the acceptance of the insurmountable complexity of the economy effectively tamed the aspiration for unhindered perfection throughout Europe. Undoubtedly the colonial experience left a deep imprint on the European policies and ideologies in providing a sense of limitless possibilities and the power to pursue them, and, not least, by introducing the racial factor into the gardening enterprise. It was not merely symbolic that during the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in April 1943, SS foreign troops, such as the Ukrainian and Baltic police units and the Trawniki men, were referred to as *Askari*, the Swahili term for African soldiers and policemen in the service of the German and successive British powers during the colonial era. Still, nontotalitarian “gardening states” reserved their most violent schemes for their colonial domains, while displaying considerably more restraint at home.⁵¹

Hence it was the Soviet polity that ended up with teleology as its economic modus operandi alongside a system of concentration camps, mass deportations, and killings.⁵² Indeed, the Soviets went out of their way to

Italy, see David Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁵¹ For an eloquent discussion of the self-imposed restraints of the liberal state, see Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 101–2. On the conscious removal of restraints on violence in colonial wars, mainly the erasure of the distinction between combatants, noncombatants, and prisoners of war, ideologically based dehumanization of the enemy and its culture, and a concerted effort to destroy the socioeconomic structure of the foe, see Sabine Dabringhaus, “An Army on Vacation? The German War in China, 1900–1901”; Trutz von Trotha, “The Fellows Can Just Starve: On Wars of ‘Pacification’ in the African Colonies of Imperial Germany and the Concept of ‘Total War’ ”; and Robert Utley, “Total War on the American Indian Frontier,” in Manfred Boemeke et al., eds., *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁵² Tim McDaniel’s interpretive essay, *The Agony of the Russian Idea* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), esp. 86–117, is an excellent starting point for a discussion of the tenuous relations among modernization, communist ideology, and the Russian heritage. Unlike McDaniel, however, I am inclined to view the totalitarian-revolutionary ethos

underline this difference. Unlike the Philistines, who constantly lament brutality and the loss of lives and preach reconciliation, the ultimate goal of the social engineering project—a genuine moral-political unity of society—could be reached only through an irreconcilable and violent struggle, declared Soviet ideologues.⁵³ Second, the campaign to eradicate internal enemies within the totalitarian state intensified *after* all residues of political opposition had been crushed, and, in the Soviet case, following the declaration that socialism had been built.⁵⁴ Terror becomes total, Hannah Arendt noted, when it becomes independent of all opposition.⁵⁵

The key to the distinctive development of the Soviets' purification drive lay in the volatile fusion of Bolshevik millenarianism and the ultimate goal of creating a conflict-free and harmonious society. It was an eschatological worldview insofar as it anticipated an end to history; it was apocalyptic in its belief in the imminence of the end of time and that, in the wake of reaching socialism, Soviet people were living in the final stages of history; it was millenarian in its belief that the final cataclysm would be followed by the kingdom of communism, namely, a conflict-free and harmonious society, the very feature that set it apart from other totalitarian enterprises that espoused cyclical conceptions of time and envisioned an endless struggle for domination and survival.⁵⁶ The quest for purity was neatly tied

as one ingrained in pan-European modernity, though one that acted on particularistic ideologies, largely because of its aspiration for a total transformation of society. The Russian heritage was certainly crucial for the evolution of Soviet communism, yet similar patterns in Nazi Germany and Marxist regimes in Asia and Africa point to a supranational, cross-cultural ideological phenomenon. In this sense, and despite its underlying teleological reasoning, Jacob Talmon's magisterial trilogy is on the mark in identifying the issue as a primarily ideological phenomenon rooted in the Enlightenment era. See Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952); *Political Messianism—the Romantic Phase* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960); and *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of the Revolution* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1981). See also Bernard Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), for emphasis on the attempts of various European thinkers to overcome the dehumanizing spirit of modern society and their dissatisfaction with the limited scope and impact of a political insurrection such as the French Revolution.

⁵³ Georgii Glezerman, *Likvidatsiia ekspluatatorskikh klassov i preodolenie klassovykh razlichii v SSSR* (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1949), 229.

⁵⁴ In his speech at the meeting of SS major-generals at Posen on 4 October 1943, when the extermination process was reaching its maximum intensity, Heinrich Himmler stated that no danger was expected at that point from Communists in the Reich since "their leading elements, like most criminals, are in our concentration camps" (*Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, 4:560).

⁵⁵ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 464.

⁵⁶ For an excellent introduction to these concepts and the tensions they created in the early medieval era, see Richard Landes, "Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 100–800 C.E.," in Werner Verbeke et

to *the* distinguishing aspect of the Bolshevik utopia: From the moment its power was established, the Soviet regime imposed a time line marking concrete stations on the road to realization of the communist utopia. Following Stalin's speech at the Eighteenth Party Congress, in which the Soviet leader celebrated the homogeneity and unity achieved in the wake of the Terror, Soviet legal theoreticians established a concrete time line for reaching communism. With the triumph of socialism codified in the Stalin Constitution of 1936, one author asserted that "on the basis of the victory [of socialism] achieved over the period of the first two five-year plans, the Soviet Union in the Third Five-Year Plan enters a new period of development, a period of the conclusion of building a classless socialist society and the gradual transition from socialism to communism."⁵⁷ With the war over and reconstruction under way, the drive was resumed full steam. Thus, in 1947, the draft of the party program set the goal of "building a communist society in the USSR in the course of the next twenty to thirty years," and, in 1948, a leading political theoretician could declare confidently:

If it were possible to organize a socialist society on the whole within twenty years from the moment of the triumph of Soviet power under the most difficult circumstances, then it is entirely possible to assume that, after the triumphant conclusion of the Patriotic War and the restoration of the ruined people's economy, two more decades will be enough to roughly erect the highest stage of communism. *Therefore, the generation that in 1920 was fifteen to twenty years old will live in a communist society.*⁵⁸

al., eds., *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 137–211. Both fascism and Nazism aimed at the creation of militaristic societies living off war, and, in the case of the Nazis, final victory was not necessarily viewed as the only possible outcome. Here I concur with Burrin who emphasizes Nazism's, and particularly Hitler's, "sense of its own fragility" (Burrin, "Political Religion," 339–40; Geyer, "The Militarization of Europe," 101; and Falasca-Zamponi, *The Fascist Spectacle*, 40). Ironically, in this light the Soviet Union, which is a marginal addendum to the Nazi state in Zygmunt Bauman's account, appears as the ultimate expression of the gardening state, as it was the only totalitarian enterprise with a certain vision of its final goal (Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*).

⁵⁷ I. Trainin, "Kommunizm i gosudarstvo," *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo* 2 (1939): 109.

⁵⁸ Indeed, this confident prediction was presented as a "scientific answer to the question on the historical epochs of building communism [that] we find in the writings of Lenin and Stalin" (Tsolak Stepanian, "Usloviia i puti perekhoda ot sotsializma k kommunizmu," in F. Konstantinov et al., eds., *O sovetskom obschestve: Sbornik statei* [Moscow: Gos. izd-vo poli. lit, 1948], 539, 540, 542). The political importance assigned to this intriguing collection of essays was underlined by its large circulation: some 120,000 copies printed for the 1948 and 1949 editions. Stepanian's elaboration on his essay was published in 1951 under the title *O postepennom perekhode ot sotsializma k kommunizmu*, and 200,000 copies were printed. For the 1947 draft of the party program, see Elena Zubkova, *Obschestvo i reformy, 1945–1964* (Moscow: Rossiia molodaia, 1993), 93. The program envisioned that, based on accelerated

A year later communism was said to be around the corner, each day bringing further affirmation of the triumphant march to communism. As the first secretary of the All-Union Communist Youth League (Komsomol) assured the delegates to the Eleventh Congress of that organization in March–April 1949, this included evidence of communist harmony—an end to the great schisms between mental and physical labor, and between town and village. The “overwhelming majority” of Soviet youth, noted another secretary, already possessed “all the elements of character of the man of Communist society.” By now, the kinship of blood forged at the war fronts between party and nonparty people alike displayed itself in the common struggle of building communism.⁵⁹ Society as a whole, then, was preparing to enter the communist era. On the eve of the Nineteenth Party Congress in October 1952 Stalin threw his personal weight behind the matter. In his last major work, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, he sought to rush the march toward communism by creating a central barter system to replace collective farm property and commodity exchange in the countryside, both of which he viewed as the last obstacles to a full-blown communist economy.⁶⁰ And with the addition of the new socialist “shock brigades”—the people’s democracies in East Asia and Europe—which altered the prewar isolation, the “mighty motherland” was said to be in the flower of her strength, possessing “everything necessary to build a complete communist society.”⁶¹

These indications of communism’s rapid approach directly impacted how the “weeds” intruding on the harmonious garden were viewed and

productivity and investment in heavy industry, the Soviet Union would surpass the productivity level per head of the leading capitalist countries, including the United States. Khrushchev’s invocation of these principles, under different conditions, underlined their deep roots in Soviet political culture (RGASPI [Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii], f. 17, op. 125, d. 476, ll. 190–91).

⁵⁹ The heroic sacrifice of the Krasnodon Komsomols (the doomed youth underground in this German-occupied region) was celebrated as a proper example, side by side with the tale of the non-Komsomol partisans whose dying wish was that they be posthumously enrolled as Komsomol members (*Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 30 March and 2 April 1949).

⁶⁰ “*Ekonomicheskie problemy sotsializma v SSSR*” and “*Otvet tovarishcham Saninnoi A.V. i Venzheneru V.G.*,” in I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, ed. Robert McNeal (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 3 (16): 205–7, 294–304. Indeed, this was how the work was presented to the delegates of the Nineteenth Party Congress. In his speech Lavrentii Beria celebrated Stalin’s work not only as an innovative theoretical statement but mainly as a concrete political program for the realization of communism. “Undoubtedly, our congress and our entire party will adapt Comrade Stalin’s statements on the conditions for and the ways of accomplishing the gradual transition from socialism to communism as their program of struggle for building communism,” declared Beria (*Pravda*, 9 October 1952).

⁶¹ See the speeches by Georgii Malenkov and Stalin at the Nineteenth Party Congress (*Pravda*, 6 and 15 October 1952). The linkage between the favorable change in the international arena and the construction of communism was celebrated throughout the postwar

the measures needed to uproot them. Groups and individuals perceived to be hostile were now referred to in biological or hygienic terms—for example, vermin (*parazity, vrediteli*), pollution (*zasorennost'*), or filth (*griaz'*)—and were subjected to ongoing purification.⁶² The implications of this rhetoric were profound. The declaration that socialism had been achieved, the victorious outcome of the Great Patriotic War, and the sense that communism was on the horizon made eradication of “this weed that in some way sprouted between the stones of our bright and well-constructed edifice”⁶³ even more urgent. In his speech at the February–March 1937 plenary session of the Central Committee, Stalin identified a new type of adversary in this age of socialism, the elusive enemy, a theme he had already begun to develop at the completion of collectivization. Since official ideology and its institutional implementation were infallible, errors and failures could be attributed only to the ill will of individuals. After several decades of socialism, accompanied by continual purges, the fact that these human “weeds” still existed had to be the result of their devious and elusive nature. Like a cancer, they mutated in different forms and various locations. And because this vermin was unrepentant, it had to be excised in its entirety. The only question was how to achieve this. The former brand of internal enemies, argued Stalin, was openly hostile to the Soviet cause by virtue of social origin and professional orientation; they could not be mistaken for anything other than what they were. The new saboteurs, on the other hand, were “mostly party people, with a party card in their pocket, that is, people who are not formally alien. Whereas the old vermin turned against our people, the new vermin, on the contrary, cringe before our people, extol our people, bow before them to win their trust.”⁶⁴ These highway brigands were devoid of ideological belief, claimed Stalin, and would resort to any imaginable crime in their struggle

era. See I. T. Goliakov, “Ocherednaia vekha na puti k kommunizmu,” *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo* 11 (1950): 1, 15.

⁶² On Soviet preoccupation with the purity of the collective body, particularly in the 1920s, see Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁶³ *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 12 February 1953.

⁶⁴ I. Stalin, “O nedostatках partiinoi raboty i merakh likvidatsii trotskistskikh i inykh dvurushnikov. Doklad na Plenum TsK VKP (b) 3 marta 1937,” *Bol'shevik* 7 (1937): 7. See Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror*, 184–85, for an examination of the appearance of the term in 1933. Note the identical logic advanced by Heinrich Himmler in a speech before Waffen-SS troops in Stettin on 13 July 1941, in which he concluded that for the last one thousand years the Aryan race had fought the same struggle against the same enemy who reincarnated itself, each time appearing under a different name, whether Huns, Magyars, Tartars, or Mongols. “Today they appear as Russians under the political banner of Bolshevism,” stated Himmler (quoted in Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* [Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1991], 177).

against the Soviet state. Thus the Soviet state must guarantee the annihilation of this vermin from its midst. With anxiety over the approaching war increasing daily, the long-held principle of verifying an individual's guilt was sacrificed in favor of collective punishment.⁶⁵ "We could not pause to investigate thoroughly an individual [case] and study it objectively. Action could not be deferred," admitted Molotov.

Of course, had we operated with greater caution, there would have been fewer victims, but Stalin insisted on making doubly sure: Spare no one, only guarantee stability for a long time—through the war and the postwar years . . . let innocent heads roll, but there will be no wavering during and after the war.⁶⁶

Stalin's warning was repeatedly invoked in the purge campaigns that followed. By then, the war had already been established as a modern-day Armageddon. Addressing the Nineteenth Party Congress in October 1952, Lavrentii Beria noted that nothing less than the mass slaughter and destruction of modern civilization was prevented by the Soviet Union, which "battled for its independence, routed the enemy who had terrorized the armies of Europe, and saved mankind and its civilization through tremendous sacrifice and supreme exertion, mobilizing all the material and spiritual resources of the people."⁶⁷ The purification drive, in this light, acquired an additional edge. The moral-political unity gained by a relentless and thorough purge was juxtaposed to the proliferation of "fifth columns" in the rest of Europe, which, in the Soviet view, was a major factor in Europe's rapid collapse beneath the Nazi onslaught.⁶⁸

"We have no ready-made pure people, purged of all sins," reflected Molotov. The revolutionary purification had to be sustained despite the general exhaustion and desire for relaxation, which Molotov admitted engulfed both the party and the population at large. Herein lay the core of the Bolshevik ethos. Revolutions age and make people old, quipped Bronislaw Baczko. And no one was more aware of the aging process and more intent on delaying it than the Bolsheviks. In a comment that spoke to both the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, Molotov remarked: "It is 'living calmly' that the Bolsheviks cannot accept. When people's lives are calm, the Bolsheviks are absolutely unnecessary. They are always in the thick of

⁶⁵ Note the remarkable similarities between the Soviet and Nazi articulation and pursuit of elusive enemies. For a fascinating account of the German obsession with the Jew within, starting at the fronts of the First World War, cultivated during the Weimar era, and finally culminating under the Nazis, see Omer Bartov, "Defining Enemies, Making Victims," *American Historical Review* 103 (June 1998): 771–816, esp. 772–81.

⁶⁶ Molotov, *Sto sorok besed*, 407, 416.

⁶⁷ *Pravda*, 9 October 1952.

⁶⁸ See the announcement on the uncovering of the "Doctors' Plot" in *Pravda*, 13 January 1953; L. Smirnov, "Neustanno povyshat' politicheskuiu bditel'nost' sovetskikh liudei," *Bloknot agitatora* 3 (January 1953): 11, 15–17; and Glezerman, *Likvidatsiia*, 193–94, 219–20.

the fray, advancing, overcoming obstacles, but when life is calm, who needs the Bolsheviks?"⁶⁹ And so the quest for purity charged ahead. On 1 December 1952 Stalin cautioned members of the Presidium of the Central Committee that "the more successes we have, the more the enemy will try to harm us. Our people forgot about this because of our great successes."⁷⁰ With the announcement, in mid-January 1953, of the "Doctors' Plot," when a group of physicians, mostly Jews, were accused of plotting to murder Soviet leaders, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* reminded Soviet youth that it was the impenetrable, homogenized home front that frustrated the fascist invaders in the recent war. But even in defeat, the enemy does not rest. A call went out for vigilance:

Having won the war we again turn to construction, because we love life and youth, because we want to make our land a flourishing garden. But as we build, we must remember that enemy spies will continue to invade our home front, that our enemy will recruit all kinds of scum to undermine our strength, to poison our joyous, happy life . . . the greater our success in building communism in the USSR, the more active and vile the operations of the imperialists and their myrmidons.

Like the biblical serpent, these enemies were the most elusive imaginable. "The spies and saboteurs sent to us by the imperialist intelligence services or recruited by them within the country from among incompletely routed anti-Soviet scum do not operate with visors up. They operate 'on the sly,' masking themselves in the guise of Soviet persons in order to penetrate our institutions and organizations, to worm their way into our confidence and conduct their foul work," stated *Izvestiia's* editorial from the same day.

An unwavering vigilance was required to "ensure the cleansing of people's minds from the survivals of capitalism, from the prejudices and harmful traditions of the old society," the editorial concluded.⁷¹

The arrival of socialism ordained new sites of excision. With the destruction of antagonistic classes, internal enemies became enemies of the people and were to be sought in new realms.⁷² By then, the nationality question harbored the clearest and most present danger to the moral and political

⁶⁹ Molotov, *Sto sorok besed*, 391, 312.

⁷⁰ Entry for 1 December 1952 in the diary of V. A. Malyshev, then a member of the Presidium and the minister of the shipbuilding industry, *Istochnik* 5 (1977): 140.

⁷¹ *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 15 January 1953; *Izvestiia*, 15 January 1953.

⁷² The new category of "enemies of the people" was codified in Article 131 of the 1936 Constitution. A year later, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution at the time when the Terror was reaching its climax, Molotov pointed to the "unprecedented inner moral and political unity of the people" that was forged through wrenching the country free from the rotting capitalist society and in the ordeal of heroic struggle against the exploiting classes and foreign intervention. This unity also meant that by now the enemies of the Communist Party and the Soviet government had become enemies of the people, declared Molotov (*Pravda*, 7 November 1937).

unity of the Soviet people, Stalin declared at the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934, underlining the increasing ethnicization of the Soviet social body and the shift in the search for the enemy within. The fight against recurrences of nationalist views had become the most critical task in the struggle against the last vestiges of capitalism in the people's consciousness, Dmitrii Chesnokov, a prominent party ideologue, declared in 1952. The residue of *zoological chauvinism* (the Soviets' favored term for racism), especially in regions temporarily exposed to fascist propaganda during the German occupation, represented a stubborn intrusion on Soviet harmony and called for the severest measures if harmony was to be maintained, Chesnokov concluded.⁷³ Another leading ideologue pointed to the unprecedented high stakes of the current campaign. Unlike the "Great Turn" of the early 1930s, the postwar collision involved a Soviet state at the height of its power and a shrewd enemy armed with an articulate ideology developed under conditions of statehood and capable of conducting a well-organized military campaign.⁷⁴

Yet Soviet relations with parallel, modern politics across the European continent were not merely phenomenological. Rather, the Soviets were constantly examining their methods in the European mirror. Soviet contemporaries were extremely anxious regarding the potential for degenerating into a "zoological" ethos. Throughout the 1930s Soviet leaders, and notably Stalin, reacted vehemently to any suggestion that their sociologically based model of the human subject could be equated with any biologically based, genetically coded enterprise, whether the racial Nazi polity or contemporary policies of eugenics and euthanasia, which enjoyed widespread acceptance during that decade. When, in the wake of war, the Soviets' indiscriminate and irreversible punishment of enemy groups drove home the inevitable comparison with Nazi racial ethos, the Soviets persistently maintained that their destruction of internal enemies was not genocidal, that their penal system, unlike the death camps in the capitalist world, remained true to its corrective mandate.⁷⁵

⁷³ Dmitrii Chesnokov, *Sovetskoe sotsialisticheskoe gosudarstvo* (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo. politry, 1952), 209. The necessity for coercion in the age of harmony and socialist democracy was hammered out by Chesnokov throughout the entire exhaustive text (see 246, 556).

⁷⁴ Glezerman, *Likvidatsiia*, 362–63, 372–74.

⁷⁵ "In contrast to the capitalist countries, where concentration camps are sites of torture and death, the correctional labor camps of the Soviet state are a distinctive school for the reeducation of a worldview bequeathed to us by the capitalist society," claimed a 1944 brochure of the Cultural-Educational Department of the GULAG (M. Loginov, "Vozvrashchenie k zhizni," in Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [GARF], f. 9414, op. 4, d. 145, l. 3. Notably, a decade earlier, it was the Western penal system that was the favorite point of reference (Maxim Gorky et al., *Belomor: An Account of the Construction of the New Canal between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea* [New York: Smith and Haas, 1935], 328).

The Soviets' acute sensitivity to being equated with the Nazi racial enterprise and their awareness that efforts to excise certain groups did not imply complete physical elimination necessitated other means of purification in addition to deportations and executions. Memory was a key political arena where the exclusion of certain groups from official representation of the Soviet fighting family, along with the denial of their unique suffering, left those groups politically invisible, without official recognition of their distinct, collective identities.

Such was the ethos that shaped and was shaped by the experience of the Great Patriotic War.