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978-0-521-56676-6 - Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent,
1934-1941

Sarah Davies

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Between 1934 and 1941 Stalin unleashed what came to be known as the 'Great Terror' against millions of Soviet citizens. The same period also saw the 'Great Retreat', the repudiation of many of the aspirations of the Russian Revolution. The response of ordinary Russians to the extraordinary events of this time has been obscure. Sarah Davies's study uses NKVD and party reports, letters, and other evidence to show that, despite propaganda and repression, dissonant popular opinion was not extinguished. The people continued to criticise Stalin and the Soviet regime, and complain about particular policies. The book examines many themes, including attitudes towards social and economic policy, the terror, and the leader cult, shedding light on a hugely important part of Russia's social, political, and cultural history.

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POPULAR OPINION IN STALIN'S RUSSIA

Terror, propaganda and dissent, 1934-1941

SARAH DAVIES

University of Durham



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For all those who spoke out

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1934	
26 Jan.–10 Feb.	Seventeenth Party Congress
18 Sep.	USSR joins League of Nations
25–8 Nov.	TsK plenum decrees end of bread rations effective from 1 January 1935
1 Dec.	Assassination of Kirov
December	Local soviet elections
1935	
15–16 Jan.	Trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and others
Jan.–Mar.	Mass expulsions from Leningrad
17 Feb.	New model <i>kolkhoz</i> charter adopted
30–31 Aug.	Stakhanov's record
22 Sep.	Military ranks restored
25 Sep.	End of rations on meat, fats, fish, etc.
14–17 Nov.	First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites
	Stalin's speech 'Life has become better, life has become merrier'
29 Dec.	Decree ending restrictions on access to higher education on the basis of social origin
1936	
12 June	Draft of new Constitution published
27 June	Decree 'In defence of the mother and child'
18–24 Aug.	Trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and others
September	Ezhov succeeds Iagoda as head of NKVD
Autumn	Harvest failure in many regions
5 Dec.	Adoption of new Constitution

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- 1937
- 6 Jan. Abortive population census
- 23–30 Jan. Trial of Radek, Piatakov, and others
- 18 Feb. Death of Ordzhonikidze
- 25 Feb.–5 Mar. TsK plenum excludes Bukharin and Rykov
from party, and calls for vigilance
- 31 May Suicide of General Gamarnik
- 12 June Tukachevskii and other generals executed
- 12 Dec. Elections to Supreme Soviet
- 1938
- 2–13 Mar. Trial of Bukharin, Rykov, Iagoda, and others
- 8 Dec. Beria succeeds Ezhov as head of NKVD
- 28 Dec. Decree on labour discipline
- 1939
- January Population census
- 10–21 Mar. Eighteenth Party Congress announces end of
purges
- 27 May Decree on measures to prevent squander of
public *kolkhoz* land
- 23 Aug. Molotov–Ribbentrop pact signed
- 17 Sep. USSR annexes eastern Poland
- 29 Nov. Winter War with Finland begins
- 20 Dec. Stalin prizes instituted
- 1940
- 12 Mar. Peace treaty with Finland
- 26 June Labour decree
- 2 Oct. Decree on fees for higher classes and *vuzy*, and
decree on labour reserves
- 1941
- 22 June Hitler invades USSR

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GARF	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii
GANO	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti
LP	<i>Leningradskaiia pravda</i>
P	<i>Pravda</i>
RR	<i>Russian Review</i>
RTsKhIDNI	Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniiia dokumentov noveishei istorii
SP	Sheila Fitzpatrick, <i>Stalin's Peasants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivisation</i> , Oxford, 1994
SR	<i>Slavic Review</i>
ST	J. A. Getty and R. Manning (eds.), <i>Stalinist Terror. New Perspectives</i> , Cambridge, 1993
TsGA SPb	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv v Sankt Peterburge
TsGAIPD SPb	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov Sankt Peterburga
TsKhDMO	Tsentr khraneniia dokumentov molodezhnykh organizatsii

The archival reference system has been adopted for the sake of conciseness. Throughout, all references are from TsGAIPD SPb unless otherwise specified. The references are to *fond* (collection), *opis'* (inventory), *edinita khraneniia* or *delo* (file), *list* (folio). Thus 24/2v/2600/3 refers to *fond* 24, *opis'* 2v, *edinita khraneniia* 2600, *list* 3. In the case of letters and documents reporting on popular opinion, I have indicated the provenance and date of a file according to the following system: p = a party source (information and agitprop departments); k = a Komsomol source; n = an NKVD source; l = a citizen's letter (except in the case of intercepted letters reproduced by the NKVD which are classified as 'n'). Thus 'p/34' refers to a party file dating from 1934.

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agitprop	agitation and propaganda
<i>artel'</i>	cooperative
<i>batiushka</i>	'little father' (often applied to tsar)
<i>bezbozhnik</i>	member of the 'League of Godless' (pl. <i>bezbozhniki</i>)
<i>chastushka</i>	popular, often four-lined verse (pl. <i>chastushki</i>)
<i>edinolichnik</i>	individual peasant farmer (pl. <i>edinolichniki</i>)
<i>ezhovshchina</i>	campaign of mass terror in 1937–8 named after NKVD head, Ezhov
<i>gorkom</i>	<i>gorodskoi komitet</i> : city committee (of party)
<i>intelligent</i>	member of the intelligentsia (pl. <i>intelligenty</i>)
<i>ispolkom</i>	<i>ispolnitel'nyi komitet</i> : executive committee
ITR	<i>inzhenerno-tehnicheskii rabotnik</i> : engineering/technical worker
<i>khutor</i>	consolidated farm (pl. <i>khutora</i>)
<i>khutorianin</i>	khutor dweller (pl. <i>khutoriane</i>)
<i>kolkhoz</i>	<i>kollektivnoe khoziaistvo</i> : collective farm (pl. <i>kolkhozy</i>)
<i>kolkhoznik</i>	member of the <i>kolkhoz</i> (f. <i>kolkhoznitsa</i> , pl. <i>kolkhozniki</i>)
Komsomol	Kommunisticheskii soiuz molodezhi: Communist League of Youth
k.	kopek(s)
<i>krai</i>	administrative region
<i>kraikom</i>	<i>kraevoi komitet</i> : regional committee (of party)
<i>kustar'</i>	cottage industry
<i>lishenets</i>	disenfranchised person (pl. <i>lishentsy</i>)
<i>muzhik</i>	Russian peasant (colloquially, man)
narodnik	member of nineteenth-century populist movement

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NEP	Novaia ekonomicheskaiia politika: New Economic Policy
<i>nizy</i>	lower classes, those at the bottom
NKIU	Narodnyi komissariat iustitsii: People's Commissariat of Justice
NKVD	Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del: People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs
<i>obkom</i>	<i>oblastnoi komitet</i> : regional committee (of party)
<i>oblast'</i>	administrative region
<i>oblispolkom</i>	<i>oblastnoi ispolnitel'nyi komitet</i> : regional executive committee (of soviet)
OGPU (GPU)	Ob''edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravleniie: Unified State Political Administration (Secret Police)
<i>okrug</i>	administrative region
PPO	<i>pervichnaia partiinaia organizatsiia</i> : primary party organisation
<i>raikom</i>	<i>raionnyi komitet</i> : district committee (of party)
r.	ruble(s)
RSFSR	Rossiiskaia sovetskaia federativnaia sotsialisticheskaiia respublika: Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
<i>sel' sovet</i>	<i>sel'skii sovet</i> : village soviet
<i>sluzhashchii</i>	employee, white-collar worker (pl. <i>sluzhashchie</i>)
<i>soratnik</i>	comrade-in-arms (pl. <i>soratniki</i>)
Sovnarkom (SNK)	Sovet narodnykh komissarov: Council of People's Commissars
SR	Socialist Revolutionary
SSSR	Soiuz sovetskikh sotsialisticheskikh respublik: USSR
Torgsin	Shop trading for hard currency and precious metals (pl. Torgsiny)
TsIK	Tsentral'nyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet: Central Executive Committee
TsK	Tsentral'nyi komitet: Central Committee (of party)
TsKK	Tsentral'naia kontrol'naia komissia: Central Control Commission (of party)
<i>verkhi</i>	upper classes, those at the top (s. <i>verkha</i>)
VKP(b)	Vsesoiuznaia kommunisticheskaiia partiia

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	(bol'shevikov): All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
<i>vozhd'</i>	chief/leader (equivalent of <i>Führer</i> , pl. <i>vozhdi</i>)
VTsIK	Vserossiiskii tsentral'nyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet: All-Russian Central Executive Committee
<i>vydvizhenets</i>	upwardly mobile cadre (pl. <i>vydvizhentsy</i>)

The transliteration system followed is that of the Library of Congress. Certain Russian words with accepted English equivalents will be given in the English form, for example, Bolshevik, rather than *bol'shevik*, and soviet, rather than *sovet*.

Unless otherwise noted, all locations are in Leningrad and Leningrad region.