

# STALINISM

Essays in Historical Interpretation

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edited by

**ROBERT C. TUCKER**

Contributors

Włodzimierz Brus • Katerina Clark • Stephen F. Cohen  
Alexander Erlich • Leszek Kolakowski • Moshe Lewin  
Robert H. McNeal • Mihailo Marković • Roy A. Medvedev  
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—Robert C. Tucker

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WŁODZIMIERZ BRUS  
KATERINA CLARK  
STEPHEN F. COHEN  
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LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI  
MOSHE LEWIN  
ROBERT H. MCNEAL  
MIHAILO MARKOVIĆ  
ROY A. MEDVEDEV  
T. H. RIGBY  
ROBERT SHARLET  
H. GORDON SKILLING  
ROBERT C. TUCKER



W · W · NORTON & COMPANY

New York · London

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Published simultaneously in Canada by  
Penguin Books Canada Ltd,  
2801 John Street, Markham, Ontario L3R 1B4.

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110  
W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 37 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3NU

Stalinism.

Based on papers presented at a conference on "Stalinism and Communist political culture" held at Bellagio, Italy, July 25-31, 1975, and sponsored by the Planning Group on Comparative Communist Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Communism Russia—History—Congresses. I. Tucker, Robert C. II. Brus, Włodzimierz. III. American Council of Learned Societies Devoted to Humanistic Studies. Planning Group on Comparative Communist Studies.

HX313.S683 1977 335.43'0947 .76-56110

ISBN 0-393-00892-4

# STALINISM

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## Preface

This book grew out of an international research conference on “Stalinism and Communist Political Culture.” The conference was held at the Rockefeller Foundation’s conference center, Villa Serbelloni, at Bellagio, Italy, July 25–31, 1975. Its sponsor was the former Planning Group on Comparative Communist Studies, created by the American Council of Learned Societies in 1967 with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation.

The Planning Group’s mission was to promote comparativism in Communist studies. In seeking to do so, it sponsored a series of workshops and research conferences to explore various approaches to comparative analytic understanding of twentieth-century Communism as the diverse phenomenon which in our time it has more and more shown itself to be. The approach embodied in the Bellagio conference on Stalinism was historical. In the historical context, some efforts were made to view the Communist system as a form of culture—or “political culture.”

No attempt was made, however, to prescribe to the conference a unified point of view worked out in advance. The participants were chosen from different disciplines, ranging from history and politics through economics and sociology to philosophy and literary scholarship; from among authorities on Eastern Europe and China as well as Russian specialists; and were encouraged to prepare essays on one or another aspect of Stalinism according to their own lights.

The one request made of the authors of the papers was that they contribute *interpretive* essays on the aspect of Stalinism of interest to them. Historical episodes and historical material were naturally not to be excluded from consideration, but were to be used for illustrative or evidentiary purposes rather than treated as the subjects of the papers. The aim was to produce a collection of scholarly papers which would seek in their different ways to be interpretive and explanatory in nature. This collective effort to illuminate the Stalinist phenomenon, and to reexamine past such efforts critically, was based on the view that even now, nearly twenty-five years after Stalin’s death, the nature and causes of the “ism” that his reign embodied remain in many ways a mystery.

The outcome, as the reader will see, is a symposium that reflects a diversity of viewpoints as well as of disciplinary orientations. This diversity became clear, often dramatically so, when the participants met in Bellagio in the summer of 1975 for what proved to be an absorbingly intense week-long discussion of papers

prepared and circulated in advance of the meeting. Although the writers of the papers in this volume later had the opportunity to take the Bellagio discussions into account in revising their papers for publication, the original diversity of viewpoints has not been effaced. On one central philosophical issue—was the Stalinist phenomenon in Communism's history the logical and inevitable outcome of the original Marxist world-view?—the volume shows not simply diversity but a direct clash of views presented by two eminent philosophical minds from Eastern Europe: Leszek Kolakowski and Mihailo Marković. Given the present, still developing state of scholarship on Stalinism, such diversity and outright opposition of interpretive positions seems healthy and best calculated to advance our understanding of the very complex set of problems involved.

The following scholars took part in the Bellagio conference as paper-givers and discussants: Zygmunt Bauman of the University of Leeds; Włodzimierz Brus of St. Antony's College, Oxford; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse of the Institute of Political Studies, Paris; Katerina Clark of the University of Texas; Stephen F. Cohen of Princeton University; Alexander Dallin of Stanford University; Alexander Erlich of Columbia University; Sheila Fitzpatrick of Columbia University; John Gardner of the University of Manchester; Leszek Kolakowski of All Souls College, Oxford; Moshe Lewin of the University of Birmingham; Mihailo Marković of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts; Robert H. McNeal of the University of Massachusetts; Roger Pethybridge of the University College of Swansea; T. H. Rigby of the Australian National University; Robert Sharlet of Union College; H. Gordon Skilling of the University of Toronto; Robert M. Slusser of Michigan State University; Robert C. Tucker of Princeton University; and Lynn T. White III of Princeton University. In addition, Professor White served as rapporteur, and Professor Dallin, a past chairman of the Planning Group on Comparative Communist Studies, was the official observer on behalf of the Planning Group.

Although he did not take part in the Bellagio conference, Roy A. Medvedev of Moscow has since contributed, by invitation, an essay to the symposium. Mr. Medvedev is well known internationally as the author of the single most important study of Stalinism to come from Soviet Russia: *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York, 1971). Alone of the essays in this volume, his is not primarily interpretive in character but rather, as he explains in his introductory note, a set of new material on the political biography of Stalin and, as such, an addendum to *Let History Judge*. Although the conference and resulting symposium have focused on the "ism" rather than on the man Stalin, the addition of this essentially biographical essay seems appropriate in the light of the conferees' generally accepted view that Stalinism, along with all the other dimensions discussed in the various essays, had a personal dimension—to which a further contribution by Mr. Medvedev to the political biography of Stalin cannot fail to be pertinent.

In conclusion, on behalf of all the participants in the Bellagio conference and contributors to the symposium, I wish to thank all those who have contributed material resources, advice, and other forms of help in this venture: the Carnegie

Corporation for the original grant to promote comparativism in Communist studies; the American Council of Learned Societies for administering the funds and providing the facilities for the work of the Planning Group; Dr. Gordon B. Turner of the ACLS for his participation in the Planning Group's work from beginning to end and for his valuable advice on various problems that arose for me as the organizer of the conference and editor of the resulting volume; Princeton University for administering the Planning Group's grant for this project; my fellow members of the Planning Group for their encouragement and sponsorship of the conference on Stalinism and their advice to me in this connection; the Rockefeller Foundation for making available its superb conference center in Bellagio as the meeting-site; Dr. Ralph W. Richardson, Jr., Dr. Jane Allen, and Dr. William C. Olson of the Rockefeller Foundation for their many-sided assistance; all the personnel of Villa Serbelloni for making the conference week a pleasant experience as well as an illuminating one; and Mrs. Lorna Giese for her able help with the conference correspondence and related matters. I also owe a special debt of gratitude to my colleagues and fellow conference participants, Professors Cohen and Lewin, for their thoughtful advice and assistance on many matters involved in the preparation of this book.

Finally, I wish to thank James L. Mairs, senior editor at W. W. Norton, and Emily Garlin, editor, for the interest which they have taken in this work, and for their editorial assistance.

R.C.T.



## Stalinism and Comparative Communism

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*Robert C. Tucker*

The present volume is not the first to discuss the nature and causes of Stalinism. But I believe that it is the first such concerted, systematic, group inquiry into the Stalinist phenomenon, primarily in its Soviet Russian manifestation.

Two questions arise here: Why did it take so long for Stalinism to become the subject of such concerted study? And, why should the quest for comparativism in Communist studies—a field that at present covers fourteen different Communist party-ruled countries and dozens of non-ruling Communist movements in other countries—focus upon the Stalinist phenomenon, given the latter's historical nature, the fact that it arose in Soviet Russia at the end of the 1920's and in the 1930's, when Russia was the only Communist-ruled country (save for its Outer Mongolian dependency), and inevitably reflected the particular forces operative in the Soviet situation of that time?

Apropos the first question, perhaps it would be helpful to recall Hegel's dictum that the owl of Minerva spreads its wings when dusk is falling. He meant that wisdom—the philosophical mind—is never really able to comprehend in depth such a complex reality as a form of civilization until the latter has run its historical course and can be seen as a whole. It must be said that Stalinism is not yet dead, either in its birthplace, Russia, or in the numerous other countries and political movements which have undergone Stalinization in their histories. In the one Communist-ruled country where a reform movement was struggling to create, finally, a socialism with a radically non-Stalinist face—Czechoslovakia—the Russian army intervened in 1968 to restore a Stalinist kind of order. But while Stalinism is not dead in the Communist-ruled parts of the world, it survives as a pervasive or not-so-pervasive remnant, as the dead hand of the Stalinist past on the post-Stalin present rather than as the dynamically pulsating Stalinism of Stalin's era. Consequently, we can now begin to see the phenomenon framed in historical time. We may not be Minerva's owl, but we have a better view.

One reason why it took so long for our scholarship to address itself directly and explicitly to the problem of Stalinism is that in its time of emergence, development, and domination, Stalinism was never officially called by its own name. Nikita Khrushchev, who became a member of Stalin's Politburo in 1938, recalls in his memoirs that Lazar Kaganovich, the most sycophantic of Stalin's

courtiers, would occasionally propose to Stalin the introduction of “Stalinism” into official Communist usage, but that Stalin, flattered as he was by the idea, never adopted it.<sup>1</sup> Although the Soviet press would refer in Stalin’s time to the “teaching of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin,” the Communist ideology retained the designation “Marxism-Leninism.” And all the ideological, political, social, economic, and cultural phenomena which gave their special stamp to the Stalin period, including the hypertrophy of the state and its secret police, the terror system, the strident Great Russian nationalism, the hierarchical society, the revival of elements of tsarism and so on, were officially treated—insofar as their existence was acknowledged—as aspects of Soviet society in its “socialist” stage of development, or Marxism-Leninism in action.

Even at that time the concept of Stalinism was being elaborated along one line by those dissident Bolshevik-Leninists, as they called themselves, who accepted Stalin’s rival in exile, Lev Trotsky, as their leader and mentor; and we find in Trotsky’s book *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), for example, an extended discussion of Stalinism as a system of deviations from the developmental guidelines of original Leninism or Bolshevism. A critical reexamination of Trotskyist interpretations of Stalinism appears below in the essay by Robert McNeal.

With the Western scholars who began in the later 1940’s to elaborate what was called “Soviet studies” as an academic field, it was a different matter. The great majority were ready to see the phenomena that we are calling “Stalinism” as the logical unfolding of what had been implicit in the Bolshevik (Russian Communist) movement from the beginning. True, they were well aware of such features of the fully developed Soviet system as the terror, the omnipresence of the secret police, the existence of a vast network of forced-labor camps, the hyper-authoritarian character of Soviet political life, the censorship, the party-controlled cultural system, and the class structure of what was supposedly a society en route to classlessness. The reader has only to turn to a classic product of the sovietological scholarship of that period, Merle Fainsod’s *How Russia Is Ruled* (1953), to verify this statement.

These phenomena, however, were neither called “Stalinism” nor conceptualized as such. Symptomatically, there was no entry under “Stalinism” in the index to Fainsod’s weighty volume. The term employed as an overall designation of the Communist sociopolitical system as it existed in the time of Stalin was “totalitarianism.” The official (Stalinist) claim that the developed Communist system was Marxism-Leninism in action was not disputed. But this outcome was conceptualized as a system of totalitarian single-party dictatorship of which Stalin, by virtue of his abilities and various historical circumstances, had become the supreme leader in succession to Lenin.

The concept of totalitarianism had been elaborated in the 1930’s and 1940’s by a series of able German émigré thinkers who in many cases had been forced to flee from Hitler’s Germany. They saw the totalitarian system as a novel twentieth-century form of ideologically motivated, thoroughly bureaucratized, terroristic total tyranny which was everywhere identical in substance though it

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1. *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston, 1970), pp. 46–47.

varied somewhat in externals, and which found classic manifestation in two countries: Nazi Germany under Hitler and Communist Russia under Stalin. Since the notion of “totalitarianism” seemed to fit the reality of Soviet Communism, Western Soviet studies tended to treat Communism simply as a variety of totalitarianism and not to bother overmuch, if indeed they bothered at all, with the phenomenon of Stalinism. These studies didn’t regard the latter as problematic.

In the notion of totalitarianism there was a lacuna which history in Soviet Russia and some other Communist-ruled states exposed after Stalin’s death, when the terror subsided and Soviet Communism under Khrushchev embarked upon a period of de-Stalinizing reforms which were accompanied by official criticism of Stalin’s so-called mistakes. The lacuna consisted in the fact that the theory of the totalitarian regime made no provision for the possibility of such a regime embarking on a course of de-totalitarianizing change by, for example, curbing the terror which was taken to be the fundamental hallmark of totalitarianism. The theory had treated the novel form of party-dictatorial total rule as possessing an inner dynamic that would go on producing totalitarianism’s characteristic manifestations permanently unless the system was overthrown, as Hitler’s was, by force. Fainsod nicely expressed this position in the closing sentences of the above-cited work: “The governing formula of Soviet totalitarianism rests on a moving equilibrium of alternating phases of repression and relaxation, but its essential contours remain unchanged. The totalitarian regime does not shed its police-state characteristics; it dies when power is wrenched from its hands.”<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, among others, the totalitarianism paradigm came under increasingly widespread criticism by scholars in Soviet studies in the later 1950’s and after.<sup>3</sup> One result was that the field was left without a generally accepted theoretical organizing idea, although some minds clung to the familiar paradigm at the time when others were ready to relinquish it. For those who were prepared to rethink our analysis of Soviet Communism, and of Communism in general, a number of possibilities were open. One was to build up the analysis historically. Starting with the Soviet system as it existed in its first decade (1917–27), the scholar would re-examine its nature and historical circumstances, identify the different currents that existed in it, and then seek to show how and why the Stalinist current became ascendant at the end of the 1920’s and what this meant for Soviet Communism and for other Communist movements as well. For Moscow’s control of the Third International made all the affiliated parties and movements subject to the influence of Soviet developments in the 1930’s and after. Soviet studies would, in short, become a kind of a “comparative politics” of the Soviet system over time. The reader will readily see that such an approach propels the problem of Stalinism into the foreground of scholarly inquiry. The nature, causes, and dynamics of Stalinism, and its mode of transmission to Communist

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2. Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 500. For the same point of view, see Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956). The quoted sentences did not appear at the end of *How Russia Is Ruled* when its second edition was published in 1963.

3. For an example of such criticism, see Stephen Cohen’s essay, below.

movements outside of Soviet Russia, are opened up anew as subjects for research and analysis. The problem, of course, had been there all along. But the scholarly mind moves tortuously to its goals, as well as at a snail-like pace.

This brings us to the second question posed at the outset. If Soviet studies are to take on the character of a comparative politics over time, why should not Communist studies in the larger sense become a comparative politics (and economics, society, ideology, etc.) over space? Here again, new developments in the social reality being studied were a spur to a comparative approach. As Stalinism partially subsided in Khrushchev's Russia, the compulsory uniformity that Stalinism had tried to impose upon Communism everywhere gave way to a visible diversity of tendency. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in a closed session of the Twentieth Soviet Party Congress in February 1956, a speech which has not yet been published in Russia, became known through much of the world when a version of it appeared in *The New York Times* in June of that year. This intensified the ferment already developing in various Eastern European countries under Communist party rule. Polish Communism underwent a temporary liberalization under a new leadership which sought successfully to contain the demand for more far-reaching change; Hungary exploded in a popular insurrection which it took a Russian army to suppress; and Mao's China began to back away from what it would one day openly denounce as "Khrushchev revisionism."

Through a whole series of subsequent events (among them the overthrow of Khrushchev in 1964 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968), a basically conservative Soviet political leadership, consisting of men who came to political maturity under Stalin, has since managed to restore some semblance of stability at the cost of the democratizing reforms which Russia and various other Communist-ruled countries urgently need but which this leadership obviously sees as threatening to its own position and to the authoritarian, bureaucratic, single-party system over which it presides. Even so, what used to be called the "Communist world" is rife with inner division nowadays. The shaky hegemony of Russia's Communism is challenged by China's. The continued validity of some of Marxism-Leninism's most time-honored tenets, such as the necessity of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the revolutionary transition period, is openly questioned by some West European parties that are not in political power but hope to be. The presence of Soviet armed forces not only in East Germany but in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia is very likely a precondition of the predominance of the Soviet model of Communism in Eastern Europe over the long range. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia continues to go its own way, Hungary proceeds with surreptitious reform, Poland has thrown off the incubus of Gomulka's brand of Communist conservatism, Rumania seeks to assert its national independence as a Communist single-party state, and Albania is an anti-Soviet friend of Communist China. At present, it almost seems that the only solid increment to Russia's position in Eastern Europe as a result of the Second World War is that she acquired a dependable ally in Bulgaria.

If international Communism's enforced emulation of the Soviet Russian model is gone for good, comparative Communist studies are here to stay. Depending on one's approach and interests, such studies may mean different things. One

possibility is the search for analytical comparison between Communist and non-Communist sociopolitical systems within the genus of that widespread twentieth-century phenomenon, the revolutionary mass-movement regime under single-party auspices, or "movement-regime."<sup>4</sup> Further, various theories of "convergence" or "the post-industrial society" pose as a problem the analytic comparison of, say, Communism in the highly industrialized Soviet Russia of our time with such non-Communist—and non-movement-regime—systems as those existing in contemporary Western Europe and the United States. But comparative Communist studies have so far sought primarily to comprehend the Communist systems themselves, with reference both to what they have in common and to their significant differences.

Those of us who have been involved in it can testify that the quest for a comparative Communism in this sense of the term has been more difficult than we realized when we started, and that positive results have been slower to materialize than we expected. We face, to begin with, the fundamental methodological question: how is one to proceed in the effort to build a comparative analysis of, say, the existing fourteen Communist-ruled states? One answer, which may appeal to some scholarly minds trained in the contemporary social sciences in America, is that we should mentally juxtapose the objects of comparison and then measure the degrees of likeness and/or difference under this or that "variable" on which the requisite information is available; and, having achieved empirical comparative results by this method, we could then form hypotheses, hopefully testable, as to what it is that the likenesses and/or differences under one or another variable are a "function" of. Possibly such a procedure may be worth pursuing for certain purposes, but I doubt that the attainable results would be other than superficial. To comprehend the fissiparous tendency in modern Communism, a different approach and theoretical foundation seem called for.

One possibility, which has appealed to the author of these lines, is an historical approach based on the idea that Russian Bolshevism and the Communist revolutionary movements that later emerged under its tutelage have been would-be culture-transforming movements, and that the sociopolitical system which they create upon coming to power is a new form of culture, or "political culture." The concept "culture-transforming movement" is derived from that of a "revitalization movement," advanced by the anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace and defined by him as "a deliberate organized conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture" and, alternatively, as the "attempted and sometimes successful innovation of whole cultural systems, or at least substantial portions of such systems."<sup>5</sup>

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4. In "Towards a Comparative Politics of Movement-Regimes," *The American Political Science Review* (June 1961), reprinted in *The Soviet Political Mind*, Rev. ed. (New York, 1971), Chap. 1, I suggested that the movement-regime is encountered in three different though comparable varieties: the Communist, the fascist, and the nationalist.

5. See Wallace's article "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. LVIII (1956), pp. 264-65, where he classifies Russian Communism as one form of twentieth-century revitalization movement, and his elaboration of the revitalization-movement idea in his book *Culture and Personality*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1970). For the argument that the Communist revolutionary movement is

The cultural approach to Communism has a prehistory, going back to such early studies as René Fülöp-Miller's *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (1928). This approach was eclipsed, however, when the totalitarian theory came into ascendancy later on. Characteristic of the latter was the view of Communism, whether in Russia or elsewhere, as in essence a system of power—or total power. Accordingly, Communist revolutionary movements were understood as power-seeking in their fundamental nature. Given this orientation, the analyst's attention inevitably focused upon such phenomena of Communist systems as their power structures, control devices, and organizational weapons. One of the resulting difficulties, from the standpoint of the needs of comparative Communist studies, is that structurally and organizationally the different Communist socio-political systems show a great deal of sameness. Simply as a system of power—which of course it is, among other things—Communism in one country is normally not so different from Communism in another. Even such Communisms in collision as those of Russia and China, or Russia and Yugoslavia, have more in common structurally, as party dictatorships with a host of formally non-party mass organizations subject to party control, than their leaders may like to admit. This helps to explain why the rise of comparativism in Communist studies had to await upon the decline of the totalitarian theory's hold upon the scholarly mind. Incidentally, it may also help to explain why numerous persons, political practitioners as well as scholarly researchers, were belated in recognizing the serious significance of rifts in the "Communist world" when these made their often subtly nuanced early appearance, as in the post-1956 prenatal period of the Sino-Soviet conflict. If Communism was in essence a system of total power owing allegiance to Marxism-Leninism as its ideology, how could mere differences of formula and emphasis be important?

From the standpoint of a cultural approach that takes Communism to be a form of political culture or sociocultural system, there is no difficulty in recognizing the patent fact that these movements are also power-seeking ones and that, once they achieve political dominance in a country, they are also—indeed, as a vital part of their political culture—systems of power.<sup>6</sup> But at the same time, the cultural approach sensitizes the observer to the enormous significance of symbolism and hence to the potential meaning of differences that the adherents of the system-of-power position are apt to dismiss as atmospheric or "merely symbolic."

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best understood as a culture-transforming one, and Communism itself as a new form of political culture, see the present writer's article "Culture, Political Culture, and Communist Society," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (June 1973), and its further elaboration in "Communist Revolutions, National Cultures, and the Divided Nations," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (Autumn 1974). The former was prepared for a conference on political culture and Communist studies held in November, 1971, under the auspices of the Planning Group on Comparative Communist Studies.

6. A cultural approach has no need to slight the importance of the organizational or power aspect of Communism, since the form of organization is properly viewed as an integral part of Communist political culture. For an interpretation of Stalinism in basically organizational and institutional terms, see T. H. Rigby's essay, below.



To the culturalist student of Communism, it is a matter of genuine importance when, to take a hypothetical example, one Communist party lays special stress on one theme in Lenin (say, the proletarian dictatorship as canonized in *The State and Revolution*) while another strongly emphasizes a different theme (say, the danger of Left sectarianism as argued by Lenin in "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*); for this may represent a Communist way of disagreeing over what is the desirable political line for Communist movement to take in the present period.

Why the cultural approach to Communism goes along with the historical one is easily stated: cultures, especially in the modern world, change over time; and culture-transforming movements, even when securely in power, confront serious obstacles to rapid sociocultural change in that the revolutionaries are always a minority among the people and the cultural ways of the past are bound to live on in the minds and lives of the popular majority. Furthermore, the very idea of innovating a sociocultural system as different from the existing one as movements like Communism envisage is utopian. The outcome of the political revolution by which the revolutionaries gain power, followed by their efforts—through legislation, education, propaganda, agitation, coercion, and whatnot—to change the cultural ways of the people, is never anything more than *partial* sociocultural change. What emerges is some sort of amalgam of the pre-revolutionary culture with the sociocultural innovations that the revolutionary regime has succeeded in implementing. Thus, as has often been pointed out, the administrative centralization characteristic of French monarchical political culture reappeared in different trappings in the republic that grew out of the French Revolution.

It follows from this argument that if we wish to understand the sociocultural development of a country which has undergone the kind of political revolution that brings a culture-transforming movement to power, we must investigate the amalgamating process which is invariably, although not necessarily avowedly, a part of it. To put the matter in more concrete terms, the revolutionary new sociocultural system will incorporate into itself elements of the national cultural past, as Soviet Communism did, for example, when in 1924, on Lenin's death, it established an official Lenin cult, replete with the mummy in the mausoleum on Red Square, which struck some protesting Communist revolutionaries at that time as a revival of the Russian Orthodox Church's old custom of preserving the bones of saints for display to the faithful. There will take place, in short, a certain nationalization of the revolutionary new way of life. Perhaps we may even formulate it as a rule—though not as an iron law—that Communism in power tends to become national Communism; and add that Bolshevism, the first case in point, became under Stalin and Stalinism a form of Russian national Communism which did not, however, shed its international expansionistic impulses.

The nationalizing of Communism will be the tendency, given the impossibility of total innovation of cultural systems, the popular impediments to cultural change, the fact that the revolutionaries themselves were acculturated under the old regime and hence bear elements of the old culture within their own personalities, and, finally, the further fact that *some* of the revolutionaries—for example,

a Stalin—are more inclined than others are to become imbued with nationalist feeling and to find things in the national cultural past, Russia's in this case, which seem worth preserving or reviving. It is at this point, among others, that the cultural approach must take into account the potential influence of leader-personality as a factor in historical development.

The thesis to which this reasoning leads, which I offer only as one of the propositions in this book and not as an agreed position of the authors as a group, is that Stalinism represented, among other things, a far-reaching Russification of the already somewhat Russified earlier (Leninist) Soviet political culture. How and in what ways the further Russification occurred under Stalin's leadership in the Soviet revolution from above of the 1930's is a main subject of one of the essays that follow and is shown to one or another extent in some of the others as well. To sum it up briefly, the original Bolshevik culture-transforming movement developed during its early years in power a Soviet culture in which elements of the Russian and general human past were blended with the movement's manifold innovations in economics, society, politics, art, and everyday life; and in the ensuing time of Stalin the further transformations that took place under the ideological banner of "building socialism" both reflected patterns out of the Russian past—including the pattern of revolutions from above—and yielded such revivals of tsarism as the absolute autocracy which Stalin recreated through the Great Purge of the later 1930's.

The relevance of the cultural-and-historical approach in general, and of an inquiry into Stalinism in particular, to comparative Communist studies, should now be clear. Against the background of the Marxist Social Democratic movements of the later nineteenth century, Communism arose in Russia under the name of Bolshevism in the early twentieth; and having under Lenin during the First World War taken a hostile stance toward Social Democracy because of the tendency of its various member parties to adopt a national "defensist" position regarding the war, i.e., to support their respective governments in what Lenin saw as an imperialist war unworthy of any socialist's support, the Bolsheviks soon after taking power developed under their aegis a third or Communist International (Comintern) which deliberately set about the encouragement of amenable radical groups in various countries to form revolutionary parties on the Bolshevik model. That central element of the Bolshevik political culture, the self-styled vanguard party committed to revolutionary action aimed at the establishment of a party-led "dictatorship of the proletariat," a party functioning under Moscow's influence as a "section" of what was in theory one world-wide Communist revolutionary movement, became thereby the kernel of "international Communism." In effect, the Communist parties of other countries became agents of the diffusion of Russian Communist political culture in the revolutionary movements of those countries. And having undergone through the purges of the foreign Communist leaderships in the Stalinist 1930's a further process of combined sovietization and Russification, indeed of *Stalinization*, those Communist parties that acquired power in the aftermath of the Second World War, in most cases under conditions of Red Army occupation of their countries, presided over



internal revolutionary processes which involved the forcible transplantation of Soviet Communism in its highly Russified Stalinist form.

The countries that came under Communist rule by one or another means—the imposed revolution under Russian occupation or revolution by guerrilla warfare, as in China, Yugoslavia, Albania, and Vietnam—varied significantly both from one another and from Russia in their national politico-cultural heritages. Hence a tendency toward diversity was bound to be latent in “international Communism,” even in the later Stalin years. For just as Russian Communism had innovated a sociocultural system in which elements of old Russian culture were present, so every other Communist movement in power would incline toward some degree of nationalization of Communism. If only to make the movement more acceptable and effective in the country that it controlled, the leaders would seek to blend various elements of the national cultural heritage (and not simply their own language, which even Stalinism tolerated) into the amalgam that was Communist culture in its Chinese or Yugoslav or Polish or Czechoslovak or other form. I do not claim that this is the sole source of diversity in Communist development, but only that it is one of the powerful sources and that it will predictably manifest itself wherever a successful Communist political revolution occurs. So long as Stalin’s terroristic despotism existed, i.e., so long as he lived, the polycentric tendency was largely suppressed in the countries where Communism took over during and after the Second World War. But the situation changed considerably after Stalin died and the terroristic despotism was dismantled. However, his successors have tried and are still trying by various means, not excluding military intervention, to hold Communist diversity in check.

In scholarship, as in war, it is often useful to follow what has been called the strategy of the “indirect approach.”<sup>7</sup> The cultural-and-historical approach is an indirect strategy in comparative Communist studies. Instead of moving straight to the comparing of Communisms, the distinguishing of observable similarities and differences between them, it delves into the developmental history of Communism, starting with Russian Communism. It does this in search of understanding not simply of the ways in which different Communisms are alike or differ, but of the underlying sources and dynamics of differentiation or non-differentiation within the Communist sociocultural universe.

Adopting the strategy of the indirect approach in comparative Communism, the central importance of addressing ourselves to the problem of the Stalinist phenomenon is beyond question. Even though, as in this volume, we examine the nature and causes of Stalinism primarily in its original Russian setting and only to a small degree in its extension to other countries, whatever progress we make may possibly redound to the benefit of Communist studies in their comparative dimension. For what we try here to illuminate is the developmental dynamics of Russian Communism, which impinged in countless ways upon every other

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7. In *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (New York, 1954), p. 18, B. H. Liddell Hart writes: “The history of strategy is fundamentally a record of the application and evolution of the indirect approach.”