Conclusion

Much of the literature on the terror of the 1930s focuses on the question of responsibility. Post-Soviet historical writing, a clear descendent of Soviet polemic, still seeks categorically to fix responsibility on bad persons and bad systems. Thus the most authoritative study of Yezhov's time at the NKVD tells us that "Stalin himself bore full responsibility for the purge as well as for its excesses." Even within the dubious historical methodology of limiting analysis to responsibility, is it possible that any single person bore "full" responsibility for anything? No one else was culpable? Only Stalin bears responsibility? Just as simplistically, we are told that Yezhov "was above all a product of Stalin's totalitarianism, terrorist, and bureaucratic system."[1] In this approach, certain persons have to bear "full" responsibility and their "crimes" are products of a "terrorist system" that is discredited today.

There has never been any doubt that Stalin was "responsible" for the terror. But how are we to understand "responsibility"? As the term is usually employed, it carries a moral charge of guilt and blame. In a moral sense, of course Stalin was responsible. He was also responsible

in a phenomenological sense in terms of agency. It is highly unlikely that the terror would have taken place without him.

Understood either as blame or as agency, such a broad term does not tell us very much about what happened, how it happened, or even why it happened. Responsibility is a concept with limited analytical value, difficult to fix and largely dependent on context. For example, if Ivan Ivanovich is arrested and shot in a mass operation in 1937, who is responsible? Stalin, for approving the mass operations with victims by provincial quota? Yes. Regional party secretaries for pressing for mass operations in the first place? Yes. Yezhov, for organizing and carrying them out? Yes. The low-level NKVD officer who determined who went on the list and selected Ivan Ivanovich? Yes. In our broad historiographical tradition, Stalin is "fully responsible." But for a victim, the question of whether he lived or died was in the hands of the NKVD official on the spot. So for Ivan Ivanovich, that local policeman was most responsible—even "fully responsible"—for his death.

The terror was so massive, so horrible, that our minds grasp it only with difficulty. As Catherine Merridale has written, many ordinary Russians today can deal with it only in terms of the individual stories of friends and family members.[2] Some attempt an empirical historical approach, seeking causes in Stalin's psychology, the inherent ideological evil of Marxism, or notions of Russian character. Others, overwhelmed by the suffering of the countless victims, abandon any attempt at analysis and fall back into a kind of unempirical contemplation of overwhelming evil. All of these attempts at understanding have one thing in common: a search for a single more or less simple way to understand something that in its horror and scale seems to defy understanding. This difficulty also characterizes our attempts to understand the Yezhovs of the world.

Our study has focused on three related questions, each with a biographical and historical component.

The first questions we posed at the outset of this study—Was Yezhov just Stalin's tool? What was the scope for power for politicians working under a dictator?—turn out to be complicated. Traditionally, in the lit-

erature, Stalin chose Yezhov because he was obedient and because he so worshiped the dictator that he was willing to do anything.[3] Yezhov as obedient tool is an easy way to answer another of our questions: why was he willing to carry out monstrous tasks for his malevolent master? Yezhov was obedient to Stalin, but so was everyone else in the country, in varying quality and degree. As in any hierarchical organization, the successful executive obeys orders, or at least has the skill to make it seem that he is doing so. So much more for the Stalinist leadership: every member of the Politburo and Central Committee was obedient, and several of them were older and more experienced than Yezhov. That he was obedient, therefore, does not explain Yezhov's rise to the NKVD. We still wonder why Stalin chose Yezhov and not someone else.

A more serious inquiry would worry less about categorical obedience and would rather look at the individual and group interests of the various officials at different levels and try to see how they deployed the power and resources available to them for various purposes. Obedience, however defined, is about power or the lack of it. In the Soviet system, as in all systems, everyone from bottom to top had some measure of power and acted with some measure of obedience. From Stalin down to the lowly collective farm chairman, everyone tried to maximize power and protect himself (and his friends) within his sphere.

The concept of obedience needs to be nuanced. The scope of real, imagined, or feigned behaviors coming under the rubric of obedience is wide. They can range from slavish compliance to conformity based on sincere conviction, to willing or unwilling compliance, to various forms of covert resistance. Even resistance can be active or passive, total or partial, and each of these resistance modes and behaviors contains some mix of defiance and compliance. People can take actions or not take them. They can influence those around them in subtle and not so subtle ways. They can work, work badly, or avoid work altogether. They can cooperate with their bosses, sabotage them, or pretend to do either. As recent studies on social history and subjectivity in Soviet history have shown, even ordinary people could choose to resist the regime, accommodate themselves to it, or believe in it wholeheartedly. Nobody was a

faceless product; everyone made choices that influenced his life and his surroundings.[4]

Recent biographies of other Stalinist Politburo members suggest the complexities of the relationship between the dictator and his lieutenants.[5] As Khrushchev reminded us, Stalin had immediate life-and-death power over his lieutenants, who when leaving Stalin's office never knew whether they would be taken straight to prison. On the other hand, they managed their careers, agendas, and intrigues within the considerable fields of politics available to them.

These lieutenants were certainly not independent politicians. Yezhov, like all of Stalin's lieutenants, never became an "independent" maker of grand policy. (It is not clear, of course, how independent any minister in a Western parliamentary system could be in making policy.) But policy can also be made in the course of implementing strategic decisions taken by others. Real political power is not always about having the final say in those lofty decisions. Stalin's lieutenants, including Yezhov, were powerful men and, within their spheres, independent politicians in real ways that mattered. Each of them headed his own network of patronage and was a master in his own bureaucratic house.[6] Stalin entrusted large areas of implementation to his lieutenants, and held them accountable for the results. Implementation is also a form of power, and even of policy making. Along with mortal accountability before Stalin came vast authority and leeway in carrying out policy.

If nothing else, Stalin's lieutenants wielded considerable power as framers of questions. Information is power, and they were Stalin's main sources of information on their spheres. Matters coming to Stalin for his personal decision or approval usually arrived as recommendations from below. In matters of personnel appointment, for example, his lieutenants usually offered the dictator a proposed candidate for a post, and sometimes Stalin refused the choice and appointed another candidate altogether. But most often a single nomination came to Stalin, and most often he approved the recommendation. Stalin frequently referred questions that had reached him down to his lieutenants for decision. His notation "kak byt'?" [what to do?] is frequently found on

archival documents that Stalin directed to his associates for their decision on important matters.[7]

In a simple and simplistic way, Stalin's lieutenants were all obedient tools. But in real life, and in ways that counted, they were also powerful semi-independent politicians with their own hands on levers of power. They generally picked their own personnel. They battled with one another over budgets and lines of turf authority. In such fights, Stalin was at pains to moderate and act as referee.[8] Senior Stalinist leaders were not slaves, nor was their power reduced as Stalin's increased.[9] They were extremely powerful men whose authority grew along with Stalin's.

Although we have biographies of bureaucratic operators like Molotov and Zhdanov, Yezhov has remained an exception. Perhaps the horrible nature of his work has reinforced the flat picture of him as a mere slave and robot. However, living up to this primitive image would be impossible in any bureaucracy, because management of large administrations and implementation of policy requires judgment, initiative, choices, and strategies.

The authors of an authoritative study of Yezhov at the NKVD rightly remind us that "Yezhov could not consult Stalin on every detail, and his role as Stalin's instrument had to involve a certain amount of autonomy."[10] Unfortunately, we do not know what kinds of "details" Stalin did or did not know, and therefore we cannot measure that autonomy. We do not know how far down the hierarchy one had to be to have one's arrest approved or ordered by Stalin. Similarly, we do not know what kinds of party members could be arrested by Yezhov's subordinates without his order or permission.

It has become a truism in Soviet history that as they came down the chain of command, orders—including Stalin's—were routinely modified at various levels and even ignored when it suited the purpose of the official receiving them. The degree of modification depended on many things, from the costs and benefits of enforcing the order to the calculation of getting caught to the likelihood of being protected by a patron if you were caught. We now understand the system as a network of Stalins, each of whom was both subordinate and boss. One was strict and force-

ful with subordinates, but with the boss one deployed appropriately subservient language, real or feigned respect, pledges of loyalty and other weapons of the weak. The lines between obedience and initiative, independence and disobedience are difficult to establish in any organization.

Because both Stalin and Yezhov functioned within this system, there is little reason to believe that their relationship was any different. Yezhov wrote to Stalin asking for instructions, orders, and rulings on various questions. He used the same fawning, obsequious tone that subordinates had used with their bosses throughout Russian history. In the same tradition, Stalin wrote to Yezhov, sometimes fondly and sometimes curtly, giving instructions and orders, which Yezhov carried out. Of course, language can be used to dissimulate, deploy power (great and small), or worship, and on the basis of these texts alone, it is impossible to say much about their actual relationship.

There is no question that Stalin supervised the terror, but there is much we still do not know about how that process worked. We know that Yezhov submitted lists of proposed arrests to Stalin, who approved them while sometimes adding or subtracting names. We have not found any lists of arrests that Stalin wrote and gave to Yezhov, but such information could have been conveyed orally by the careful dictator. Although we know that Yezhov met Stalin in his office more frequently than anyone except Molotov, we do not know the kinds of face-to-face explicit and implicit understandings that existed between the two. And we know nothing of their telephone conversations.

Although Yezhov was certainly never an independent player in the top leadership, he knew how to influence The Boss and to pursue agendas that were not necessarily identical to Stalin's. It is perhaps significant that at the time of Yezhov's fall, Stalin accused him of withholding information and demanded that he reveal the contents of his "secret archive," which contained names of officials whom Yezhov had not arrested and therefore was protecting.[11]

The second set of questions we posed had to do with career paths. How did Yezhov climb the ladder? How did one rise and prosper in Stalinist administration?

In addition to Yezhov's supposedly servile nature, a second common answer to our questions is that Stalin prepared Yezhov, selecting and promoting him as an obedient and unquestioning robot, nurtured and prepared for his role as master purger.[12] One often reads that Yezhov was deliberately brought to Moscow and put to work studying the party's composition so that he could later orchestrate a long-planned purge of the ranks.

However, the idea that Stalin planned the terror for a long time is highly speculative and is in fact contradicted by a substantial body of evidence. There are many signs before late 1936 that terror was not on Stalin's mind. Twists and turns of policy, crackdowns followed by real liberalization, inexplicable and contradictory changes in public statements, personnel shuffles and reshuffles throughout the 1930s do not suggest a plan for terror. They rather seem to indicate indecision, false starts, contradictions, and short-term improvisation as Stalin's mode of operation.[13] Yezhov's unpublished book, "From Fractionalism to Open Counterrevolution," exists in several versions and rewrites that run from early 1935 to the fall of 1937. From version to version, year to year, the story of the "Fascist conspiracy" against the USSR changed, and the final 1937 versions contradicted 1935 ones. For example, in the first 1935 draft, Zinoviev and Kamenev are "finally" accused of having only morally abetted the assassination of Kirov, but in later versions, when the official line changed, this was replaced with statements on their direct guilt in organizing "terrorist acts."[14] The fabricated 1937 terror conspiracy was obviously not planned or foreseen in Yezhov's 1935 writing, which Stalin approved.

Moreover, Yezhov's rise through the ranks is easily explained without imagining him as having been cultivated and brought along by someone. Although his career was meteoric, it was not atypical and illustrates the chain of general experiences necessary for work at the top of the Stalin apparatus. This was a time of meteoric careers and rapid advance for an entire cohort of "new Bolsheviks." The rapid promotions of Andrei Zhdanov, Georgy Malenkov, Nikita Khrushchev, and hundreds of thousands of lesser party members followed trajectories as

steep as Yezhov's. Even for someone without powerful patrons, a desperate shortage of administrative talent in the early Soviet regime propelled skilled and loyal young administrators—cultivated or not—up the ladder as the scope of the regime's activities dramatically expanded. There are no sources indicating that before the early thirties Stalin or anyone else advanced Yezhov's career in any unusual way. His early career was not the result of the manipulations of his superiors. He needed no patrons to move up, and in fact sometimes maneuvered his career in spite of them.

Yezhov was simply good at what he did, and this brought him promotions, as the same set of qualities would in any organization. He took an active hand in his own career. In 1935–36, he skillfully angled for the NKVD leadership position, playing to Stalin's suspicions and actively but tactfully undermining Yagoda's police leadership. Stalin certainly approved all of Yezhov's promotions, but Yezhov's own abilities are sufficient to explain his rise.

His rise can also be partly explained by personal qualities, which bring us closer to plausible reasons for his ascent. Many Old Bolshevik professional revolutionaries disdained administrative work, partly because of their glorious revolutionary self-images and partly because of the antibureaucratic voluntarism of their revolutionary generation. But younger Bolsheviks like Yezhov fit more comfortably into an apparatus and excelled at such work. They were willing to take on any assignment, however mundane, and complete it thoroughly and on time not only because they were obedient but because they were conscientious. They were energetic, "can-do" types who worked day and night to finish a job. Every document we have from Yezhov's bosses over the years testifies to his capability and capacity for hard work. All his performance reports are full of words and phrases like "good organizer," "conscientious," "energetic," "works independently," and "good at practical work." This assessment is so consistent over the years as to be conclusive: Yezhov was a hard worker. Stalin had to force Yezhov to take vacations, and on at least one occasion it took a Politburo resolution to keep him from coming back early.[15]

Yezhov's drive and energy were not unique in Stalin's entourage. All those who became Stalin's close collaborators were hard workers. Molotov and Kaganovich were legendary for taking on any task, for putting out any fire, and for using tough methods to solve administrative problems. A recent biography of Andrei Zhdanov also stresses his capacity for work and for successful completion of assignments. Stalin shunned lazy officials, and nobody made it near the top unless he was a workaholic.[16] Hard work is therefore another explanation of Yezhov's rise to the NKVD, as well as a general marker for success in the Stalinist system.

Yezhov also had an attractive personal modesty, a quality esteemed among Bolsheviks in Stalin's times. Upon taking office in 1936, he was bombarded by requests for biographical information.[17] Publishers of encyclopedias, pamphlets, and peasant calendars asked him for a biography. Famous historians, such as the prominent I. I. Mints, went to work researching learned biographies.[18] Novelists, including the Socialist Realist writer Alexander Fadeev, began to write colorful accounts of his life.[19] Yezhov generally replied to such requests for information with a note that he was too busy to provide information. It would have violated his modesty to take much of an interest in his evolving hagiography, and he was at pains to tone down the worshipful prose that began to surround him.

According to the poet Dzhambul, "When the October [revolution] dawn began to shine, with courage in his eyes he stormed the Palace."[20] Fadeev and others had Yezhov as the primary organizer of the Vitebsk workers' militia, more or less single-handedly turning Vitebsk into a "Bolshevik fortress." But Yezhov described his 1917 activities humbly, writing only that he organized radical cells in factory shops where he worked, helped distribute leaflets in kiosks, and worked for radical candidates in local elections.

Similarly, Fadeev wrote that during the Civil War, Yezhov was a military commissar who displayed a "natural heroism" at the front, facing Kolchak's White Army. Wounded in a crucial attack, he was carried from the battlefield severely injured. Unable to remain inactive, he soon

left the hospital and found political work in another unit. Once again, Dzhambul carried the glorification furthest:

I remember this. In the purple sunsets
I saw Comrade Yezhov through the smoke.
With his sword held high, dressed in the greatcoat
Of the people, he led the attack. . . .
Hardened in battle was brave Yezhov.

This was all far too much for the unassuming Yezhov. In his first revision of his official 1936 *Pravda* biography, he crossed out words about his having served "at the front" against Kolchak's White Army. In his second revision, he further scratched out words suggesting that he had served "against Kolchak and in important detachments on the eastern front," as well as a line suggesting that he had been commissar of a division.[21] He was at pains to write in another autobiographical statement that he had not seen combat.

Yezhov's personal life also reflected a modesty that not all Bolshevik officials managed to maintain. Stalin himself lived simply, usually in one room with a sofa and a table for work. After the former NKVD chief Yagoda's arrest, an audit showed that he had used state funds to build himself a palatial dacha. In 1936 alone Yagoda spent more than a million rubles on maintaining apartments, dachas, and rest homes that his family used.[22] Stalin went through the roof; he drafted a Politburo resolution condemning such "dacha palaces" and ordering sharp restrictions on their size. Officials should live modestly, he insisted.

Yezhov did. At the time of one's arrest, the NKVD made an inventory of the detainee's possessions, and a comparison between those of Yagoda and of Yezhov is instructive. The inventory of Yagoda's goods ran to 130 categories and several thousand items, including more than 25 men's overcoats, 42 pairs of boots, 32 soldier's blouses, 22 women's coats and 50 women's dresses, 22 men's suits of European tailoring, 31 pairs of foreign made women's shoes, 91 women's foreign-made berets, 130 pairs of silk stockings, 37 pairs of foreign-made gloves, 95 bottles of

French perfume, 1,008 antique dishes, and 73 foreign-made fishing rods. Investigators must have been especially impressed with Yagoda's collection of 3,904 pornographic pictures and 11 pornographic films.[23]

Yezhov, at the height of his fame, had a single overcoat, 9 pairs of old boots, 13 soldier's blouses, 48 simple shirts, 34 figurines, and several empty and partially empty vodka bottles.[24] He dressed simply, in military-issue pants and blouse, and his boots were worn and rough. Years later Dmitri Shepilov remembered Yezhov as "a totally ignorant man" in matters of culture and theory and was horrified that "he spit straight on the luxurious carpet."[25] One doubts that Stalin or his generation found Yezhov's coarse worker's behavior as distasteful as did Shepilov. Stalin put great store in class and by all accounts could not tolerate stuffed shirts, pretentious intellectuals, or "bourgeois" seekers of wealth. Yezhov was none of those.

Stalin also trusted Yezhov's judgment. Yezhov's archive is full of notes and memos from Stalin (and his lieutenants) redirected to Yezhov with handwritten marginal notes like "Comrade Yezhov! Your opinion?" or "to Comrade Yezhov. What's this all about?—I. S. [Stalin]" or "Comrade Yezhov, what to do about this?"[26] When Bukharin, the editor of *Izvestiia*, was having personnel troubles, Stalin wrote to Yezhov, "Please talk to Bukharin and straighten this out."[27] Stalin was also personally concerned about Yezhov's health, which had never been good. At various times Yezhov had been treated for tuberculosis, anemia, malnutrition, angina, sciatica, exhaustion, and colitis.[28] In the fall of 1935, Stalin wrote to Yezhov, "The main thing now is that you hurry off on vacation to one of the Soviet resorts or abroad, as you like or as the doctors recommend. If you don't, I'll make a big fuss."[29] During Yezhov's enforced vacations, Stalin checked to make sure he was actually resting.[30]

Yezhov's career also certainly benefited from an attractive résumé and broad experience. As a former Putilov factory worker, Red Guard organizer, and Civil War commissar, he had the right social and political pedigree. His experience in regional party organizations and in the non-Russian nationality areas in the 1920s also stood him in good stead; Stalin himself had been an expert in nationality policy. Yezhov's

experience in the Commissariat of Agriculture and the Industrial Department of the Central Committee had given him experience in the two key areas of Stalinist economy.

Each of Yezhov's positions, as we have seen, was not simply a formal office in the bureaucratic hierarchy. In practice, each assignment carried with it the ability to short-circuit the bureaucracy and appeal to high-ranking persons. Authority attached to persons and patrons, not to institutions. The Stalinists instinctively grasped the unreality of institutions and the personal practices behind them. Their habit of creating a new institution for each new task, the chronic overlapping of functions between agencies, and the bewildering array of large and small agencies devoted to the same task were hallmarks of Bolshevik institutional nihilism. What counted was the personal power of the person leading an agency. Of all the committees, temporary and permanent commissions, commissariats, and the like devoted to a given policy area, the one headed by an authoritative person was the one that called the tune.

This was a system of personalized politics rather than of rational institutions. Institutions in the Bolshevik system had always been weak.[31] The Bolsheviks' own backgrounds as professional revolutionaries at odds with tsarist institutions had left them with no love for formal organizations. After the Revolution, as radical voluntarists out to change the world, they naturally distrusted rule-bound bureaucracies that were by nature conservative. Trotsky's famous remark upon being appointed foreign commissar in 1917 could apply to any Bolshevik's attitude toward institutions: "We will publish the secret treaties and close up shop." When it came to the state, many Bolsheviks' views bordered on anarchism, especially in the early days after the Revolution.

The Bolsheviks were simultaneously state builders and institutional nihilists. On the one hand, beginning in the 1930s there were obvious efforts to strengthen the state. Class-discriminatory practices in education, legality, and employment were abandoned in favor of a unitary concept of citizenship to be enshrined in the 1936 Constitution. There was a new emphasis on rule-bound procedures and a new discourse about the state.

But a strong tendency toward voluntarism remained, side by side and in contradiction to statism.[32] It reflected a prerevolutionary distrust of bureaucracy and bureaucracies, along with a fortress-storming campaign mentality and an equally strong reliance on cadres, personalities, and "our people" rather than rules. The governmental system was an irrational hodgepodge of overlapping institutions and jurisdictions with unclear mandates and constantly changing normative rules. Whenever a new policy had to be implemented, a new commission, committee, or ministry was casually created even if one was already available. What was important was not paperwork or the competencies of institutions but finding "our" people to staff the institutions and carry out policy. Yezhov expressed this typical Bolshevik attitude when he told his subordinates: "Writing a paper will not do any good. We will have to send some of our people there to straighten it out."[33]

Real political power was also reflected in the right to referee and resolve disputes between and among personalities. In a personalized system of politics, where formal rules and procedures do not matter so much as persons, bureaucratic relationships often resolve themselves into personal ones. Disputes ostensibly about budgets, personnel, and even policy were resolved and adjudicated in personal terms. Participants in both sides of a given conflict called in favors and appealed to protectors and allies, and the conflict was generally settled by decision of a superior referee. Much of the day-to-day business of any Stalinist official, at any level, was taken up with resolving such disputes coming up from below. Indeed, in a confused bureaucratic structure of overlapping institutions with unclear authority, one's real power and position had to do with the level of dispute one could referee.

Yezhov was good at this. At Orgraspred he settled arguments between party committees that competed for personnel. At the Commissariat of Agriculture, he used his accumulated experiences and personal contacts to fight others for valuable personnel and staff a new agency. In the Orgburo and the Secretariat, he was able to resolve disputes between Central Committee members and commissars. His résumé experience, therefore, was not only about offices and agencies. It was about

his ever growing skill to deal with people: to know who they were, what were their interests and goals, and what kind of compromises might be possible. The system was about people, not flow charts. It was his skills with people that fueled his rise.

In this light, it should not be surprising that we conclude that the key factor in Yezhov's NKVD appointment—and his general success in the Soviet system—was his long-term experience with personnel assignment. He had been continuously working in cadre selection since 1924. Nobody in the leadership could match these twelve years of experience. Yezhov mastered the fundamental practice of Bolshevism: party personnel.

When in a famous speech in 1935 Stalin said, "Personnel policy is the most important thing," he was expressing a profound Bolshevik belief. Yezhov himself put it another way when he told his subordinates, "The party leads by appointing people. . . . This is the political expression of party leadership in its organizational form."[34] For the Stalinists, personnel policy was not only important; it was the very heart of their system. The key was to separate "our people" from "alien elements." If matters could be arranged so that the right people were put in charge, then it really didn't matter what institution they were in charge of. Personnel were to be selected according to political reliability, loyalty, and (with luck) "businesslike qualifications."[35]

A vital part of Yezhov's experience, and something at which Stalin himself had excelled, was detailed knowledge of who was in the party. In the early 1920s, when Stalin was actively involved in personnel selection, he had an amazing memory for who was who, who had done what, who had been where, and who had betrayed him. He knew everybody. From the mid-1920s, Yezhov had also come to know everybody who was anybody in the party. He spent long hours poring over card files and personnel dossiers. He had long experience matching jobs with appointees. He knew where to find candidates to mobilize for particular tasks and had the name of a qualified candidate at the tip of his tongue when he needed it. As he told his subordinates, "You must know each of your party workers personally. If I call you and wake you

up any time of night, you have to be able to tell me where such and such a worker works, how he conducts himself, and so forth."[36]

When in 1936 Stalin was looking for someone to head the NKVD, Yezhov was the obvious candidate, not because he was "obedient" or because he had been cultivated. By that time, as the party's leading expert on cadres, Yezhov had more experience at the heart of the system than anyone else. He had the right résumé. He knew how to manage and run organizations. He had been overseeing the NKVD for two years and knew how that institution worked. But most important of all, he knew who was in the party. His experience in the three party screenings of the 1930s (1933, 1935, 1936), combined with his work in KPK investigating individual party members, only contributed to his years of experience in Orgraspred.

If the matter at hand was sorting out friend from foe, nobody was better qualified than Yezhov. In this sense, running the NKVD during the terror was a kind of mirror image of the kind of personnel selection that Yezhov had done for years. It is clear from interrogation protocols of arrested terror victims that the highest priority was to get the accused to name names. Again reflecting the personalized politics of the system, when it came to political crimes, the investigators were much more concerned about "with whom" than with "what" when they interrogated suspects. Arrests spread out in trees of personal connections, and a key goal of the terror in general was to uproot personal networks. Whenever a key official was arrested, his clients, appointees, and friends were also arrested. Yezhov already knew who was connected to whom, who had worked where with whom, who had some dirt in his past. He knew whom to suspect, whom to trust. He was perfect for the police job, and he brought with him to NKVD several assistants from his years in personnel selection.[37] His appointment was logically based on his qualifications, given the task at hand.

Out third question was about belief. Who could do these things; what did Yezhov believe? How did Stalinist Bolsheviks see the world in general?

We have often looked for simplistic answers having to do with om-

niscient and omnipotent dictators, malevolent long-range plans, willing one-dimensional dupes, and bad systems. It seems that we must use evil as an explanatory device, even in our research: only a monster, a devil, could do monstrous deeds, so we end up with one-dimensional fairy tales. Thus one explanation of Yezhov's behavior in the 1930s is based on the idea of a sudden personality change. Somehow the modest, friendly, and gallant fellow of the 1920s is said to have transformed himself at some point into a monster, perhaps having fallen under the spell of Stalin's personality.[38] Good was corrupted by evil.

The Stalin terror was unbelievably cruel and horrible. Millions of lives were snuffed out or needlessly destroyed. Husbands and wives were torn apart. Children were ripped from their parents and raised as orphans. Huge numbers of innocent people were shot in the head and thrown into pits. Even larger numbers wasted what remained of their lives behind barbed wire in desolate and cruel Gulag camps. But it does not follow from this that the purgers were red-eyed devils whose actions can be conveniently dealt with under labels like "insane" or "evil."[39] Confronted by the utterly ordinary Adolf Eichmann in the trial dock, Hannah Arendt suggested that terror was carried out by ordinary people rather than by hysterical monsters. They made choices about their interests and believed, in many cases, that what they were doing was simply their job. They remained pleasant, polite, normal people with families; they enjoyed music, outings in the country, and poetry.[40] The evil of the Eichmanns (and by implication of the Yezhovs) was horrible precisely because they were normal people.

They did not think that what they were doing was evil; they thought they were fighting evil. They thought that what they were doing was a nasty job that had to be done to ensure a happy future. To dismiss that as simple evil and to probe no further is to project particular values onto them and to explain their actions by our standards of morality. To do so also simplifies our analytical task to the point where no more research is really necessary: they were bad people and that's that. All we have to do is adduce more examples of just how evil they were and we are finished.

We must wonder what Yezhov thought he was doing. How did he

justify the cruel repression he conducted? Did the pleasant sociable fellow of the 1930s undergo a personality change? Of course, given the state of our sources we cannot answer this question conclusively. We do not have a Yezhov diary, and the few personal letters we have do not touch on justifications for the terror beyond official formulations. We can, however, make some observations and possible inferences based on his biography, social origins, and early experiences. In this light, we can see a continuity that obviates the need to posit a personality change or to impose on a person from another time our own liberal ideas of good and evil, right and wrong. Turning Yezhov into a flat, obedient robot who suffered a personality change from good to evil is not only implausible; it hides the cultural and historical context from which he emerged.

It is clear from everything Yezhov wrote and said, including his final statement before his own execution, that he sincerely believed in the existence of a monstrous oppositionist-Fascist conspiracy against the Soviet government.[41] No measure was too harsh in uprooting these alien traitors. He even believed that his own fall was engineered by still unmasked conspirators: he had failed to purge enough. Yezhov's beliefs on this, although reflecting the hysterical tenor of the times, are not without resonance in his own social and cultural origins and early life experiences.

According to the Bolshevik "algebra" of guilt, anyone who opposed the Bolsheviks was objectively and by definition opposing the Revolution, opposing socialism, and opposing human welfare, regardless of that person's subjective intent. All those who opposed collectivization, therefore, might as well be saboteurs because their opposition had the same effect as actual resistance. Those who knew of dissent or opposition and did not report it were themselves guilty of it. All those who opposed, or might oppose, the Stalin Revolution and General Line in the 1930s might as well be spies, because the objective effects of their stance were just as harmful as actual espionage.

Rebels are labeled as "bandits"; reluctant peasants become "kulaks"; dissenters become "Trotskyists." Any unauthorized political organiza-

tion becomes ipso facto a "counterrevolutionary organization." Neither the identification nor the analogy was false for the Stalinists; these were not analogies but equations. The Stalinists said the same things to each other behind closed doors that they said to the public: in this regard their "hidden transcripts" differed little from their public ones. Bolsheviks saw the world through a prism that interpreted reality in a special way. The world was divided sharply and exclusively into friends and enemies, orthodox and heretical. Small political deviations were portrayed, and sincerely understood, as attacks by enemy forces.

The "enemies of the people" in 1937 were the "others." Yet this 1937 thinking was nothing new for Bolsheviks or indeed for Russian society. We have seen the brutal and brutalizing nature of the 1918–21 Civil War, in which the enemy "others" were treated with vicious cruelty. But even before that, concepts of "us" vs. "them" were embedded in Russian plebeian culture and practice.

Yezhov's earliest political experiences were those of a radicalized worker before and during the 1917 Revolution. Studies of worker discourse at that time, as we have seen, reveal a political world divided between enemies and friends, between "others" and "us." In 1917, even before the establishment of the Soviet regime and long before Stalin took power, workers were using the language of traitors, enemies, and betrayers. In language reminding us of 1937, they were saying that it was necessary to be "merciless with the enemies of the people." For these 1917 workers "true freedom necessitated silencing the voices of those who opposed the struggles and demands of workers, soldiers, and peasants."[42] This was Yezhov's early political education and socialization.

After 1917 these ideas were strengthened in the brutal Civil War and then translated into hard state practice. From the beginning of his career, Yezhov was known to his fellows as someone for whom class identity and struggle were everything. Writing in 1922 of his comrades in Kazan, Yezhov was proud that "they put their hopes on me thinking I can uphold the class line."[43] As workers and Bolsheviks saw it, cruel dictatorship against others was necessary to preserve a humane life for "us." "Our" democracy and happiness in fact depended on using dicta-

torship to deprive "them." In 1917 and in 1937, "the community must be unitary. Opposition and diversity is falsehood and therefore deserves no hearing. Government must be an expression and protector of this community based on a uniform commitment to truth."[44] In 1917 and in 1937, "a just government would not mediate among interests. . . . It was only the ill will of evil-doers that obstructed change. . . . All problems were caused by ill-intentioned people, by enemies of the people."[45] The sense of community in Russia was always in opposition to some other, usually malevolent group.[46] The worker idea of happy brotherhood was intimately related to protecting that community, at any cost, from "them."

Although it seems so from our liberal perspective, Yezhov's cruelty was not in contradiction with the specific ideas of humanity and community he shared with his fellows. For him and his contemporaries, there was no conflict between singing and dancing with "our" brother workers and then going out and torturing the enemy other. For the radical plebeians of Yezhov's time, the two traits affirmed and even depended on one another. The pleasant Yezhov of the 1920s and the hard killer of the 1930s were the same person.

Notes

Introduction

1. *Pravda,* 3 December 1937. I am grateful to Peter Wolfe for his translation.

2. Yezhov was arrested by his successor, L. P. Beria, on 10 April 1939. He was tried and executed on 4 February 1940. N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin, eds., *Kto rukovodil NKVD, 1934–1941: Spravochnik* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1999), 185.

3. Among other works, see Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895–1940* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002), the best study of Yezhov and the terror. Also see J. Arch Getty and Roberta Thompson Manning, eds., *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); O. V. Khlevniuk, "The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937–1938," in *Soviet History, 1917–53: Essays in Honour of R. W. Davies,* ed. Julian Cooper, Maureen

Perrie, and E. A. Rees (London: Macmillan, 1995); O. V. Khlevniuk, "Les mechanismes de la 'Grande Terreur': des années 1937–1938 au Turkmenistan," *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 39, nos. 1–2 (1998); O. V. Khlevniuk, *1937-i: Stalin, NKVD i sovetskoe obshchestvo* (Moscow: Izd-vo "Respublika," 1992).

4. See, for example, Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary* (New York: Norton, 1973), and Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1962).

5. See B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit. Ezhov i Ezhovshchina, 1936–1938* (St. Petersburg: Petrovskii Fond, 1998); Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner;* V. A. Kovalev, *Dva stalinskikh narkoma* (Moscow: Izd-vo gruppa "Progress": "Univers," 1995); Aleksei Polianskii, *Ezhov: istoriia "zheleznogo" stalinskogo narkoma* (Moscow: ARIA-AiF, 2001).

6. The best study here is Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

7. The fullest popular biography is Polianskii, *Ezhov: istoriia.* Like other representatives of this genre, this book contains imagined conversations and no documentary or source references. The only serious scholarly study is Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner.*

8. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* contains eight substantial chapters on Yezhov's police tenure and only one on the forty-one years of his life leading up to them.

9. Yezhov's archive is in Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter RGASPI), f. 671, op. 1.

1. Epilogue as Prologue

1. Feliks Ivanovich Chuev, Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov, and Albert Resis, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics, Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 1993), 257.

2. A. M. Larina, *Nezabyvaemoe* (Moscow: APN, 1989), 269–70.

3. RGASPI, f. 85, op. 27, d. 93, ll. 12–13, Kaganovich to Ordzhonikidze. See also Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov and Feliks

Ivanovich Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: iz dnevnika F. Chueva* (Moscow: "Terra," 1991), 398, 406, 38.

4. Yezhov's role in preparations for this first show trial is reflected in his personal archive. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 189.

5. *Report of Court Proceedings; the Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre. Moscow, August 19–24, 1936, in re G. E. Zinoviev [and others]* (New York: Fertig, 1967).

6. Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895–1940* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002), 182.

7. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 100–115.

8. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 5 (1989), 74.

9. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 575, ll. 11–19, 40–45, 49–53, 57–60, 66–67. N. A. Uglanov, former First Secretary of the Moscow party organization in the late 1920s, had sided with rightists Bukharin and Rykov.

10. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 576, ll. 67–70.

11. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 575, ll. 11–19, 40–45, 49–53, 57–60, 66–67.

12. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 52, ll. 190–94.

13. Boris Starkov, *Oni ne molchali* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), 217.

14. V. N. Khaustov, V. P. Naumov, and N. S. Plotnikova, eds., *Stalin i NKVD-NKGB-GUKR "Smersh," 1939-mart 1946* (Moscow: Fond "Demokratiia," 2006), 45–46.

15. The best analysis of the witch hunt in the Comintern is William Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates? The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

16. Ivo Banac, ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933–1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 36, 61.

17. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 75–77.

18. Roger R. Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldier: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925–1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 134.

19. NKVD operational order no. 486, 15 August 1937. Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Federal'noi sluzhby bezopasnosti Rossiiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter TsA FSB), f. 100. op. 1, por. 1, l. 224–35.

20. Khaustov, Naumov, and Plotnikova, eds., *Stalin i NKVD-NKGB-GUKR "Smersh,"* 46; Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 200–201.

21. J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 474–77.

22. J. Arch Getty, "'Excesses Are Not Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002); M. Junge and R. Binner, *Kak terror stal 'bol'shim.' Sekretnyk prikaz No. 447 i tekhnologiia ego ispolneniia* (Moscow: AIRO, 2003).

23. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 84.

24. Ibid., 83.

25. Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998).

26. V. N. Khaustov, V. P. Naumov, and N. S. Plotnikov, eds., *Lubianka. Stalin i Glavnoe Upravlenie Gosbezopasnosti NKVD, 1937–1938* (Moscow: Fond "Demokratiia," 2004), 302–21.

27. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 96.

28. N. V. Petrov and A. B. Roginsky, "'Polskaia operatsiia' NKVD 1937–1938," in *Repressii protiv poliakov i pol'skikh grazhdan,* ed. A. E. Gur'ianov (Moscow: Zveniia, 1997), 33.

29. N. Okhotin and A. Roginskii, "Iz istorii 'nemetskoi operatsii' NKVD 1937–1938 g." in *Repressii protiv rossiiskikh nemstev: Nakazannyi narod,* ed. N. Okhotin and A. Roginskii (Moscow: Zveniia, 1999), 35–75.

30. Petrov and Roginsky, "'Polskaia operatsiia,'" 33.

31. NKVD operational order no. 693, 23 October 1937. TsA FSB, f. 100. op. 1, por. 1, ll. 239–42.

32. J. Arch Getty, Gabor T. Rittersporn, and V. N. Zemskov, "Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 4 (1993).

33. Politburo decision "On Arrests, Procuratoral Supervision, and Conduct of Investigations," 17 November 1938, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1003, ll. 85–87.

34. Yezhov's file on Beria's "methods of work" is RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 264. His file on Stalin is a collection of postal receipts for money sent to Stalin in exile before the revolution, the time during which the rumor had been that Stalin was a tsarist police agent: RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 287.

35. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 399.

36. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1003, ll. 82–84.

37. Yezhov mentioned the Liushkov defection as a key reason he should be removed at NKVD. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1003, ll. 82–84.

38. Unfortunately, some scholarly studies make serious use of these "confessions" as sources. See B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit. Ezhov i Ezhovshchina, 1936–1938* (St. Petersburg: Petrovskii Fond, 1998), and Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner.*

39. *Moskovskie novosti,* 30 January 1994.

2. The Making of a Bolshevik

1. Here and below, statistics on St. Petersburg's working class are taken from S. A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: Revolution in the Factories, 1917–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), chapters 1 and 2. For more on the working class, see Victoria Bonnell, "Radical Politics and Organized Labor in Pre-revolutionary Moscow, 1905–1914," *Journal of Social History* 12, no. 2 (1978).

2. Robert B. McKean, *St. Petersburg Between the Revolutions: Workers and Revolutionaries, June 1907–February 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 38.

3. See Heather Hogan, *Forging Revolution: Metalworkers, Managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890–1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Eduard M. Dune, *Notes of a Red Guard,* trans. Diane P. Koenker and S. A. Smith (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Charters Wynn, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms: The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

4. R. Zelnik, ed., *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiogra-*

phy of Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 96.

5. McKean, *St. Petersburg Between the Revolutions,* 38.

6. Quoted in Wynn, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms,* 119.

7. Ibid., 127.

8. V. A. Giliarovskii, *Moskva i moskvichi; ocherki staromoskovskogo byta* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1955).

9. Quoted in Zelnik, *Radical Worker,* 99.

10. McKean, *St. Petersburg Between the Revolutions,* 57, 253, 259, 482.

11. In a questionnaire in the early 1920s, Yezhov claimed that he "could make himself understood in the Polish and Lithuanian languages." See "Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich," in *Kto rukovodil NKVD, 1934–1941: Spravochnik,* ed. N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1999), 185–86.

12. Fadeev's unpublished manuscript, "Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov: Syn nuzhdy i bor'by" [Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov: Son of necessity and struggle], is in RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, l. 70.

13. *"Kol'ki knizhinka."* Yezhov's recollections come from an autobiographical statement he wrote in 1921: "Kratkaia biografiia N. I. Yezhova" [Short (auto)biography of N. I. Yezhov], 1, RGASPI, uncatalogued documents. Much of the following account is taken from this statement, elements of which can be verified from other sources. Yezhov's short autobiography may be more dependable than subsequent accounts. It was written before Yezhov became a "leading party worker" and at a time before hagiography or self-promotion were common. It also contains personal references to comrades who knew Yezhov at various times and who could confirm his own account of his activities.

14. "Kratkaia biografiia," 1, and RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, l. 53.

15. See Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905–1914," *Slavic Review* 23, no. 4 (1964), and 24, no. 1 (1965).

16. Tim McDaniel, *The Agony of the Russian Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 35, 42.

17. St. Petersburg had been renamed Petrograd during the war, and

would be rechristened again, as Leningrad, after the leader's death in 1924.

18. "Kratkaia biografiia," 1. However, a search of military archives in 1936 showed him ordered to Vitebsk in early June 1916: Order of the Dvinsk Military District, 3 June 1916, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, l. 31.

19. His "Kratkaia biografiia" does not mention radical activity during the war, although Yezhov noted years later on a questionnaire that he had been "repressed" in this period by the tsarist government and "exiled" from St. Petersburg in 1914: Personal questionnaire for delegates to the 14th Congress of the RKP(Bolsheviks), RGASPI, f. 54, op. 1, d. 126, l. 22. As we shall see, other sources written twenty years later at the height of Yezhov's power went further and claimed that he had been branded politically "unreliable" early on by the government and sent from St. Petersburg to a "punitive detachment" in the rear.

20. Leopold Haimson, "The Problem of Social Identities in Early Twentieth Century Russia" (with discussion), *Slavic Review* 47, no. 1 (1988).

21. M. D. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution, 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 17–19.

22. Haimson, "Problem of Social Identities."

23. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution,* 21.

24. Among Marxists, the Mensheviks believed that the overthrow of the tsar in early 1917 represented the "bourgeois revolution" predicted by Marx and thought that the next, "proletarian" revolution was to be expected only after a long process of liberal democracy. Bolsheviks, on the other hand, wanted to compress the time between the two revolutions and under Lenin's leadership sought to bring out the proletarian, socialist revolution immediately. Bundists represented a separate Jewish workers' party, usually associated with the Mensheviks. Other parties (Trudoviks, Legal Marxists) also championed workers' interests, with various views on how to achieve them. Socialist Revolutionaries promoted a revolution of peasants rather than workers. Kadets resembled European liberals and advocated parliamentary government along English lines.

25. Overlaying this political chaos was the nationality question. Especially in multinational places like Vitebsk, which had substantial populations of Latvians, Poles, Jews, and others, it was not uncommon for members of these non-Russian populations to have their own party groups, either within the well-known parties or separately.

26. "Transcript of Comrade Drizul's memoir," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 3, 12, 33; see also Yezhov's questionnaire and party card, d. 266, ll. 78, 82.

27. B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit. Ezhov i Ezhovshchina, 1936–1938* (St. Petersburg: Petrovskii Fond, 1998), 9–12, doubt Yezhov's proletarian credentials, early radicalism, and devotion to the 1917 revolution in general. Without footnotes or other documentation, their account seems to be based on unspecified interviews and archival materials other than the Yezhov personal archive. Some of its points can be verified; others cannot.

28. "Transcript of Comrade Drizul's memoir," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, l. 10. With the help of party editors, Drizul's characterization of a tedious orator who rarely spoke had to be edited and euphemized into a man with "fewer words, more deeds," one "for whom word never differs from deed." The latter was too pretentious for Yezhov, who crossed it off the text. See ibid., ll. 44, 57.

29. Ibid., RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 14, 18.

30. "Transcript of Comrade Drizul's memoir," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 1, 3–4; Briukhanov and Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit,* 10.

31. "Transcript of Comrade Drizul's memoir," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, l. 9.

32. Political commissars were appointed by the Bolshevik government and attached to various institutions to serve as watchdogs over the nominal chief. First used during the Civil War, political commissars constituted an answer to the distrust with which the Bolsheviks viewed nonparty holdover administrators from the old regime.

33. "Transcript of Comrade Drizul's memoir," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 8–11.

34. "Kratkaia biografiia," 2.

35. Ibid.

36. "Questionnaire," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 266, l. 78.

37. Briukhanov and Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit,* 13–15.

38. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution,* 11, 13.

39. Nathalie Babel, ed., *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel* (New York: Norton, 2002), 231, 258.

40. Ibid., 359–61.

41. On the Civil War generally, see William G. Rosenberg, Diane P. Koenker, and Ronald G. Suny, eds., *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); V. Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); I. Babel, *The Red Cavalry and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 2005); William Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917–1921* (New York: Macmillan, 1935); Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917–1921* (London: Phoenix, 2001); Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920: The Defeat of the Whites* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Lars T. Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914–1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Oliver H. Radkey, *The Sickle Under the Hammer: The Russian Socialist Revolutionaries in the Early Months of the Soviet Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963). On the psychological and social effects of the Civil War, see J. Arch Getty, "The Politics of Stalinism," in *The Stalin Phenomenon,* ed. Alec Nove (London: Weidenfelt and Nicolson, 1993).

42. We have Antonina Titova's "Registration blank for a member of the KPSS" and a short autobiography she wrote in 1933: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 100, 107. After completing her education in the famous Timiriazev Agricultural Academy, she worked for years in various agricultural research institutes until her death in 1988.

43. See miscellaneous biographical materials in RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 266, l. 89.

44. In 1919 the party had created three subcommittees of the Central Committee. The Politburo was to handle pressing political and strategic questions. The Orgburo was to deal with organizational matters, which

quickly came to mean personnel assignment. A Secretariat was to coordinate work between the other two committees and deal with correspondence and communication in the party. It proved significant for his rise to power that Joseph Stalin was the only person sitting on all three bodies.

45. "*Provedeniia klassovoi linii.*" Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 24 October 1922, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, ll. 8–11.

46. E. Sudnitsyn to N. I. Yezhov, 10 February 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 268, ll. 6, 6 ob.

47. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution,* 82, 96.

3. In the Provinces

1. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1962), xlv, 95.

2. See Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapter 1, for an analysis of this situation.

3. Entitled "On Party Discipline," the measure was a response to the appearance of several dissident groups within the party during the Civil War. *Desiatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mart 1921 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1963), 571–73.

4. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 114. See also Daniel Thorniley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Rural Communist Party, 1927–39* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988).

5. T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917–1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 52–53.

6. *Deviatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mart-aprel' 1920 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1960), 36. On purges generally, see J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

7. *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mart-aprel' 1922 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1961).

8. Ibid., 555, 659; *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), 17–25 aprelia 1923 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1960), 790.

9. Protocol of the Orgburo of the CC, 10 February 1922, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, d. 287, ll. 2, 22–24.

10. Protocol of the Secretariat of the CC, 15 February 1922, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, d. 289, ll. 2, 6. At this time, the senior party leader of a territorial organization was designated "secretary" or "responsible secretary." Nearly always, party appointments were proposed by staff and ratified or rejected by the Orgburo or Secretariat. Although form dictated that the CC "recommend" a candidate to a district, in nearly all cases this amounted to appointment from above, rather than election by the committee as the party's rules required.

11. The best discussion of this centralization is Robert Service, *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organizational Change, 1917–1923* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

12. A. N. Sakharov et al., eds., *"Top Secret": From the Lubianka to Stalin on the Situation in the Country, 1932–1934* (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2002–6), 1: 117.

13. Party report Secretary Lure to CC, 1922 (n.d.), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 118, l. 59.

14. Sakharov et al., *"Top Secret,"* 1: 144, 82, 304.

15. Materials for the 12th Party Congress, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, d. 440, l. 54.

16. *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 156.

17. For squabbles in nationality areas, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

18. *Vosmoi s"ezd RKP(b), mart 1919 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1959), 184–85, 496; *Vosmaia konferentsiia RKP(b), dekabr' 1919 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1961), 28, 215.

19. These categories had been prescribed in November 1918 but were not always observed by local report writers. See the CC's report to the 8th Party Congress: *Vosmoi s"ezd,* 496.

20. Compare, for example, Yezhov information letter, 1 September 1922 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 118, ll. 147–59), with the ungrammatical

and misspelled text of his personal letters of the same period (Yezhov to Berzina, 21 September 1922, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 178, l. 28).

21. Yezhov Informational Letter to the CC for August 1922, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 118, l. 146.

22. Ibid., ll. 147–50.

23. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 1 November 1922, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, l. 12. Narkomprod was the agency responsible for collection and distribution of the food tax-in-kind.

24. The Democratic Centralists (1919–20) had argued for more collegial decision making at the top of the party and against the tendency of Lenin and a few key leaders to make decisions without consultation. The Workers' Opposition (1920–21) wanted more proletarian members in the party and favored giving the trade unions a significant role in government. See Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1988).

25. See T. H. Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques and the Rise of Stalin," *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 1 (1981), for an analysis of such squabbles.

26. Ibid. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* has convincingly shown how the weakness of institutionalization led to a strongly "personalized politics" in the Stalin period.

27. "Russian chauvinism" refers to the tendency of Russians to denigrate local traditions, marginalize native leaders, and/or "russify" local culture. Petrov to unknown comrades, 19 February 1923, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 153, l. 11; Mari Obl. KK Secretary Volkov report to Moscow TsKK, 5 April 1923, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 153, l. 14; Protocol of the Mari OblKK, 1 March 1923, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 153, l. 6.

28. "On the Petrov Affair," RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 153, ll. 3–4. Although unsigned, this seems to be an internal report of the TsKK.

29. Yezhov report to the CC, June 1922, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 118, l. 146.

30. Yezhov report to the CC, August 1922, RGASPI f. 17, op. 67, d. 118, ll. 147, 151.

31. Petrov to unknown comrades, ll. 10–11.

32. "On the Petrov Affair," l. 3.

33. Petrov to unknown comrades, l. 10.

34. "On the Petrov Affair," l. 3.

35. Protocols of the Mari OblKK, 1 March and 27 April 1923, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 153, ll. 5–7.

36. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 9 March 1923, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, l. 17.

37. On this see Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire.*

38. "On the Petrov Affair," l. 3.

39. Yezhov to Berzina, 21 September 1922, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 178, l. 28; expletive deleted by Yezhov. This letter was found in Molotov's archive. It contained a reference to Aleksandr Shliapnikov, leader of the Workers' Opposition in the party. Police censors no doubt found this suspicious and sent the letter to Molotov, who was Yezhov's boss. Although Berzina was implicated in leftist opposition movements, it is not clear whether Yezhov was involved.

40. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, n.d., RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, l. 3.

41. B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit. Ezhov i Ezhovshchina, 1936–1938* (St. Petersburg: Petrovskii Fond, 1998), are mistaken in arguing that Yezhov was first removed, followed by Petrov for the sake of balance. The opposite was true: Petrov was forced out by January, while Yezhov was simply put on extended vacation and was technically on the Mari roster until March 1923, at a time when the TsKK was considering Petrov's expulsion from the party.

42. Orgburo protocol, 10 November 1922, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, d. 385, l. 146. In January 1923 a Mari report listed a Comrade Lur'e as party secretary: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 118, l. 42. In that report, Lur'e complained of Petrov's "criminal behavior" even though Petrov was long gone from Mari.

43. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 1 November 1922, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, l. 12.

44. See Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques." Rigby seems to exaggerate the ability of outsiders to win control (10, 13).

45. Zinoviev's report for the Central Committee, *Vosmoi s"ezd,* 287.

46. Krestinsky's reports for the Central Committee, *Vosmaia Konferentsiia,* 29–30; *Deviatyi s"ezd,* 43; *Desiatyi s"ezd,* 45–46.

47. Central Committee memos, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 114, ll. 10, 12, 80.

48. Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques," 30; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, d. 312, l. 4; d. 288, ll. 2–3; d. 317, ll. 2–5.

49. Quoted in Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques," 22. See also Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire,* on *skloki* centering around nationality issues.

50. Molotov's reports for the Central Committee, *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 54–55, 155, 654–56; *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 792–98.

51. "On the Petrov Affair," RGASPI, ll. 3–4.

52. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 118, ll. 21–25, 49.

53. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 24 October 1922, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, ll. 8–11.

54. Kharakteristika na Sekretaria Marobkoma tov. Yezhova N. I., RGANI, f. 5, op. 98, d. 148732, l. 17.

55. Kharakteristika na chlena RKP(b) tov. Yezhova N. I., RGANI, f. 5, op. 98, d. 148732, ll. 18–19.

56. Sakharov, *"Top Secret,"* 1: 405.

57. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 1 November 1922, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, l. 12.

58. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 24 October 1922, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, ll. 8–11.

59. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 1 November 1922, 9 March 1923, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, ll. 12–14, 17–19.

60. Orgburo protocol, 1 March 1923, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, d. 415, ll. 87, 275. The city of Semipalatinsk was at that time in Kirgizia but later became part of Kazakhstan.

61. Materials for the 12th Party Congress, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, d. 440, ll. 52–53.

62. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 15 April 1923, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, ll. 20, 20 ob.

63. Semipalatinsk's population in early 1923 was 566,823 Kirgiz,

449,269 Russian, and 33,045 "other." Materials for the 12th Party Congress, l. 52.

64. *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 800–802.

65. *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 656. At this congress, the Central Committee berated Communists working in such areas for insufficient care, tact, and attention to the local population.

66. Sakharov, *"Top Secret,"* 1: 883; 2: 34, 186, 246, 16, 61, 124, 144–45; 3: 660.

67. Ibid., 1: 635, 673, 760, 821, 895–96, 913–14; 2: 43–44. One secret police report in December 1924, made the unsurprising observation that lowering taxes resulted in less peasant discontent! Ibid., 2: 260.

68. Report of Semipalatinsk Gubkom to the Central Committee, 10 February 1923, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 87, ll. 256–60; Sakharov, *"Top Secret,"* 1: 673, 760; 2: 44, 131.

69. Report of Semipalatinsk Gubkom to the Central Committee, 10 February 1923.

70. "Guerilla aberrations and methods": *"partizanskie uklony."*

71. Materials for the 12th Party Congress, ll. 52–53. The Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party had been the largest Russian political party in 1917, standing for a form of agrarian socialism. Its various wings had since come out against the Bolsheviks and had been outlawed by the Soviet government.

72. Sakharov, *"Top Secret,"* 1: 821, 895–96; 3: 722. A pud is a bit more than thirty-six pounds.

73. Antonina Titova, "Registration blank for a member of the KPSS," and autobiography, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 100, 107.

74. Uchraspred to Marobkom, March 1923, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 558, l. 12; Spisok proshedshchikh cherez Uchraspred, 16 March 1923. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 34, d. 216, l. 27.

75. Yezhov closed letter to the Central Committee, 29 June 1923, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 87, ll. 243–51.

76. Alexander Fadeev, "Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov: Syn nuzhdy i bor'by" [Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov: Son of necessity and struggle], RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 69–86.

77. "Yezhov Nikolai Ivanovich," in *Kto rukovodil NKVD, 1934–1941: Spravochnik,* ed. N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1999), 185.

78. For example, it was often the territorial party secretaries themselves who at party congresses demanded more help and direction from Moscow. See, for example, speeches by P. K. Kaganovich (Kursk) and P. Volin (Kostroma) at the 9th Congress: *Deviatyi s"ezd,* 62, 64. Even oppositionist critics of the CC majority reluctantly admitted that the CC had the responsibility to assign cadres centrally to make best use of scarce talent. See Trotsky speech at the 9th Congress: *Deviatyi s"ezd,* 76–77, and Preobrazhensky's at the 12th Congress: *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 146. By the mid-1920s, nobody disputed the CC's need to do this.

79. Yezhov to Akmolinsk Gubkom, 28 December 1924, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 87, ll. 52–53.

80. Sakharov, *"Top Secret,"* 1: 913–14; 2: 122, 134, 179, 186, 246, 249, 289; 3: 584, 634.

81. Beys were members of traditional elites, roughly comparable to European nobles.

82. Sakharov, *"Top Secret,"* 2: 105, 111, 123; 3: 635–36, 700–701.

83. The Alash-Orda movement had been a generally liberal group favoring Kirgiz-Kazakh sovereignty in Turkestan. It had stood at the head of a short-lived state after the Russian Revolution (December 1917–May 1919). Alash-Orda had fought on both sides during the Civil War but sided with the Reds in the end. During the period of Yezhov's tenure in Central Asia, Alash-Orda was allied with the Bolsheviks, but increasing conflicts with the Bolsheviks led to its liquidation in 1927–28 as "anti-Soviet."

84. Naneishvili to Central Committee, 1924 (n.d.), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 208, ll. 13–17.

85. Dzhangil'din to Stalin, 24 April 1925, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 82, ll. 218–22.

86. Service, *Bolshevik Party in Revolution,* 175.

87. See, for example, CC letter, 22 December 1924, published in *Izvestiia TsK,* no. 12 (17), 1924, 4.

88. Khodzhanov to Stalin and Kuibyshev, 6 April 1925, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 82, ll. 205–11.

89. Protocol of meeting of Kirgiz kraikom, 27 March 1925, f. 17, op. 67, d. 82, ll. 217, 217 ob.

90. Khodzhanov to Stalin and Kuibyshev, 6 April 1925, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 82, l. 211.

4. The Party Personnel System

1. See Robert V. Daniels, "The Secretariat and the Local Organizations in the Russian Communist Party, 1921–1923," *American Slavic and East European Review* 16, no. 1 (1967); Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 131.

2. The classic work on Trotsky is still Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet,* 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954–63).

3. See Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1988).

4. Robert H. McNeal, *Stalin: Man and Ruler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

5. It is worth noting that the head of the personnel appointment staff (*Orgraspred*) for the second half of the decade was Ivan Moskvin, who sided with the Stalinist majority but who was never a Stalin intimate.

6. See T. H. Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques and the Rise of Stalin," *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 1 (1981).

7. Ossinsky, Sapronov, and Zinoviev speeches to the 8th Congress, *Vosmoi s"ezd RKP(b), mart 1919 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1959), 165–66, 169–71, 184–85, respectively.

8. Trotsky speech to the 9th Party Congress, *Deviatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mart-aprel' 1920 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1960), 76–77.

9. When Preobrazhensky issued his warning in April 1923, only 30 percent of provincial party secretaries were being "recommended" rather than elected: Preobrazhensky speech to the 12th Party Congress, *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), 17–25 aprelia 1923 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1960), 146.

10. Zinoviev's coreport of the Central Committee to the 14th Party Congress, *XIV s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b), 18–31 dekabria 1925 g. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1926), 127.

11. See Molotov and Rumiantsev speeches to the 14th Party Congress, ibid., 484–85, 595.

12. Riutin speech to the 12th Party Congress, *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 181.

13. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 94, 173; Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques," 17.

14. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 6.

15. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 362. See also Molotov's scathing attack on the Leningraders' undemocratic delegate selection: *XIV s"ezd,* 482–83.

16. See the speeches by Molotov, Shkiriatov, and Rumiantsev: *XIV s"ezd,* 484–85, 568–71, 595.

17. Robert Service, *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organizational Change, 1917–1923* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 128.

18. Molotov's organizational report to the 11th Party Congress, *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mart-aprel' 1922 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1961), 54.

19. See Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 132–34.

20. Stalin noted this at the 12th Party Congress and observed that if oppositionists declined to accept new positions, there was little the CC could do about it. *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 198.

21. Unfortunately, the protocols of Orgburo and Secretariat meetings do not include the text of Orgraspred presentations and recommendations.

22. Stalin's organizational report to the 13th Party Congress, *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), Mai 1924 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1963), 118.

23. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 114–19.

24. Ossinsky speech to the 8th Party Congress, *Vosmoi s"ezd,* 165.

25. Resolution of the 8th Party Congress, *Vosmoi s"ezd,* 426.

26. For a useful outline of these developments, see T. H. Rigby, "USSR Incorporated: The Origins of the Nomenklatura System," *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 4 (1988).

27. See *Vosmaia konferentsiia RKP(b), dekabr' 1919 goda. Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1961), 30; *Desiatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mart 1921 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1963), 56, 111; *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 56, 65.

28. Molotov's report to the 11th Party Congress, *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 53, 56.

29. D. Kursky's report to the 13th Party Congress, 131; Boris Bazhanov, *Vospominaniia byvshego sekretaria Stalina* (Paris: Frantsiia: Tretiia Volna, 1980), 36.

30. D. Kursky's report to the 14th Party Congress, *XIV s"ezd,* 87–89.

31. Nogin's report of the Accounting Department to the 11th Party Congress, *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 64–65. For examples of the constant complaints see *Vosmoi s"ezd,* 184–86 (Zinoviev), 181 (Kaganovich); *Vosmaia konferentsiia,* 28 (Krestinsky); *Desiatyi s"ezd,* 49 (Krestinsky); *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 63 (Nogin), 152 (Molotov); *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 803–4 (TsK Otchet).

32. Smolensk Archive file 116/154e, 88. Yezhov wrote the same thing to Stalin in August 1935: RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 1085, l. 12.

33. CC Draft Resolution, *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 804.

34. *Vosmaia konferentsiia,* 221; *XIV s"ezd,* 89.

35. See Nogin's and Molotov's reports to the 11th Party Congress, *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 81, 56, respectively. By mid-1924, the Secretariat faced three hundred to four hundred agenda items at each meeting.

36. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 163; *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 804.

37. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 164–65; Rigby, "USSR Incorporated," 532.

38. Before the Revolution, all regional party leadership positions were filled by appointment or by co-opting available talent.

39. D. Kursky's Accounting Dept. report to the 13th Party Congress, *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd,* 133.

40. Rigby, "USSR Incorporated," 533.

41. Politburo protocols are in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3. Those of the Orgburo and the Secretariat are RGASPI, f. 17, op. 112, 113.

42. *Deviatyi s"ezd,* 13, 86; *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd,* 143–44.

43. D. Kursky's Accounting Dept. report to the 13th Party Congress, *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd,* 130.

44. V. P. Nogin's report to the 12th Party Congress, *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 81. Gill rightly observes that the various high "councils of organizational notables" largely ratified staff proposals: Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System,* 158–59.

45. See *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd,* 702, for the appeals rule.

46. D. Kursky's Accounting Dept. report to the 13th Party Congress, *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd,* 133.

47. D. Kursky's Accounting Dept. report to the 14th Party Congress, *XIV s"ezd,* 88, 92.

48. Rigby, "USSR Incorporated," 531.

49. "Spisok zamov i pomov Orgraspreda i otvetstven. instruktorov TsK," n.d. (1928?), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 547, ll. 56–59.

50. Ibid.; "Shtat orgraspreda Tsentral'nogo Komiteta VKP(b) na 15 noiabria 1928 g.," RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 547, ll. 25–30.

51. "Shtat orgraspreda Tsentral'nogo Komiteta," ll. 28–30.

52. N. I. Yezhov, "Ob"iasnitel'naia zapiska," 28 April 1928, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 614, l. 185.

53. For such actions, among hundreds of examples see "Protokol no. 45 zasedaniia Sekretariata TsK VKP(b) to 22 iuniia 1928 g.," items 22, 23, 27, 28, 35. In the latter case, a personal transfer request from Dzerzhinskaia (widow of Lenin's friend and recently deceased secret police chief Feliks Dzerzhinsky) was declined; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 634, ll. 1–13.

54. Based on a scan of the rosters and conference transcripts in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 13.

5. Sorting Out the Comrades

1. See Kursk delegate P. K. Kaganovich's remarks to the 9th Party Congress in 1920, *Deviatyi s"ezd RKP(b), mart-aprel' 1920 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1960), 62.

2. Antonina Titova, "Registration blank for a member of the KPSS," and autobiography, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 100, 107.

3. Frontiers: "*okraina.*"

4. Yezhov to Molotov, 25 February 1924, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 67, d. 87, l. 233.

5. Political questions: *kharakteristika.* RGANI, f. 5, op. 98, d. 148732, l. 27.

6. Orgburo protocol, 4 January 1926, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 158, l. 5. Several of Yezhov's performance reports had recommended that he enhance his natural proletarian instincts with formal Marxist education. See, for example, RGANI, f. 5, op. 98, d. 148732, ll. 16, 17, 18, 27.

7. Orgburo protocol, 8 February 1926, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 166, ll. 9, 13, 51.

8. Secretariat protocol, 15 March 1926, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 178, l. 189.

9. The phrase was Molotov's, who decades later so remembered Yezhov. Feliks Ivanovich Chuev, *Molotov: Poluderzhavnyi vlastelin* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 1999), 472. (This is an updated and corrected version of Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov and Feliks Ivanovich Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: iz dnevnika F. Chueva* [Moscow: "Terra," 1991].)

10. As the party's First General Secretary in overall charge of personnel, this had also been one of Stalin's paths to power.

11. Yezhov appears on a list of 127 people taking Marxism courses at the Communist Academy in a list of the CC Secretariat marked "conspiratorial," a secret designation for CC documents. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 178, l. 189.

12. A. Fadeev, "Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov," unpublished manuscript, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 77–78.

13. Kurskom report to Communist Academy, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 234, ll. 155, 159–60, 164. Yezhov's 225 rubles per month was not meager; no student was paid more, and even Central Committee department heads received the same salary. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 547, l. 28.

14. B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit.*

Ezhov i Ezhovshchina, 1936–1938 (St. Petersburg: Petrovskii Fond, 1998), 27–28, believe that Yezhov met Moskvin at the 14th Party Congress in December 1925. This seems unlikely. At the congress, Moskvin was a prominent Bolshevik leader at the center of the current Stalinist struggle with the Zinoviev Leningrad opposition. Yezhov, on the other hand, was a minor delegate from Kazakhstan who did not even have voting privileges at the meeting.

15. "O rabote t. Yezhova N. I.," Secretariat protocol, 14 July 1927, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 310, ll. 9, 138.

16. V. P. Nogin's report to the 12th Party Congress, *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), 17–25 aprelia 1923 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1960), 81; D. Kursky's report to the 13th Party Congress, *Trinadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), Mai 1924 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1963), 131; Kursky's report to the 14th Party Congress, *XIV s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b), 18–31 dekabria 1925 g. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1926), 88–92. Gill calls these higher bodies "councils of organizational notables which rested upon a hierarchy of bureaucrats in the secretarial machinery." Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 158–59.

17. "Shtat orgraspreda Tsentral'nogo Komiteta VKP(b) na 15 noiabria 1928 g.," RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 547, ll. 28–30. Moskvin's formal title was *zaveduiushchii*, chief or head. The total of forty-four responsible workers under him does not include clerical secretaries, file clerks, archivists, and other technical personnel. The entire staff of Orgraspred was seventy-eight persons.

18. Ibid., ll. 56–59.

19. Yezhov to Orgburo, 25 August 1927, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 203, ll. 141–42.

20. Voronezh Province Party Committee to Yezhov, 22 September 1927, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 15, l. 128.

21. Confirmation of the date of Yezhov's promotion has not been located in the archives, but by early December he was listed as a deputy chief of Orgraspred on the roster of delegates to the 15th Party Congress.

Piatnadtsatyi s"ezd VKP(b), dekabr' 1927 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet. (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1962), 2: 1522.

22. Lev Emmanuilovich Razgon, *Nepridumannoe: povest' v rasskazakh* (Moscow: "Kniga," 1989), 13–14. Razgon writes that Moskvin had spotted Yezhov in the provinces and brought him to Moscow, giving him the position of Orgraspred instructor in 1927 (12). Briukhanov and Shoshkov repeat the story, taking it from Razgon; Briukhanov and Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit*, 30–31. We have found no record that Yezhov ever served as an instructor in Orgraspred, or that Moskvin had anything to do with Yezhov's arrival in Moscow, which, as we have seen, seems to have been engineered by Yezhov himself.

23. Briukhanov and Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit*, 32.

24. N. I. Yezhov, "Ob"iasnitel'naia zapiska," n.d., RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 614, l. 142.

25. "Spisok zamov i pomov Orgraspreda i otvetstven. instruktorov TsK," RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 547, l. 56.

26. See his various letters, notes, and remarks at Orgraspred conferences in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 496, l. 223; op. 113, d. 203, ll. 141–42; d. 610, l. 101; d. 614, ll. 142, 185; d. 616, l. 134.

27. Although other Orgraspred responsible workers did so as well, Yezhov seems to have done rather more than his share. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 614, ll. 142, 185; d. 616, l. 119; d. 628, l. 236; d. 634, l. 6.

28. Quoted in Razgon, *Nepridumannoe* 14.

29. "Zasedanie komissii O.B. TsK po voprosy o proverke sostava i merakh po ukrepleniiu rabotnikov sel'skogo khoziaistva to 23/XII–29," RGASPI, f. 17, op. 74, d. 2, ll. 1–2.

30. Orgraspred conference, c. January 1928, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 496, ll. 161–62. Yezhov's speech was always terribly ungrammatical and elliptical, requiring numerous insertions in translation.

31. Ibid., ll. 27–28.

32. Ibid., l. 29.

33. Ibid., ll. 29–30.

34. Orgraspred conference, 14 August 1928, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 69, d. 510, ll. 2, 3, 16.

35. Voronezh Gubkom memo to Orgraspred CC, 7 September 1927, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 15, l. 128.

36. Yezhov's name does not appear on Stalin's office calendar until his appointment as Orgraspred chief in November 1930. Stalin rarely attended meetings of the Orgburo or the Secretariat, and a search of the protocols of those organizations has located very few meetings at which both were present.

37. R. W. Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil, 1929–1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 240–41.

38. Politburo protocol, 15 December 1929, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 768, l. 4.

39. Ibid.

6. Yezhov on the Job

"Kadry reshayut vse" — Cadres decide everything — was the title of a highly publicized Stalin speech in 1935, and it became a widely promulgated slogan in the 1930s. It does not mean that party cadres decided policy questions; a more accurate, if less pithy, interpretation would be "personnel allocation is the most important factor."

1. On collectivization generally see Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization* (New York: Norton, 1975); R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture, 1929–1930* (London: Macmillan, 1980); and Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

2. Prikazy Narkomzem SSSR, *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki* (hereafter RGAE), f. 7486, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 32, 77, 85, 90.

3. For examples of these routine appointments, see RGAE, f. 7486, op. 1, d. 13.

4. Yezhov to Yenukidze, 30 November 1930, RGAE, f. 7486, op. 39, d. 17, l. 67.

5. See Yezhov to the Council of Labor and Defense, 10 October 1930, RGAE, f. 7486, op. 19, d. 52, ll. 161–62.

6. For examples of his reports to the Collegium of Narkomzem, see RGAE, f. 7486, op. 19, d. 9, l. 189.

7. RGAE, f. 7486, op. 1, d. 2, l. 126. At about this time, the Yezhovs separated. Antonina continued her career in agricultural research and lived until 1988. Around 1930 Yezhov married Yevgenya Gladuna, a typist at the newspaper *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*. She later edited the popular journal *USSR Under Construction* and ran a literary salon in their apartment that attracted such leading writers as Isaac Babel and Mikhail Kol'tsov. She came under suspicion in 1938 (at the same time as Yezhov) for talking too much about politics with her guests. She committed suicide on 23 November 1938, after writing to Stalin protesting her innocence. Virtually all her literary guests and friends were arrested and were executed, along with Yezhov, in early 1940. See Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895–1940* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002), 16–17, 120, 68–69, 90–91.

8. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 1 November 1922. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, l. 14.

9. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 13–14. On the cultural revolution of the period, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

10. Yezhov to V. M. Molotov, 16 February 1930, RGAE, f. 7486, op. 39, d. 10, l. 59.

11. Quotation marks in original. Yezhov used the word *prorabotka,* which indeed means study but which in Stalinist documents sometimes carries the connotation of endless or inconclusive examination of a question: working it to death. Yezhov's intercession with Molotov may have succeeded. The first Higher Courses for leading workers in Narkomzem USSR opened on 20 June 1930, with an enrollment of 152 students. "Prikaz Narkomzema," 15 June 1930, RGAE, f. 7486, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 58–59.

12. See his order in RGAE, f. 7486, op. 1, d. 11, l. 68.

13. RGAE, f. 7486, op. 19, d. 9, ll. 214–15.

14. Yezhov to CC, 12 April 1930, RGAE, f. 17, op. 39, d. 10, l. 118.

15. Yezhov to Moscow Party Committee (copied to Orgraspred), 14 June 1930, RGAE, f. 17, op. 39, d. 10, l. 120.

16. See, for example, his letters to the Orgburo and Secretariat, 4, 16, and 30 October, RGAE, f. 17, op. 39, d. 10, ll. 195, 201, 213.

17. Yezhov order, 26 March 1930, RGAE, f. 7486, op. 1, d. 11, l. 85.

18. See the blank form in RGAE, f. 7486, op. 1, d. 10, l. 51.

19. Stenogram of Yezhov conference with peasants, RGAE, f. 7486, op. 79, d. 24, l. 9.

20. Politburo protocol, 14 November 1930, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 804, l. 14.

21. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 13.

22. Ibid., 15–21. *Chistka* literally means a sweeping or cleaning.

23. Politburo protocols, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 808, l. 2; d. 1994, l. 4; d. 2068, l. 3; d. 2059, l. 8.

24. Ibid., f. 17, op. 3, d. 808, l. 2; d. 807, l. 12; d. 1928, l. 5; d. 1929, l. 5; d. 1932, l. 4; d. 857, l. 45; d. 856, l. 2; d. 1975, l. 4; d. 1994, l. 6; d. 2057, l. 2; d. 2068, l. 1; op. 162, d. 9, ll. 161, 165; d. 10, l. 45; d. 11, ll. 48, 63; d. 15, ll. 95, 168, 2; d. 14, l. 96; op. 120, d. 104, l. 1.

25. Ibid., op. 3, d. 1977, ll. 2, 4; op. 162, d. 11, l. 122; d. 12, ll. 39–40; d. 14, l. 44; d. 15, ll. 80, 113.

26. Ibid., op. 3, d. 1928, l. 9; d. 1988, l. 6; d. 2001, l. 6; d. 2002, l. 9; d. 2021, ll. 12, 13.

27. Ibid., d. 2037, l. 13; d. 2043, l. 17; op. 162, d. 9, l. 124; d. 15, l. 2.

28. Ibid., op. 120, d. 52, ll. 188–200. My thanks to Lynne Viola for this reference.

29. Ibid., op. 3, d. 942, l. 2, and discussion in J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 159.

30. For examples of his reports to the Orgburo and Secretariat, see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 299, l. 18.

31. Yezhov speech to Raspredotdel workers, January 1933: RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 1–10.

32. Yezhov speech to conference of ORPO workers, 16 August 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 6–8, 24.

33. See J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chapter 2, for a description of party purges. See also T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917–1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 204, for a discussion of these nonpolitical targets.

34. Politburo protocols, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 922, ll. 50–55.

35. P. N. Pospelov et al., *Istoriia Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow: Gosizdat Politlitury, 1971), 283.

36. See Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* for further discussion.

37. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 100, 101. Yezhov spoke generally on the screening to a Raspredotdel conference; RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 2.

38. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, dd. 98, 99. For detailed examination of the suspicion of foreign Communists, see William Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates? The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), chapters 3–4; Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998).

39. Yezhov to Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich, 19 April 1934, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 82, d. 905, l. 19.

40. Politburo protocols, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 2030, l. 6; d. 2044, l. 5; d. 2056, l. 8.

41. See, for example, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 2024, l. 1; d. 2044, ll. 6, 26; f. 671, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 1–5.

42. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 20, 44.

43. B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit. Ezhov i Ezhovshchina, 1936–1938* (St. Petersburg: Petrovskii Fond, 1998), 160.

44. Orgburo protocols, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 163, d. 924, l. 20.

45. Yezhov to Kaganovich, April 1934, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 52, ll. 1–5; Shkiryatov to Yezhov, ibid., d. 268, l. 109.

46. For examples see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 114, l. 17 (Zimin to Kaganovich to Yezhov); f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, l. 10 (Amosov to Stalin to Yezhov); d. 52, ll. 48–52 (Krupskaia to Stalin to Yezhov).

47. Beria to Yezhov, 16 February 1934, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, ll. 4–8.

48. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 30, 83–86, 165–71.

49. Litvinov to Yezhov, 9, September 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, ll. 99–100.

50. Akulov to Yezhov, 28 April 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 57, l. 11.

51. Sudnitsin to Yezhov, 10 February 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 268, ll. 4–5.

52. For examples, see RGASPI, f. 268, op. 1, ll. 1–17, 35–36, 93–94.

53. See, for example, the requests in RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 22, 52.

54. Krupskaia to Stalin to Yezhov on schools and museums, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 52, ll. 48–52; Angarov to Yezhov on dispute with Bubnov on schools, ibid., ll. 87–89.

55. I analyze the rise and fall of these plenipotentiaries in J. Arch Getty, *Pragmatists and Puritans: The Rise and Fall of the Party Control Commission* (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1997).

56. Sheboldaev to Yezhov, 6 February 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 89, ll. 3–5; Undated Yezhov notes on conversations with Kaganovich, ibid., d. 52, ll. 14–20.

57. Frenkel' to Stalin and Yezhov, 22 May 1937, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 89, ll. 127–30.

58. Yezhov notes, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 89, ll. 221–58.

59. Yezhov to Stalin, 26 March 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, ll. 18–19. Sometimes Stalin asked a question or two. When in March 1934 Yezhov approved Ammosov's request for more party workers for the railroads, Stalin jotted to Yezhov, "What's this about?" Yezhov explained and Stalin approved.

60. Yezhov to Stalin, n.d., RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, l. 97.

61. We have found no cases in the archival sources in which Stalin disapproved one of Yezhov's personnel recommendations.

62. See J. Arch Getty, "Afraid of Their Shadows: The Bolshevik Recourse to Terror, 1932–1938," in *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Neue Wege der Forschung,* ed. Manfred Hildermeier and Elisabeth

Mueller-Luckner (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998); Gabor T. Rittersporn, "The Omnipresent Conspiracy: On Soviet Imagery of Politics and Social Relations in the 1930s," in *Stalinism: Its Nature and Aftermath—Essays in Honour of Moshe Lewin,* ed. Nicholas Lampert and Gabor T. Rittersporn (London: Macmillan, 1992).

63. Politburo protocols, 3 December 1934, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 17, l. 87. The "Law of 1 December 1934" recalled a similar emergency procedure that followed the assassination of Soviet ambassador to Poland Vorovsky in 1927, when measures were implemented to execute suspects without prosecution, defense, or appeal. See V. N. Khaustov, "Deiatel'nost' organov gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti NKVD SSSR (1934–1942)," Ph.D. diss., Akademiia FSB, 1997, 95.

7. Yezhov and the Kirov Assassination

1. "Vokrug ubistva Kirova," *Pravda,* 4 November 1991; A. Yakovlev, "O dekabr'skoi tragedii 1934 goda," *Pravda,* 28 January 1991.

2. In 1956 Khrushchev had formed a commission chaired by N. Shvernik to investigate the Kirov murder. It "found nothing against Stalin. . . . Khrushchev refused to publish it—it was of no use to him." F. Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym* (Moscow: "Terra," 1991), 353.

3. J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 140–57; Adam Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (New York: Viking, 1973), 375–88; Robert Conquest, *Stalin and the Kirov Murder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), appendix; J. Arch Getty, "The Politics of Repression Revisited," in *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives,* ed. J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 40–62; S. V. Kulashov, O. V. Volobuev, E. I. Pivovar, et al., *Nashe otechestvo. chast' II.* (Moscow: Mysl', 1991); Iu. N. Zhukov, "Sledstvie i sudebnye protsessy po delu ob ubiistve Kirova," *Voprosy istorii,* no. 2 (2000); Boris Starkov, "Ar'ergardnye boi staroi partiinoi gvardii," in *Oni ne molchali,* ed. A. V. Afanas'ev

(Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), 215; O. V. Khlevniuk, *1937-i: Stalin, NKVD i sovetskoe obshchestvo* (Moscow: Izd-vo "Respublika," 1992), 46; Anna Kirilina, *Rikoshet, ili skol'ko chelovek bylo ubito vystrelom v Smol'nom* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvo "Znanie," 1993). The best and most recent summary of the evidence pro and con is M. Lenoe, "Did Stalin Kill Kirov and Does It Matter?" *Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 2 (2002).

4. Of course, if Stalin had engineered the assassination through the Leningrad NKVD, the best way to organize a cover-up inquiry would have been to leave them in charge.

5. The fear was *vedomstvo,* institutional loyalty and the inclination of chiefs to protect their subordinates and the reputation of their organization.

6. See Leonid Naumov, *Bor'ba v rukovodstve NKVD v 1936–38 gg.* (Moscow: self-published, 2003).

7. Yezhov's notebook, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 271, ll. 560, 560 ob.

8. See *Leningradskaia pravda,* 6, 8, 11, 12, 18 December 1934 for reports. Such retaliations repeated the spasmodic executions of 1927, when Soviet ambassador to Poland Vorovsky had been assassinated. See V. N. Khaustov, "Deiatel'nost organov gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti NKVD SSSR (1934–1942)," Ph.D. diss., Akademiia FSB, 1997, 95.

9. *Leningradskaia pravda,* 20 March 1935.

10. Yagoda to Stalin, 26 February 1935, *Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossisskoi Federatsii* (hereafter APRF), f. 3, d. 58, l. 174/41; Yezhov to Stalin, n.d., RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 147, ll. 52–53.

11. Yezhov had approvingly summarized Zakovsky's report of 16 February in a memo to Stalin, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 147, ll. 49–53.

12. Prokofev and Zakovsky to Yezhov, January–March, 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 129, ll. 10–30, 36–44, 92, 145–61.

13. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 7 (1989).

14. Agranov to Stalin, 4 December 1934, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 114, ll. 8–10. Leningrad had been G. E. Zinoviev's power base for his struggle against Stalin in the late 1920s, and these three had worked then in the Leningrad party apparatus.

15. At the top of the written statement, the time is given as "con-

ducted at 16:45," an impossibly early fifteen minutes after the shooting, because we know from another document (RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 113, l. 1) that the order for her arrest was not even given until 18:20. At the bottom of the interrogation record, the time is given as 19:10, which is probably correct. Interrogations of Draule, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 114, ll. 1–5. Draule was subsequently executed for complicity in the assassination.

16. Yezhov's notebooks, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 271, l. 541. For his close supervision of the interrogations in general, see ibid., ll. 529–52.

17. The following account is taken from records of Nikolaev's interrogations on 5, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18 December 1934 in Yezhov's files, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 114, ll. 8–10, 11, 16, 54, 58, 65, 68, 76–94, 180, 214.

18. See their interrogations in Yezhov's files, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 114, 120–21, 126–28, 134, 136.

19. This was the case with Shatsky, Rumiantsev, and another accused conspirator named Yuskin. In addition to their interrogations in the previous note, see the transcript of their closed trial in RGASPI, f. 617, op. 1, d. 128.

20. Interrogation of Zinoviev, RGASPI, f. 617, op. 1, d. 134, ll. 164–65.

21. Kotolynov's testimony in RGASPI, f. 617, op. 1, d. 128, ll. 62–72.

22. *Pravda,* 23 December 1934, 16 January 1935; *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 7 (1989), 70; I. V. Kurilov, N. N. Mikhailov, and V. P. Naumov, eds., *Reabilitatsiia: Politicheskie protsessy 30–50-x godov* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), 166.

23. Yezhov to Stalin, 20 February 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 148, ll. 18–21.

24. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 135, 137, 140–41, 144–49.

25. Ibid., dd. 150–60.

26. Yezhov to Stalin, December 1934, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 52, l. 21.

27. Volkova file in Yezhov notes, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 116, ll. 2–35.

28. Agranov report on Borisov autopsy, RGASPI, f. 617, op. 1, d. 114, l. 13. For the report of the autopsy on Borisov, see ibid., ll. 48–51.

29. According to a Politburo document, the Leningrad NKVD had "put their weapons aside and [fallen] asleep." A. Yakovlev et al., *Lubianka. Salin i VChK-GPU-OGPU-NKVD, Yanvar' 1922-Dekabr' 1936* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003), 592–93. My thanks to Igal Halfin for this reference.

30. *Pravda,* 23 January 1935. N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin, eds., *Kto rukovodil NKVD, 1934–1941: Spravochnik* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1999), 296.

31. Khaustov, "Deiatel'nost organov," 131.

32. Ibid., 38.

33. Yezhov to Stalin, 23 January 1935, RGASPI, f. 617, op. 1, d. 118, l. 25. Typically, reports and memos written to Stalin in response to his request or order contain phrases like "in response to your order," wording that is absent in Yezhov's letter.

34. Ibid., ll. 6, 29.

35. Ibid., l. 32.

36. Ibid., l. 34.

37. The meeting's transcript is RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 5.

38. Yezhov to Stalin, 23 January 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 2, d. 118, l. 1. Yezhov's speech to the NKVD chiefs is in d. 5. See also Khaustov, "Deiatel'nost organov," 340.

39. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 9, l. 54.

40. RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 174, ll. 137–38.

41. See Zakovsky speech to the February 1937 CC Plenum, RGASPI, f. 17, op, 2, d. 598, ll. 2–4, 12–18. For Agranov's recollections, see ibid., ll. 23–26, 29–35, 41–42. See also Kurilov, Mikhailov, and Naumov, *Reabilitatsiia,* 153–54, 84, and Yezhov's statement at his own trial in *Moskovskie novosti,* no. 5 (1994). At his trial in 1938, Yagoda's bureaucratic defense in 1935 would be interpreted not as guarding his authority but as a treasonous attempt to protect the terrorists Yezhov was trying to uncover.

42. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 7 (1989), 85.

43. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 95–115.

44. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 273, ll. 1–65, cited from the first 1935 draft. In later drafts of the book in 1937, this section was rewritten to

make Zinoviev and Kamenev not only the direct organizers of the Kirov murder but spies and wreckers as well. Obviously, this interpretation had not been foreseen in 1935.

45. The party purge had been planned in late 1934 before Kirov's assassination, but the killing served to put it higher on the agenda. Because Yezhov was not involved in the political education campaign, it will not be treated here. See Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges,* for a discussion of that effort, in which A. A. Zhdanov played a prominent role.

8. Enemies Large and Small

1. Orgburo protocol, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 961, l. 16.

2. Yezhov speeches, 1935–36, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 67–129.

3. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 198, ll. 1–3; d. 211, ll. 20–23; f. 671, op. 1, dd. 47, 56.

4. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 7 (1989), 65–93.

5. Tsybulnik to Yezhov, 22 March 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 1–5.

6. Yezhov notation to secretaries, 22 March 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 103, l. 1.

7. The group consisted of Yezhov, Shkiryatov, and Belenky. Their report to Stalin is dated 29 March, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 1–5.

8. Closed Letter of Central Committee, 19 July 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 106, l. 28.

9. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 108–11.

10. In the draft outline of his speech, Yezhov listed seventeen points he wanted to make. The Yenukidze matter was number fourteen. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 42–47.

11. Kamenev's real name was Rozenfeld. Kamenev was his revolutionary alias.

12. Interrogation of Zinoviev, 19 March 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 109, l. 34.

13. Interrogation of Kamenev, 11 April 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 111, l. 19.

14. Interrogations of Zinoviev, 19 March 1935, and Kamenev, 11 April

1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 111, ll. 19–26; d. 109, ll. 35–59.

15. Interrogation of Kamenev, 11 April 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 111, l. 26.

16. Yezhov speech to Central Committee Plenum, 6 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 542, ll. 55–86.

17. See, for example, the December 1936 plenum at which Yezhov directly accused Bukharin of treason. Faced with Bukharin's denial, Stalin sent Yezhov back to the drawing board to get more "evidence." J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 303–26.

18. Yagoda speech to Central Committee Plenum, 6 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 542, ll. 175–78.

19. Yenukidze to Yezhov, 29 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 105, ll. 127–34. Yezhov neither quoted nor mentioned the letter in his speech.

20. Yenukidze speech to Central Committee Plenum, 6 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 542, ll. 125–41.

21. Kaganovich speech to Central Committee Plenum, 6 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 542, ll. 158–59.

22. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1. d. 106, ll. 1–26.

23. Uncorrected stenogram, Central Committee Plenum, 6 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 547, ll. 69–70.

24. Printed stenographic report, Central Committee Plenum, 6 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 544, l. 22.

25. Stalin to Kaganovich, September 1935, RGASPI, f. 81, op. 3, d. 100, ll. 92–93.

26. Stalin comments to Central Committee Plenum, 3 June 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 572, ll. 73–75. Readmitting Yenukidze then (June 1936) was a curious irony. For it was at that plenum that the Politburo announced the upcoming capital trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev for the assassination of Kirov, the theory Yezhov had unsuccessfully put forward at the plenum that expelled Yenukidze.

27. Yezhov manuscript "From Fractionalism to Open Counterrevo-

lution (on the Zinovievist Counterrevolutionary Organization," RGASPI, f. 671, op, 1, d. 273, ll. 36–37, 40.

28. Already in late 1933 the Orgburo had discussed an operation whereby members would exchange old party cards for new ones that would be properly and exactly registered: RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 5–7. Nothing was done then, and the matter was proposed again in November 1934 before the Kirov assassination. See J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chapters 2 and 3, for a discussion of the disarray in party files and lack of control over membership cards in the early 1930s.

29. Orgburo protocols, 7 December 1933, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 12, l. 27. Shkiriatov represented the Control Commission, Malenkov the cadres office, and Kosarev the Komsomol.

30. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 2077, l. 3. For Yezhov's draft of the order see RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 28, ll. 62–94. See also Smolensk Archive file 499, ll. 308–9.

31. One regional secretary said that Yezhov or his staff called almost every day for progress reports, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 561, l. 164.

32. For the reports to Stalin, see RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 28, ll. 141–73, 186–211, 234–38.

33. Stenogram of Conference, 25 September 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 179, ll. 34–77.

34. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 184, ll. 64–65; d. 181, ll. 153–55.

35. For examples see his orders on Smolensk, 23 June 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 32, ll. 1–6; and on Azov–Black Sea territory, 31 July 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 590, l. 2.

36. Previous screenings had been conducted either by the control commissions (before 1933) or by special ad hoc purge commissions (1933).

37. Yezhov frequently noted, in 1935 but not later, that allowing party committees to purge themselves was a good idea. See, for example, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 77, l. 4.

38. By the beginning of 1937, Yezhov was interpreting regional secretaries' protection of their own people as treason: "protecting enemies of

the people." At that time, two very prominent regional party leaders in the Ukraine (P. P. Postyshev) and Azov–Black Sea (B. P. Sheboldaev) were demonstrably fired for this. See Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* chapter 9.

39. The famous Aleksei Stakhanov, the shock worker who gave his name to the Stakhanovist movement, was one of those who had lost his party card. On 17 June 1936 NKVD department head Molchanov wrote to Yezhov that Stakhanov was always fighting with his wife and "could not exclude" the possibility that his wife had sold it. His party secretary suggested a divorce, but Stakhanov refused. Molchanov to Yezhov, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 253, ll. 122–23.

40. Yezhov memo, 8 February 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 111, 179.

41. See, for example, Yezhov to Stalin, July–October 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 28, ll. 181, 235.

42. Yezhov speech to Central Committee Plenum, 8 December 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 177, ll. 20–22. This number is almost certainly incomplete. A subsequent internal Central Committee memo of February 1937 inexplicably gave a figure of 263,885 proverka expulsions; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 278, l. 2. It was not uncommon in this period for the same agencies to give wildly varying figures for party membership.

43. These new data on NKVD participation in the proverka revise the earlier conclusions in Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges,* where it was argued on the basis of other archives that the police played little role in the operation. See Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* chapter 5.

44. See, for example, the reports on the proverka from Ivanovo and Ukraine: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 184, ll. 60–66.

45. Stenogram of conference, 25 September 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 179, ll. 34–77, 253–68.

46. Ibid.

47. See Yezhov's and Stalin's remarks to the June 1936 plenum of the Central Committee, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 572, ll. 67–75.

48. Central Committee memo, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 278, l. 7.

49. Khlevniuk has written that eventually more than two hundred thousand expelled party members were placed under NKVD surveillance. O. V. Khlevniuk, *1937-i: Stalin, NKVD i sovetskoe obshchestvo* (Moscow: Izdvo "Respublika," 1992), 57. It is difficult to imagine how this was possible. For Yezhov's monitoring of the appeals see RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 29, 40, 92.

50. *Pravda,* 5 June 1936. Apparently for security reasons, it was customary for *Pravda* to announce Central Committee plena only after they had been completed.

51. See, for example, *Pravda,* 7–10 June 1936. Although no CC resolution was passed, there was a "closed letter" sent to party organizations with the new line. Yezhov wrote it. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 99–110.

52. Yezhov speech to Central Committee Plenum, 3 June 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 568, ll. 135–36.

53. Yezhov speech to Central Committee Plenum, 3 June 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 572, l. 67. On the importance of variant texts see Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* esp. chapters 5 and 10.

54. Yezhov Conference on Proverka, 4 March 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 263–64.

55. For Stalin's speech, see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 572, ll. 73–75.

56. Yezhov speech to Central Committee Plenum, 3 June 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 568, ll. 13, 141, 154–55.

57. In the Exchange of Party Documents in 1936 Yezhov got more of what he wanted: expulsions of oppositionists. If in the Proverka only 2.8 percent of those expelled were "Trotskyist/Zinovievist," in the Exchange the number rose to 8.8 percent. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 278, ll. 2–3.

9. Angling for the Job

1. This chapter is limited to Yezhov's role in the events leading up to the full-blown terror of 1937–38. For broader treatments, see O. V. Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro: mekhanizmy politicheskoi vlasti v 1930-e gody* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1996), and J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The*

Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

2. Yezhov file "Unusual Events," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 244.

3. On this point see J. Arch Getty, "Afraid of Their Shadows: The Bolshevik Recourse to Terror, 1932–1938," in *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: Neue Wege der Forschung,* ed. Manfred Hildermeier and Elisabeth Mueller-Luckner (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998).

4. Baulim to A. Ya. Yakovlev, 4 April 1937, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 123, d. 1, ll. 34–35.

5. Politburo resolution, 23 April 1937, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 21, l. 30.

6. Kharitonov to Yezhov, n.d., RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 262, ll. 7–8.

7. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 234; d. 57, ll. 86–89; f. 17, op. 120, d. 264, ll. 1–5; d. 270, ll. 2–3.

8. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 66.

9. Memo, Industrial Department to Yezhov, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 195, ll. 88–89. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, for other instances of Yezhov's high-level personnel refereeing in 1936.

10. Rumiantsev to Yezhov, 27 August 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, l. 88. For other examples of Yezhov's high-level refereeing between top party and state leaders, see RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 91.

11. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 48, ll. 8–9. In his letter, Bukharin addressed Yezhov as "*tezka.*" In Russian this means someone with identical first name and patronymic: both Bukharin and Yezhov were Nikolai Ivanovich. This file contains numerous requests from various persons for Yezhov's permission to travel abroad.

12. French Comintern delegates to Yezhov, 9 July 1935, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 204, ll. 27, 29–30.

13. Yezhov worked through several drafts of his letter to Stalin and apologized for not having had time to interview each participant individually. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 254, ll. 13–15; d. 63, ll. 47–66.

14. Ironically, Yezhov himself would become victim to the xenophobia he had abetted. These approved vacations eventually contributed to Yezhov's undoing. When he himself was arrested and interrogated, he

was forced to admit that he had been recruited by foreign intelligence services while on vacation abroad. See Yezhov's interrogation in APRF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 375, ll. 122–64.

15. Yezhov conference stenograms, February, May 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 63, ll. 67–75, 99–108.

16. For examples, see RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 17–21, 44–45, 56–71, 86–98.

17. Troianovsky to Yezhov, 25 January 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 87, ll. 38–41.

18. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, dd. 98, 99; op. 162, d. 19, ll. 4, 98–100.

19. Manuilsky to Yezhov, 4 January 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 73, ll. 1–3. The same week, Yezhov organized a commission to send first 250, then 300 experienced party workers to "strengthen" NKVD border security in the Far East against former White Guards, Trotskyists, Koreans, and others suspected of spying for the Japanese. The commission was also to examine suspicious backgrounds of workers from the Far Eastern Railroad. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 19, ll. 25, 34.

20. NKVD memo to Yezhov, February 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 73, ll. 4–26.

21. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 70, ll. 62–77.

22. Yezhov to Stalin, 20 February 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 73, ll. 31–37. There are several drafts of Yezhov's letter to Stalin in his archive. It was in the final draft that Yezhov took his swipe at the NKVD.

23. Frinovsky was to become one of Yezhov's chief intimates and deputies at NKVD in 1936–38.

24. CC draft resolution, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 73, ll. 53–57.

25. Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998); A. E. Gur'ianov, ed., *Repressii protiv poliakov i pol'skikh grazhdan* (Moscow: Zveniia, 1997), 33; I. L. Shcherbakova, ed., *Nakazannyi narod: repressii protiv rossiiskikh nemtsev* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1999), 44.

26. Yezhov commission report, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 73, l. 96.

27. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 78, passim. Ostensible accusations in-

cluded suspicion of being a provocateur, connections with suspicious people, suspicion of being a Polish agent, having been expelled from the Polish CP. In June 1936 the Politburo and NKVD forbade any connections between Soviet citizens and German representatives in the USSR.

28. Dmitrov and Manuilsky to Yezhov, 8 June 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 266, l. 73. Delo 266 contains other memos criticizing MOPR and Stasova's leadership.

29. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 84; no. 9 (1989), 36; RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 174, ll. 137–38.

30. Sometimes Agranov even reported directly to Stalin, bypassing his chief, Yagoda. See, for example, his memo to Stalin of 25 April 1935, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 174, l. 33. At the end of December 1938, Agranov was named chief of the Administration of State Security (GUGB) within Yezhov's NKVD, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 983, l. 2.

31. See Yagoda's interrogation, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 176, ll. 59–76.

32. This was the story Yezhov and his friends in the NKVD told at the February–March 1937 plenum of the Central Committee. See Yezhov speech in *Voprosy istorii,* no. 10 (1994), 13–27.

33. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 85. This may have been the time that Stalin forced Yagoda to comply by threatening to "punch him in the nose." Ibid., 69.

34. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 146, 245.

35. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 177.

36. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 82–83. It is not hard to see how V. P. Olberg attracted attention. He was a German citizen with a Honduran passport and permanent residency in the USSR. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 164, l. 268.

37. Yagoda to Stalin, before 8 April 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 163, l. 2.

38. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 82–83.

39. G. E. Prokof'ev to Stalin, 23 February 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 162, ll. 1–7. For the transfer of Trotskyist archives and documents to Yezhov, see Politburo resolution, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 19, l. 78.

40. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 83.

41. RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 193, l. 2.

42. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 85–86.

43. Interrogation of Kamenev, 23–24 July 1936; interrogation of Zinoviev, 26 July 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 170, ll. 125–39, 153–54.

44. "Zaslizhennyi prigovor," forwarded by Molchanov to Yezhov, 4 August 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 172, ll. 497, 525.

45. Politburo protocols, 19 August 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 20, l. 52. See also RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 93, l. 21, for Stalin's approval. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 189–99, for Yezhov's files on the trial.

46. Stalin to Kaganovich and Molotov, 6 September 1936, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 94, l. 31.

47. Ivo Banac, ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933–1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 51, Dmitrov's diary entry for 11 February 1937. Stalin also reviewed in advance the verdicts to be handed down by the court. An early draft of the verdict included the phrase "the sentence is final and no appeal is possible." Stalin noted that this would create a bad impression abroad, even though it was true, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 93, l. 61.

48. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS,* no. 8 (1989), 100–115.

49. The left and right oppositionists had in fact formed a secret "bloc" in 1932, but there is no evidence that terror was part of its program then. See J. Arch Getty, "Trotsky in Exile: The Founding of the Fourth Internationale," *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 1 (1986). It is not clear when Yagoda's NKVD learned about it, although his agents surely suspected it.

50. Memo on Kotsiubinsky, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 240, ll. 1–28.

51. Piatakov's name had come up more or less innocently in the testimony of some of the defendants at the August 1936 trial.

52. Balitsky to Yezhov, February–August 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 239, ll. 1–59. The series of investigations and interrogations that eventually framed and condemned Piatakov included securing the testimony of several of his friends, coworkers, and secretaries. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 175.

53. Balitsky to Yezhov, 10 September 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d.

239, l. 185. Balitsky used the familiar second-person "ty" with Yezhov from this point.

54. For background on these and other events in 1936, see Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* chapter 7; Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895–1940* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002), chapter 2; Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro,* chapter 5.

55. Balitsky to Yezhov, 30 December 1934, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 240, l. 30.

56. Since the spring of 1936 Yezhov had been "verifying" the staff of the government newspaper *Izvestiia,* which the former rightist Bukharin edited. After weeding out numerous former supporters of Zinoviev and Trotsky, Yezhov ominously concluded that Bukharin bore responsibility for the oppositionist "clutter" and general lack of vigilance. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 49.

57. The effort to accuse and arrest Bukharin and Rykov broke down. At a confrontation between the arrested Sokol'nikov and Bukharin, the former refused to testify that he personally knew of Bukharin and Rykov's participation in the conspiracy. Tomsky, the other supposed middleman, was dead. Procurator Vyshinsky therefore concluded, "Therefore it can be established that the basic source to confirm Zinoviev, Kamenev, [I. I.] Reingold, and Sokolnikov on the membership of Bukharin and Rykov in the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc is Tomsky, the questioning of whom is impossible because of his death. . . . The investigation is closed." RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 176, ll. 69–70. Yezhov's moves against Bukharin and Rykov would receive another setback at the December 1936 Central Committee plenum, when Stalin rejected Yezhov's evidence against the two rightists and postponed a decision. See Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* 303–30.

58. The final version of Yezhov's letter is found in Stalin's personal archive: RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 729, ll. 81–84.

59. Yezhov's rough draft is in his archive: RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 52, ll. 190–94. O. V. Khlevniuk, *Stalinskoe Politbiuro v 30-e gody: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Airo—XX, 1995), 205–6, and Jansen

and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 51, correctly note that Yezhov never sent this letter to Stalin but did not find the version in Stalin's archive that Yezhov actually sent. Here and below, sections of Yezhov's first draft that he removed before sending the letter to Stalin are in italics.

60. By accident or as the result of his investigations, Yezhov was close to the truth here in his assessment of the 1932 situation. Getty, "Trotsky in Exile." Testimony on the 1932 bloc was also provided by Sokol'nikov, Uglanov, and others. See RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 175, ll. 216–30; d. 176, l. 2.

61. Yezhov was right. See the story of Stalin's contradictory and hesitant moves against Bukharin in Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* 303–30, 364–419.

62. Even so, Yezhov's recommendations in the final letter went beyond what Stalin was willing to approve at the time. Although mass shootings without trial and according to "simplified procedure" would take place, the victims would be kulaks, common criminals, and ordinary citizens, and Stalin would not order this until July 1937. See J. Arch Getty, "'Excesses Are Not Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002). Yezhov's categories were approved by the Politburo only a month later, and at that time Stalin removed Yezhov's first category recommendation for summary executions. See the discussion in Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror,* 273.

63. Particularly harsh repressive policies were always presented as originating somewhere else. The bloody mass operations of 1937 and the shooting of the Polish officers at Katyn in 1940 were posed as "proposals" of the NKVD, not of Stalin. Even dekulakization and collectivization in 1929–30 were said to have resulted from a spontaneous upsurge from below, and when disaster forced Stalin to beat a retreat with his "Dizzyness with Success" article in 1930, it was therefore possible to blame excesses on others.

64. Feliks Ivanovich Chuev, Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov, and Albert Resis, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics, Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 1993), 257.

65. The 1936 testimony of Dreitser incriminating himself and other Trotskyists was one of the papers on which Yagoda had written "nonsense" and "impossible." Yezhov's implication then and later was that Yagoda was protecting Dreitser to avoid expanding Yezhov's inquiries.

66. Dukelsky to Yagoda and Yezhov, 9 March 1935–13 September 1936, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 1–26.

67. As a Yezhov client, Dukelsky might have been expected to fall with his sponsor in late 1938. But he was lucky, after a fashion. In the summer of 1937 he was involved in an automobile accident that required long recuperation. When he recovered, in March 1938, he became chairman of the Cinema Committee of the USSR. During the war he was a plenipotentiary of the State Defense Committee, and later deputy RSFSR minister of justice. He retired in 1953 and died peacefully in his bed in 1960. See N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin, eds., *Kto rukovodil NKVD, 1934–1941: Spravochnik* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1999), 179–80.

68. Interrogation of Molchanov, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 174, ll. 134–37.

69. Stalin, Zhdanov telegram to Politburo, 25 September 1936, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 94, l. 123. The appointment was confirmed by the Politburo officially on 11 October 1936, when Stalin returned from vacation. Politburo protocols, 11 October 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 36, d. 981, l. 50.

70. RGASPI, f. 85, op. 27, d. 93, ll. 12–13.

71. Stalin to Yagoda, 26 September 1936, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 94, l. 131.

72. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 56.

73. See, for example, Politburo protocols, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 2101, l. 3.

74. Mikhail Shreider, *NKVD iznutri: Zapiski chekista* (Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 1995), 35.

75. A. M. Larina, *Nezabyvaemoe* (Moscow: APN, 1989), 269–70.

76. Kaganovich to Ordzhonikidze, 30 September 1936, RGASPI, f. 85, op. 27, d. 93, ll. 12–13.

Conclusion

1. Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner: People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895–1940* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002), 203–11, who write that "In the present state of our knowledge this is indeed the most plausible explanation."

2. Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Granta, 2000).

3. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 203, 208.

4. On resistance see Lynne Viola, *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), and Jeffrey J. Rossman, *Worker Resistance Under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). For accommodation see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). On subjectivity and belief, see Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), and Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

5. Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896–1948* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Derek Watson, *Molotov: A Biography* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

6. Khlevniuk reminds us that each Politburo member had groups of followers in the provinces and in the *vedomstvy* he controlled. O. V. Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro: mekhanizmy politicheskoi vlasti v 1930-e gody* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1996), 262–63. Stalin frequently acted as referee among them and their empires.

7. For a discussion of decision making among Stalin and his lieutenants, see J. Arch Getty, "Stalin as Prime Minister: Power and the Politburo," in *Stalin: A New History,* ed. Sarah Davies and James Harris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83–107.

8. RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 779, ll. 23, 29–31, 33. See also O. V. Khlev-

niuk et al., eds., *Stalin i Kaganovich: perepiska. 1931–1936 gg.* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), 21; Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro,* 85.

9. See Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro,* chapter 2. Khlevniuk quotes Moshe Lewin's remark about Stalin converting his lieutenants into "slaves" (245).

10. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 209.

11. Yezhov to Stalin, n.d., RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 265, ll. 29–41. At the Politburo session that attacked him for stalling certain investigations and protecting people, Yezhov took notes: RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 271, ll. 1–79. See also V. N. Khaustov, "Deiatel'nost organov gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti NKVD SSSR (1934–1942)," Ph.D. diss., Akademiia FSB, 1997.

12. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 203.

13. This argument is developed in J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), J. Arch Getty and Roberta Thompson Manning, eds., *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and a great many other works on other aspects of Stalinist policy making.

14. N. I. Yezhov, "From Fractionalism to Open Counterrevolution (on the Zinovievist Counterrevolutionary Organization)," RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, dd. 273–86. Compare, for example, d. 273, ll. 59–65, with ll. 597–699. As Stalin gradually decided that the conspiracy went beyond Zinoviev, the manuscript's title was changed to "From Fractionalism to Fascism."

15. Politburo resolution "On Comrade Yezhov," RGASPI, d. 17, op. 3, d. 951, l. 1. See also Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 124.

16. Boterbloem, *Life and Times.*

17. For Yezhov's correspondence with these people, see RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270.

18. For some of Mints's notes, see RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 1–39.

19. Fadeev's unpublished manuscript, "Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov: Syn nuzhdy i bor'by" [Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov: Son of necessity and struggle], is in RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 69–86.

20. *Pravda*, 3 December 1937.

21. Compare the drafts in RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 270, ll. 40–41.

22. V. K. Vinogradov et al., eds., *Genrikh Yagoda. Narkom vnutrennix del SSSR, Generalnyi komissar godsudarstvennoi bezopasnosti. Sbornik dokumentov* (Kazan: Karachaev-Cherkesskaia Otdeleniia Rossiiskoi Inzhenernoi Akademii, 2000), 440–41.

23. Ibid., 89–93.

24. B. B. Briukhanov and E. N. Shoshkov, *Opravdaniiu ne podlezhit. Ezhov i Ezhovshchina, 1936–1938* (St. Petersburg: Petrovskii Fond, 1998), 133–34.

25. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner*, 195, 197–98.

26. For examples see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 114, l. 17 (Zimin to Kaganovich to Yezhov); RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 18, l. 10 (Amosov to Stalin to Yezhov); RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 52, ll. 48–52 (Krupskaia to Stalin to Yezhov).

27. Stalin to Yezhov, 11 July 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 52, l. 30.

28. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner*, 196.

29. Stalin to Yezhov, 19 September 1935. Stalin's personal concern was noted in a Politburo resolution: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 163, d. 1079, l. 63.

30. Stalin asked for periodic reports on Yezhov's health and treatments. See, for example, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 84, l. 14.

31. Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

32. See Moshe Lewin's discussion of the contradiction between statism and arbitrariness as "two models in one." Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: New Press, 1994), 280–85.

33. Stenogram of Yezhov conference, RGAE, f. 7486, op. 79, d. 24, l. 9.

34. Ibid., l. 24.

35. Of course, such an understanding and personalized practice was based on patronage, patrons, and clients—familiar features of the Soviet (and post-Soviet) systems. Stalin was the supreme patron of the system; his clients were themselves patrons of those below them, and

so forth. To a considerable extent, the ubiquity of patronage and personal favoritism mitigated against the selection of personnel strictly according to qualifications.

36. Yezhov speech to conference of ORPO workers, 16 August 1935, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 6–8.

37. These include M. I. Litvin, V. E. Tsesarsky, S. B. Zhukovsky, and I. I. Shapiro, all of whom Yezhov made NKVD department heads.

38. Jansen and Petrov, *Stalin's Loyal Executioner,* 199, 202–3.

39. Nor does it imply an impersonal modern and modernizing bureaucratic machine that carried out holocausts and massacres in order to excise "evil weeds" or transform humanity (Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989]). All bureaucracies are led by political people, decision makers who launch terrors for their own reasons, which, explicitly at least, seem to have nothing to do with modernity. Moreover, the prewar Soviet bureaucracy was hardly modern. It was a ramshackle collection of inefficient, overlapping personal fiefdoms inherently incapable of developing a single strategy or even outlook.

40. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,* rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1994).

41. On the ubiquity of belief in conspiracies in the Stalin years, see Gabor T. Rittersporn, "The Omnipresent Conspiracy: On Soviet Imagery of Politics and Social Relations in the 1930s," in *Stalinism: Its Nature and Aftermath—Essays in Honour of Moshe Lewin,* ed. Nicholas Lampert and Gabor T. Rittersporn (London: Macmillan, 1992).

42. M. D. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution, 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 13, 16, 17, 19.

43. Yezhov to Petr Ivanov, 24 October 1922, RGASPI, f. 671, op. 1, d. 267, ll. 8–11.

44. Tim McDaniel, *The Agony of the Russian Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 35.

45. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution,* 82, 96.

46. McDaniel, *Agony of the Russian Idea,* 42.

Index