TERROR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE AGE OF STALIN

Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin is the first comprehensive study of popular participation in the “Great Terror,” a period in which millions of people were arrested, interrogated, shot, and sent to labor camps. The book shifts attention from the machinations of top party leaders to the mechanisms by which repression engulfed Soviet society. In the unions and the factories, repression was accompanied by a mass campaign for democracy. Party leaders urged workers to criticize and remove corrupt and negligent officials. Workers, shop foremen, local party members, and union leaders adopted the slogans of repression and used them, often against each other, to redress long-standing grievances, shift blame for intractable problems in production, and advance personal agendas. Repression quickly became a mass phenomenon, not only in the number of victims it claimed, but also in the number of perpetrators it spawned. Using new, formerly secret, archival sources, Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin takes us into the unions and the factories to observe how ordinary people moved through clear stages toward madness and self-destruction.

This book is dedicated to my children

Eva Jane Rediker

and

Ezekiel Kalman Rediker

in the hope that the past will prove useful to them in building a better future.
## Contents

*Photos*  
*Acknowledgments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Toward a Social History of the Terror</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Crisis of Industrialization</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Murder to Mass Conspiracy</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilizing Mass Support for Repression</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Campaign for Union Democracy</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims and Perpetrators</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals of Repression in the Factories</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Index*  

vii
Photos

1. Serp i Molot (Hammer and Sickle) factory, 1935
2. Serp i Molot, 1935
3. Krasnyi Proletarii (Red Proletarian) factory, 1935
4. Funeral of Sergei M. Kirov with Stalin by the coffin
5. Nikolai I. Ezhov, head of the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs
6. Nikolai I. Ezhov
7. Meeting of workers in Serp i Molot’s open hearth furnace, 1936
8. Meeting of workers in Trekhgornaia Manufaktura
9. Women workers in the Kauchuk Rubber Factory at an election meeting, June 1937
10. Workers cast secret ballots in multicandidate elections for the factory committee in the Chicherin Machine Building factory, Moscow, June 1937
11. Aleksandra V. Artiukhina, head of the Union of Cotton Textile Workers in Moscow and Leningrad
12. Nikolai M. Shvernik, head of the All Union Central Council of Unions
13. P. F. Stepanov, director of Serp i Molot, 1933
14. Workers in the Likernovodochnyi (Spirits and Vodka) factory pouring vodka into bottles, 1937
15. Workers in Krasnyi Proletarii listen to a speech by a party organizer, 1939
16. Meeting of workers in Serp i Molot, 1939
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to many people and institutions for their help. The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research and the American Council of Learned Societies/Social Science Research Council/National Endowment for the Humanities International and Area Studies Fellowship provided grants for research and writing. The History Department of Carnegie Mellon University offered supplementary support and generous travel allowances for research in Russia. The exchange between Carnegie Mellon University and the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) proved invaluable in aiding my work in libraries and archives in Moscow. I am indebted to Irina Karapetians, Iuri Afanas’ev, John Lehoczky, and Joe Trotter for their continuing financial and administrative support for the exchange. I am also grateful to my Russian colleagues at RGGU. Aleksei Kilichenkov and Igor Kurukin, in particular, have aided me in numerous ways, large and small. Elena Nikulina provided able and efficient research assistance.

The staff at the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) have been unfailingly helpful. Their professionalism and dedication in the face of numerous obstacles and hardships inspire great respect. I am especially grateful to Nina Abdulaeva, the head of the reading room, and to archivist Boris Sadovnikov, who acquainted me with the holdings of the All Union Central Council of Unions (VTsSPS) and unions. Without his guidance, I would never have found many of the materials included here. I am also grateful to Lydia Naumova, the head of the reading room in the Central Archive of Social Movements of Moscow (TsAODM), now the Central Archive of Social-Political History of Moscow (TsAOPIM), for her help in ordering documents and negotiating restrictions. Barry Schles, the head of interlibrary loan at Carnegie Mellon University’s Hunt Library, has been highly resourceful in locating even the most difficult materials. The
Acknowledgments

Russian State Archive of Film and Photographic Documents (RGAKFD) allowed me to reprint selections from their archive of historical photographs, and the Tretiakov Gallery went to some effort to locate and reproduce Solomon Nikritin’s powerful painting, People’s Court, for the cover of this book. A portion of this book first appeared as an article, “Stalinist Terror and Democracy: The 1937 Union Campaign,” in American Historical Review, December 2005.

William Chase, Donna Harsch, Carmine Storella, and Lynne Viola all offered excellent suggestions and comments on the manuscript. Naum Kats has been a wonderful colleague, and has aided my research over the years in many ways. I have learned much from my discussions with Moscow colleagues Andrei Sokolov and Sergei Zhuravlev. Colleagues from the Working Class History Seminar in Pittsburgh, the University of Toronto, the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, and the Russian Labor History conference under the auspices of the International Institute for Social History all offered stimulating comments on portions of the manuscript. I worked in TsAODM over several summers with Simon Pirani, a friend, comrade, and colleague, and I am grateful for our spirited discussions about Russian politics, past and present. J. Arch Getty was unfailingly generous with sources and references, kindly answering every query. I fondly remember one bright summer afternoon in his Moscow apartment when we painstakingly reconstructed and reviewed the key arrests and political events of the late 1930s month by month. Donald Filtzer read the entire manuscript with great care and generously shared his extensive knowledge of Russian workers and factories with me. His comments were invaluable in revising the manuscript. His own meticulous research and passionate engagement with the big political issues of Soviet socialism serve as a model of what scholarship can and should be.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Marcus Rediker, who has accompanied me and walked many a mile in a field far from his own. Our political discussions over the years have deepened my understanding of the Soviet experiment. He still asks the hardest, the smartest, and the most useful questions.