Trotsky that far and away the best single advertisement for world communism, in the future, would be a Russia which was successful, stable, safe.

The Iron Will of Uncle Joe

Of course there was a famine. None can deny this any longer. It occurred in the spring of 1933, in the great grain-producing areas of the U.S.S.R., the North Caucasus, and Ukraine. Communists, after preliminary hesitancy, now admit the fact of the famine, though in circumlocutory jargon. For instance, Miss Anna Louise Strong writes (*New Republic,* August 7, 1935), "There was a serious grain shortage in the 1932 harvest due chiefly to inefficiencies of the organizational period of the new large-scale mechanized farming among peasants unaccustomed to machines." This is quite a mouthful—a mouthful that the peasants didn't get.

The chief point about the famine is not—it might be said—that several million people died. Chamberlain puts the mortality as high as five or six million. This is too high, other authorities believe. The point is that the Soviet Government was engaged in a tremendous, epochal struggle to socialize the land, for the eventual good of the peasants; the peasants, however, resisted and—terribly enough—suffered. To balk the government, they refused to harvest grain. Therefore they did not have enough to eat. And died.

The inside story of the famine is briefly this. The Five-Year Plan included "collectivization" of the peasantry. Russia, overwhelmingly an agrarian country, contained in 1927 almost 25,000,000 peasant holdings; Stalin's plan was to unite them into socialized collective farms. The peasants would turn over implements and livestock to a farm manager, and work in common on comparatively large rather than very small holdings, assisted by tractors furnished by the state. This was the idea. On it, the future of socialism in the U.S.S.R. depended.

What happened was that the peasants, bitterly indignant, staged two major resistances to the immense forcible process of collectivization. First, they slaughtered their livestock, rather than turn it over to the collectives. It was an extraordinary and tragic event—though not so tragic as the human starvation later. There was no organization among the peasants, no communication; yet in hundreds of villages, separated by hundreds of miles, a *simultaneous* destruction

of animals began. Rather than turn over their precious pigs, sheep, cattle, to the collective authorities, the peasants murdered them.

The cost was terrible. Stalin—four years late—admitted it. The agrarian economy of the Soviet Union suffered a blow from which it cannot fully recover till about 1940; it will take till then to replenish the slaughtered stock. For, once the killing began, it progressed till about *fifty per cent* of the animals in the Soviet Union were killed. Official figures admit that the number of horses in the country diminished from 33,500,000 in 1928 to 19,600,000 in 1932; the number of cattle from 70,500,000 to 40,700,000; sheep and goats from 146,700,000 to 52,100,000; pigs from 25,900,000 to 11,600,000.[4]

The peasants, stunned by this catastrophe, sank into temporary stupor. The government—when the worst of the damage was done—retreated hastily. Probably Stalin had not realized the formidable extent of the slaughter until it was too late. . . .[5] The tempo of collectivization had been far too rapid. The plan called for full collectivization only after ten years, but within two years, in 1930, sixty-five per cent of all the farms had been collectivized. So the pace was toned down.

Even so, in 1932, the peasants, stiffening into a final vain protest, rebelled again. As if by underground agreement, another psychic epidemic spread through the rich fields of the Caucasus and Ukraine. The farmers, those still outside the collectives, were paid miserable prices; either they could buy no manufactured goods at all, or goods only of indifferent quality. They hit on a plan. They had sowed the crop, which was abundant; but they decided not to harvest all of it. They harvested exactly what they calculated they would themselves need during the winter, and left the rest to rot. "What was the use of slaving to produce a handsome crop, if the state simply seized it all?"

This was, of course, mutiny. It was not only defiance of Stalin; it was a threat to starve him into submission. The Soviet Government needed grain to distribute to the industrial regions, the great

[4] Premier Molotov's speech at the 1934 party congress. (Cf. *Socialism Victorious,* p. 394.)

[5] He has learned his lesson, however, and admitted his mistake. New rules introduced in the autumn of 1934 permit individual peasants to keep a limited supply of livestock: one cow, two sheep, four pigs, chickens.

cities; it needed grain for export, to pay for the machinery it had to import for the Five-Year Plan.

Even the farmers already in the collectives let their grain rot. There were few communist overseers, few trained and loyal farm managers. Word got to Moscow that the harvest, which should have been handsome, was largely lost. Stalin saw that this was a major crisis. If the peasants were permitted to get away with this, the revolution was beaten. ("Obsolete classes don't voluntarily disappear," he told Wells.) He had to act. And did.

Government grain collectors descended on the farms, tall with weeds, and seized that small share of the crop that the peasants had saved *for their own use!* One by one, they visited every holding, and took every lick of grain due the government in taxes. If a man's normal crop was, say, sixty bushels, the tax might be twenty bushels. But the farmer had only harvested, say, twenty-five bushels. So when the government took twenty, the farmer and his family had only five—instead of twenty-five—to live on the whole winter and spring.

Russian economy is still extremely primitive. The question of grain, of bread, is a matter of life and death. When there was no grain left, the people began to die. The government might have diverted some grain from the cities—though that was a pinched, hungry year everywhere—to feed the peasants. But the government did not do so. Stalin decided that the peasants must pay the penalty for their rebellion. They had refused, blindly, stupidly, to provide grain; very well, let them starve. And they starved.

Meantime, the kulaks had been liquidated by a more direct process. These were peasants of more than average industry or ability or wealth; the capitalist farmers, "class enemies on the agrarian front." In 1928 there were 750,000 people officially classed as kulaks in the Soviet Union. To-day there are none. They were rooted out like trees, packed into prison trains, dispatched to labor camps in far parts of the country, put to forced labor on building railways, digging canals.

The famine broke the back of peasant resistance in the U.S.S.R. Since the famine collectivization has proceeded slowly, smoothly. From 1930 to 1935 another twenty-five per cent of the land has been socialized. All but a small fraction of the best arable land in Russia is now organized into about 250,000 farms. The peasants tried to

revolt. The revolt might have brought the Soviet Union down. But it collapsed on the iron will of Stalin. The peasants killed their animals, then they killed themselves.

Stalin the Human Being

Let no one think that Stalin is a thug. It would be idle to pretend that he could take a chair in fine arts at Harvard; nevertheless his learning is both broad and deep, especially in philosophy and history. One is instinctively tempted to consider this reticent Georgian as a roughneck, a man of instincts and muscle, not of brains. But his speeches quote Plato, Don Quixote, Daudet; he knew all about the monkey trial at Dayton and the composition of Lloyd George's shadow-cabinet and the unionization of workers in America; in his talk with Wells he showed a better knowledge of Cromwell and the Chartists than Wells himself.

In 1893 he shocked and horrified a deputation of Bolshevik writers by telling them their work was rubbish, because it had no broad basis in general culture. "Read Shakespeare, Goethe, and the other classics, as I do," he said.

Nor are his manners bad. He sees visitors only very rarely, but one and all they report his soberness, his respectful attention to their questions, his attempt to put them at their ease. His speeches are full of a curious sort of sardonic courtliness; for instance he refers to capitalists usually as "Messieurs the *Bourgeoisie.*"[6] He restrains his personal appearances to the minimum; once, during the crucial period of the Five-Year Plan, he made no speech or public appearance for eighteen months. He is the only dictator who is *serene.*

He has a sense of humor, though perhaps it is heavy to Western ears; that he has a sense of humor at all differentiates him from Hitler or Mussolini. Shaw reports his keen sense of comedy. Addressing the 1930 congress of the party, he ticked off the Right Opposition of Bukharin and Rykov by asserting that if Bukharin saw a cockroach he proceeded at once to smell catastrophe, foreseeing the end of the Soviet Union in one month. "Rykov supported Bukharin's theses on the subject," said Stalin, "with the reservation, however, that he had a very serious difference with

[6] Incidentally, an odd point, he sometimes speaks of himself in the third person. Cf. *Leninism,* I, 300, and II, 225.

14

FIGHT AGAINST THE COUNTRYSIDE

In 1930–31 Stalin's regime carried out a dekulakization program in two waves, which together deported 1.8 million people accused of being kulak or "kulak-like" (*podkulachnik*). As we have seen, many were sent to the Gulag system or exiled to "special settlements" in distant parts of the country. By January 1932, the OGPU estimated that close to 500,000, or nearly 30 percent of these people, were dead or had run away.[1] Two million more who had been slated for deportation within their region (category-three kulaks) joined the exodus to the cities involving a total of twelve million people.[2] This disruption of normal life had fatal consequences for vast numbers of innocents.

The peasantry was resilient and resisted collectivization away from the glare of the police and in surreptitious ways. According to available statistics for 1930, 55 percent of all peasant households may have been on collective farms in March, but the percentage had fallen by more than half by June. In some areas (like the central Black Earth region), over 80 percent of those collectivized in March fell to just over 15 percent in June. Thus, when they had a chance and a choice, all but the poorest—who might benefit by joining such a venture—left collective farms in droves.[3]

RENEWED ASSAULTS ON THE PEASANTRY

Shortages began to spread, and on January 13, 1931, the state introduced a rationing system for essential food and commodities. The exclusion from the provisioning system of the peasantry and those considered disenfranchised meant that 80 percent of the country had to fend for themselves.[4]

Given population growth and the move to the cities by millions, the state needed to collect more grain for 1931 than it had the previous year, and still more in 1932. This was a futile task and led to desperate protests from the peasants. They stole or slaughtered livestock and ate the meat before it could be taken from them. Rumor was that no one on the collective farms would get any. This turn of events was an economic disaster, since farms could not operate without farm animals in an era when most had no tractors.

The regime renewed the collectivization drive to force peasants onto industrial-scale operations and increase production, and in 1932, with famine already in the air, just over 60 percent of all peasant households were back on the collective farms. That figure would grow to 89.6 percent by 1936 and include virtually all peasant households in the main agricultural regions.[5]

On June 16, 1932, the Politburo discussed calls for help from Communist leaders in Ukraine and agreed to send them unused oat seed, corn, and grain.[6] Two days later, in a letter to Kaganovich and Molotov on behalf of the Politburo, Stalin acknowledged reports of "impoverishment and famine" but took no responsibility, nor did he admit that quotas were too high. He blamed the famine on the personal failings of those directly in charge, particularly the first secretaries of the Party in Ukraine and the Urals, who had supposedly divided the total quota among all localities and collective farms in a "mechanical equalizing" way, instead of demanding more from better-producing areas to compensate for poorer ones. He castigated officials for being too preoccupied with new industry, when they should have been keener to secure a prosperous agriculture, which was needed to support industrial development.

Stalin wanted the Five-Year Plan fulfilled "at any cost," and he suggested having a meeting with regional authorities and instructing them

on how to improve. They were to be held personally responsible for any shortcomings.[7]

Some food assistance was offered to the starving. By July, Stalin was willing to reduce the demands for grain from Ukraine, but only for collective farms and individual peasants who had "especially suffered." In a follow-up note on August 5, he blamed "the main shortcoming" on the "organizational lapses" of the Commissariat of Agriculture and outlined needed changes.[8]

He also ordered an end to "sabotage." On July 20, 1932, he wrote to Lazar Kaganovich, by then the third most important man in the Party after Stalin and Molotov, and complained about thefts in the countryside by "dekulakized persons and other antisocial elements." He believed there had to be a new law that treated certain thefts as "counterrevolutionary." He was incensed about robberies from freight cars, collective farms, and cooperatives and demanded they be punished by "a minimum of ten years' imprisonment, and as a rule, by death." He also wanted the OGPU to introduce stricter surveillance. As for profiteers, he said bluntly: "We must eradicate this scum" and send "active agitators" to concentration camps.[9]

The note to Kaganovich led to the notorious law "On the Protection of the Property of the State Enterprises, Collective Farms, and Cooperatives and the Strengthening of Public (Socialist) Ownership," which went into force with its publication in *Pravda* on August 7. This law, designed to be used against hungry peasants who stole grain from the fields, was known as the "law on the five ears of corn." In the first months alone, tens of thousands of starving people were found guilty of the crime of "counterrevolutionary" theft. Of that number, an estimated five thousand were sentenced to death, and many thousands more were given ten-year prison sentences.[10]

On August 11, Stalin suggested softening the law. Those executed should be guilty of systematic thefts, not petty ones, but the repressive process had a momentum of its own. District-level officials continued to be more radical than Stalin and fired judges who would not prosecute to the full measure of the law. Mass repression, beatings, and vigilante acts continued in many parts of the country.

Stalin admitted to Kaganovich that the crisis in Ukraine was the "most important issue" facing the country. He said they might lose the great grain-growing region "unless we begin to straighten out the situation."

He was reminded by some fifty district committees from the area that the grain procurement plan was "unrealistic." He refused to budge and, determined to move ahead on the backs of the peasants, stubbornly held to the idea that the problem was poor leadership combined with resistance by "counterrevolutionaries." His solution was to make organizational-administrative changes and to install new leaders in Ukraine who would turn it "into a real fortress of the USSR, into a genuinely exemplary republic."[11]

Stalin was by no means alone in his unbending attitude. The Politburo sent Kaganovich and Molotov to lead commissions to the North Caucasus and Ukraine on October 22, 1932, and like Stalin, they blamed the problems on sabotage organized by "kulaks," "counterrevolutionaries," "saboteurs," or "foreign elements."

Raids were used to search for kulak grain—but in fact most such people had long since been deported. The assault was actually on collective farms not meeting quotas and thought to be holding back. Even regional and local Party leaders felt the men in the Kremlin were demanding too much. Moscow's response in the North Caucasus was to arrest five thousand "criminally complacent" functionaries, along with fifteen thousand collective-farm workers. The Cossacks still in the area were again victimized. Molotov followed a similar pattern of repression in Ukraine, and other grain-producing areas soon did so as well. In 1932, tens of thousands were deported to the Gulag, and more followed the next year.[12]

CAUGHT BETWEEN VILLAGE AND CITY

In November 1932 the Politburo ordered local authorities who had not fulfilled their quotas to carry out new raids. They sent activists, like the infamous 25,000ers they had used earlier against the kulaks, to get grain from peasants "at any cost." These "thousanders" used all forms of terror to achieve their goals. Stalin told the Politburo that "certain groups" of collective farmers and peasants had to be dealt a "devastating blow." Communists suspected of being in cahoots or sympathizing with them were condemned; in some places, such as the North Caucasus, half the Party secretaries were expelled on Kaganovich's orders.[13]

There is extensive evidence on the deteriorating situation in the

countryside. Lev Kopelev, a young and enthusiastic Communist and a "thousander" who took part in these raids, left a memoir. He accepted Stalin's views and recalled how he "was convinced that we were warriors on an invisible front, fighting against kulak sabotage for the grain which was needed by the country, by the five-year plan." He thought he had a mission to save "the souls of these peasants who were mired in unconscientiousness, in ignorance, who succumbed to enemy agitation, who did not understand the great truth of communism."[14]

The "thousanders" believed the peasants had plenty of grain stashed away. To get at these "private reserves," the raiders used what they called "undisputed confiscation," which is to say, they took everything else from a household, including clothing, religious objects, and even family pictures. Kopelev says it was "excruciating" to hear the screams of protest, but he had persuaded himself not to give in "to debilitating pity. We were realizing historical necessity. We were performing our revolutionary duty. We were obtaining grain for the socialist fatherland."[15]

Kopelev's commitment to Communism and Stalin was coupled with disdain for peasants, an attitude common already in Lenin's time. Kopelev persisted in the ritual of praising Stalin as

> the most perspicacious, the most wise (at that time they hadn't yet started calling him "great" and "brilliant"). He said: "The Struggle for grain is the struggle for socialism." And we believed him unconditionally. And later we believed that unconditional collectivization was unavoidable if we were to overcome the capriciousness and uncertainty of the market and the backwardness of individual farming, to guarantee a steady supply of grain, milk and meat to the cities. And also if we were to reeducate millions of peasants, those petty landowners and hence potential bourgeoisie, potential kulaks, to transform them into laborers with a social conscience, to liberate them from "the idiocy of rural life," from ignorance and prejudice, and to accustom them to culture, to all the boons of socialism.[16]

Victor Kravchenko, another activist for a time enthralled by Stalin, remembered on his rounds that "despite harsh police measures to keep the victims at home, Dniepropetrovsk was overrun with starving peasants. Many of them lay listless, too weak even to beg, around railroad stations. Their children were little more than skeletons with swollen bel-

lies. In the past, friends and relatives in the country sent food packages to the urban districts. Now the process was reversed. But our own rations were so small and uncertain that few dared to part with their provisions."[17]

In Ukraine, which was the worst affected in the USSR, the level of urban mortality was 50 percent higher in 1933 than in 1932, but in rural areas it was nearly three times as high. By contrast, mortality rates in the areas around Moscow and Leningrad were largely unchanged in 1932–33. Outside Ukraine, there were areas like the lower Volga where mortality rates also jumped, indicating that more than one nationality suffered in the famine and that epidemic illnesses also played a role.[18]

Hundreds of thousands tried to escape to the cities to look for food or get on ration lists. To cut off the exodus, the government introduced internal passports on December 27, 1932. The passports, a despised feature of tsarist Russia, were issued to most townspeople over the age of sixteen—with the exception of the thirty or more groups officially "without rights," the *lishentsy*. But no passports were given to peasants. The stamp in the passport (*propiska*) became a matter of life and death, a novel form of persecution.[19]

Furthermore, Stalin and Molotov issued orders on January 22, 1933, to restrict the sale of railway tickets. Those caught trying to flee the famine were forced to turn back. Some were simply taken outside the city limits in open wagons and told to fend for themselves.[20]

Miron Dolot's memoir tells of his experiences as a young boy in Ukraine. He writes that his village was forcibly collectivized and that while they already suffered food shortages in 1931, the next two years brought full-scale famine. He remembered the "thousanders" who came for grain, not from the kulaks, but from the poor villagers now working against their will on the collective farms. Much that happened was senseless. Horses, once valued workmates of the peasants who cared for them, had been rounded up by the state and placed on collective farms without first taking steps to ensure they would be properly housed and fed. In the midst of the famine, the horses, now looked upon as "useless eaters," died from starvation and neglect before the promised tractors were there to replace them.

The villagers asked "Comrade Thousander" why their homes were searched for food when none existed. They were told the mere fact they were still alive proved there was food to be found. Although the harvest

was good in 1932, the state took everything, and starvation grew rampant in the countryside.

Dolot and his mother left for town in January 1933 to exchange two medallions of gold she had saved. On the way they saw death everywhere. He remembered how the open spaces "looked like a battlefield after a great war. Littering the fields were the bodies of starving farmers who had been combing the potato fields over and over again in the hope of finding at least a fragment of a potato that might have been overlooked or left over from the harvest. They died where they collapsed in their endless search for food. Some of the frozen corpses must have been lying out there for months. Nobody seemed to be in a hurry to cart them away and bury them."[21]

By the next spring Dolot's village was a ghost town. It

> had become a desolate place, horror lurking in every house and in every backyard. We felt forsaken by the entire world. The main road which had been the artery of traffic and the center of village life was empty and overgrown with weeds and grass. Humans and animals were rarely seen on it. Many houses stood dilapidated and empty, their windows and doorways gaping. The owners were dead, deported to the north, or gone from the village in search of food. Once these houses were surrounded by barns, stables, cattle enclosures, pigpens, and fences. Now only the remnants of these structures could be seen. They had been ripped apart and used as firewood.[22]

The peasants died in the hundreds of thousands. Some went quietly, others died of poisoning when they ate things unfit for human consumption, and an unknown number committed suicide. Vasily Grossman describes it as follows:

> In one hut there would be something like a war. Everyone would keep close watch over everyone else. People would take crumbs from each other. The wife turned against the husband and the husband against the wife. The mother hated the children. And in some other hut love would be inviolable to the very last. I knew one woman with four children. She would tell them fairy stories and legends so that they would forget their hunger. Her own tongue could hardly move, but she would take them into her arms even though she had hardly any strength to lift her arms

when they were empty. Love lived on within her. And people noticed that where there was hate people died off more swiftly. Yet love, for that matter, saved no one. The whole village perished, one and all. No life remained in it.[23]

Some of the collectors took advantage of their position to exchange food for sexual favors.[24] Reports of the Ukrainian OGPU in May 1933 suggest that cannibalism became common.[25]

Protests about the excesses committed by the "thousanders" and others were sent to Moscow from many sources, including letters from the novelist Mikhail Sholokhov (later a Nobel Prize winner), whose book *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1932) was based on research into the collective-farm system on the Don. Stalin knew Sholokhov and recommended the book to Kaganovich. He said the writer might not have been all that talented, but was "profoundly honest" and wrote "about things he knows well."[26]

Sholokhov sent Stalin two letters in April 1933 describing what he saw in the North Caucasus. He detailed the tortures used to get grain and worried that such methods would discredit the idea of the collective farm. Stalin responded and told the novelist not to be deceived. If some activists were sadistic, they would be punished, but he should not lose sight of the fact that those who withheld their grain, far from being "innocent lambs," were engaged in sabotage and prepared to have the Red Army and workers go without food. "The fact that this sabotage was silent and appeared to be quite peaceful (there was no bloodshed) changes nothing—these people deliberately tried to undermine the Soviet state. It is a fight to the death, Comrade Sholokhov!"[27]

Nevertheless, Stalin had the allegations investigated, and the Politburo gave grain to the two districts mentioned by Sholokhov. The Politburo approved additional small amounts of grain, some of which was supposed to go to areas of Ukraine, but precisely who received that food remains uncertain.[28]

The famine was the result of disastrous farm policies, coupled with wasteful collection measures, so in that sense it was man-made, not simply the result of natural catastrophe.

Moreover, the regime exacerbated the already dreadful situation because it continued grain exports. These went up dramatically in 1930 over 1929 and rose again slightly in 1931. Thereafter, exports were reduced, but not before the famine had already set in.[29]

FATALITY RATES

Historians have given varied answers concerning the fatalities of the famine, partly because the statistical evidence is flawed. Mortalities were not always recorded, and the dead were often left where they fell. It was also true that deaths related to the famine continued long after, because survivors whose health was seriously undermined died prematurely. Kazakhstan went through a demographic catastrophe in this period, part of which involved a typhus epidemic, and another epidemic in the lower Volga had similar consequences.[30] A scholarly account based on newly opened Russian archives concludes that the "excess mortality"—that is, the deaths above and beyond "normal" statistical projections—was between four and five million. These figures can be taken as a minimum.[31]

Kazakhstan in central Asia came under the yoke of collectivization, even though no more than 25 percent of the population was engaged in agriculture and a small percentage of those in grain growing. The mostly Islamic people were either nomadic or seminomadic—that is, they migrated with their herds in summer. Soviet experts advised against trying to collectivize this region, but under the Five-Year Plan the Kazakh Communist Party forged ahead, and the people resisted by slaughtering their livestock. The experiment failed, and a famine, coupled with typhus, resulted.

Nicolas Werth estimates a total of six million deaths in the 1932–33 famine: four million in Ukraine, one million in Kazakhstan, and another million in the North Caucasus and the Black Earth region.[32] Robert Conquest suggests five million died in Ukraine, not four million, but otherwise is in agreement with Werth on the effects of the famine.[33]

The dekulakization campaign, which began in 1929, was separate from but sometimes overlapped with the famine. Those labeled kulaks suffered from persecution, and an unknown number of them sent to the camps died as a direct result of the famine.

Between 1930 and 1933 over a million kulak households were affected by dekulakization. Approximately 2.1 million accused of being first-category kulaks were exiled outside their own region as "special settlers" (*spetsposelentsy*), but went to work in camps and settlements of the OGPU. In addition, between 2 and 2.5 million were branded second-category kulaks and exiled to somewhere away from their homes, but remained (for a time at least) in the same region. A final group, estimated at between 1 and 1.25 million, "dekulakized themselves," that is, left their homes and fled. According to what are called "official records," 241,355 died in exile, and 330,667 "escaped and were not recaptured"—all of this just in 1932–33. The famine continued into 1933–34, the result not of drought but of the state's brutal grain extraction program.[34]

We should be skeptical about Soviet statistics, which inflated production figures "under pressure from politicians" to make the system appear to be prospering. Intimidation was likely also applied to reduce figures on mortalities, lest the system look the failure it was. There can be little doubt that the famine as a whole was one of the worst disasters in modern European history.

THE STATE INVADES THE COUNTRYSIDE

Stalin said over and over that the problems of agriculture lay in its poor organization, and he put forward detailed proposals, including the deployment of the Machine Tractor Station (MTS). The theory was to pool machinery and utilize it on the great expanse of collectivized land.[35] In January 1933, his proposals began to be implemented. The MTS also had political sections (*politotdels*), representatives of the central authorities "specifically chosen" from the urban Communist Party. They were sent "to direct the political and economic reorganization" but were independent of the local (*raion*) Party. With exclusive rights to direct political work on the collective farms, they had links all the way to Moscow. To reinforce the surveillance and control from the center, the deputy of the *politotdel* was a member of the OGPU.

Although the political sections of the MTS changed over time, they carried forward the Party's message and led recruitment drives. The MTS went on to boast enormous gains in terms of machines available. The production and procurement of grain crept upward only slowly during the remainder of the 1930s, and there was no great breakthrough. What was crushed in the process was the last shred of peasant independence.[36]

The relationship between the Stalinist regime and the peasantry was not governed only by repression. To get them to bend, Moscow cooled its missionary zeal in the countryside. To entice them to join the collective farms, the government left them some room to work on small plots of land. The peasants manipulated this hybrid system as best they could and over time even accommodated themselves to the collectivization as a whole.[37]

Stalin may have hoped his image among the peasants would become something between the "good tsar" and the "leader" who dispensed justice and provided rewards for hard work. But memories of collectivization remained raw, and peasant attitudes toward him in the late 1930s were generally "sour and wary."[38]

Andrea Graziosi thinks Stalin won more grudging support. She suggests that the victory in the battle for grain was "also Stalin's *personal* victory. Many peasants now 'recognized' him as a stern, master-like 'father' whom it was impossible to disobey (even though one could still 'cheat' him of a small part of the harvest)." Graziosi believes that this attitude was "one of the roots of the indubitable hold of Stalin's cult from the mid-1930s onward also in the countryside."[39]

The tough-minded peasants had little choice but to recognize Stalin as their master, since his power of life and death over them was a fact they could not change. Joining in the celebrations associated with the Stalin cult would have been a prudent act for a countryside beaten into submission by a tyrannical and murderous "father."

FROM BRIEF "THAW" TO GREAT TERROR

At the beginning of 1934 Stalin signaled victory in the war against the countryside and a "thaw" in militant Communism. The OGPU was dissolved on February 20, 1934, and incorporated into the new Union People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, the NKVD. Unlike its predecessors, the NKVD initially did not have the power to execute people on its own authority. Cases of treason would henceforth go