

## History Department Summer Independent Learning 2021.

### Mandatory

Task 1:

Use your planning sheet to write up the AO1 section of your History coursework. Your coursework must:

- Be word processed
- Be no longer than 2,200 words. Remember, exceeding the overall word count automatically results in a 10% markdown.
- Must be footnoted.
- Include bibliography (footnotes and bibliography do not contribute to the word count).
- The deadline for this will be the first week of Y13.



Select the three AO2 primary sources which you wish to include in your final answer. The word limit for all three AO2 sources should not exceed 1,200 words.

You can also spend extra time completing additional reading/research to develop your understanding/arguments.

### Strongly recommended

Task 2:

Complete the reading looking at the impact of Stalin's policy of collectivisation. This will be the first topic we will cover in September.

Menzhinsky & Iagoda = leaders of the OGPU (Secret police).

organization, from Trotskyism': Ivan Smirnov, who had opposed Stalin since 1923; Ivar Smilga, a libertarian Latvian; Evgeni Preobrazhensky, who with Trotsky had opposed the Brest-Litovsk treaty and who had overseen the killing of the Tsar and his family; the party's wit and cynic Karl Radek.<sup>29</sup>

Stalin did not deign to speak personally to penitent Trotskyists. Emelian Iaroslavsky, secretary to the party's Central Control Commission, Stalin's panegyrist and nicknamed for his militant atheism 'the Soviet priest', had them sign a public recantation. Not all Trotskyists gave in. The Bulgarian communist Khristian Rakovsky, who had been Soviet ambassador to Britain and France and felt that, despite being exiled to Saratov, he was shielded by his prestige in the Comintern, demanded democratic discussion within the party. Some 500 'oppositionists' in ninety-five labour colonies and prisons supported Rakovsky's demand, but by shooting Iakov Bliumkin, the messenger, Stalin and Iagoda had made contact with Trotsky a capital offence.

In 1929 Stalin's fiftieth birthday was celebrated with sycophantic posters and eulogies. Stalin stopped mediating between left and right and veering from one to the other. He named 1929 the year of the 'great turnabout' (*perelom* – the word also means fracture). In April the first five-year plan of industrialization began, incorporating the projects that Stalin had denounced, when Trotsky put them forward, as absurd: 'As if a peasant who'd saved a few kopecks for a new plough were to go and buy himself a gramophone'. Economists knew what was demanded of them: they proposed doubling in five years the output of coal, steel, electricity and gold. Stalin took the wildly optimistic figures and doubled them again, campaigning to achieve the five-year plan in four.

New ways were needed to approach these targets. Foreign investment, given Stalin's hostility to foreigners as saboteurs, played a minor part, although Henry Ford greedily offered assembly lines for tractors and trucks. Capital reserves were too small. In the world depression, Russia's oil and timber fetched less than ever. Grain had to be taken from the peasants even more ruthlessly. Russia had vast reserves of coal, gold and rare earths in its frozen far north, but even the one and a half million unemployed in the cities could not be lured there. Despite the losses of the First World War and the civil war, Russia had labour in plenty – but it had to be forced.

## Enslaving the Peasantry

And behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the . . . brink of the river. And the ill-favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. Genesis 41: 3–4

Stalin's campaign of 1929 against the peasantry might be seen by a cold-blooded cynic as a long-overdue cure for an overpopulated countryside. In the nineteenth century Europe had sent surplus peasantry to its colonies. In the twentieth century Stalin had Siberia and Kazakhstan to absorb the peasants of Russia and the Ukraine who, despite the terrible mortality of the civil war, were still too numerous for the land to support. The suffering that ensued has few parallels in human history; it can only be compared in its scale and monstrosity with the African slave trade. But whereas the British, French, Spanish and Portuguese took 200 years to transport some ten million souls into slavery, and kill about two million of them, Stalin matched this figure in a matter of four years.

This was an act of unprecedented monstrosity, and the almost total silence and indifference of Europe and America to the fate of the Russian peasantry suggests that the rest of the world, like Lenin, Stalin and Menzhinsky, considered the Russian peasant hardly human. The Nazi persecution of the Jews began as Stalin completed his genocide of the Russian peasant. We are still shocked today by Europe's connivance at Nazi racism but, compared with Europe's indifference to the introduction of slave labour in Russia and to the eradication of the Russian peasant, its murmurs about Nazi atrocities seem like an outcry. The Soviet authorities tried to confine journalists and diplomats to Moscow but could not stop them looking at the countryside from train windows; nor could it prevent foreign technicians working on projects in the provinces from talking. A few European journalists – Nikolaus Basseches in Germany, Gareth Jones and Malcolm Muggeridge in England – reported accurately and extensively, but their voices were drowned by the disgracefully bland reassurances of such experts as the British professor Sir Bernard Pares or the American journalist Walter Duranty that nothing

untoward was happening. Some journalists, notably Duranty, had been suborned by Iagoda and retailed Stalin's propaganda not just to secure privileged access to commissars but also to avoid unpleasant revelations about their own activities.

Stalin, the party and OGPU were not worried. Apparently, putting a dozen foreign technologists on trial hurt Soviet prestige, but enslaving and exterminating millions of Russian and Ukrainian peasants did not. In January 1929 the Politbiuro instructed Menzhinsky, Nikolai Ianson (then commissar for justice) and Krylenko to combine forces, 'to ensure maximum speed in carrying out repressions of kulak terrorists'.<sup>30</sup> In May a Politbiuro resolution entitled 'On the use of the labour of criminal convicts', strictly secret and signed by Stalin, was addressed to Iagoda in OGPU and to Krylenko in the prosecutor's office. It runs: 'To move to a system of mass exploitation for pay of labour by criminal convicts with a sentence of less than three years in the regions of Ukhta, Indigo, etc.'<sup>31</sup> In July 'concentration camps' became 'corrective labour camps'; the GULAG came of age.

In April 1930 Stanisław Messing, Menzhinsky's deputy and a Polish veteran of the suppression of the Kronstadt rising, set up a vast economic empire. Its nominal head was Lazar Kogan, who had run OGPU's border guards; Kogan's deputies were Matvei Berman, the most ruthless exploiter of unskilled labour in history, who would at the age of thirty-four take over the GULAG, and Iakov Rapoport, one of just two GULAG pioneers who would survive Stalin.

Most of the inmates who flowed into these camps were not convicts, but 'socially dangerous elements' by OGPU's criteria: kulaks of the first category, in other words prosperous farmers who might resist dispossession. Arrests and deportations at first nearly overwhelmed the system. Menzhinsky and Iagoda atoned for their mishandling of the first show trials and of Trotsky's departure by taking energetic measures to provide a pool of labour, albeit unskilled, for the mines of the far north. Iagoda's strategy, which Stalin backed, was to change the *raison d'être* of OGPU's empire from a political to an economic one. Political prisoners had formerly been idle playthings for sadistic, disgraced Cheka officers. As Menzhinsky sickened, Iagoda took the initiative and replaced feral camp administrations with more subservient ones; he directed prisoners' physical strength into whatever earned, or saved, foreign currency: logging,

mining and finally massive construction projects like the White Sea canal.

Arrests and executions carried out by OGPU soared: 162,726 persons were arrested in 1929, mostly for 'counter-revolutionary activity', 2,109 were shot, some 25,000 were sent to camps and as many again into exile. In 1930 arrests doubled to a third of a million and executions increased tenfold to 20,000.<sup>32</sup> The camps received over 100,000. By 1934 there would be half a million slave labourers. The camp economies, with their terrible mortality and relentless thirst for expendable labourers, would come to dictate the number of arrests.

Stalin's five-year plan involved urbanization, and depopulating the countryside was the obvious method. The grain requisitioning of 1928 and the taxation that had beggared every farmer gave the peasantry no incentive to stay on the land and the state continued to pillage and terrorize the countryside. The 'great turnabout' announced by Stalin in November 1929, a programme of total collectivization in grain-producing regions, was the next step. Collectivization had been officially under way since 1921, but fewer than 5 per cent of peasants had joined, even on paper, collective farms.

Skirmishes escalated into civil war in the winter of 1929-30, with hundreds of thousands of peasants armed with pitchforks and shotguns against OGPU paramilitaries with machine guns. In many areas, despite Menzhinsky's fears about their loyalties, Red Army units used artillery and aerial bombardment. In the Ukraine, the civil war commanders Iona Iakir and Vitali Primakov led punitive raids. All resistance, even demonstrations in which communist activists were merely beaten up, was met with overwhelming force. A few army men defected to the peasantry and on one occasion pilots were shot for refusing to bomb rebellious villages. Even OGPU men revolted: in March 1930, in the Altai mountains of Siberia, Fiodor Dobytn, the district GPU plenipotentiary, arrested eighty-nine party members, shot nine of them and liberated 400 imprisoned kulaks, whom he armed with rifles.<sup>33</sup>

The last opposition in the Politbiuro, Bukharin and his liberal economists, was gagged, while the capitalist world, indifferent to the holocaust, seemed happy to sell machinery and technology for Soviet industrialization. Stalin did as he wished. Targets for collectivization were stepped up as the process became irreversible. Over 27,000 party activists were mobilized. Molotov urged Stalin to even more severe measures and in

mid-January 1930 took overall charge, on a commission with Krylenko, Iagoda and one of OGPU's most bestial men Efim Evdokimov.

These men were interested only in class war, in eradicating kulaks, although fewer than 2.5 per cent of Russia's peasantry were prosperous enough to be classified as such. But Iagoda, Evdokimov and Krylenko marked out over 5 per cent of peasants for destitution, deportation and, in many cases, extermination. Kulaks were divided into three categories: 'hostile' – to be shot or put in camps, 'dangerous' – to be exiled to non-arable land in the far north or to Kazakhstan, and 'not posing a threat' – to be dispossessed and released in their own region. By the end of January 1930, Molotov's commission had put 210,000 households, one and a half million human beings, in the first two categories. Kulaks were evicted into the freezing winter, their neighbours forbidden under pain of sharing their fate to give them food or shelter. Their money – even their savings books – was confiscated together with any property not in their hands or on their backs. Those that survived the trains to Siberia were at the mercy of one of OGPU's most vicious chiefs, Leonid Zakovsky, who had not built even shacks to house them.

On paper the campaign was a success: by mid-February 1930 Molotov was able to report that some 13,500,000 households – over half of the peasantry – had handed over land, livestock and tools to collective farms. Given that the kulaks had left everything behind, the poor and middle peasantry should have prospered since they now had more arable land and equipment per head. Some poor peasants were given warm clothes and shoes stripped from kulaks – gifts that Iagoda hoped might win their loyalty. In fact, many collective farms existed only on paper, in regions where all that had happened was decimation of the population and disruption of the economy. The peasantry slaughtered that winter half the draught and meat animals in the country. 'For the first time they are eating all the meat they want,' commented a Red Army officer. But the promised tractors had not been built, and when they were many did not work – and now there were often no horses to pull the ploughs.

The fate of those left on the land was grim; that of the kulaks was as horrific as the fate of Poland's Jews under Hitler – 'Auschwitz without ovens' as one survivor later put it – the only saving grace being Iagoda's improvised tactics which left enterprising or lucky kulaks with the hope of escaping death. Iagoda's letter to his subordinates Stanisław Messing

and Gleb Bokii had a Stalinist logic: 'The kulak understands splendidly that collectivization of the countryside means that he must perish, he will resist all the more desperately and viciously, which we see in the villages. From planned uprisings to counter-revolutionary kulak organizations and terrorist acts.'<sup>34</sup> The kulak, Iagoda argued, must have 'his back broken' by spring. Gleb Bokii was to organize more camps and locate wildernesses, some well above the Arctic Circle, where deported kulaks could be left unguarded to die, out of earshot or sight, of starvation, cold and disease.

There were difficulties in moving over a million peasants. Trains of cattle trucks – each train carrying up to 2,000 deportees and watched over by guards who killed at the slightest provocation – crawled over Russia's railways, already overloaded in a country virtually without motor roads. The inhabitants of provincial cities were horrified by the spectacle at their railway stations of crowds of starving and louse-ridden kulaks, middle peasants who had been rounded up to meet the targets, and poor peasants classified as 'subkulaks' for expressing pity for the kulaks. Urban workers steeled themselves to walk over corpses on the pavements. OGPU was worried only when areas hitherto unscathed were panicked by tales of what was about to happen.

At all times Stalin knew in detail what was happening. Iagoda gathered almost daily for Stalin and Molotov statistics from all over the country on arrests, deportations, executions. Naive young communists wrote letters describing the sickening atrocities on the trains to Siberia and in the Arctic tundra. To counter resistance, more OGPU cadets and frontier guards were rushed in. Food, tools, even barbed wire failed to arrive; there was no funding. Junior OGPU officials, motivated by fear of responsibility rather than pity for their victims, complained about the Commissariat of Trade, which failed to provide food. Even the theoretical rations per adult kulak could not stave off death in unheated barracks in a Russian winter: 300 grams of bread, 195 grams of potatoes, 100 grams of cabbage, 75 grams of salt herring – 1,300 calories.

In the south the liquidation of the kulaks turned into ethnic warfare as Don Cossacks who had survived the 1920 genocide were murdered as kulaks by their impoverished neighbours, Ukrainian peasants. All over the north Caucasus 'spontaneous' atrocities, spurred on by OGPU, flared up: Cossacks were burnt alive in cinemas, Chechen shepherds and

bee-keepers were gunned down as 'bandits'. Frinovsky, head of OGPU's border guards, arrived to quell national uprisings, allegedly provoked by kulaks. He reported, after putting the risings down, that corpses choked the rivers flowing into the Caspian Sea. A few communities were hard to crack: the million German farmers who had lived for two centuries on the left bank of the Volga rallied behind their church pastors. Not until 1941 were Stalin's men able to dispossess the Volga Germans. Inspired by their mullahs, the Tatars also withstood attempts to separate out the kulakš, but they could not hold off OGPU, and dreadful retribution was exacted.

The Ukraine suffered worst, for anti-Muscovite feeling fuelled resistance so widespread that it took Stalin two years to devise adequate reprisals. There was more violent resistance in the Ukraine than in the rest of the Soviet Union; of all kulaks deported, a quarter were Ukrainian.

There were now virgin lands in Kazakhstan on which to begin an arable experiment; they were won, like the American west, by exterminating the nomads who had lived on them for centuries. Unlike the American west, however, Kazakhstan received new settlers with no money, clothes, seedcorn or tools, and many would freeze or starve to death. Other Kazakhs fled with their animals into China. Perhaps two million emigrated, even though their fellow Kazakhs in China had no pasture to spare, and half of the refugees died.

The information dam erected around the country by OGPU still leaked. Until 1935, when rural post offices stopped accepting letters for abroad, Cossacks wrote to their relatives scattered from Uruguay to China. But Westerners in general were too gullible or indifferent to protest about the holocaust among the Russian peasantry and Cossacks. As one Kuban Cossack wrote to his relatives abroad: 'Various delegations come from abroad, all communists of course. They are fed well and told stories. If they see people queueing and ask why, "our" lot explain that these are poor people come for a free meal. And the foreigners go home and probably talk about miracles in the land of the Soviets.'

In 1930 a Terek Cossack woman described to an émigré cousin her life over the last ten years:

You reproach us for not writing to you, but we'd be glad to have a correspondence, except it's impossible. You probably heard we were

deported in 1922 . . . We were scattered over the wide world, each going where he could, to the Ingush, the Chechens, Osetians, Georgians – so that we relatives don't see each other . . . Your family was chased out in 1923 and on the night of 10 December outside Grozny all six were shot, but S. was killed right on the street. The next morning all your farm was looted – the house was blown up, the sheds, barns and gates went to the Chechens . . . When we were expelled we wrote to you that many had died, they were all shot.

Our Cossack station has been divided into three categories. 'Whites' – the males have been shot and the women and children scattered wherever they could save themselves. The second category is 'reds' – they were deported, but not harmed. And the third, 'communists'. Nobody in the first category was given anything, reds were allotted one cart per family to take everything they wanted, while communists had the right to take over all their movable property . . . Don't send any money, because the collective farm gets it and we just sign for it. Our deported men are in the infantry and very few come home – everyone says they've died.<sup>35</sup>

Ordinary peasants could write only to party bosses or the newspapers, and Soviet newspapers referred letters they did not print to OGPU. Kulaks had nothing to lose – they wrote to Stalin. For instance:

Dekulakization happens like this: 15 people come at night and take everything. They stole pickled berries, salted gherkins and even the meat from the saucepan. They ripped my only fur coat off me, I resisted and was arrested on the spot . . . Many people perished when the kulaks were deported, at –40° they took families by horse-drawn cart to Tiumen and Tobolsk. In Tobolsk alone about 3,000 are buried, these are completely innocent victims, it is like the order that King Herod once gave to slaughter babies under 6 months . . . Comrades Bukharin, Rykov, Frumkin and Tomsy are right, they know peasant life and peasant thinking better than you.<sup>36</sup>

Molotov was well pleased with the campaign of 1929–30. All targets were exceeded, many by well over 100 per cent: 140,000 had been arrested, twice the figure suggested by the Central Committee at the end of January; the far north had received 70,000 deportees for slave labour

in mines and forests, twice the number budgeted for. Twice as much grain as targeted had been requisitioned, leaving even the remaining poor and middle peasants with too little to eat, let alone to sow in spring. The monetary supply was under control, by annulling kulaks' savings and confiscating their silver.

Iagoda's final report on liquidating the kulak, circulated to the Politbiuro on 15 March 1931, is a proud compilation of disgraceful figures.<sup>37</sup> The party and police had nearly lost control: in 1929 and 1930 thousands of anti-Soviet leaflets and posters had circulated, some 14,000 mass demonstrations and 20,000 acts of 'terrorist violence' had occurred, and there had been 3,000 incidents of grain being burnt rather than handed over. Resistance reached its peak in March 1930. The figures reported by Iagoda omit atrocities in the north Caucasus, the Urals and Siberia, and OGPU's 20,000 executions omit the slaughter of women and children in villages which offered armed resistance. In 1929 the Buriat Mongols, despite their Buddhist faith, rose up. Their own historians agree on a figure of 35,000 Buriats shot in the course of 'pacification'. Figures for Bashkirs, Chechens and Cossacks are still guesswork. To judge by OGPU's informants, the peasantry were bewildered about what political course to take. Some shouted their support for Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy, acclaim which helped to doom the right in Stalin's eyes; some called for the Industrial Party (an invention of Stalin and Menzhinsky) to assume power. In remote areas, kulaks resorted to partisan warfare against OGPU and the collective farms.

No wonder that Stalin later told Churchill in 1945 that collectivization had caused him more anxiety than the Second World War. To stem the chaos, Stalin blamed his subordinates for misleading him. Russian Tsars had defused popular resentment by accusing their ministers of pulling the wool over their eyes. A desperate peasantry, unable to conceive of a mind so evil that it would deliberately inflict so much suffering, believed a god who blamed his fallen angels. There was no longer a left or right 'deviation' to blame, although they would be resurrected as bogeymen and scapegoats, so Stalin blamed his overenthusiastic subordinates. His article 'Giddiness from Success' in *Pravda* on 2 March 1930 signalled that the worst was over. 'Collective farms cannot be imposed by force... Who needs these distortions, this bureaucratic decreeing of a collective movement, these unworthy threats against the peasants? Nobody but our

enemies.' Then came an equally hypocritical decree from the Politbiuro, 'On the struggle against distortions of the party line in the collectivization movement'. The peasantry were so encouraged by these texts that they deserted the collective farms. By summer 1930 the country was only 20 per cent collectivized. Peasants left the collectives, even though they lost the animals and tools they had brought with them and were then allotted the worst land to farm.

The activists who had followed instructions from Stalin, Molotov and Iagoda did not understand the shift in tactics and were nonplussed by this ungrateful disavowal. They were reluctant to apologize to the peasantry but Stalin judged that party discipline required testing the obedience of his subordinates.

There could be no real going back. Land had been redistributed (and often left fallow), houses burnt, horses slaughtered, families split up and heads of households killed. At least half a million people were facing malnutrition in camps or 'special settlements', and a million dispossessed kulaks begged for food, bribed officials for new papers or sought work in the towns. OGPU's own reports stressed the hopelessness in barracks in Astrakhan and Vologda, where 20,000 former kulaks were dying of typhus and hunger. Tens of thousands of victims, particularly middle peasants caught up in the waves of arrests, appealed to the judiciary. A few thousand were freed from the camps and sought work in the enormous building sites springing up in the Urals and on European Russia's rivers.

OGPU recorded executions that followed a written sentence but left uncounted deaths with no paper trail. For want of censuses in the early 1930s, the mortality of the first collectivization campaign has to be guessed. The figures point to a catastrophe even before the terrible famine of 1932-3: a drop in the birth rate from 45 to 32 per thousand between 1928 and 1932, and a climb in the death rate with 620,000 more deaths in 1931 than in 1928. The groundwork for the famine, the greatest demographic catastrophe to hit the peasantry in Europe since the Middle Ages, was laid by Stalin in 1929, for the survivors were so weakened, physically, morally, economically, that they were doomed to die. For want of horses, women pulled ploughs; there was precious little grain and, with half the livestock slaughtered, no meat.

But Stalin had stepped back simply in order to advance much further.

In September 1930 he told Mikoyan to force the tempo of grain exports to 'establish our position on the international market' and instructed his faithful acolyte Poskriobyshev, the secretary of the secret section of the Central Committee, to receive warmly the American engineer Hugh L. Cooper, who would accept increased grain exports from the USSR in exchange for help with producing tractors. By 1931, from a starving countryside, over five million tonnes of grain was being exported to pay for turbines, assembly lines, mining machinery and the funding of communist parties all over Europe, Asia and America.

The silence of the West, which emerged from its economic depression at least partly as a result of orders from the Soviet Union paid for by the blood of millions of peasants, is a blot on our civilization. Diplomats and journalists may well have shared Stalin's view that the Russian peasant was a subhuman brute; Western businessmen were eager for the contracts that Soviet industrialization was bringing their way. As the late British historian Christopher Hill said seventy years later of the Ukraine in 1933: 'I saw no famine.'

The silence of the Russian intelligentsia, bludgeoned and cajoled by OGPU and the party, is more excusable. When writing about the civil war, Soviet novelists and poets could talk of atrocities on both sides and mourn the waste, but on this second civil war there was no leeway. Nevertheless, a handful of Russian poets could not blind themselves to what everyone knew was happening. The young poet Nikolai Zabolotsky lost his freedom and his health for speaking of the horrors in his ironically entitled 'Triumph of Agriculture': he let the Russian peasant protest through the mouth of a horse:

People! You are wrong to believe that I cannot cogitate, if you thrash me with a stick, after putting a breast band on my neck. A peasant, his legs gripping me, gallops, lashing horribly with the *knut*, and I gallop, though ugly, my hungry mouth gasping for air. All around nature is dying, the world is rocking, impoverished, flowers are dying, weeping, swept away by a blow of the legs.

## The Peasantry: the Final Solution

In February 1933 Stalin told a congress of hand-picked peasants that the collective farms had snatched at least twenty million of them from the clutches of the kulak and pauperdom. Each household, Stalin promised, would have one cow, once the kulaks were finished off. Stalin's final words ring true, read with or without irony: 'This is an achievement such as the world has never known before and which no other state in the world has tried to achieve.'

Stalin told Churchill that collectivization cost ten million lives. OGPU counted the deaths by starvation and disease only for a few months; they kept records only of peasants shot, arrested or deported as kulaks, their mortality rates, their escapes, their recapture. A few registry offices in the worst-affected areas along the Volga kept track of who died from what. In some villages and Cossack stations, abashed officials and a few courageous peasants tried to keep a toll. Today's statisticians can estimate the losses from the age and sex structure of the generation that lived through this catastrophe. Another basis for calculation is the difference between the population predicted in 1926 for 1937 and the real figures (some twenty million less) obtained in 1937 by the census takers – they were shot for their honesty. Allowing for famine, violence, hypothermia and epidemics caused by the disruption, the number of excess deaths between 1930 and 1933 attributable to collectivization lies between a conservative 7.2 and a plausible 10.8 million.

The surviving peasants were enslaved for two generations. On 27 December 1932 the Soviet state issued internal passports to its citizens, but not to the peasants, who were left unable to leave their collective farms. For them the civil war had come back, but with no Whites or Greens to defend them. Provincial towns suffered too: refugees brought epidemics of typhus – there were nearly a million cases in 1932. Food shortages in many cities made ration cards meaningless. Rickets, scurvy and dysentery killed children; in many areas more than half the infants under one year old died.

The kulaks began dying the moment they were dispossessed: in trains that took them north and east, over 3 per cent died of disease and

privation. Despite the annual influx of deportees, the population of the 'labour settlements' actually fell from 1932 to 1935. Of 1,518,524 kulaks in exile in 1932, nearly 90,000 died.<sup>38</sup> The following year was worse: 150,000 – 13 per cent of deportees – died and a quarter of the escapees were recaptured. Only in 1934 did mortality drop below 10 per cent. The death rate in Iagoda's labour camps gave prisoners a one-in-three chance of surviving a ten-year sentence. Not counting the victims of the Great Terror, in the 1930s over two million persons were deported to labour settlements in hitherto uninhabited areas of the north and Siberia. Kulaks were followed by the inhabitants of frontier zones and other undesirables. Of the two million, well over 400,000 died including 50,000 'repressed' by OGPU and the NKVD, and over 600,000 fled into anonymity or to the building sites of the Urals and Siberia (a third of these were recaptured). To the casualties of the subsequent famine, we have to add half a million kulaks who died outside the grain-producing regions.

Stalin had full reports from commissariats, party and OGPU. All June, July and August in 1930, 1931 and 1932 he spent recuperating on the Black Sea coast, supervising Kaganovich and Molotov by courier and telegram. In August 1933 he went south again for a two-month break, travelling slowly by train, river boat and car, taking a week to pass through the worst-affected regions. Stalin saw abandoned villages, victims of famine and of typhus epidemics. 'Koba,' Voroshilov wrote to Abel Enukidze, 'like a sponge, kept soaking it all up and there and then, after a little reflection, sketched out a series of measures.'<sup>39</sup>

Politbiuro members were flooded with protests: on 18 June 1932 a twenty-year-old Ukrainian Communist Youth activist wrote to Stanislav Kosior, the Ukrainian party secretary:

Imagine what is now being done around Belaia Tserkov, Uman, Kiev, etc. Enormous areas of fallow land . . . In the collective farms where there were 100–150 horses there are now only 40–50 and those are falling down. The population is starving terribly . . . Tens and hundreds of cases when collective farmers go to the fields and vanish and a few days later the corpse is found and without pity, as if it were quite normal, is buried in a pit, and the next day they find the corpse of the man who buried the first one . . .<sup>40</sup>

Kosior was so shaken that he held back the grain that Moscow demanded from his starving region. This damned him in Stalin's eyes and for the time being he was demoted to deputy commissar for heavy industry.

Stalin did not relent. He gave detailed instructions to intensify the campaign: 'deport from Kuban region in twenty days two thousand rich kulak families who are maliciously preventing sowing,' he instructed Kaganovich on 22 November 1932.<sup>41</sup> In December Stalin and Molotov told Iagoda, Evdokimov, the army commander Ian Gamarnik and the secretary of the lower Volga region Boris Sheboldaev to expel from a north Caucasus Cossack station, 'the most counter-revolutionary, all inhabitants except for those genuinely devoted to Soviet power . . . and to settle this area with conscientious Red Army collective farmers who have too little land or bad lands in other regions, handing them the land, the winter wheat, buildings, deadstock and livestock of the deportees.'<sup>42</sup> Sheboldaev had to commandeer railway depots to cope with this resettlement. He complained to Kaganovich that the peasants who were starving to death were concealing grain hoards, that out of sheer malice they were letting their horses and cows die of starvation.

Stalin conceded a few adjustments to give peasants incentives to produce a surplus for the market, but the hungry were kept away from food. On 16 September 1932 Stalin's draconian law 'of five ears of corn' came into force. To stop uprooted kulaks from 'shattering our new structures', it punished by death or prison any peasant taking just a handful of grain or a cabbage for the land for themselves. Capitalism, Stalin argued, overcame feudalism by making private property sacrosanct; socialism must overcome capitalism by making public property 'inviolable'. Under this law within a year 6,000 had been shot and tens of thousands imprisoned – prison at least held out the prospect of daily rations for the thieves.<sup>43</sup>

At Stalin's behest, Menzhinsky concentrated on procuring grain from the starving regions and seeing that OGPU got it to the ports or, if there was no cover and no transport, that the peasantry were prevented from looting the piles of grain rotting in the rain. Menzhinsky's part in the famine of 1931–3 makes him responsible for more deaths than can be laid at the door of Dzierżyński, Iagoda, Ezhov or Beria. Iagoda, unlike Menzhinsky, was shaken by the enormity of what OGPU had enabled Stalin to do. On 26 October 1931 he wrote to Rudzutak, then commissar for the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate:



The sickness rate and mortality of the deportees is too great . . . The monthly mortality equals 1.3 per cent in Northern Kazakhstan and 0.8 per cent in the Naryn [Siberia] region. Among those that have died there are a particularly high number of younger children. Thus of those below 3 years old 8–12 per cent of the group has died every month, while in Magnitogorsk it has been even more, up to 15 per cent a month. It must be noted that on the whole the high mortality is not due to epidemic illnesses but to the lack of arrangements for housing and equipping these people, and child mortality climbs because of the absence of the necessary food.<sup>44</sup>

Menzhinsky and Iagoda had from the north Caucasus figures for deaths from starvation and disease and for cannibals or corpse eaters. In March 1933 they were informed:

Citizen Gerasimenko ate the corpse of her dead sister. Under interrogation Gerasimenko declared that for a month she had lived on various rubbish, not even having vegetables . . . Citizen Doroshenko, after the death of his father and mother was left with infant sisters and brothers, ate the flesh of his brothers and sisters when they died of hunger . . . In the cemetery up to 30 corpses have been found, thrown out at night, some gnawed at by dogs . . . several coffins have been found from which the corpses have disappeared . . . In Sergienko's apartment was found the corpse of a little girl with the legs cut off, and boiled meat . . .<sup>45</sup>

For once, Menzhinsky and Iagoda's men – Georgi Molchanov, who had organized terror in the north Caucasus and now headed OGPU's secret political sector, and Genrikh Liushkov, Molchanov's deputy and later a defector to Japan – decided not to punish the cannibals, and requested food, medicine and doctors to be sent. In other areas, Molchanov and Liushkov found that even working collective farmers were dying: 'On 16 March farmer Trigub, an activist, 175 days' work credited, died of hunger. He applied several times to the farm administration for an issue of food, but received no help. For the same reason groom Shcherbina (185 days' work) and carpenter Volvach died.'<sup>46</sup>

Not only the authorities were brutalized. Surviving peasants turned on each other and the starving. In summer 1933 a GPU man from the north Caucasus reported:

On Malorossiiskaia farmstead a boy was caught in a vegetable garden: he was killed there and then by the collective farmers . . . At Ivanovskaia farmstead a cultivator and five collective farmers detained a workman on the rice farm whom they tortured, cutting off his left ear; they put his fingers in a door and broke them, then threw him alive down a well. After some time they dragged him out barely alive and threw him into another well which they filled with earth. At Petrovskaja homestead a keeper at the Stalin commune detained an unknown woman on the collective farm area for stealing ears of wheat, took her into a straw barn, tied her to a pillar and burnt her and the barn. He buried the corpse where the fire was.<sup>47</sup>

Soviet intellectuals had to be blind and deaf not to know of these horrors. Very few even hinted at them.<sup>48</sup> Osip Mandelstam, safe from censorship now that he was unpublishable, noted in a short lyric of 1933 that 'Nature doesn't recognize its own face, / and the terrible shades of the Ukraine and the Kuban [ . . . ] / On the felt earth hungry peasants / Guard the gate, not touching the handle.' Nikolai Kliuev, in his vision of starving Russia *The Country of Burnt-Out Villages*, had prophesied:

The day chirped with sparrows, when as if to go looking for mushrooms, the infant was called to the yard. For a piece of beef and liver a neighbour gutted the boy and salted him with grey salt along his bird-like ribs and sinews. From a joist under the beam an old woman washed away the blood with her mop. Then, like a vixen in a snare, she burst out barking in the storeroom. And the old woman's bark was terrible, like a lullaby, or like magpies' chattering. At midnight the grandmother's suffering rose over the poor hut in the shape of Vasia's head. Peasants, men and women, crowded round: 'Yes, the same curls and pockmarked nose!' And suddenly the mob howled at the moon for mortal guilt. Parfion howled, so did thin Egorika, and the massive wolf echoed them on the eaten-out back yards . . .

The Ukraine suffered worst from cannibalism, a crime for which Soviet law had made no provision. Cannibals were summarily executed by OGPU.

Stalin's concern was to make sure the foreign press got no wind of these horrors. 'Molotov, Kaganovich!' he wrote furiously in February 1933, 'Do you know who let the American correspondents in Moscow

go to the Kuban? They have cooked up some filth about the situation in the Kuban . . . This must be put a stop to and these gentlemen must be banned from travelling all over the USSR. There are enough spies as it is . . .<sup>49</sup> Very few foreign correspondents saw the famine first-hand and their reports met with disbelief. Who in peacetime would destroy his country's peasantry?

One person was able to get Stalin's ear, and that was the young Cossack writer Mikhail Sholokhov. Stalin responded, however perfunctorily, to Sholokhov's boldness when other interventions exasperated him. Sholokhov wrote of the horrors he witnessed at his own Cossack station, Veshenskaia: he described collective farmers left destitute after grain, clothes and houses were taken, deportees forced to sleep in the freezing cold, children shrieking, a woman with a baby at her breast begging in vain for shelter before both died of the cold. He described mass floggings, torture in frozen pits or on red-hot iron benches, mock executions, women stripped naked on the steppe. 'Do you remember, Iosif Vissarionovich, Korolenko's sketch "In a pacified village"? Well, this "disappearance" was done not to three peasants suspected of stealing from a kulak, but to tens of thousands of collective farmers.'<sup>50</sup> Sholokhov hinted that if he had no response, he would use the material in his second novel *Virgin Soil Uptumed*. Stalin thanked Sholokhov and sent out Matvei Shkiriakov from the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate. One or two torturers from OGPU were given nominal prison sentences. Stalin told Sholokhov, 'your letters create a somewhat one-sided impression . . . you have to see the other side . . . your respected Cossack farmers were being saboteurs and didn't mind leaving the workers, the Red Army without grain.'

The region that suffered most from Soviet collectivization was the Mongolian People's Republic, which was in the hands of a Russian puppet, the future Marshal Khorlogiin Choibalsan, a drunken psychopath who connived at the murder of his entire Politbiuro. Mongolia was not just a cordon sanitaire between the Soviet Union and Japanese Manchuria; it was a laboratory in which Stalin's anti-religious and anti-kulak campaigns were tested. The Buddhist lamas, a third of the adult male population of Mongolia, were slaughtered, the cattle herders dispossessed. In spring 1932, its population reduced by a third, Mongolia revolted and Stalin had to retreat. The government was partially replaced,

the rebel leaders declared Japanese agents and their followers promised an amnesty; train-loads of consumer goods were sent and a squadron of aircraft repainted in Mongolian insignia was sent to bomb the insurgents.

In Russia too there were rebellions, though remarkably few. Within a day's journey of Moscow, on 10 April 1932 thousands in the town of Vichuga rose, burnt down the police station and occupied the party and GPU headquarters, seriously injuring fifteen police. Kaganovich came down to organize the reprisals. In the grain belt the new motor tractor stations became police headquarters not machinery centres. Together with OGPU, MTS 'chekas' arrested kulaks, 'disorganizers' and 'wreckers'. But even when the tractor stations had tractors available to replace dead horses and ploughmen, the collective farms had no money to lease them. 'I consider it impermissible,' Stalin wrote to Kaganovich, 'that the state spends hundreds of millions on organizing MTS to serve the collective farms and still doesn't know how much the peasantry is going to pay for their services.'<sup>51</sup>

Down in the Ukraine what disturbed Stalin was not the deaths of millions of his subjects, but vacillating local leaders who grumbled that plans for grain procurement were 'unreal'. 'What is this? This isn't a party, it's a parliament, a caricature of a parliament,' he wrote to Kaganovich. His own brother-in-law Redens, he grumbled, was 'not up to conducting the battle with counter-revolution in such a big and peculiar republic as the Ukraine.'<sup>52</sup> Stalin claimed to fear another Polish invasion: 'Pilsudski's agents in the Ukraine are not slumbering, they are much stronger than Redens' or Kosior thinks. Bear in mind too that the Ukrainian Communist Party (500,000 members, ha-ha) contains quite a few (yes, quite a lot?) of rotten elements, conscious and unconscious agents of Petliura, even direct agents of Pilsudski.' Stalin asked Menzhinsky to remove Stanislav Redens and put in the field the most brutal GPU man available, Balitsky. The Ukraine was to be 'within the shortest time a real fortress'.

By 1934, the main slaughter was over, and a relatively good harvest provided enough grain for the surviving peasants and the townspeople. Effectively, the war of Stalin, the secret police, the party, the army and the city workers against the peasants was won. Even those who had witnessed the horror tried to put it all behind them. Sholokhov gave *Virgin Soil Uptumed* a happy ending. Gorky, novelists and film-makers of

the Soviet Union celebrated a countryside feeding industrial workers the calories they needed to build paradise. The only exception was Nikolai Zabolotsky, who imbued 'The Triumph of Agriculture' with a Swiftian irony that misled the censor for a few years. Into a horse's mouth Zabolotsky put the peasant's *De profundis*:

All around nature is dying, the world is rocking, impoverished . . . now, bow-legged with pain, I hear: the heavens howl. Now a beast trembles, predestined to turn the wheel's system. I beg, reveal, reveal it, friends: are all people really lords over us?

Collectivization had brutalized victims and perpetrators to such a degree that civilized society no longer existed in the USSR. The cruelty and passivity it induced in Soviet citizens made it possible for Stalin and his hangmen to proceed to an even more violent campaign in the party and among the urban population.

## FIVE

### Iagoda's Rise

. . . if you magnified an ordinary flea several thousand times you'd get the most fearful animal on earth which nobody would be strong enough to control . . . But history's monstrous grimaces produce such magnifications in the real world, too. Stalin is a flea which Bolshevik propaganda and the hypnosis of fear have magnified to unbelievable proportions.

Gorky's diary, according to witness!

