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Preface

This book has taken me longer than most. The subject matter has much to do with it, given the preconceptions, if not the knee-jerk reactions, that are produced by the cypher of 'Stalin'. Some years ago, I managed acquire a set of Stalin's works, from none other than a second-hand bookshop in Kansas. Kansas! Yes, for it used to be—many, many years ago—a left-wing, if not Marxist centre in North America. How times have changed. But I soon found that the 'Works' were incomplete, ending abruptly in January of 1934. Eventually, I tracked down the remaining volumes, published by Red Star Press in London. Meanwhile, I found the Russian original, which has now been transferred (in online version with page numbers) to the University of Newcastle in Australia, one of my homes. To add to my collection, I became aware in the process of a new edition of Stalin's works, *Trudy*, which is in the process of publishing what may well be a full collected works by Stalin.

I set to reading Stalin, slowly and painstakingly, as I had done earlier with Marx, Engels, leading western European Marxists, and then Lenin. For some reason, Stalin took me longer, even though he wrote a little less than the others. My earlier hunch that Stalin may actually have something to offer the Marxist tradition was slowly being confirmed, but what that contribution might be took a lot more effort. It required working through the texts many times, seeking to discern the key ideas in light of the frameworks that I was developing. Why? Few had actually worked in such a way, with many simply dismissing Stalin and thereby not even giving him the benefit of serious attention. My starting point with a theological radar meant that I was even more alone. More to the point, I began to realise that many of my assumed categories were being broken down, forcing me to begin thinking again, rethinking everything in the process.

This was, after all, socialism in power, however one may interpret the term. I also realised that socialism in power continues to be chronically under-thought, with many 'Western' Marxists simply refusing to countenance the possibility that anything could be learnt from socialism in power—which by 2017 offered a century of immense experiences, stunning achievements, abysmal failures, but above all, an immense resource for reflecting on socialism after the revolutionary seizure of

power. Precisely this reality attracts me so much, especially now with my immersion in Chinese socialism. Stalin is one—although not the only one—of the theorists of socialism in power, whether people like it or not.

As I point out at various moments in the book, it was written largely in the context of China, my second home. I am often here for extended periods of time, especially in Beijing. Initially, I was not so enamoured with the place—too large, too hectic, too much change all the time. But after a few years, I realised why I like the place so much, with all its flaws. It is the centre of the strongest socialist state in world history, eclipsing now the Soviet Union. In the middle of Tiananmen Square, the gate of heaven no less, lies the body of Chairman Mao. Here is socialist power, with a Communist Party in control. It is like a magnet to me and I am working to understand what it means. This study of Stalin is a first step in the process. 'Stalin and the Theology of Class Struggle', in *Og Theologie: Festskrift til Carsten Pallesen*, edited by Mads Peter Karlsen and Lars Sandbeck. Copenhagen: Eksistensen, 2016, pp. 315–34; 'On the Question of Sin: Stalin and Human Nature', in *The Bible and Critical Theory* 12.2 (2016): 87–103; 'A Materialist Doctrine of Good and Evil: Stalin's Revision of Marxist Anthropology', *Crisis and Critique* 3.1 (2016): 109–54; 'Against Culturism: Reconsidering Stalin on Nation and Class'. *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 42 (2015): 247–73.

Along the way, many have assisted me with my thoughts, although they are by no means responsible for the way I have developed them. Domenico Losurdo is one, who quietly assures me that we are of the mainstream and that we patiently need to persuade the remainder of their waywardness. Zhang Shuangli is another. We have met often over the years, pushing each other to think further on core questions relating to socialism in power. Zang Fengyu remains a close comrade, urging us both to engage with the burning questions that relate to China today. Lu Shaochen's efforts to rethink major categories in an original way challenge me to stop and think whether I am working in the most productive manner. Yu Min, through her knowledge of the early years of the Soviet Union, quietly nods when I mention what I thought was a newly discovered idea, for she has found this already in the reality of China. Roger Markwick's wariness is very much appreciated, as he patiently questions the large topics I enthusiastically tackle, and Tom Griffiths continues to insist on the importance of 'socialism for the twenty-first century' from a Latin American situation. To all these I am immensely thankful, as well as those who are too many to mention as I spent the last few years working on this book. Above all, Christina Petterson and I continue our common project, in different parts of the world, for signs of socialism, if not communism itself—in both expected and unexpected corners.

Beijing, China Roland Boer
May 2017

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Introduction

> The point to notice is that Stalin was very well aware that the revolution in Russia had given rise to tasks which required fresh ideas, a development of Marxism to suit the new situation (Copleston 1986, 326, see also 328).

Is it possible to think with and through Stalin, surprising and indeed scandalous as such a task may possibly be? This is precisely what I undertake in this study, with the result that some of the core issues relating to socialism in power—socialism as a distinct period, human nature, the Party, socialist democracy, minority nationalities, language, affirmative action and the state—find unexpected developments and elaborations.

The task entails two related steps: the first is to explicate what is usually implicit in Stalin's thought. More often than not, he deals with immediate practical issues, being forced to think through their implications and seek theoretical direction for further practices. At this point, be begins to develop the seeds of fuller positions. Or, rather, they are often fragments requiring further work in order to construct a more coherent position. The second step goes further: to think with and through Stalin. Here the question of socialism in power comes to the fore, since the topics that have arisen in my study relate directly to the ambiguous reality of power. However, I have also found the need to work through and beyond Stalin, taking his usually embryonic reflections a little further. Needless to say, this approach entails far more than discerning the author's 'intention', whatever that may have been (and we are certainly not privy to the inner workings of his mind). I do not wish to revisit the whole debate around the 'intentional fallacy', save to point out that discerning the structures and themes in Stalin's published texts is but one part of my project. More importantly, I seek to uncover what is implied, what runs beneath the surface so as to develop the points further.

How to begin such a project? The initial framework comes from my earlier studies of Western European Marxism and Lenin (Boer 2007–2014, 2013). I approached their works with a theological radar, seeking to unearth the biblical and theological dimensions that run through their thought. At times, they wrote whole books on the Bible and theology, at other times shorter pieces, and at others

their works sought to account for and transform theological terms and ways of thinking. With this material, I was then able to reassess much of their other work. I was not interested merely in the historical fact that European and West-Asian cultures have been saturated with the entwinement of theology and philosophy, but more in the profound implications for understanding Marxist ways of thinking. My approach was not to assume a dependence—historical or ontological—on theology but a translatability between radical politics and theology. By translation I mean a dialectical process, in which each term resists the process of translation so that one must continually reconsider the translation in question. Thus, each translation is a temporary affair, in which there are gains and losses of meaning, only to attempt the process once again. The upshot is that no one language may claim absolute or prior status, for each can be seen in a more modest light, being aware of their own promises and limitations.[1]

I began my study of Stalin in a similar vein, especially in light of the fact that he was the only world communist leader who had studied theology extensively. So, the majority of the chapters that follow draw upon a significant theological, if not also philosophical category: biblical engagement and scriptural dynamics in dealing with the texts of founders; the determining role of the biblical stories of Babel and Pentecost for understanding the debates over language, as well as Stalin's own Pentecostal approach; the highly productive reality of the delay of communism in light of the Christian delay of the Parousia (or Christ's return); the debates over human nature in the Christian tradition for framing Stalin's disruptive awareness of the starkness of evil, which thereby produced a fundamental reframing of Marxist anthropology; and the more philosophical issue of transcendence and immanence, insofar as this tension was translated into Marxist deliberations concerning the relations between the Communist Party and the people. Each of these engagements seems to me highly productive, since they enable sustained deliberation on key questions.

Relevant here are two historical items that I will not analyse in detail in the chapters that follow. The first is, as mentioned, that Stalin studied theology for five years (1894–1899) at the Tiflis Spiritual Seminary, a training college for priests in the Russian Orthodox Church.[2] On the negative side, this meant speaking only in Russian, even in private, and not in the native Georgian of the students. The church hierarchy in Tiflis and the seminary was decidedly reactionary, seeking to instil reverence for the tsar and God, in equal measure. Discipline was tight, with the whole day carefully organised, limited excursions outside and prescribed reading (banning even Dostoyevsky). Textbooks and the Bible were standard fare, and the students wore cassocks. On the positive side, Stalin experienced—for the time—an exceptionally thorough theological education. And he came to appreciate the ascetic

[1]For a more complete elaboration of this method of engaging between radical politics and religion, see my 'Translating Politics and Religion' (Boer 2015b).

[2]The following is based on a few sources (Kun 2003, 21–36, Service 2004, 23–31, Kotkin 2014, 21–38).

life of a theological student, with its simple diet of bread and beans and the ability to get by with little. What did he study? He had already spent 5 years at the parish school of his home town, Gori, which had set him on the path to the priesthood (as his separated mother fervently wished). Here he was already known and rewarded for his devoutness, attending all church services, even reading the liturgy and leading the singing in the choir—and invariably coming first in his class due to diligent and enthusiastic study. He was destined for the seminary, the highest educational institution in the Caucasus. In this institution, the earlier years of study included both 'secular' and theological subjects: Russian literature; secular history; mathematics; Latin; Greek; Church Slavonic singing; Georgian Imeretian singing; Holy Scripture. By the final years, the subjects became distinctly theological: ecclesiastical history; liturgy; homiletics; comparative theology; moral theology; practical pastoral work; didactics; church singing; Holy Scripture. Some subjects may have changed, but throughout Holy Scripture and church singing were constants. The young Stalin was noted by his teachers for his phenomenal memory, subtle intellect and voracious reading. His marks varied over the years, ranging from high to low, especially from the middle years onwards when he became involved with revolutionary groups outside the seminary (indeed, the seminary was known as a hotbed of unrest and became a recruiting ground for the Georgian socialist movement[3]). Thus, he may have risen to fifth in a class of twenty-nine in his second year, but by the fifth year he had slipped to twentieth out of twenty-three. All the same, he became thoroughly versed in theological matters. He knew the history of the church back to front; he could sing; he read Greek and Latin; and he knew intimately how the church itself worked (which assisted immensely in his famous compact with the church in 1943). Above all, he knew the Bible. Indeed, he had already studied Old and New Testament while at school, before arriving at the seminary. Ten years or more of solid study of the Bible are bound to leave their impression on a young man. It is not for nothing that Stalin later was known for having memorised long stretches of text and quoting from the Bible at will. In the end, Stalin left the seminary before sitting for the final examinations, which would have qualified him to become a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church, if not to proceed to university. Biographers remain puzzled as to why he did so. Stalin himself hinted it was because of revolutionary activity; others suggest it was because he was unable to afford the fees. But the most likely reason is that he realised that the life of a priest was not for him, so he chose to leave. It was, obviously, a big decision. Yet, for many years afterwards in revolutionary circles, he was known as 'The Priest'.

The second historical moment stems from article 124 in the 1936 constitution, which affirmed freedom of religious worship and of anti-religious propaganda. The Russian Orthodox Church, under the wise Patriarch Sergei, began to petition the

[3]This should not be surprising. Apart from Engels's path from Reformed Christianity to socialism, the Russian Orthodox Church was itself in profound turmoil, with movements for reform abounding in the lead-up to the Russian Revolution (Shevzov 2004, Roslov 2002).

government to hold to its promise (it helped matters immensely that Sergei had already, in 1927, issued a statement seeking rapprochement between the communists and the church). He sought permission for the reopening of churches, the admission of openly religious people to regular employment, if not the possibility of religious candidates in elections (which they did in 1937). Stalin eventually responded to the church's persistence, meeting with leaders in September of 1943 to reach a historic compact.[4] In return for support of the war effort that eventually defeated Hitler, Stalin allowed the reopening of thousands of churches, along with theological colleges and monasteries, the release of imprisoned clergy and the re-establishment of the church's leadership hierarchy. Given his intimate knowledge of the church, Stalin clearly knew the benefits of such an alliance, running at a much deeper level than propaganda—Sergei had already called on all citizens of the Soviet Union to support the fight against Hitler, even providing funds for specific units in the Red Army. This agreement remained largely in place until Stalin's death. We should not be surprised that a specific form of religious iconography developed around Stalin, fuelled by rumours of a 'mysterious retreat' in 1941.

These historical moments assist in setting the context, although my prime interest is in Stalin's texts. At the same time, thinking through Stalin involves moving past the theological starting point, for the questions raised have to do with the Marxist tradition itself. In this sense, the matters of language, socialism and communism, human nature and the Party have their own life within theoretical debates and practical realities of Marxism. This situation applies especially to the question of the state, if not the socialist state. My analysis of this question does not seek to frame it in theological terms, no matter how much some may argue that the state in a European situation owes its shape to theological influences (Schmitt 2005). The reason is that Stalin simply does not see the state in these terms. Instead, what he calls a socialist state involves matters of class and nationality, dictatorship of the proletariat, affirmative action, redefining the 'people' and thereby the definition of the socialist state—a hitherto unexpected development.

Two other factors are important for understanding what I seek to do. The first is that all of these theoretical explorations took place largely in the context of socialism in power. I write 'socialism in power' in order to leave open the question as to whether the Soviet Union was socialist (assuming one knows what socialism is) and to indicate that a Communist Party was in power. Why this context? In my earlier study of Lenin, I was surprised to find that the Lenin after October was far more interesting than the one before October, even if most of his writings and activities took place before the revolution. As he pointed out on a number of occasions (as Mao did too), gaining power through a communist revolution is relatively easy, but exercising power in order to construct socialism is exponentially more difficult and complex. *This* is the Lenin who intrigues me. But it fell to Stalin to become the prime architect of socialism in power, the first time this had happened in world history. And so Stalin drew me in, for he and many other

[4]See Miner (2003) for a detailed study, albeit with some qualifications.

Bolsheviks found it necessary by force of circumstances to reassess some major Marxist categories and—more importantly—develop new ones that did not exist previously, for the simple fact that very few Marxists indeed had experienced the exercise of power.

Second, and closely related, is a changing context for my own work: China. Half of my time is now devoted to living and researching in the People's Republic, which has had a significant influence on the shape of the book. In an unexpected conjunction, the topics that arose through carefully reading and reflecting on Stalin's texts turned out to be topics that are very relevant for understanding Marxism in China. The intersection initially seemed fortuitous, but it eventually became clear that the common ground is socialism in power. More specifically, the creative influence of Stalin and the Soviet Union rose to a peak in the Yan'an period of the 1930s and into the 1940s. After the failure of earlier revolutionary efforts, and the trials and triumphs of the Long March, the Chinese communists had an opportunity to study, reflect, discuss and write. Apart from works by Marx and Engels, they had recourse to the developed positions coming from the Soviet Union. Translations brought them the works of Lenin and Stalin, as well as a number of key Soviet philosophers from Stalin's era. It was this context that framed the significant materials delivered in lectures and written in Yan'an, although the Chinese communists also clearly developed their own positions in debate with Soviet thought. Indeed, some of Mao's most important theoretical works come from this time, continuing to influence the frameworks of Chinese Marxism today. In my study of these works, it has become clear that many of the categories first broached by Stalin are taken and reworked in the writings of Mao and others. Thus, Stalin—so often excised from the history of Marxism, let alone Marxist philosophy—is the crucial link from Marx, Engels and Lenin to Mao and modern China.

In the end, my approach can be described simply: a careful analysis of texts. Some may speak of a humanist ideal, running back to Erasmus, but for this humanist the texts in question included the Bible. I undertake a patient and painstaking analysis of the actual published texts, with their insights, problems and challenges. This focus on the published texts is a conscious methodological decision, the reasons for which should be obvious by now. To these I add that I deliberately do not focus on the archives (see below), not least because of the tendency—archive 'fever' perhaps—to assume that one may find endless secrets to Stalin in such archives. Secrets there may be, although I doubt it. Instead, my interest is in careful attention to the patterns of thought and structures in the published texts. As Michael Smith observes (2010, 107), 'Stalin still has much that is genuine to teach us'.[5] Given the many preconceptions about Stalin, I have been more careful than usual, exegeting and citing the many texts in question in order to justify the arguments I develop. To do so, I focus on his *Works* (*Sochineniia*), although a number of volumes of a more complete Russian edition, *Trudy*, have

[5]And as Jeremy Smith (2005, 47) observes in relation to Stalin's statements on the national question, these 'statements should not be underestimated'.

now been completed. Surprisingly, this is a rare venture in our time, with only Van Ree (2002a) and Vaiskopf (2002) engaging to some extent with Stalin's texts (the former mostly for understanding and the latter with the aim of condemnation).

Reasons for the neglect of Stalin's actual writings are many: the polarisation—veneration and demonization—over 'Stalin'; the spate of studies since the 1990s that have been devoted to archives; the domination of research by historians, whether social historians or biographers; and the dismissal of any theoretical ability he may have had. Let me take each in turn. In terms of the polarisation over Stalin, the overwhelming tone in the 1990s was to focus on yet further atrocities committed (Volkogonov 1990, Radzinsky 1997). By contrast, by the early 2000s a distinct shift began, with some seeking to identify and indeed praise Stalin's gains (Osipov and Zotova 2003, Polikarpov 2007, Kremliov 2008, Ziuganov 2009, Zhura 2012, Lipman, Gudkov, and Bakradze 2013, Oshkalov 2013). By contrast, I seek not to takes sides in this polarisation, to seek the tyrant or saint within his thought. Instead, I take seriously Stalin the thinker, desiring to understand rather than praise or condemn.

Thus far I have referred to Russian works (although some have been translated). If we shift our scope to the international scene, the overwhelming tendency since the 1980s has been to make use of the archives that became more widely available in the late 1980s and especially the 1990s. Work after work claims to have had unprecedented access to such archives, or to have discovered new archives, or to have reconsidered the available archives. This research has undoubtedly enriched research into Stalin, although it should be noted that in the last decade many of the archives have once again been restricted. The material that remains available is due to earlier digitalisation. The down side of this archival fever is that careful study of the written, published works of Stalin have been neglected. A further focus since the 1980s has been social history, adding a significant angle to the earlier tendency to focus mostly on activities of the government.[6] This work has also been predicated on access to archives, yet it is even more notable for at best skimming over Stalin's written material (apart from the curious hypothesis that everyone was opposed to the communists). More recently, a spate of biographies has begun to emerge, with one scholar after another seeking to make a distinct contribution (Medvedev and Medvedev 2003, Montefiore 2003, 2007, Service 2004, Kotkin 2014, Khlevniuk 2015). These biographies both build on and seek to counter some of the perspectives in earlier biographies (Deutscher 1967, Tucker 1973, 1990, Volkogonov 1990). They may also be seen as part of the increasing debate over Stalin's legacy (Martens 1996, Roberts 2006, Losurdo 2008, Furr 2011).

Running like a sub-stream under all this work is an intermittent effort to deal with Stalin and religion to some extent (Fülöp-Miller 1926, Berdiaev 1934, 1937, Sarkisyanz 1955, Agursky 1987, Halfin 1999, Kharkhordin 1999, Duncan 2000, Vaiskopf 2002, 199–290). Religion is more or less present in these works, although the ways they do so vary considerably: background in Russian Orthodoxy; Stalin as

[6]Fitzpatrick's is the pioneering work here (2000).

part of a larger picture; traditions of 'messianism'; homologies with theology based on apparent likeness; secularisation of theology in Bolshevik ideology. Apart from Vaiskopf, none deals with Stalin's texts in any detail. In Vaiskopf's case, the theological homologies are somewhat overdone and used as another mechanism to reveal the workings of a tyrannical mind.

The present work, then, beats a somewhat lonely path. This loneliness is enhanced by the assumption that Stalin was actually able to think. It may be surprising, but he is not often credited with this ability, let alone the ability to think dialectically. Was he not the one who was a novice at theory, mocked by his comrades for his faltering efforts? This assumption is captured best in a fictional vignette: 'When, at one of the Party meetings of those days, Stalin involved himself in a theoretical argument, he was interrupted by a half-amused and half-indignant remark from the old Marxist scholar, Ryazanov: "Stop it, Koba, don't make a fool of yourself. Everybody knows that theory is not exactly your field"' (Deutscher 1967, 290, see also Trotsky 1941, 83–84, 386, Von Laue 1964, 202–3, Tucker 1973, 315, 318, Plamenatz 1975, 7–8, Cliff 2004, 132). By contrast, for all its many flaws, Kotkin's biography notes Stalin's 'vigorous intellect' (2014, 7). I must admit that I have come to agree with Kotkin on this point, overturning many of my preconceptions through patient and careful attention to Stalin's works.

This is also one of the conclusions of Van Ree's patient and important studies of Stalin's political thought (1997, 1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010c).[7] While I do not agree completely that Stalin developed a thoroughly tight-fitting and comprehensive doctrine to which he adhered, I do agree that Stalin gave much thought to the problems thrown up by the ever-changing situation and that he did so by immersing himself in the Marxist classics. Significant here is Van Ree's consideration (2002a, 1–9) of the role of Stalin's thought in popular (mis)-conceptions, which I interpret as follows. Stalin has variously been charged with vulgar Marxism, dogmatism, mystification, ignoring reality and the peddling of illusions (Timpanaro 1975, 32–33, Balibar 1977, 50, Service 2004, 319, Anderson 2007, 142, Michael-Matsas 2007, 117, Banaji 2010, 47–49, Khlevniuk 2015, 7). These various charges turn on whether Stalin was out of touch or in touch with reality. If the former, then his dogmatism was one with his illusions, but this suggestion struggles to make any sense of the events as they unfolded in the Soviet Union, in all their stunning achievements, disruptions and failures. It also fails to understand the remarkable consistency in Stalin's thought and that of the other communists who worked with him. If the latter, then he becomes a hypocrite, cynic or sophist, assuming a deliberate effort to conceal reality, as saying one thing—in very Marxist terms—but doing the opposite, or a cynical effort to secure ever more dictatorial power, or spinning words to justify yet another deviation (Plamenatz 1947, 111–17). The problem here is that Stalin clearly believed what he thought and acted upon such positions. Ultimately, all of these charges carry with them the

[7]At the same time, Van Ree cannot resist the temptation to find external sources for Stalin's thought outside the Marxist tradition.

assumption that one has no need to consider his actual texts and the thoughts developed therein. My study indicates that this is a mistake.

Indeed, I have come to the position that Stalin must be studied carefully as part of the Marxist tradition. The various responses I have discussed—ranging from dismissals of his intellectual ability to the charge of sophistry—function as efforts to excise Stalin from this tradition. To this should be added a narrative of betrayal, or even a Fall from the truth of Marxism. This narrative takes many forms, with some attributing the betrayal to Engels, Lenin or Stalin (apart from efforts to condemn Marxism by connecting them all to Marx). I am interested here in the charge that Stalin himself betrayed Marxism (Deutscher 1959, 459–66, Liebman 1973, 417–25, Farber 1990, Le Blanc 1990, 4–5, 2014, 44–45, Anderson 2007, 142, Lecercle 2007, 276, Molyneux 2003, 126–27). This move is often made to distinguish him from Lenin, so that one may claim Lenin, dismiss Stalin, and then pick up another as the true heir of Lenin—whether Trotsky, Mao, Ho Chi Minh or Castro. I find this a curious move indeed, for it erases a major figure in that tradition, who—despite his missteps and profound mistakes from time to time—was crucial in fostering anti-colonial struggles and socialist revolutions elsewhere in the world, especially in China. No matter what one's assessment of Stalin may be, it is an act of intellectual laziness to deny him a place in the tradition. So I follow Van Ree (2002a, 14–17, 1997) in assuming that Stalin was very much part of the Marxist tradition. He notes that Stalin's library was overwhelmingly Marxist and he made extensive notes in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Even more, all of the key ideas developed by Lenin and Stalin can be found in earlier moments of the Marxist tradition. After all, a political tradition like Marxism is constantly developing, revising positions and developing new ones in light of changing circumstances. Is not a key Marxist method one of praxis-interpretation-praxis?

It remains to provide a synopsis of the chapters that follow. The first chapter sets the scene in two ways: first, I examine in detail Stalin's engagements with the Bible, since he was known for his propensity to quote or allude to biblical texts. This was as true of the young theological student, for whom 'Holy Scripture' was a core subject, as of the mature Stalin in his many speeches and writings. I am interested in tracing the biblical contours of this material, with its allusions, invocations and inflections. After analysing the main features of this biblical sentence production, I offer a series of recreated texts that highlight the biblical tenor of Stalin's writings—following the canonical order from Genesis to Revelation. Second, and more importantly for the subsequent chapters, I examine what may be called a scriptural dynamic (understanding 'scripture' as writings rather than 'sacred' texts), which is translatable across different scriptural traditions. Thus, in traditions in which written texts of founders play an important role, the claims made upon and reinterpretations offered of the founding texts are crucial for justifying new directions. Here tensions over spirit and letter emerge, as do struggles over reinterpretation and betrayal of meaning. In debates, all sides claim to be faithful to the texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin, with each denouncing the other as undertaking misguided interpretation.

Building on this biblical framework, the second chapter in many ways sets the scene for the arguments that follow. It concerns the productive role of the 'delay of

communism' in Stalin's thought. The world's first socialist revolution soon experienced a delay in the expected achievement of communism. It became obvious that it would not come as soon as many expected. This delay produced a number of innovations, which I examine in some detail. It began with the distinction between socialism and communism, with the interim of socialism becoming a distinct period. But how to define such an era? Stalin creatively deployed biblical texts (2 Thess 3:10 and Acts 4:32 and 35) to define it, to the point of including them in the 1936 constitution, as well as four dialectical features: the diversity and unity of languages and cultures; the intensification of class conflict as the goal draws nearer; socialism in one country; strengthening the state as the means to its withering away. By now, echoes of the early Christian phenomenon of the 'delay of the Parousia' should be clear: Christ's delay in returning produced a range of responses in which the interim became the norm. The details may have been different, but the underlying phenomenon of delay is analogous. However, the most intriguing aspect of Stalin's thought is what may be called proleptic communism (analogous to proleptic eschatology), in which a communism of the future is creatively present as a type of reverse causality, determining the nature of the present even though it remains to be achieved.

The third chapter develops a specific aspect arising from the delay of communism: the question of language. This topic requires a fresh analysis of the range of Stalin's thoughts on the topic. I argue that he glimpses the possibility of a dialectical understanding of language: the greater the totalising unity, the greater the linguistic diversity produced; the more diversity arises, the more does a new form of unity arise. The first part of the chapter analyses the initial stage of the dialectic, where Stalin indicates the unexpected creation of more languages as a result of Soviet practices. The second part deals with the question of unity, specifically in terms of the widespread ideal of an eventual universal language under global socialism. These two aspects indicate an underlying pattern that may be described in terms of a tension between the languages of paradise (or pre-Babelian language) and Pentecost, between Genesis 11 and Acts 2. Whereas the socialist tradition was influenced in its own way by the search for a universal pre-Babelian language (characteristic of European linguistic study), Stalin takes a different path, stressing tensions between unity and diversity in a way that strongly echoes Pentecost. However, Stalin's thoughts on this matter are not always consistent, so when faced with questions, he resorts to a conventional stages theory of linguistic development, in which initial diversity would eventually lead to unity. Even when he deploys such a theory, we may discern a desire to push the final age so far into the future that it may well never come. The interim provides ample time for a more dialectical approach. In light of this position, it becomes possible to see the essay on linguistics (1950) as an anomaly. It results in a closing down of the dialectic in terms of a stability-flux opposition.

In the fourth chapter, I argue that Stalin makes a potentially significant philosophical contribution to Marxist anthropology (the doctrine of human nature). Due to its significance, this is necessarily a long chapter, with four parts. The first investigates the effort to identify a new human nature, particularly during the

'socialist offensive' of the 1930s. Stakhanovism, with its emulation, tempo and grit, provided the first glimpse of the new nature which both realised the latency of workers and peasants and marked a new departure. The second part investigates the language and practice of criticism and self-criticism, in which the terminology of 'sin' appears frequently. It is easy enough to criticise others and identify their flaws, but it is far more difficult to criticise oneself, or at least accept the valid criticism of others. The third part digs into the intensification of the dialectic, which was a signature feature of Stalin's dialectical engagements. We find this intensification in a number of areas, although I focus on revolutionary experience, the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the idea of the world divided into the two great camps of socialism and capitalism, and—the most well-known—the intensification of class struggle, especially as one draws nigh to the goal. At this point, the theological resonances rise to the surface, so I designate it the 'theology of class struggle'. All of these features set up the final section, which analyses the increasing awareness of the depths of evil, produced precisely by the new human nature espied earlier. Such evil was manifested in the purges, eliminating the kulaks as a class and, above all, the 'Red Terror'. Here I delve into the terminology of purging (with its theological echoes), the demonstration trials and the shocking awareness of a new depth of evil within both the collective and individual self. This discussion would not be complete without an identification of the theological underpinnings of such a theory of human nature. Stalin challenges Russian Orthodox theological assumptions, as well as the Pelagian heritage of Marxist anthropology, which assumed a significant role for human action, since human beings could indeed undertake good works on their own. By contrast, Stalin takes a more Augustinian line on the question of human nature and its transformation. In terms of the defining fifth-century debate between Pelagius and Augustine, Stalin's approach may be seen as an Augustinian irruption in which 'sin' looms large. But there is a twist, for the two sides—inherent goodness and the depth of evil—should not be separated from one another: they are necessarily connected, for without one, the other would not have existed.

The fifth chapter concerns Stalin's deliberations over Party and people, which may be seen as a Marxist recalibration of the dialectic of transcendence and immanence. The chapter begins by observing that despite the abandonment of the world by God and the concomitant drive to immanence in modern Europe, the dialectical relation between transcendence and immanence remains, albeit in recast or translated forms. In other words, it is not that transcendence has been banished, but that it takes on new roles. Stalin offers, perhaps surprisingly, the most far-reaching reinterpretation, albeit in political terms. The main features of his position concern the opposition of 'from below' and 'from above', the nature of socialist consciousness, and the relations between Party and people. In terms of the well-known distinction between 'above' and 'below', Stalin reveals a distinct caution over transcendence and a valorising of immanence. Such caution challenges the common idea that Stalin was a proponent of 'revolution from above'. The next step is to examine the workings of more complex dialectical understanding, initially embodied in his reflections over socialist consciousness. These reflections function as a microcosm of the more developed argument concerning Party and people, in

which transcendence and immanence rely thoroughly on one another. This argument inevitably leads to an initial articulation of what socialist democracy might be. The chapter closes by considering the objection (Adorno) that the transformation of theological transcendence leads to even more pernicious forms of political and cultural transcendence, in which human beings lord it over others. Was Stalin guilty of such a move?

In many respects, the arguments of much of the book lead to the final chapter on the state. It begins with the intriguing observation that the state which began to develop in the Soviet Union was not a federation, not a nation-state, not an empire, not a colonising power, whether externally or internally, but an entirely new state formation. In a European and West-Asian context, each form of the state mentioned trails theological assumptions and associations. But if the Soviet Union was not such a state, then what form of the state was it? How one understands the state turns on a dialectic of the universal and particular, manifested in terms of nationality, class, affirmative action, anti-colonialism, the definition of 'people' and the role of a socialist state. The steps in the argument may be summarised as follows. First, a totalising unity produces hitherto unknown forms of diversity, as is manifested in the focus on class as a way to rethink the 'national question' (meaning here nationalities and not the bourgeois nation-state) and in the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Second, this dialectic provides the basis for the theoretical elaboration of the world's first 'affirmative action' program. According to this program, nationalities were fostered, languages encouraged (to the point where new literate languages were created) and culture, education and political leadership actively nourished. Third, arising from the affirmative action program was the theoretical justification and practice of the international anti-colonial struggle. Fourth, within that international context we see the beginning of a new understanding of the state. This state is not comprised of a nation, since the term 'nation' was studiously avoided. Instead, it entailed a redefinition of the term 'people' (*narod*), in which the 'Soviet people', made up of all nationalities, was constituted by workers, collective farmers and intellectuals. But what did Stalin mean when he used the term 'socialist state'? He faced an initial problem, deriving from Lenin's definition of the state as a manifestation of class struggle, and the latter's prevarication over whether the state was an instrument or tool to be used by one class against another or whether it was indelibly shaped by the class in power. Stalin's attempted solution is to argue that Lenin wrote only the first volume of *The State and Revolution*, having been unable to complete the work due to the outbreak of the October revolution. So Stalin proposes stages in the development of the socialist state, in which the first stage accords with Lenin's view, but the second stage moves beyond: internal class enemies have been destroyed, so one keeps a watch on external enemies; the classes of workers, farmers and intellectuals now work together in non-antagonistic ways (contradiction remains under socialism); and a strong state is required to enact the social and economic transformations characteristic of socialism. To these should be added the resolute focus on class, the affirmative action program, anti-colonialism and the development of a new identity, 'being Soviet'. Of course, this is only a beginning to analysis of the socialist state,

so one must analyse other socialist states—especially China—to ascertain more mature practices.

In the conclusion, I return to a motif that runs throughout the book. Stalin worked hard at theoretical elaborations of the Marxist tradition as he saw it. Yet, his formulations were often tentative, exploratory and piecemeal. The chapters—some quite long—of the book attempt to exegete Stalin's texts, identify underlying (often theological) surrents, and develop his points in a more coherent form. So in the conclusion, I pursue the implications of his main ideas, especially with an eye on the Chinese situation. The reason is that the current study is also one in transition, for I have become increasingly immersed in a Chinese context, seeking to understand Chinese Marxism and its practice today. As mentioned earlier, I have found an extraordinary conjunction between the core ideas Stalin began to examine and the important questions for understanding Chinese politics, economics and culture in light of Marxism. I end, however, on a slightly different note, attempting to assess the profound bifurcation in the reception of Stalin, caught as he is between veneration and demonization, with relatively few efforts at balanced assessments. One of the latter, by Losurdo, becomes my focus, for he provides a riveting account of how the 'demonic legend' grew around Stalin. Throughout, I attempt not to take sides, but to understand. And a Chinese approach may well help, for the response to Stalin as well as to Mao is to recognise and appreciate their many significant, if not world-changing contributions, but also to acknowledge, criticise and avoid their mistakes.

Chapter 1
Stalin's Bible

> Undoubtedly, our path is not of the easiest; but, just as undoubtedly, we are not to be frightened by difficulties. Paraphrasing the well-known words of Luther, Russia might say:
>
> Here I stand on the border line between the old, capitalist world and the new, socialist world. Here, on this border line, I unite the efforts of the proletarians of the West and of the peasants of the East in order to shatter the old world. May the god of history be my aid! (1920s, 406, 1920t, 393).

'He could quote from the Bible … he read seriously, making notes, learning quotations' (Montefiore 2007, 100). This was as true of the young theological student, for whom 'Holy Scripture' was a core subject, as of the mature Stalin in his many speeches and writings. In this opening chapter, I take a slightly different direction and set the scene for the following chapters by tracing the biblical contours of Stalin's texts, with their allusions, invocations and inflections. After briefly analysing the main features of this biblical sentence production, I plunge into an imaginative effort to recreate Stalin's texts in a way that highlights their biblical tenor. This effort is a type of pastiche, in which I draw together the many references and allusions into a new whole that follows the canonical narrative of the Bible. All of this enables me to raise the issue of how one interprets the texts of the initial revolutionary leader—in this case, Lenin—in what may be called a scriptural dynamic. Such a dynamic one finds in each revolutionary movement where the leader was also an intellectual who wrote and thought.

1.1 The Poet

Before I do so, let me mention briefly the nature of Stalin's sentence production per se, or 'style' as it is at times called. Contrary to the regular denigrations, deriving from Trotsky (1941, xv, 66), that Stalin was neither 'a thinker, a writer nor an

R. Boer, *Stalin: From Theology to the Philosophy of Socialism in Power*,
DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-6367-1_1

orator' and that his style was 'plodding and barren', a careful examination reveals a significant range, if not skill, in the production of sentences.[1] It varied considerably over time, covering poetry, uses of imagery, rhetorical if not euphoric flights, storytelling, liturgical preferences, liking for repetitions, slogans and catechetical style. He could be direct, conjure up word images, offer clear repetitions with a twist each time, tell stories and bark commands. One is irresistibly drawn (although some would be simultaneously horrified) into the rhythms of these sentences. I am most intrigued by the widely ignored poetry of Stalin's youth. 'Adolescent and precocious, skilful and yet faltering'—so does the translator describe the five poems a youthful Stalin wrote and had published in a leading Georgian literary journal, *Iveria*, in 1895, and one in *K'vali* (*The Trace*) in 1896 (Rayfield 1985, 44).[2] Indeed, Rayfield observes that Stalin had 'the mixture right', blending Persian, Byzantine, Romanticist and Russian 'civic' elements. Their 'real talent', he writes, if not 'observation and affection', meant that the first—'Morning'—and the fifth—'To Raphael Eristavi'—were republished, one in a widely used anthology of Georgian poetry for schools (even in the Khrushchev and subsequent eras) and the other in a jubilee book devoted to the person celebrated in the poem.

The attention to poetry did not leave Stalin once he decided on a revolutionary path, rather than an ecclesiastical or literary one. To give but a few examples, he writes of humble workers with 'tobacco pouches in their hands and with petitions in their pockets' (Stalin 1912q, 242, 1912r, 73) and whose sweat has watered the land of the landlords (Stalin 1906a, 217, 1906b, 398). At the same time, they have a 'scarlet blood' that 'seethes with the fire of unspent strength!' (Stalin 1912k, 231, 1912l, 71). They are the 'subterranean forces', the 'first swallows', the individual streams of a proletarian movement that is about to burst forth into a general revolutionary flood, the waves of which rise higher and with increasing force: 'Neither prisons nor penal servitude, nor gallows—nothing can stop the proletarian movement' (Stalin 1905g, 82, 1905h, 27, 1912k, 232, 1912l, 72). They will lead a revolution, 'awe-inspiring and mighty', which will liberate an 'enslaved East and the bleeding West' and before whom the 'old "lords" of the earth in the East and the West bend their heads before it in fear and trembling' (Stalin 1918k, 167, 1918l, 164, 1918o, 173, 1918p, 170). They will finally overcome a situation in which Russia was 'beaten' by the Mongol khans, the Turkish beys, the Swedish feudal lords, the Polish and Lithuanian gentry, British and French capitalists, the Japanese barons. All beat her—'because of her backwardness, because of her military backwardness, cultural backwardness, political backwardness, industrial

[1]The only significant engagement with Stalin's sentence production is the rather gothic work by Vaiskopf (2002), who sees much of Stalin's thinking as a form of 'sophistry'. Within its Platonic framework, this may be seen as a criticism. But if one sees Plato's ruling class (aristocratic) assumptions for what they are, this may actually be an unwitting compliment. Ultimately, Vaiskopf's agenda is not only to undermine Stalin's thought as a weak form of Aristotelian-theological logic (which would make him a disciple of Thomas Aquinas!), but also to demonise him in yet another way.

[2]Rayfield plays on a common theme, seeking the tyrant-in-waiting in even these early poems.

backwardness, agricultural backwardness' (Stalin 1931i, 40–41, 1931j, 38–39). In correcting these wrongs, the workers and peasants will 'build a citadel of Soviet power in the East' so as to 'light the path to emancipation for the tormented peoples of the East' (Stalin 1919k, 247–248, 1919l, 238–239).[3]

From poetry, it is a small step to the Bible itself, with its myriad genres of—to name but a few—mythology, legend, annals, narrative, apothegm, psalmody, oracle, parable, epistle, and … poetry. In what follows, I engage in a type of creative pastiche in the first person, drawing together many of the biblical citations and allusions by Stalin into a whole that seeks to capture the feel of his texts. Given the canonical range of these references, I move through from the moment of creation in Genesis to the final text of Revelation, from Hebrew Bible to New Testament.[4]

1.2 From Creation to the Prophets

Many would like to claim that they are made in the 'image and likeness [*po obrazu svoemu i podobiiu*]' of the bourgeoisie, or perhaps that they recreate the world in their own image (Stalin 1908e, 98, 1908f, 259, 1926g, 139, 1926h, 132). But I, Stalin, have been born and reared in the image and likeness of nothing less than the 'great Party of the working class'. As a result, I will devote myself to the working class, to communism, and to world revolution, with 'all my strength, all my ability and, if need be, all my blood, drop by drop' (Stalin 1929k, 146, 1929l, 140).[5] But we cannot have creation without the Fall and the 'tree of knowledge of power'. Tasting the fruit of the tree tempts some, such as the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, to make alliances with the propertied classes (Stalin 1918y, 54, 1918z, 301, see also Martin 2001a, 348, 350).[6] They will be banished from the garden, which is guarded by the flaming and 'bared sword [*obnazhennyĭ mech*]' of the working class, the OGPU (Stalin 1932a, 160, 1932b, 158).[7] Outside the garden, the banished Adams and Trotskys will toil 'in the sweat of their brow'—although

[3]Further examples include Mayday celebrations during the Second World War, celebrations of the October Revolution, the end of the war and Moscow's 800th anniversary (Stalin 1941c, d, e, f, 1942e, f, 1943g, h, e, f, 1944a, b, e, f, c, d, 1945e, f, s, t, 1946c, d, 1947a, b).

[4]Many of the biblical images appear in relation to both opponents and Bolsheviks, which makes the process of such a pastiche somewhat more complex. All the same, it is a curiously revolutionary Bible, and certainly not the 'Bible of legal revolutionary democracy' (Stalin 1906–7a, 351, 1906–7b, 175).

[5]Stalin uses the same words as the Synodal Bible of 1826, which he would have known from his time of theological study. These are *obrazu* and *podobiiu*, image and likeness. Vaiskopf (2002) overplays his argument at this point, suggesting that Stalin saw himself as both modest human being and part of the Godhead, as a reflection of Christ's dual nature as human and divine.

[6]Gen 2:16; 3:1–12.

[7]Gen 3:24.

the workers too labour with their own sweat and find themselves outside the garden (Stalin 1927m, 56, 1927n, 53, 1941a, 4, 1941b, 59).[8]

From this banishment another creation story emerges, that of the Flood, in which even the 'the heaven-blessed wells burst out in gushers' (Stalin 1910a, 180, 1910b, 4),[9] and then the Babel story of the multiplication of languages. I am not one who feels that socialism and then communism will lead to a singular human language, returning to the state of language before Babel (often called the language of Adam and Paradise (Olender 1992)), but I do believe that socialism produces an even greater diversity of languages and cultures—more like Pentecost than Babel. Indeed, 'the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages'. It has brought the 'forgotten peoples and nationalities on to the scene' and given them 'new life and a new development' (Stalin 1925w, 141, 1925x, 139).[10] Perhaps the greatest creation story is that of the Exodus, when the people of Israel escaped oppression and were not so much helped by God but became the waves of the sea themselves. The 'individual streams of the proletarian movement are merging in one general revolutionary flood', so much so that the 'waves of this flood are rising higher and dashing against the tsarist throne with increasing force—and the decrepit tsarist government is tottering' (Stalin 1905g, 82, 1905h, 27).[11]

Exodus means wilderness, where the Party was tried and steeled into a fighting force. It may have gone 'astray in the wilderness of Social-Democratic confusion' (Stalin 1926y, 117, 1926z, 111). It may have been tempted by worshipping 'icons' or 'fetishes', whether of our 'backwardness', or liberal parliaments, or 'High Priests', or the 'Golden Calf' of profit of the kingdom of the bourgeois oppressors, or the 'one and indivisible' country, or even spontaneous movements and collective farms (Stalin 1905c, 92, 1905d, 35, 1912g, 226–227, 1912h, 60–61, 1923u, 282, 1923v, 277, 1923g, 347–348, 1923h, 340–341, 1926c, 174, 1926d, 165, 1927m, 78–79, 1927n, 74–75, 1933c, 230–231, 1933d, 225–226, 1934c, 31, 1934d, 30, 1935j, 103–104, 1935k, 88, 1938e, 329, 1938f, 250).[12] Indeed, I myself was guilty of 'waverings' during this time of exile, if not even afterwards. But I did not conceal them (like Trotsky did), for I confessed and ensured I did not err again —'who of us has not been subject to transitory waverings [*mimoletnye kolebaniia*]' (Stalin 1926u, 67, 1926v, 64, see also 1927m, 10, 1927n, 9–10)? But through these trials, our Party became the 'Holy of Holies [*sviataia sviatyh*]' that no one was willing to desecrate by—paradoxically—not turning it into a philosophical or religious sect (Stalin 1905i, 66, 1905j, 5, 1905u, 78, 1905v, 19, 1927q, 269, 1927r, 263)![13] After our long murmuring, wandering, suffering and sacrifices, we knew

[8]Gen 3:19.

[9]Gen 7:11.

[10]Acts 2:1–18.

[11]Ex 14:26–29.

[12]Ex 20:4–5; Deut 5:8–9.

[13]Ex 26:33–34; 2 Chr 3:8; 10; 4:22; 5:7; Heb 9:3.

that we were not voices 'crying in the wilderness' (Stalin 1917w[1], 303, 1917x[1], 385),[14] for we were able to arrive proudly at the kingdom of labour, the 'promised land' of socialism (Stalin 1905c, 97, 99, 103, 104, 1905d, 39, 41, 44, 1906c, 287, 1906d, 103, 1912g, 226, 1912h, 60, 1927e[1], 200, 1927f[1], 197–198).

Winning the revolution is no guarantee that things will be in any way easier. As Lenin said again and again, gaining revolutionary power is relatively easy; far, far more difficult and complex is the effort to construct socialism—especially when no one has done it before! Like Nehemiah after the exile in Babylon, we too—especially during the 'civil' war and international blockade—had to build 'under fire', laying 'bricks with one hand' and defending what we were 'building with the other' (Stalin 1920s, 403, 1920t, 390).[15] As the Psalmist put it, 'strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round, slandering and informing, threatening and imploring, begging and demanding' (Stalin 1917i[2], 410, 1917j[2], 480).[16] At times, we were like David in the face of Goliath, trying to find a way to cut off this 'devil's head … with his own sword' (Stalin 1906g, 295, 296, 1906h, 123, 124, see also 1923u, 271, 1923v, 266).[17] At other times, the enemy was nothing more than a giant with 'feet of clay [*glinianykh nogakh*]' (Stalin 1925i, 279, 1925j, 273),[18] cowering before us with 'fear and trembling [*straha vspomnit'*]' (Stalin 1905k, 151, 1905l, 90).[19] Our enemies were not only without, but also within. Some wished the revolution and counter-revolution to reconcile, wanting the 'wolves and the lambs' to graze together (Stalin 1906k, 254, 1906l, 4).[20] Often, 'doubt crept into people's hearts, they began to depart, each to his own national tent' (Stalin 1913e, 380, 1913f, 159).[21] They may have felt that our 'days were numbered' (Stalin 1927q, 271, 1927r, 265),[22] but these were, to quote the sage from Ecclesiastes, 'empty phrases thrown to the wind' (Stalin 1905c, 101, 106, 117, 1905d, 42, 46, 55).[23] And at times, we paid the highest price and found ourselves mourning, as David did for Jonathan, over the death of a comrade who was near us, 'as a trusted friend, as a loved comrade, as a faithful companion in arms' (Stalin 1934a, 64, 1934b, 82).[24] But we were not dismayed, for our 'victorious banners' waved, 'to the dismay of the enemies of liberty and socialism!' Indeed, our call resounded 'through the

[14]Matt 3:2; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23.

[15]Neh 4:15–18.

[16]Ps 22:12.

[17]1 Sam 17.

[18]Dan 2:33–34, 41.

[19]Ps 55:5; Mark 5:33; Acts 16:29; 1 Cor 2:3; 7:15; 2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:12; Heb 12:21.

[20]Isa 11:6. The English translation of Stalin's text has 'the lion and the lamb', but the Russian reads '*volki i ovtsy*' (wolves and lambs).

[21]1 Kgs 12:16 and 2 Kgs 14:12. The Russian here has '*kvartiram*', which may be understood as 'lodgings'. The Synodal Bible of 1876 has '*shatram*', 'tents'.

[22]Job 14:5; Ps 39:4.

[23]Eccl 2:12, 26; 4:4, 16; 5:16; 6:9.

[24]2 Sam 1:17–27.

world, to the joy of all the oppressed and enslaved!' (Stalin 1917m[2], 103, 1917n[2], 179).[25]

1.3 From Gospel to Revelation

However, I love the gospels best, if not the New Testament as whole. I mean not only the socialist 'gospel [*Evangelie*]' of 'salvation [*spasenie*]', or our 'sacred cause [*sviatomu delu*]', but also the 'joyful news [*radostnuiu vest'*] of the victories of the Russian revolution' (Stalin 1918i, 185, 1918j, 181, 1920o, 423, 1920p, 410, 1920i, 426, 1920j, 413, 1905c, 131, 1905d, 66, 1906o, 205, 1906p, 371, 1906a, 224, 1906b, 404). It is nothing less than the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) realised:

> The bondage of landlordism has been broken, for power in the countryside has passed into the hands of the peasants. The power of the generals has been broken, for power in the army is now concentrated in the hands of the soldiers. A curb has been put on the capitalists, for workers' control is rapidly being established over the factories, mills and banks (Stalin 1917c[2], 1, 1917d[2], 22).[26]

The oppressed may be 'groaning under the yoke', 'eternally persecuted and humiliated' (Stalin 1901a, 20–21, 1901b, 93–94).[27] They may beg 'a crumb of charity', in prayer and hope (Stalin 1906o, 199, 1906p, 366),[28] but we will ensure the yoke is lifted and they no longer need to beg crumbs. All the same, we must remember that a 'man's food does not consist of bread alone' (Stalin 1935f, 115, 1935g, 96).[29]And we must never forget (unlike Trotsky) the humility of John the Baptist, who knew of the coming of a great one, 'whose shoe-laces he was not worthy of tying [*sapoga kotorogo on ne stoit*]' (Stalin 1927m[1], 178, 1927n[1], 173).[30]

Our focus is resolutely on the common people, the little ones without whom we could not function at all. They are like the widow's 'mite [*leptu*]', her last copper coins which were worth more than the endless riches of the powerful (Stalin 1929m, 120, 1929n, 114).[31] Or like the one strike out of one hundred: ninety-nine may prove futile, but the one that succeeds is worth more than the ninety-nine (Stalin 1901a, 18, 1901b, 91).[32] The revolutionary forces take good care of these little ones, so much so that 'not one hair of the head' of any of them will be injured

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[25]Common throughout the Psalms and prophetic material, but see Ps 100; 105:43–44; Isa 35:10; 61:1–4.

[26]Luke 1:46–55.

[27]Matt 11:30, with allusion to 1 Kgs 12:9–10.

[28]Mark 7:28 and Matt 15:27.

[29]Matt 4:4; Luke 4:4; see Deut 8:3.

[30]Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; Matt 3:11.

[31]Mark 12:41–44, Luke 21:1–4.

[32]Matt 18:12–14. Luke 15:3–7.

(Stalin 1920c, 414, 1920d, 401).[33] Indeed, the last will be first (Stalin 1933c, 181, 1933d, 179).[34] This is our promise. For what we bring is new and unexpected. You cannot patch a threadbare garment to make new 'garments for suffering mankind'; indeed, patched clothes will tear and break (Stalin 1901a, 16, 1901b, 90, 1919e, 283, 1919f, 273).[35] Further, 'let us sow the good seed among the broad masses of the proletariat' (Stalin 1905u, 80, 1905v, 21),[36] and when we reap what has been sowed, we will reap a hundredfold (Stalin 1901a, 26, 1901b, 98, see also 1905k, 152, 1905l, 90).[37] For if we have faith, faith in Lenin, even as small as a mustard seed, the revolution is ours. We can move mountains (Stalin 1926y, 120–121, 1926z, 113–114),[38] in a way that has nothing to do with the superstitious idea of a 'fate' that determines our destinies (Stalin 1931g, 122, 1931h, 119–120). But if we are faithless, if we are 'prey to weariness and wavering' and 'fall into despair and cultivate a spirit of pessimism' like our opponents within, we will not succeed (Stalin 1925a[1], 118, 1925b[1], 117, 1926e, 19, 69, 78–80, 89, 94–96, 1926f, 19, 65, 73–75, 84, 89–90, 1926m, 225–226, 233, 1926n, 213–214, 222, 1926u, 153, 1926v, 149).[39]

But beware! Let him who is without sin 'cast a stone [*brosit' kamen'*] at the Bolsheviks' (Stalin 1927m, 36, 1927n, 34).[40] Our young forces may be 'Legion' (Stalin 1929m, 120, 1929n, 114),[41] but they must deal with the 'honeyed words' of the Pharisees, who have a 'parson's morality' (Stalin 1926i, 5, 1926j, 5) and build their house 'on sand' (Stalin 1904a, 33, 34–35, 38, 51n, 1904b, 152–154, 156, 166n, 1905a, 183, 185, 1905b, 112, 114, 1905q, 192, 1905r, 122).[42] They disguise themselves as 'innocent angels' (Stalin 1908g, 121, 1908h, 281), dressing in 'sheep's clothing' (Stalin 1905u, 77, 1905v, 18),[43] or—to extend the metaphor—they are like 'bad shepherds [*durnymi pastyriami*]', such as the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks (Stalin 1917u[2], 414, 1917v[2], 492, 1917m[1], 155, 1917n[1], 242).[44] The good shepherd will come and 'separate the sheep from the goats [*chtoby otdelit' ovets ot kozlishch*]', so we can dissociate ourselves from alien

[33]Luke 21:18. See 1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11.

[34]Matt 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31.

[35]Mark 2:21; Matt 9:16.

[36]Matt 13:24, 37–38.

[37]Matt 13:8, 23; 19:29; Mark 4:8, 20; 10:30; Luke 8:8.

[38]Matt 13:31–32; 17:20–21; 21:21–22; Mark 4:30–32; 11:23; Luke 13:18–19; 17:5–6.

[39]Mark 9:19; Rev 21:8. Vaiskopf makes much of the question of 'faith' and 'belief' in Stalin's texts, which was opposed not only to understanding, but also to the lack of faith in opponents. All of this, according to Vaiskopf (2002, 40, 132–133), points to a theological tenor to Stalin's dictatorial ruthlessness.

[40]John 8:1–11.

[41]Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30.

[42]Matt 7:26–27.

[43]Matt 7:15.

[44]John 10:1–18.

elements (Stalin 1920g, 319, 1920h, 307),[45] who can 'go to the devil' (Stalin 1907e, 72, 1907f, 97, 1908i, 135, 1908j, 293, 1926y, 117, 1926z, 111, see also 1927y, 315, 1927z, 306, 1927i[1], 248, 1927j[1], 244).[46] 'By the holy Duma, that would be better!' (Stalin 1907g, 38, 1907h, 61). We will soon know that those 'who are not for us are against us!' (Stalin 1906k, 253, 1906l, 4).[47] Our path may be 'bestrewn with thorns', full of persecutions, but 'the thorns will not daunt us if the sympathy of the workers … continues in the future' (Stalin 1912o, 256, 1912p, 87).[48]

Yet, we will stumble on our path, often committing the 'great sin' [*bol'shom grekhe*] of—to select a few—not working hard enough on behalf of the proletariat, underestimating the strength of our enemies or falling short in managing collective farms and grain procurement (Stalin 1906k, 272, 1906l, 19, 1933c, 238, 1933d, 232, 1939a, 412–413, 1939b, 330, see also 1912u, 271, 1912v, 104, 1907e, 56, 59, 1907f, 85, 87, 1912c, 248, 1912d, 77).[49] We should never 'forget that there are many wicked men' on this 'sinful earth' (Stalin 1934c, 33, 1934d, 32, 1908e, 100, 1908f, 261). In other situations, we do well to say 'forgive them their trespasses' (Stalin 1927c, 364, 1927d, 354, see also 1925i, 395–397, 1925j, 384–386),[50] for no-one is 'infallible [*bezoshibochnykh*]'—I too am guilty of 'mistakes and momentary vacillations' (Stalin 1926u, 78, 1926v, 74, 1927m, 64, 1927n, 61, see also 1926u, 78–79, 1926v, 74–75). Crucially, workers who become part of our movement do not immediately become leaders, writers and thinkers. They—like Bebel—do not 'drop from the skies'. They make mistakes at first; 'they will stumble once or twice, and then learn to walk independently like "Christ walking on the water"' (Stalin 1909a, 157, 1909b, 356, see also 1912a, 223, 1912b, 54, 1912o, 256, 1912p, 87, 1922e, 133–134, 1922f, 131, 1924a, 284, 1924b, 271–272, 1933g, 257–258, 1933h, 250–251).[51] Indeed, you may recall how Christ distilled the essence of the commandments to two, loving God and loving your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22:37–40). May I humbly suggest that we Bolsheviks also have two commandments: (1) 'Don't allow yourselves to be provoked by the counter-revolutionaries' but 'save your strength for the coming struggle'; (2) 'Rally more closely around our Party' (Stalin 1917i, 113, 1917j, 224).[52]

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[45]Matt 25:31–46.

[46]Matt 4:10; 1 John 3:8.

[47]Mark 9.40.

[48]Matt 7:13–14.

[49]Matt 12:31; Mark 3:29. For a full treatment of the question of sin, with references, see chapter 4.

[50]Matt 6:12; Luke 11:4. Note also that a 'son does not pay for the sins of his father'. The comment was an impromptu response, made towards the end of 1935, to the speech of a Stakhanovite who claimed that due recognition had been denied him since his father had been a dekulakised kulak. It was published in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 2 December, 1935, p. 2 (Fitzpatrick 2000, 130). See Ezek 18:20.

[51]Matt 14:22–23; Ps 37:24.

[52]See also the three commandments to *Krestyanskaya Gazeta* (Stalin 1924u, 337, 1924v, 323).

Yet, the main focus of the gospels is the death and resurrection of Jesus, with which we Bolsheviks find much in common. It may be at the time of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, when he proclaimed that 'even the "dumb stones" are crying' out (Stalin 1917a[1], 309, 1917b[1], 390).[53] Or perhaps that the truth of the revolution is being uttered 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' (Stalin 1913c, 292, 1913d, 147, 1924o, 249, 1924p, 237),[54] a truth that is also as solid as the house built on the rock (Stalin 1924o, 249, 1924p, 238).[55] At the same time, when we were preparing endlessly for the revolution, we knew full well that no matter how much we prepared, we 'knew not the day or hour' wherein 'the bridegroom cometh' (Stalin 1925a, 68, 1925b, 68, see also 1917c[1], 331, 1917d[1], 411).[56] There may have been signs, such as the 'hellish horrors' (Stalin 1905e, 189–190, 1905f, 128–129) of the 'abomination of desolation [*Merzost' zapusteniia*]', which came 'like a hurricane and revealed a new picture to everybody' (Stalin 1922e, 131–132, 1922f, 129–130),[57] but these were only signals of the time to come. Meanwhile, we had to drink the 'bitterest cup' (Stalin 1912s, 274–275, 1912t, 119),[58] like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, to the point where our 'cup of patience was filled to overflowing' (Stalin 1913a, 388, 1913b, 157).[59] Nonetheless, we always run the risk of a Judas kiss that will betray us (Stalin 1924q, 46, 1924r, 45, 1927m[1], 197, 1927n[1], 190).[60] Indeed, the Pilates of our day may try to wash their hands of the whole business (Stalin 1917w, 266, 1917x, 346, 1906k, 261, 1906l, 10),[61] but the counter-revolutionary forces will still cry, 'crucify the Bolsheviks, crucify them, they are to blame for everything!' (Stalin 1917a[3], 247, 1917b[3], 322).[62] Despite all of this, we Bolsheviks can say even in the darkest hour, that they 'know not what they do' (Stalin 1913i, 385, 1913j, 244).[63] So much so that the revolution lives, rising from the dead (Stalin 1917s, 386, 1917t, 460, 1917e[3], 85, 1917f[3], 161, 1917o[2], 153–154, 1917p[2], 231, see also 1918q, 100, 1918r, 99). This is nothing less than a miracle that can even move mountains, especially during the socialist offensive of the 1930s and during the Second World War.[64]

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[53]Luke 19:40; see also Hab 2:11. The editors of *Trudy* note the Habakkuk reference, but not the one from Luke.

[54]Matt 21: 16; from Ps 8:2.

[55]Matt 7:24–27.

[56]Matt 25:1–13.

[57]Matt 24:15.

[58]Matt 20:22–23; 27:24; Mark 10:38–39; John 18:11.

[59]Ps 23:5.

[60]Matt 26:49; Mark 14:45; Luke 22:47–48.

[61]Matt 24:24.

[62]Mark 15:13–15; Luke 23:21; John 19:6, 15.

[63]Luke 23:34.

[64]Myriad are the references here (Stalin 1913c, 285, 1913d, 141, 1925g[1], 217, 1925h[1], 214, 1930m, 26, 1930n, 25, 1933c, 232, 1933d, 227, 1934g, 315, 1934h, 308, 1934c, 31–32, 1934d, 30–31, 1935c, 76, 1935d, 61, 1935j, 109, 1935k, 92, 1938e, 331, 1938f, 251, 1945c, 18, 1945d, 211). Matt 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–31. The references to 'miracle' are

While I love the gospels, I am not averse to the rest of the New Testament, especially the Apostle Paul's letters (genuine and Pseudo-Pauline) and the Apocalypse. Indeed, Paul's epistles are in many respects the model of militant missives, written on the run while fomenting a revolutionary movement (Badiou 2003, 19, 31). Like us, he suffered much, beaten, flooded, stoned and shipwrecked, suffering hunger, thirst, sleeplessness and cold. But 'we shall not become despondent, we shall not cry out for help, we shall not abandon our work (*ap-plause*) and we shall not be daunted by difficulties' (Stalin 1925i, 378–379, 1925j, 349).[65] And like us, he sought unity in the midst of constant threats of sectarianism, strengthening 'local Party organisations' against a 'slough of despondency and lack of confidence in the cause', seeking a distinct 'quality of the comrades' who appreciate the 'importance of the cause they are serving', and above all seeking the 'most lively connections' with our most vibrant units (Stalin 1912a, 221–223, 1912b, 53–54).[66] But we seek to go beyond Paul, for we wish to unite 'progressive forces' of all countries, 'regardless of Party or religious faith, into a single camp of national liberation' (Stalin 1943a, 85, 1943b, 157). We are united around Lenin, who 'is now the most beloved name pronounced by the downtrodden, oppressed peasants and revolutionary intelligentsia of the colonial and unequal countries'. In the past, it may have been the case that Christianity was regarded as an 'anchor' or 'rock of salvation [*iakorem spaseniia*]', but we are reaching the point where 'socialism may serve (and is already beginning to serve!) as the banner of liberation for the millions who inhabit the vast colonial states of imperialism' (Stalin 1923o, 354, 1923p, 347).[67] To achieve such moments of 'sacramental significance' (Stalin 1918c, 109, 1918d, 108), we need to go through the 'baptism' of tribulation (Stalin 1926s, 183–184, 1926t, 174–175),[68] while avoiding any 'foolish rapture [*teliachiĭ vostorg*]' as we await the 'advent' of socialism (Stalin 1934g, 357–358, 1934h, 350–351).[69] As we do so, we must live by the commandment of 2 Thess 3:10: 'he who does not work, neither shall he eat [*Kto ne truditsia, tot ne est*]'—those not working being, of course, the old aristocracy and bourgeoisie (Stalin 1933g, 256, 1933h, 249, 1936a, article 12, 1936b, stat'ia 12, 1936e, 166, 1936f, 128, 1938a, 126, 229, 1938b, 122, 219). For we are all members of one body: 'Just as every complex organism is made up of an incalculable number of extremely simple organisms, so our Party, being a complex and general organisation, is made up of numerous district and local bodies called Party organisations, provided they have

(Footnote 64 continued)

not always positive (Stalin 1913c, 292, 1913d, 147, 1917e[2], 124, 1917f[2] 207, 1917u, 313, 1917v, 393, 1925a[1], 99, 1925b[1], 99, 1925i, 279, 1925j, 273, 1926q, 348, 1926r, 333, 1930e, 257, 369, 1930f, 250, 359, 1951–1952a, 248, 1951–1952b, 177).

[65]2 Cor 11:23–28.

[66]1 Cor 1:10; see also Eph 4:1–16.

[67]Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 22:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7; see also Ps 188:22; Deut 32:15; 2 Sam 22:3; Ps 18:2; 62:2; 95:1.

[68]Mark 10:38–39.

[69]1 Thess 4:13–18; 2 Thess 2:1–12; 1 Cor 15:51–52.

been endorsed by the Party congress or the Central Committee' (Stalin 1905i, 67n, 1905j, 6–7n).[70] Indeed, neither 'prisons nor penal servitude, nor gallows—nothing can stop the proletarian movement: it is continuously growing!' (Stalin 1905g, 82, 1905h, 27).[71] And we must not, to invoke some other epistles, 'go completely underground and leave the field free for the activities of the dark forces [*chërnym silam*]', or—'God forbid [*bozhe upasi*]'—let our tongues betray us (Stalin 1908a, 149, 1908b, 304, 1917k[1], 77, 1917l[1], 145, 1926u, 65, 1926v, 62, 1929i, 10, 1929j, 9, 1924q, 42, 1924r, 41–42).[72]

The grand narrative of the Bible may be profoundly influential in many parts of the world. Beginning with creation, it moves through the early fathers and mothers, the enslavement in and then liberation from Egypt, arrival in the Promised Land, exile in Babylon and return. All the while, prophets spoke, songs were sung, and poetry was written. And then we have the story of Jesus of Nazareth and the parables and sayings of the gospels, along with the letters of Paul and others of the early Christian movement. The whole story closes with the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation. Many have accused us communists of deploying a secularised Jewish-Christian narrative: it begins with a situation of exploitation and alienation (sin), followed by a saviour figure (the proletariat and peasantry), who redeems us and ushers in a new, apocalyptic age (socialism and then communism). Indeed, one of the first to have suggested that we have merely secularised this story, as a kind of eschatological Marxism, is none other than the erstwhile Bolshevik, Nikolai Berdiaev (1937). Is this true? No, it is not, as any study of Marx and Engels, or indeed Lenin, will show (Boer 2011).

So, when I refer to the Book of Revelation, I do so with a different idea in mind. It is not we who are 'standing at the door, knocking', but other timid groups, who may knock 'at an open door' but do not 'dare to enter the house', or who may 'knock at one door, but open another' (Stalin 1901a, 16, 1901b, 89, 1927m, 61, 1927n, 58).[73] Others may claim that they offer the 'alpha and omega' (Stalin 1901a, 17, 1901b, 91),[74] or even the 'Holy Trinity [*Sviataia troitsa*]' (Stalin 1917e, 107, 1917f, 183) of revolutionary activities, but they do not even come close to the communists. Instead, the throne of the hated tsar—who claimed to rule 'by the grace of God' (Stalin 1905o, 195, 1905p, 135, see also 1934g, 303, 1934h, 297)[75]—and the rule of aristocracy and bourgeoisie have been 'swept from the face of the earth' (Stalin 1905k, 140, 1905l, 80).[76] We have disarmed the dark forces and armed the people so that they rule, 'storming heaven [*shturmuiut nebo*]' (Stalin

[70] 1 Cor 12.

[71] 2 Cor 11:23–29.

[72] Eph 6:12; James 3.

[73] Rev 3:20.

[74] Rev 22:13.

[75] Acts 13:43; 14:26; Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; 9:14; Gal 2:21; see also Col 1:6; Titus 2:11; Heb 2:9; 12:15; 1 Peter 4:9; 5:12.

[76] Ex 32:12; Deut 6:15; 1 Sam 20:15; 1 Kgs 13:34; Amos 9:8; Zeph 1:2–3.

1927c, 338, 1927d, 330) and establishing the 'kingdom of labour' by nothing less than 'the labouring people themselves'. Indeed, this kingdom of labour must be created 'on *earth*, not in heaven' (Stalin 1924i, 49, 1924j, 48; translation modified). We may proclaim that in such a kingdom public property is 'sacred and inviolable [*sviashchennoĭ i neprikosnovennoĭ*]' (Stalin 1933c, 213, 1933d, 209), but there is nothing 'metaphysical' about such a kingdom (Stalin 1926q, 362–364, 1926r, 347–348). But is this a New Jerusalem, the 'establishment of a "paradise" on earth and universal abundance'? 'No, that is the philistine [*obyvatel'skoe*], petty-bourgeois idea of the economic essence of socialism' (Stalin 1926u, 23, 1926v, 22).[77]

1.4 Light to the Nations

One of the most potent biblical images is the light to the nations (which I have kept aside until now), for it also expresses the true role of socialism in one country. We may see it in two ways, as either leading us to the Land of the Soviets (the Mosaic form) or as leading others to come to or emulate our Soviet Motherland (the Isaianic form). Let me explain. Before the October Revolution, the Party itself may be seen as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, lighting 'up our road to the "promised land [*obetovannuiu zemliu*]" called the socialist world' (Stalin 1905u, 80, 1905v, 21, see also 1925i, 310, 1925j, 303).[78] Later, our newspapers came to light 'the way for working people' (Stalin 1927e, 172, 1927f, 169, see also 1923i, 402, 1923j, 392) and indeed the Republic of Soviets itself offered to all peoples under oppression and exploitation a 'pillar of their hopes of deliverance … a reliable beacon pointing the path to their emancipation' (Stalin 1924i, 52, 1924j, 50).

More powerfully still, the Land of the Soviets, once it had achieved socialism, became the great light to the nations, 'a living beacon [*zhivym maiakom*] illuminating the path to socialism' (Stalin 1918y, 62, 1918z, 308, see also 1920a, 408, 1920b, 395, 1924a, 277, 1924b, 265, 1936e, 173, 1936f, 132).[79] We shall no longer 'bleed' at another's hands, but will 'ensure that the one to be bloodily battered and "bleeding" shall be some bourgeois country and not the U.S.S.R'. (Stalin 1927m, 48–49, 1927n, 46). At this level, we became an exemplar, a model for others to follow, as Lenin explained so well. For him, our socialist Republic of Soviets will be the 'torch of international socialism', by which he meant 'an example to all the labouring masses'. Against those who seek to extinguish this torch are those who strive to 'hold the torch aloft and to fan its flame'. This is our task: 'Comrades, I do not doubt that you will do all you can that the torch may burn bright and illumine the road of all the oppressed and enslaved'—so much so that it will burst 'into full

[77]Rev 21:1–22:5. The Russian, *obyvatel'skoe*, means 'narrow-minded' or 'philistine'.

[78]Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–20; 33:9–10; Num 12:5; 14:14; Deut 31:15; Neh 9:12, 19; Ps 99:7.

[79]Isa 42:6; 49:6.

flame' and light 'similar torches … in all parts of the world' (Stalin 1926u, 154–155, 1926v, 150–151).

Yet, there is another level, in which workers of the world come to the Soviet Union, drawn by the light to the nations. They have heard of the new way of life in the 'workers' state called the Soviet Union', undertaking a 'pilgrimage' here and peering into 'every nook and cranny' (Stalin 1925k, 54, 57, 1925l, 55, 58).[80] They do not believe what they read, 'but want to convince themselves by their own experience that the proletariat is capable of building a new industry, of creating a new society' (Stalin 1925a[1], 133, 1925b[1], 131).[81] Why? It is because we are the 'shock brigade' of the world proletariat, because of the 'world significance [*mirovoe znachenie*]' of our revolution, so much so that we have become the advanced detachment, the vanguard of world revolution (Stalin 1931i, 42, 1931j, 40, 1934g, 387, 1934h, 378–379, 1924g, 419, 1924h, 400, see also 1927g, 1927h, Stalin 1921m, 84, 1921n, 82–83, 1923a, 182, 1923b, 178–179, 1923u, 241, 1923v, 236, 1924g, 416, 418–419, 1924h, 397, 399–400, 1927g[1], 173–176, 1927h[1], 168–171, 1933c, 163–164, 175, 1933d, 161–162, 172, 1933g, 254, 263, 1933h, 247, 255). And this, against what all the naysayers assert, is the true meaning of socialism in one country.[82]

1.5 Scriptural Dynamic

By now it is time to cease ventriloquising Stalin and to recover my own voice. Obviously, Stalin's sentence production has a distinct biblical cadence. No study thus far has paid careful attention to this feature of his writing, let alone attempted to identify the biblical sources of his myriad references and allusions. However, I close with a different question, which arises from the previous material: the scriptural dynamic of revolutionary movements. This dynamic is not restricted to religious movements with their authoritative texts, although such movements provide significant insights into how one deals with the texts. Marxism is also, in one respect, a scriptural (that is, written) tradition. Marx and Engels wrote much, but so also did Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Kim Il-Sung, and many more. This is a rich tradition, but it also produces a conundrum: how does one reinterpret the words of the

[80]See David-Fox (2012) for a careful study of the ambiguities of this process in action.

[81]Further texts make the same point (Stalin 1925y, 166–169, 1925z, 164–167, 1925i, 290–291, 298–299, 1925j, 284–285, 291–292, 1924c, 310–314, 1924d, 298–301, 1931i, 42–43, 1931j, 40–41). See also the allusion to the Magi, who follow the 'light from the East' or indeed the 'guiding star' to see the new-born Jesus (Stalin 1918i, 186, 1918j, 182, 1925e[1], 254, 1925f[1], 247–248). Matt 2:2, 9.

[82]Here again, the references are multitude (Stalin 1921k, 108, 112, 1921l, 106, 110, 1923a, 183, 1923b, 179, 1924g, 414–420, 1924h, 395–401, 1925o, 1925p, 1925y, 171, 1925z, 169, 1926e, 64–80, 1926f, 60–75, 1926o, 1926p, 1926m, 227–232, 1926n, 216–221, 1926q, 341, 1926r, 326, 1926u, 21–26, 1926v, 20–25).

founders—Marx and Engels—in light of new situations, especially with socialism in power rather than seeking power? In other words, the question is whether one adheres to the letter or the spirit of the original texts. The Apostle Paul was quite clear, speaking 'not of letter (*grammatos*) but of spirit (*pneumatis*); for the letter (*gramma*) kills, but the Spirit (*pneuma*) gives life' (2 Cor 3:6). Stalin agreed wholeheartedly.

The issue to which Stalin's texts return again and again is how to interpret the texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin in light of different situations. It becomes one of the crucial features of the debates between Stalin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and others. We may discern three overlapping strategies in this scriptural dynamic: the claim to adhere to the letter while accusing one's opponent of distortion and misinterpretation; the recourse to the spirit of the text in light of changed circumstances; and interpretation in light of the spirit while aiming to adhere to the letter of the text (more so with Lenin's texts). Let me take each in turn, even though they overlap.

1.5.1 Letter and Distortion

Adherence to the letter applies specifically to Lenin's texts, despite the fact that he did not live long after the October Revolution. In the long-running debates of the 1920s and 1930s, each side accused the other of distorting Lenin's texts while claiming that their own interpretation adhered to the letter of those texts. For instance, in his extensive answers to questions at the end of his report on the Fourteenth Congress of 1925, Stalin engages in detail with Lenin in seeking to refute his opponents (Stalin 1925i, 362–403, 1925j, 353–391). Stalin's tactic in these debates is to distinguish between Leninism and Trotskyism (on topics such as trade unions, Party organisation and the masses), with the former clearly his own line of interpretation and the latter a deviation (Stalin 1926a, b, m, n, 1926u, 31–47, 1926v, 29–45, 1927m[1], 198–201, 1927n[1], 192–195). Most heated were the debates over socialism in one country and policies in relation to China, with one side accusing the 'Stalin faction' of misinterpreting Lenin and Stalin charging that the opposition has 'shed the last remnants of Leninism, that it is as far from Leninism as heaven is from earth' (Stalin 1927o, 346, 1927p, 341, 1927m, 59–60, 1927n, 56–57, 1926u, 116–131, 1926v, 111–126).

1.5.2 Spirit: Marxism in the Age of Imperialism

More frequently Stalin invokes the distinction between 'the letter [*bukvoĭ*]' and the 'spirit [*dukh*]', the latter of which he understands as the 'standpoint of Marxism and its method'. The danger is to substitute this 'real Marxism' with the 'letter of individual Marxist propositions [*bukvoĭ otdel'nykh polozheniĭ marksizma*]' (Stalin 1926u, 104, 1926v, 99). How does this work in practice? Generally, it means that

subsequent experiences, especially in light of the new world situation and socialism in power, must improve and enrich the 'old formulas' (Stalin 1926u, 104, 1926v, 99). At this level, Leninism becomes Marxism in the age of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Marx and Engels may have written during an earlier phase of immature capitalism, but the situation now is quite different, which Lenin (1916a, b) had described as imperialist capitalism. In this light, Leninism becomes the general theory of the revolutionary experience of all workers. It includes 'all that was taught by Marx plus Lenin's new contribution to the treasury of Marxism, and what necessarily follows from all that was taught by Marx' (Stalin 1925e[1], 253, 1925f[1], 247, see also 1925q, 1925r, 1927k, 97–100, 1927l, 92–95).[83]

At a more specific level, Stalin invokes a well-tried mode of scriptural interpretation, in which certain aspects of the original text (the letter) are bound to their time and place. They may have been relevant then, but in a new situation they are no longer so. The key example come from the most influential Marxist among the second and third generations: Engels. In his catechetical 'Principles of Communism' from 1847 (an early version of what would become the manifesto), Engels had asked the question, 'Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone?' His answer: 'No … The communist revolution will … be no merely national one; it will be a revolution taking place simultaneously in all civilised countries' (Engels 1847a, 351–352, 1847b, 374).[84] This text in particular was used by various critics against the Bolshevik doctrine of socialism in one country (Trotsky 1972, 32, 186, 291–301, 1941, 254, 259–260, 396, 434). Stalin's response was to observe that although ninety percent of Engels's prescriptions had indeed been implemented in the Soviet Union, his 'formula of the forties of the last century was correct in its time, but has become inadequate today'. Instead, it should be replaced by Lenin's formula: under the new conditions of global capitalism and class struggle, the 'victory of socialism in individual countries is quite possible and probable' (Stalin 1926q, 311, 1926r, 298). Later, other points made by Engels would be seen to be time-bound and inadequate in the new historical situation, such as the reluctance of peasants to make the transition from small farms to large collectivised farms (Stalin 1929a, 158–159, 1929b, 152–153). Indeed, Stalin is not afraid to criticise Engels's more inadequate pieces. Thus, in relation to 'The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom', Stalin observes that Engels was a 'little carried away, and, being carried away, forgot for a short time, certain elementary things which were well known to him'—such as the economic and political dimensions of imperialism and colonialism (Engels 1890a, b, Stalin 1934e, 14, 1934f, 20).

As was his wont, Stalin resorts to a story to make his point concerning spirit and letter:

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[83]These contributions include: teaching on the dictatorship of the proletariat, the peasant question, the national question, the Party, the question of the social roots of reformism, the question of the principal deviations in communism, and so on.

[84]The reasons given include the globalised market and the levelling of social development to the two great classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat, although the pace of revolution in each country would differ.

> It was at the time of the sailors' and soldiers' revolt in the Crimea. Representatives of the navy and army came to the Social-Democrats and said: 'For some years past you have been calling on us to revolt against tsarism. Well, we are now convinced that you are right, and we sailors and soldiers have made up our minds to revolt and now we have come to you for advice'. The Social-Democrats became flurried and replied that they couldn't decide the question of a revolt without a special conference. The sailors intimated that there was no time to lose, that everything was ready, and that if they did not get a straight answer from the Social-Democrats, and if the Social-Democrats did not take over the direction of the revolt, the whole thing might collapse. The sailors and soldiers went away pending instructions, and the Social-Democrats called a conference to discuss the matter. They took the first volume of *Capital*, they took the second volume of *Capital*, and then they took the third volume of *Capital*, looking for some instruction about the Crimea, about Sevastopol, about a revolt in the Crimea. But they could not find a single, literally not a single instruction in all three volumes of *Capital* either about Sevastopol, or about the Crimea, or about a sailors' and soldiers' revolt. They turned over the pages of other works of Marx and Engels, looking for instructions – but not a single instruction could they find. What was to be done? Meanwhile the sailors had come expecting an answer. Well, the Social-Democrats had to confess that under the circumstances they were unable to give the sailors and soldiers any instructions. And so … the sailors' and soldiers' revolt collapsed (Stalin 1926u, 97–98, 1926v, 93–94).

1.5.3 Not a Dogma, But a Guide to Action

However, the most intriguing form of this scriptural dynamic is to adhere to the letter in light of the spirit. Thus, one seeks to reinterpret the texts of the founders while being faithful to those very same texts. This was particularly the case with the long and complex debates among the Bolsheviks, which turned mostly on the interpretation of Lenin's texts. Stalin draws heavily on Lenin's writings on questions such as the form of government and the state (Stalin 1927a, b), the role of slogans in relation to the peasants (Stalin 1927s, t), the notion of the 'weakest link' (Stalin 1929g, h), and—once again—the issue of socialism in one country. While Stalin's opponents quoted Lenin on permanent and global revolution, Stalin drew from Lenin the point the Soviet state can achieve what is 'necessary and sufficient' for a socialist society in one country, but that it is never fully secure or guaranteed until socialism becomes a global reality (Stalin 1926e, 66–69, 1926f, 61–64, 1926q, 357–363, 1926r, 341–347, 1927m, 73–82, 1927n, 70–78).

Let me analyse a particularly good example of this process, with reference to a couple of late pieces by Lenin, 'The Tax in Kind' and 'On Co-Operation' (Lenin 1921a, b, 1923a, b). Lenin argues in 'The Tax in Kind' that cooperatives were a form of state capitalism, and may therefore be tolerated for a while under the NEP. However, in 'On Co-Operation', Lenin writes that 'co-operation under our conditions nearly always coincides fully with socialism' (Lenin 1923a, 473, 1923b, 375). Is this a simple contradiction, with the latter position overruling the former in light of new developments? If so, Stalin would be invoking the same spirit of interpretation as he invoked with Engels. However, Stalin opts for a subtler

approach, seeking the implications of the later text in the former (Stalin 1926e, 91–94, 1926f, 84–88). He finds it in the following: 'The transition from small-proprietor co-operatives to socialism is a transition from small to large-scale production, i.e., it is more complicated, but, if successful, is capable of embracing wider masses of the population, and pulling up the deeper and more tenacious roots of the old, pre-socialist and even pre-capitalist relations, which most stubbornly resist all "innovations"' (Lenin 1921a, 348–349, 1921b, 226–227). In other words, Lenin left open the possibility that the nature of cooperatives depends on their specific economic situation. Under state capitalism, they are capitalist enterprises, primarily private and secondarily collective. However, under 'our present system, co-operative enterprises differ from private capitalist enterprises because they are collective enterprises, but do not differ from socialist enterprises if the land on which they are situated and the means of production belong to the state, i.e., the working class' (Lenin 1923a, 473, 1923b, 375). Here Stalin invokes the spirit through the letter, if not seeking the spirit in the letter and thereby enabling a new interpretation.[85]

All of this is embodied in the old slogan, deriving from Engels, that Marxism is 'not a dogma, but a guide to action' (Engels 1886a, 531–532, 1886b, 578; Lenin 1910a, 39, 1910b, 84, 1917e, 43, 1917f, 132, 1920a, 71, 1920b, 55). In quoting the slogan, Stalin invokes the image of a path, 'which we must continue to follow if we want to remain revolutionaries to the end' (Stalin 1926q, 319, 1926r, 305). But a path must go somewhere, over different and new terrain, even if one is not entirely sure of the destination. And if it is good enough for the interpretation of Marx, Engels and Lenin, it is good enough for Stalin to admit that even his own earlier formulations might no longer hold (Stalin 1951–52a, 246–247, 1951–b, 176). The reality, or the science, of socialism in power means in practice that a strong socialist state will be required for the foreseeable future. It will certainly not soon be done away with.

1.5.4 Betrayal or Reinterpretation?

In light of all this, some would accuse Stalin of all manner of 'Jesuitical' twists and turns, with the result that he overturns all of the key doctrines of Marxism (Wetter 1958, 228–268; Lowenthal 1960; Nove 1962; Deutscher 1967, 292–344; Trotsky 1972; Leonhard 1974, 95–125; Allworth 1980; Cohen 1977, 1985, 38–92, Golubović 1981; Tucker 1990, 50–58, 319–328, 479–486; Daniels 1993b, 1993a, xxxii, 190; Brandenburger and Dubrovsky 1998; Krausz 2005, 237, 239). By now it should be clear that this approach constitutes adherence to the letter (the first approach discussed above). Debates at the time were subtler than that, not merely in

[85] A similar approach emerges in the complex discussions of the withering away of the state, which Stalin both maintains and reinterprets. See the discussion of this topic in Chap. 6.

terms of the aim of interpreting in light of the spirit or method of Marxism itself, but also—and more importantly—in terms of a dialectical understanding the spirit-letter opposition. That such a scriptural dynamic, endemic to movements with written texts, should take place in the context of socialism in power is to be expected. In fact, it is necessary.

Chapter 2
The Delay of Communism: Stalin and Proleptic Communism

> When will that be? Not soon, of course [*Konechno, ne skoro*]' (Stalin 1934g, 360, 1934h, 353).

From this initial biblical framework, my argument in this chapter concerns the 'delay of communism', which was a major feature of Stalin's theoretical innovations. After the world's first socialist revolution, it became clear that a world revolution, if not global communism, would not arrive any time soon. As the interim between the revolution and communism became the norm, it gained a name, socialism, in distinction from communism. But how to define it? Stalin deployed biblical texts to distinguish socialism and communism, as well as developing a series of dialectical definitions of socialism as a result of pushing communism into a well-nigh mythical future: the diversity and unity of languages and cultures (as we have seen); the intensification of class conflict as the goal drew nearer; socialism in one country; strengthening the state as the means to its withering away. Perhaps the most intriguing is a proleptic approach to that goal—in which the future state determined and was thereby actual in the present.

Stalin's involvement in these theoretical developments is as inescapable as it is crucial.[1] But I would like to add another factor: the analogy or 'translation' with the Christian theological development known as the 'delay of the Parousia'. In both cases, the pushing back of the desired goal had significant implications for theory and practice. By 'delay of the Parousia' I refer to the early Christian awareness that—in contrast to expectations—Jesus Christ was not hurrying to return in glory and

[1]Few indeed are the studies that deal seriously with the theoretical developments I analyse here. Those that do so attribute the developments either to the constant tension between Soviet and 'Western' social and economic systems, in which socialism and capitalism became coexistent rather than the former succeeding the latter (Marcuse 1958), or to the internal tension in Marxist thought and practice between objective and subjective factors, or between *tekhnika* and *politika* (Priestland 2007, 36–37). I have been able to find only one study that hints at the delay of communism in the development of key elements of Stalin's thought, although it merely suggests that the fading of hopes for a world revolution fostered a nationalist agenda (Mehnert 1952, 20, 118).

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usher in a new age. The interim gradually became the norm and the various churches adjusted to the situation—to the point of becoming the ideology of not a few states. In the following analysis, I begin with this delay of the Parousia in order to highlight a number of analogies with Stalin's thoughts on the delay of communism.

Before proceeding, I should make clear what this chapter is not. What follows offers a philosophical and indeed theological study of Stalin's thought, rather than a historical or political study. Thus, I am not interested here in the common suggestion that Marxism in its different forms constitutes a secularised version of Jewish or Christian 'messianism', in which the state of sin will be overcome by a messianic figure (the proletariat) in order to usher in an eschatological age (communism). First proposed by Berdiaev (1937), it has become a staple in some analyses of Marxism. However, it is a speculative thought bubble taken as 'fact' through thousands of repetitions (Boer 2011). Nor am I interested in Stalin as a 'messianic' figure (Demaitre 1967; Duncan 2000, 60–61), for this is a loose category that is better analysed in terms of veneration and demonization. And I do not focus on the whole political and social dimension of Moscow as the Third Rome, Slavophilism and the world-historical mission of the Russian people (Duncan 2000, 11–47; Miner 2003, 13–19). This is a worthwhile study on its own, but it is beyond the scope of my study. Instead, I am resolutely concerned with the philosophical and indeed theological dimensions of Stalin's thought in relation to the two delays, which may be seen in terms of the model of translation.

2.1 Delay of the Parousia

I begin by situating my analysis in terms of the delay of the Parousia in Christian thought, with an eye on the particular slant given by Eastern Orthodox interpretations. A staple of New Testament scholarship is that the early Christians believed fervently in Christ's immanent return. The New Testament texts span the first two centuries of the fledgling church's life, with the earlier of those tending towards immanent expectation. The clearest indication of such an anticipation appears in 1 Thessalonians, Paul's earliest letter, in which he speaks repeatedly of Christ's return. In Chaps. 4 and 5 (the 'little apocalypse'), he elaborates on Christ descending from heaven 'with a cry of command' and raising the dead first. 'Then we who are alive', he writes, 'who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever' (4:17). Paul seems to have included himself and some of the Thessalonians among those who would still be living when Christ returns. In contrast to those who preach Roman imperial propaganda, 'peace and security', the day of the Lord will come 'like a thief in the night' (5:2). However, since Christians are of the day and light, they need not fear such a thief, for they will be taken up whether they 'wake or sleep' (5:6). If anything, this is a radicalisation of the saying of the thief (Matt 24:43–44; Luke 12:39–40; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev 3:3), for instead of watchfulness at all

times, Christians may rest secure in the knowledge that they will join Christ on his return (Koester 2000, 120; Ehrman 2000, 281–288). How is one to live in such anticipation? Soberly, quietly, praying ceaselessly, avoiding the lusts of this world, and working hard without exploitation and in love for one another. This strongly eschatological orientation seems to have characterised many of the fledgling churches, coming to influence the way the Gospels presented Jesus: his sayings were reinterpreted and reformulated as the words of a near future redeemer and bringer of salvation, with direct implications for how Christians should live in expectation of Christ's immanent return (Mark 13; Luke 10:1–16; 12:35–46; 17:22–37; Matt 8:19–22; 9:35–10:15; 10:37–38; Didache 16).

After Paul's death and by the turn of the first century, it had become clear to many that Christ was not in a great hurry to return. The response to this awareness took various forms, although I am specifically interested in the theoretical dimensions. Other dimensions focused on continuing to exist in the world as it is, in terms of social structures, economics and politics—most famously in the way Christianity came to terms with and indeed dominated the Roman Empire after Constantine—which would have ramifications a Russian situation, manifested in the Third Rome and Slavophilism. But these items are not my concern, for I focus on theoretical questions. At that level, we find that the responses to the delay of the Parousia marked the real beginning of theology as such (perhaps one of the most significant and unexpected by-products of the delay). The initial responses to the delay sought to deal with and reinterpret the tension between immanence and delay: (1) revitalised and intensified expectation; (2) realised eschatology, in which Christ's first appearance, death and resurrection had already inaugurated the new age; (3) explanation of the delay, usually with an increasing number of conditions that had to be met before Christ's return; (4) proleptic eschatology, in which the future moment determines the present. The first of these responses appears in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, with its radical eschatology on a personal register, and Revelation, which is infused with an impatience borne of immediate political developments (Bovon 2009, 84). As for the second response in terms of realised eschatology, we find this particularly in the deutero-Pauline epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, which emphasise the benefits of salvation in the present rather than expectation of fulfilment in the future (Holladay 2005, 555, 563, 577; Puskas and Robbins 2011, 222).[2]

I am most interested in the third and fourth responses, which are related to one another. The effort to explain the delay appears most clearly in 2 Thessalonians, a letter written in Paul's name that offers a neat contrast with 1 Thessalonians, in which Paul expected Christ's return in his own lifetime. This was also a crucial text in Eastern Orthodoxy, which developed a keen sense of the trials and tribulations before the end time, including sustained reflections on the Antichrist. In the key section of the second letter, the author tackles directly the claim that the day had

[2]Paul had already sought to dampen such an approach in 1 Corinthians, where the problems seem to have been both 'freedom' (or licence) and asceticism by the 'strong ones', who believed the end had already come (Koester 2000, 126–131).

come (2 Thess 2:1–2).[3] Not so, argues the author, for prior conditions must be met in what becomes an eschatological timetable: apostasy and rebellion; appearance of the 'man of lawlessness' (anti-Christ); appearance of the 'one who restrains' and then his removal. Only then will Christ come and inaugurate the end by slaying the lawless one. Throughout, the letter emphasises the length of time between the present and the end (Ehrman 2000, 344–346), couching eschatological doctrines in mythological language, as much a mystery to present readers as it perhaps was to its initial recipients. In Eastern Orthodox interpretation, the Antichrist—the man of lawlessness—is the key, for he will generate apostasy, resistance to God and try to pass himself off as God (Alfeyev 2008, 110). Indeed, Eastern Orthodox thinkers took the main point of 2 Thessalonians—these events have not happened yet, so the end is not on its way[4]—a step further: 2 Thessalonians indicates that the work of the Antichrist had begun already with Christ's appearance and would be defeated only in the final struggle.

What happens in the meantime? The interim increasingly becomes the norm, in which tradition (2:15), perseverance in tribulation (1:4–12), steadfastness and hard work are the order of the day (3:6–13). How the interim is interpreted is crucial, for it reveals at another level what I have elsewhere called the political ambivalence that runs throughout Christianity (Boer 2014a, 125–206). Let me focus on a particular verse, which brings into relief this tension, now in terms of the class dynamics of interpretation: 'anyone unwilling to work should not eat [*hoti ei tis ou thelei ergazesthai mēde esthietō*]' (3:10). This slogan, presented as an instruction or command from 'Paul' when he was with the Thessalonians, is situated in the midst of admonitions to avoid disorder (*ataktōs*), to undertake appropriate labour so as not to burden others (3:6–15).[5] Although the range of suggested interpretations may seem significant,[6] I am interested in the class dynamics of such interpretation specifically in relation to work.[7] Many are the commentators who would see in 2 Thess 3:10 a criticism of labourers and artisans shirking work. For example, they may be characterised as 'idle beggars' (as seen by outsiders) who took advantage of

[3]See the useful expositions of this key statement in Menken (1994, 98–101) and Nicholl (2004, 115–117).

[4]Other later texts also tackle such problems, such as Jude and 2 Peter (Holladay 2005, 735–742).

[5]A comparable concern, with a much lighter touch, may be found in 1 Thess 4:11, where members of the congregation are urged to work with their hands, and 5:14, where the *ataktoi* are to be admonished. If so, then the author of the second letter has picked up this hint and taken it in a new direction. The theme of receiving 'reward' for labour appears elsewhere in the gospels (Matt 10:5–10) and Paul's epistles (1 Cors 9:1–14; 2 Cor 11:7–11). However, in these cases the reward in question is for the labour of the gospel rather than labour apart from activities to spread the new faith. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians the emphasis is on the latter and the need for the congregation to continue in labour.

[6]The best interpretation remains that of Bartlett (2012), from whom I have drawn much but with whom I disagree in some respects.

[7]It matters little in this respect whether the question is framed in eschatological or non-eschatological terms. The connection with eschatological concerns was first made by Johann Albrecht Bengel in his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* from 1742, vol. 2, 501.

Christian 'brotherly love', or boisterous and rabble-rousing poor who remained dependent on the their rich patrons, or greedy, lazy and undisciplined (*ataktoi*) unemployed manual labourers who were unwilling to work and looked to wealthy Christians to supply their wants as though the latter were new patrons, or even a congregation that was largely made up of manual labourers, some of whom shirked their responsibilities to the others in terms of working for the 'welfare syndrome' of the common meal in light of 'transformative love-patriarchalism' (Russell 1988; Winter 1989, 309, 1994, 42–60; Aune 1989, 87–90; Nicholl 2004, 166–175; Jewett 1993; Murphy-O'Connor 1996, 117; Gaventa 1998, 128; Weaver 2007).[8] Class assumptions are difficult to miss. Perhaps Nicholl expresses such assumptions best: 'It is not difficult to imagine that some from the manual labouring class would have exploited the opportunity to be indolent rather than return to a life of hard manual work', being all too ready to engage in 'leeching' and 'sponging' (Nicholl 2004, 174, see also Thiselton 2011, 264).[9] More generally, 2 Thess 3:10 and the epistle as a whole advocate accommodation with the world as it is, to become respected citizens in existing society.[10] Often have theorists and defenders of capitalism taken up the verse with a similar agenda: those who do not work are the idle unemployed, the poor who are so due to their own laziness.[11] By contrast, a good citizen of the world has a job, pays taxes and is not a burden on society.

A very different interpretation is also possible: those who shirk honest labour are precisely the rich, members of the ruling classes who undertake no productive work. Instead, they rely on the labour of others in order to live in the way to which they had become accustomed. Difficult it is to find this interpretation in the early commentators or indeed recent critics, which may be read as an unwitting signal of class assumptions.[12] Perhaps the Bohemian reformer, Jan Hus (1371–1415), offers

[8]Some go so far as to argue that the reason for abandoning work was 'honourable'—to preach the gospel (Barclay 1993; Burke 2003, 213–216).

[9]The *Apostolic Constitutions* (350–370 CE), a work about which little is known but which is full of practical advice, strikes a similar tone (Thiselton 2011, 266).

[10]Conzelmann (1982) famously argued that Luke-Acts had a similar agenda. For a recent rearticulation of this position, see Holladay (2005, 238–241).

[11]I can give only a sample of the impressive range. Weber (1994, 159) sees it, through the influential Puritan Richard Baxter, as one of the cornerstones of Protestant asceticism and thus of early capitalism. James Smith, upon arriving at the Jamestown settlement in North America in 1908, invoked the verse in order to rectify the colony's problems (Bartlett 2012, 37). William Graham Sumner (1840–1910), the erstwhile clergyman, anti-socialist and proponent of laissez-faire economics quoted the verse (Wilson-Reitz and McGinn 2014, 186). In our own time, 'shock jocks' such as Glenn Beck call upon the verse to challenge any form of welfare (Bartlett 2012, 37), as did Margaret Thatcher in her 'Sermon on the Mound' before the Church of Scotland General Assembly of 1988. She suggested that 2 Thess 3:10 provides the first biblical 'principle' for shaping social and economic life: 'We are told we must work and use our talents to create wealth'.

[12]The only recent work I have been able to find suggests rather weakly that the *ataktoi* and *periergazomenoi* (busybodies) are 'upwardly mobile social climbers' and 'ancient "yuppies"' within a patronage system that despised labour (Wilson-Reitz and McGinn 2014). Bartlett's otherwise excellent study falls away from such a position by arguing, following Jewett (1993), that

the first hint in this direction. In his *On Simony* of 1413, he attacks the medieval church practice of having many holdings so as to generate more income with no labour. Not only is this 'trafficking in holy things' contrary to scripture, but it also destroys the church: 'Woe to the canons … bishops … and prelates who eat, gorge themselves, guzzle, and feast abundantly, but in spiritual matters amount to nothing' (Hus 1953, 247).[13] This hint would finally be taken up by none other than the Bolsheviks, especially Stalin.[14] This text from 2 Thess 3:10 was already a slogan in 1918 and was highlighted in the 'Stalin Constitution' of 1936. Those who do not work are of course the capitalists, landlords and kulaks, whose relative wealth is extracted from others. I will have more to say concerning this biblical text later, for it is a key marker for the delay of communism. In doing so, Stalin and the Bolsheviks unwittingly drew upon a slogan from the midst of a key biblical text concerning the delay of the Parousia. The connection is not conscious, for Stalin would not have known of the theory of the Parousia's delay. Yet this is precisely why the connection is all the more powerful: the delay of the Parousia is translatable with the delay of communism. The interim created by the delay, the time in between, was to be for those who put in an honest day's work.

A couple of implications arise from these interpretations of 2 Thess 3:10. To begin with, the conservative reading, which identifies the 'idle' as lazy manual labourers who are unwilling to work and which reads the text as advocating accommodation with the world as it is, would open the door to Christianity becoming the religion of empire under Constantine. Many other texts could be marshalled to show how easily Christian hierarchs can slip into seats of power, sharing the space with petty despots and aspiring tyrants (whether collective or individual).[15] But in this case I am interested in the way the political ambivalence of Christianity appears through the class dynamics of interpreting 2 Thess 3:10. If one

(Footnote 12 continued)

the early Christians in Thessalonica were all marginalized people in the 'first phase of communism', in which the difficulty of finding work meant that too many relied on the *agape* feast.

[13]See also Calvin (1851, 355–356), who writes of the monks and priests as 'lazy drones' whose 'only religion is to be well stuffed, and to have exemption from all annoyance of labour'. Among the church 'fathers', only Tertullian and John Chrysostom threaten to come close. Tertullian writes: 'Each one should work with his own hands for a living'. Indeed, 'Let the Church stand open to *all* who are supported by their hands and by their own work' (Roberts and Donaldson 1867–1873, vol. 3, 63; vol. 5, 63). As for Chrysostom, he observes in *Homily* 5, 'To pray and fast, being idle, is not the work of the hands' (1889, 394). Notably, Augustine tends to restrict such precepts to monks, especially in his *On the Work of Monks* (1886).

[14]It is not for nothing that Hus, the reformer before Luther, would become a pre-revolutionary hero in communist Czechoslovakia.

[15]For example, Lieuw (1999a, b) argues that the gospel of Mark replicates the 'might is right' approach of colonial imperialism by proclaiming that Jesus Christ and not the Roman emperor is the highest authority. Moore (2006, 45–74) argues that the gospel of John is the gospel of the imperial status quo, intuiting that 'Rome will eventually become Christianity and Christianity will eventually become Rome'.

identifies manual labourers and artisans as lazy, good-for-nothing sponges on the rich and on 'hard-working' members of the church and society, then it is a short step to valuing the rich, the ruling class and indeed the state they control as the way God ordained that the world should be.

The other implication follows on the heels of the radical interpretation of 2 Thess 3:10 and leads me—beyond an identification with those who labour and who are poor—to the fourth response to the delay of the Parousia: proleptic eschatology. In this respect, the present time of labour, steadfastness, perseverance through difficulties and comradely love—all emphasised by 2 Thessalonians—exists in light of the time to come. I mean not a goal to which one strives, but a sense of the future that is 'creatively present to all the temporal things that precede this future' (Pannenberg 1991–1993, vol. 3, 531). It is neither pushed into a distant future, nor is it realised fully in the present. Instead, the present is understood in terms of prolepsis, in which events happen 'before their time' (Pannenberg 1991–1993, vol. 3, 580–646; Moltmann 1965, 1999). In this sense, the interpretation of 2 Thess 3:10 finds continuity with Paul's notion of Jesus' resurrection being the 'first fruits' of what is to come (1 Cor 15:20–28).[16] The eschatological future is 'the basis for the lasting essence of each creature that finds its manifestation already in the allotted duration of its life and yet will achieve its full manifestation only in the eschatological future'. Although we are still on the way to becoming ourselves, we are 'in some sense already the persons we shall be in the light of our eschatological future' (Pannenberg 1991–1993, vol. 3, 603–604). Thus far, I have drawn on Protestant theologians to explicate proleptic eschatology, but I suggest that we find traces of such an approach in Eastern Orthodox theology. I do not mean the Trinitarian focus, according to which history itself is an unfolding of the eternity manifested in the three persons and economy of salvation, but rather the way the anticipated eschaton permeates in every way the time already begun with the coming and resurrection of the 'last Adam'. This creative force is already apparent in the Church as the body of Christ on earth, in its liturgy which makes Christ and eschaton present, in the icon which uncovers already the transformation of the whole creation, and in the 'spiritual way', if not asceticism (Chryssavgis 2008), which is shaped by the eschatological perspective in the sense of appropriating the divine image and likeness of God on the path of salvation. Although this is often presented as an inaugurated eschatology (Stylianopoulos 2008, 21; Bobrinsky 2008, 50), in which Christ has begun the new age but awaits fulfilment in the glorification of the cosmos, I suggest that it has touches of a more proleptic vision. This appears, for instance, in the argument by Schmemann (1985, 9–10, see also Stăniloae 2000, II: 61) that 'the whole of Christian theology is eschatological'. We live in 'time by that which is beyond time; living by that which is not yet come, but which we already

[16]In a different way, a similar perspective infuses 2 Peter, where one's conduct in the present is determined by the future (Holladay 2005, 739).

know and possess'.[17] Indeed, it is something we can 'taste here and now'—the leitmotiv being the Transfiguration of Christ (Mark 9). The Kingdom of Heaven is thus both at hand and awaiting fulfilment, so much so that history itself is created out of the delay of the Parousia.

To sum up, the delay was highly productive in terms of Christian thought, if not providing the very conditions for what we now know as theology. I have been particularly interested in how the delay produced two theoretical responses, one in terms of explaining the delay and the other in the eventual development of proleptic eschatology. On both counts, it turned out that Eastern Orthodoxy has been concerned with such matters, especially the eschatological 'timetable' of 2 Thessalonians and the potential for proleptic eschatology. I have of course emphasised these for a reason, since they will become important in my analysis of Stalin's theoretical reflections on the delay of communism.

2.2 The Delay of Communism and the Identification of Socialism

As for Stalin, I begin with the nature of the delay of communism, before considering the way the interim became the norm (via 2 Thessalonians), the dialectical implications thereof and then proleptic communism itself. Initially, Stalin shared the position of Lenin and other Bolsheviks: a European if not global revolution was imminent and the October Revolution was its precursor (Lenin 1917a, 74, 1917b, 272, 1918e, f, g, h, 1919g, 456, 1919h, 488, 1920a, 21–22, 1920b, 3–4; Lih 2011, 190). The long-term success of the latter relied on the former. He held to this position with the constitution of 1924, which stated that the formation of the USSR was the first step to a World Socialist Soviet Republic (Stalin 1923c, 404, 1923d, 395). The interim was to be brief, in which the transition from capitalism to socialism would set the stage for the realisation of global communism (Stalin 1924g, 414–420, 1924h, 395–401). Already a stages theory is implicit in these formulations, one that would eventuate in the distinction between socialism and communism, between the interim and its fulfilment. I will return to this distinction in a moment, but it first needs to be situated within a couple of theoretical and practical problems within Marxist thought: stages theory and the distinction between objective and subjective factors. The tendency towards historical analysis in terms of stages is endemic to Marxism, notably with regard to the narrative of modes of production and especially the path from capitalism to socialism. In this case, capitalism provides the necessary conditions for socialist revolution through tensions between the forces and relations of production and the sharpening of class conflict. In his earlier work, Stalin often invokes this version of the stages theory, at

[17]Florovsky (1975, 66) comes close with his observation that history is 'inwardly regulated and organized precisely by this super-historical and transcendent goal'.

times including the necessity of capitalism as a way of overcoming the remnants of feudalism (Stalin 1906a, 222, 1906b, 401–402, 1906e, 234–235, 1906f, 417–419, 1909a, 153, 1909b, 353, u, v).[18] This preference for stages opens out into objective tendencies within Marxism. The objective forces of history—in terms of economic and social contradictions—produce the stages in question but also the internal tensions that lead to their undoing through revolutionary change. I do not intend to engage in the detailed philosophical discussion of this objective dimension (with its attendant "cold stream" of sober scientific analysis), save to note that it played a significant role among the various wings of the Russian Social-Democratic Party in the lead up to the October Revolution. Thus, a bourgeois revolution should be encouraged to mature so as to enable a socialist revolution out of the contradictions of the former. Many Mensheviks and a good number of Bolsheviks entertained such a position, even Lenin and Stalin from time to time. Yet, a revolution does not happen without subjective intervention, which changes what counts as objective. Lenin, especially in his 'Letters from Afar' and the 'April Theses', urged such an intervention, a veritable recreation of the world, upon his initially sceptical and reticent comrades—with the result being the October Revolution.[19] Stalin seems to have had occasional doubts about Lenin's new direction, exhibiting a distinct liking (as we will see in the discussion of language) for a stages theory.[20] But later he came to see the full role of subjective intervention, a 'standing with' rather than a 'lying down on' Marxism, which he characterises most fully as strategy and tactics (Stalin 1920g, 324, 1920h, 312, 1921m, n, 1923a, 1923b, 1927k, 101–103, 105, 1927l, 95–98, 99–100).

However, Stalin's main and original contribution to this theoretical problem of Marxism was not to be in terms of subjective intervention, but rather in a dialectical engagement with the stages theory in which he opens up what I will call mythical and proleptic communism. In order to situate how he does so, I need first to trace how he gradually distinguishes between socialism and communism as two distinct stages, before stretching out the interim within the context of a stages theory.

Stalin's earlier texts play a double game: he develops a preliminary stages theory while not distinguishing between socialism and communism (here he follows Marx's own terminology). Thus, in 'Anarchism or Socialism?' from 1906 to 1907, he begins by outlining an ideal vision of communism in contrast to the crises of capitalism generated by scattered private enterprise designed to maximise profits. Under communism one will find no classes, exploitation, wage-labour, profits, state power and the private ownership of the means of production. On a positive register, it means collective labour, free workers, collective ownership of the instruments and means of production and the socialist organisation of society. In short, the main

[18]Stalin presents such an approach as a more mechanical version of dialectics: 'we must never forget that everything changes, that everything has its time and place, and, consequently, we must also present questions in conformity with concrete circumstances' (Stalin 1906e, 235, 1906f, 419).

[19]See my earlier detailed analysis of Lenin on this subject (Boer 2013, 103–133).

[20]As a further example, he also argued for the proletarian leadership of the bourgeois revolution (Stalin 1906i, j, k, 254, 1906l, 4, 1907i, 2–3, 1907j, 264–265, 1907e, 61–69, 1907f, 88–95).

purpose of production will be to 'satisfy the needs of society' (Stalin 1906–1907a, 336, 1906–1907b, 160). He draws upon the old socialist slogan, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' (which, as we will see, is also a gloss on a biblical text, Acts 4:35). But now Stalin qualifies the different stages needed before achieving such a society. 'In the *first* stage of socialism', he writes, when those who 'have not yet grown accustomed to work' (note the allusion to 2 Thess 3:10) are becoming used to such work, and when productive forces still require further development so that 'dirty' and 'clean' work remain to be done, the principle of 'to each according to his needs', will 'undoubtedly be greatly hindered and, as a consequence, society will be obliged *temporarily* to take some other path, a middle path [*srednii put'*]' (Stalin 1906–1907a, 338, 1906–1907b, 162). This first stage or middle path is but a transition, for when the roots of capitalism have been destroyed, when the 'savage' sentiments and habits have been overcome in the new conditions, and when the future society 'runs into its groove', then the principle of abilities and needs is the only principle needed. At this early point, Stalin's distinctions are still rather mild, for he speaks of a first stage and its aftermath, a middle path to finding the right track. The reason he does so is that he follows Marx's 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in which Marx speaks of a first and a higher phase of communist society—the latter being characterised by none other than 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs' (Marx 1875a, 87, 1875b, 15). Marx may have written of the two phases of communist society, but for Stalin it was socialist society. They were one and the same.

So in 1906–1907 Stalin has distinguished a couple of stages but still sees the first stage as a relatively brief interim. However, by the tumultuous months between the February and October revolutions of 1917, it became clear that the Bolsheviks might well be able to lead a successful revolution. Thoughts turned to what would happen after the revolution and how the new world might be shaped. In this situation, we find Lenin, already in May of 1917, beginning to make the crucial distinction between socialism and communism. 'From capitalism', he writes, one 'can pass directly only to socialism', by which he means the social ownership of the means of production and the distribution to each according to work done. But this is only the first step, for 'socialism must inevitably evolve gradually into communism', which he characterises according to the well-known slogan concerning abilities and needs (Lenin 1917i, 84–85, 1917j, 179–180). Lenin has begun to reinterpret Marx's distinction between two stages of communism, which becomes clearer a few months later in his explicit engagement, in *The State and Revolution*, with none other than the same text by Marx that Stalin had used, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' (Lenin 1917g, 464–479, 1917h, 86–102).[21] As his exegesis of Marx's brief comments proceeds, Lenin points out that the 'scientific distinction between socialism and communism is clear'. It may not be possible to discern such differences from before the revolution, but the theoretical distinction is important.

[21]Marcuse (1958, 20) observes that Marx's late distinction between the two phases of communism is not an incidental correction, but 'follows from the very principle of the dialectical method'.

Indeed, what 'is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the "first", or lower, phase of communist society' (Lenin 1917g, 475, 1917h, 98). The distinction has now been made, with the interim clearly designated as socialism. A couple of years later, Lenin examines 'in what way communism differs from socialism'. Socialism is the 'first form of the new society', growing out of capitalism, whereas communism is a 'higher form of society, and can only develop when socialism has become fully established' (Lenin 1919i, 284, 1919j, 33). Under communism people fall into the habit of performing social duties without any apparatus for coercion, so much so that unpaid work for the common good becomes the norm. Notably, in these works, socialism is not so much the transition from capitalism to communism. Instead, there are two transitions, one from capitalism to socialism and the other from socialism to communism (Lenin 1921a, 330–331, 335, 342, 1921b, 206–207, 212, 219). Socialism has become a distinct stage in its own right. The interim now has a name.

The paradox is that Lenin had not yet experienced the delay of communism. That would soon come, as the prospect for European and then global revolutions faded. In 1917 this was not yet so, which means that Lenin's distinction is anticipatory in a way he did not imagine: it provided an initial theoretical framework for interpreting and explaining the delay of communism. Notably, Stalin took his time in taking up Lenin's distinction. The earliest references after 1917 still use socialism and communism interchangeably, in which socialism includes the disappearance of classes and the state (Stalin 1918g, 81, 1918h, 79, 1918u, 91, 1918v, 89). The first implicit suggestion of the distinction between socialism and communism appears in 1924, well after Lenin's proposal and when enough time had passed for the delay of communism to become apparent. In *The Foundations of Leninism*, Stalin begins by speaking of the 'transition from capitalism to communism', thereby still assuming that socialism is an in-between period. But then he observes that what might seem as a transitional phase is anything but, for it is 'an entire historical era [*tseluiu istoricheskuiu ėpoxu*]', full of conflicts, external threats, advances, defeats, re-education, and economic and cultural reconstruction (Stalin 1924e, 115, 1924f, 111–112, see also 1927k, 100, 1927l, 95). Yet in this text the distinction remains implicit, a feature of many of his works from the mid-1920s onwards (although by the 1930s and in the midst of the socialist offensive he tends to focus on the transition to socialism).[22]

The first explicit statement and deployment of the distinction appears in 1927, in a reply to a question from the first American Labour Delegation (Stalin 1927k, 139–141, 1927l, 133–135). Asked about the nature of communist society, Stalin replies with the classic definition that he had already provided in 1906–1907 along with some additions: collective ownership of the means of production; free associations of workers rather than the state and classes; a planned high-technology economy;

[22]As many texts from the 1920s indicate (Stalin 1924o, 261, 1924p, 249, 1925a[1], 127–128, 1925b[1], 125–126, 1925y, 161–164, 1925z, 158–163, 1925i, 317–318, 379, 1925j, 310–311, 369–370, 1926m, 227–228, 1926n, 216–217, 1928i, 236–237, 1928j, 227–228, 1929a, b, 1929e, 354, 1929f, 339, 1929i, 77, 1929j, 73, 1929q, r).

the end of antitheses between town and country and between agriculture and industry; the ability-needs slogan; the flowering of art and science; true individual freedom. But all this is still in the future, so what is needed now is that workers should 'march towards socialism, and still more to communism' (Stalin 1927k, 140, 1927l, 134).[23] Indeed, in an echo of his earlier observation concerning the 'entire historical era' of socialism, full of struggle and conflict, he mentions that the development of socialism in more and more countries will produce vigorous opposition, so that two global camps will form between socialism and capitalism.

The delay in Stalin's full deployment of the distinction seems to echo the delay of communism itself. Only when the latter became apparent was he willing to make use of the distinction and designate socialism as a distinct stage. With this belated clarity concerning socialism, Stalin undertakes two theoretical developments. The first is to focus on the construction of socialism and define it further; the second is to push communism ever further into the future. I tackle the first development in what follows, after which I turn to the implications of an ever-delayed communism.

2.3 The Interim Becomes the Norm: Defining Socialism

How to define the interim that has become the norm? This was a gradual process, in which the various items of such a definition in turn shaped the nature of the interim. It may be surprising to some, but a key factor in this definition turned on some biblical texts. One is the same text we encountered earlier, 2 Thess 3:10—'anyone unwilling to work should not eat'. It was soon drawn into contact with another, Acts 4:32 and 25: 'Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common … They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need'. Let us see how the interaction worked itself out, in what may be called a creative exercise of Bolshevik biblical interpretation.

2.3.1 He Who Does Not Work, Neither Shall He Eat

Lenin was the first to use 2 Thessalonians in such a fashion. In his exegesis of Marx's comments in 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', Lenin observes that in the stage of socialism 'bourgeois law'[24] (Marx's phrase) persists in terms of regulating the allocation of labour and products. In this context, the 'socialist principle, "He

[23] At the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934, he speaks of 'the first stage of communism, i.e., the socialist stage of development [*pervoĭ stadii kommunizma,—sotsialisticheskoĭ stadii razvitiia*]' (Stalin 1934g, 349–350, 1934h, 343).

[24] 'Bourgeois law' is Marx's phrase, which Lenin seeks to explicate. For Lenin, of course, full communism meant the withering away of the state (see Chap. 6), so the continued presence of

who does not work shall not eat [*kto ne rabotaet, tot ne dolzhen est'*],'' is already realised'. So too is another closely related socialist principle, 'An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labour' (Lenin 1917g, 472, 1917h, 94).[25] Soon afterwards, Lenin quotes this biblical text once again when addressing a crowd of workers in Petrograd. The context was the grain shortage of 1918, brought about by the destruction of the transport network by the First World War and the White Armies. Lenin accuses the bourgeoisie of disrupting the fixed prices, profiteering and resorting to bribery and corruption in order to undermine the power of the workers. By contrast, the 'prime, basic and root principle of socialism' is:

> 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat [*kto ne rabotaet, tot da ne est*]'. 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat' – every toiler understands that. Every worker, every poor and even middle peasant, everybody who has suffered need in his lifetime, everybody who has ever lived by his own labour, is in agreement with this. Nine-tenths of the population of Russia are in agreement with this truth. In this simple, elementary and perfectly obvious truth lies the basis of socialism, the indefeasible source of its strength, the indestructible pledge of its final victory (Lenin 1918c, 391–392, 1918d, 357–358).

This slogan was plastered throughout cities, towns, and villages during the dire situation of the 'civil' war and its food shortages. Interpreted in the immediate situation, it meant state control of grain supplies and an absolute ban on private hoarding and trading, strict registration of grain and efficient transport to deliver to places in need, and a 'just and proper distribution of bread' among all citizens and without favour to the rich (Lenin 1918c, 392, 1918d, 358). The last point in particular reinforces the point that the ones not working were the old capitalists and the bourgeoisie, for they engaged in no productive labour. It was high time they did so.[26] As I pointed out earlier, this distinctive interpretation may perhaps be seen in the early reformer, Jan Hus, but it is otherwise original to Lenin. Let me pick up Lenin's comment that this biblical text embodies the 'prime, basic and root principle of socialism [*pervoe, osnovnoe, korennoe nachalo sotsializma*]'. This is a rather stunning observation, basing the phase of socialism on a biblical principle. Yet I reiterate my earlier point: this phase was generated out of the delay of communism in a way that is curiously analogous to the way the biblical text was itself generated out of the delay of the Parousia for the early Christians. At the same

(Footnote 24 continued)

some forms of the state was seen as a bourgeois relic. Stalin would later begin to redefine the state itself under socialism.

[25]The only analysis that connects Lenin's interpretation with 2 Thessalonians is that of Bartlett (2012, 47–48). He notes that Lenin removes the important dimension of willingness (*thelei*) to work from 2 Thess 3:10, and he adds the obligatory *dolzhen*, must not or ought not (to eat).

[26]The biblical text also featured in a famous debate between Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Commissar for Enlightenment, and Metropolitan Vvedensky, the leader of the Renovationist movement in the Russian Orthodox Church. Vvedensky observes (1985, 193): 'When you say you are for the principle of work, I remind you of the slogan, "he who does not work shall not eat." I have seen this in a number of different cities on revolutionary posters. I am just upset that there was no reference to the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, from where the slogan is taken'.

time, Lenin is quite clear concerning the nature of socialism: 'But this is not yet communism' (Lenin 1917g, 472, 1917h, 94).

Stalin would make much greater use of 2 Thess 3:10 for defining socialism.[27] Already in 1920 he connects the text with voting. Only working people should have the right to elect other workers to the Soviets, since they are, after all, Soviets of the working people: 'We in Russia believe that he who does not work, neither shall he eat'. Even more: 'You must declare that he who does not work, neither shall he vote' (Stalin 1920c, 420, 1920d, 405).[28] Yet, the 1930s saw the greatest use of the text, especially in preparation for the 'Stalin Constitution' of 1936. It arose in the context of the socialist offensive, with its massive industrialisation and collectivisation drives, the realisation of the affirmative action program and the emerging Red Terror—all necessarily connected.[29] It was also the time when the claim was made repeatedly that socialism had been achieved in the Soviet Union (Stalin 1934g, 340, 1934h, 333, 1935c, 75, 1935d, 60, 1936e, 157–163, 1936f, 123–126, 1939a, 372–397, 1939b, 302–321).

Article 12 of the constitution reads: 'In the U.S.S.R. work is a duty and a matter of honour for every able-bodied citizen, in accordance with the principle: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat [*kto ne rabotaet, tot ne est*]"' (Stalin 1936a, article 12, 1936b, stat'ia 12). The text is a direct quotation from Lenin's version of the saying, rather than the version that had appeared in the 1918 constitution of the RSFSR (1918a, article 18, 1918b, stat'ia 18). Since the biblical text is not given much interpretation in the constitution itself, I need to consider some writings published around the time of the constitution.

A significant step appears a few years earlier, in 1933 and as part of the lead-up to the constitution. Here Stalin seeks to answer the question: if we are living under socialism, why do we have to toil (*trudit'sia*)? In the catechetical style that he developed, he replies that such talk is fundamentally wrong. It is the 'philosophy of loafers and not of honest working people' (Stalin 1933g, 256, 1933h, 249). But

[27]Few if any are the studies that recognise the importance of Lenin's and Stalin's engagements with this and other biblical texts. Menken (1994, 135–136) notes Stalin's usage, but curiously suggests it is among a range of subsequent distortions of the text. Despite the plethora of Russian language texts that mention the text, very few note its biblical origins (Dubrovin 2015, 82). As for Soviet specialists, none realise the significance of Lenin's and Stalin's engagements with this text. Even Filtzer's careful studies (1986, 2004) of labour fail to mention it. Guins, as well as Wilson-Reitz and McGinn, mention, with no further comment, its appearance in the 1918 and 1936 constitutions, Fitzpatrick mistakenly attributes it to Marx and Krausz calls it a simplified principle of 'ethical socialism' (Guins 1954, 150; Fitzpatrick 2000, 180; Krausz 2005, 239; Wilson-Reitz and McGinn 2014, 186). It is not uncommon to find treatments of the constitutions failing to discuss these biblical statements at all (Siegelbaum and Sokolov 2000, 158–206).

[28]Indeed, in the 1920s, the term *netrudovoi element*, non-working element, was a neologism that entered popular parlance in the 1920s (Shternshis 2006, 203).

[29]For a full elaboration of this point, see Chap. 4.

what does he mean by 'loafers [*lodyrei*]'? The word evokes connotations of idlers, slackers and bums, with distinct echoes of *ataktōs* and *ataktoi*, living in a disorderly and idle fashion from 2 Thess 3:6–11.[30] They are—and he claims Lenin for such an interpretation—both the former exploiters and those who do not go along enthusiastically with the new socialist project. The former we have met, in terms of those who do not work for themselves but compel others to work for them. A little later, in the *Short Course*, Stalin would point out that this group had now been compelled to work, or at least those who become—willingly or otherwise—part of the socialist project (Stalin 1938a, 229, 1938b, 219). The latter, however, form a new category. They too 'loaf and want to live at the expense of others'. They are the ones who drag their feet, who passively and actively resist the socialist offensive. They too do not want to work conscientiously (*trudilis' chestno*), 'for themselves, for the community'. These slackers are no better than the former exploiters and to them too the biblical slogan applies: 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat [*kto ne truditsia, tot ne est*]' (Stalin 1933g, 256, 1933h, 249). This new category was in many respects created by the intensity of the socialist offensive, which turned the Soviet Union into a modern economic superpower in a breathtakingly short period of time. Many were those who enthusiastically threw themselves into the new project, but many were those who did not, finding themselves left behind and opposing, passively or actively, the project itself. These are the ones Stalin has in mind with his second category of the ones who do not work.

One further point is worth noting concerning this text by Stalin. His use of *trudit'sia* may seem innocuous here, for it has largely the same meaning as Lenin's use of *rabotaet* (*rabotat'*). The semantic fields are close: the former means to toil over, labour and work, while the latter means to work, function, be open and operate. However, Stalin's text is closer to the official Synodal version of the Bible from 1876, which he would have known from his time of theological study. It reads: '*esli kto ne khochet trudit'sia, tot i ne esh*'.[31] While both *trudit'sia* and *rabotat'*, along with their respective nouns and adjectives, were used in the Party literature and government announcements, *rabotat'* was the favoured term, along with *rabotnik* (worker). Stalin's slight shift here may well indicate a more biblical tenor to his use of the slogan, especially in light of the fact that he uses *trudit'sia* heavily in the lead-up to his quotation of the biblical verse (as I have indicated) and indeed prefers it for his later reflections.

The final point concerning the citations of 2 Thess 3:10 relates to its use to mark achieved socialism. This claim was already part of the constitution of 1936, but it also appears in his reflections on the constitution and in the famous *Short Course*

[30]The Synodal version of the Russian Bible has the adverb *beschinno* for the Greek *ataktos*, which adheres to the strict sense of 'disorderly'. However, the connotative connection or semantic overlap with *lodyr'*, loafer or idler, is very close.

[31]And indeed closer to the 1918 Constitution of the RSFSR, which reads: '*Ne trudiashchiĭsia, da ne est*' (1918b, stat'ia 18).

that appeared a couple of years later.[32] In both cases, the biblical verse is cited in a list of the principles or pillars of socialism: common ownership of the instruments and means of production; abolition of exploiting classes and of the gap between rich and poor; full employment; rights to education, rest and leisure; and work as both an obligation and honourable duty: 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat [*kto ne rabotaet, tot ne est*]' (Stalin 1936e, 166, 1936f, 128, 1938a, 126, 229, 1938b, 122, 219). Above all, these mark a socialism that has been achieved, in which the 'relations of production fully correspond to the state of productive forces, for the social character of the process of production is reinforced by the social ownership of the means of production' (Stalin 1938a, 126, 1938b, 122). Not only had the interim—socialism—become the norm, but it had also been established. In this norm, 2 Thess 3:10 was now in effect.

2.3.2 *From Each According to His Ability, to Each According to His Work*

At the same time, the *Short Course* adds a crucial dimension to the slogan. Here Stalin makes a direct connection between working-eating and the point that the 'goods produced are distributed according to labour performed', indeed that 'he who does not work, neither shall he eat' provides the principle of such distribution according to labour (Stalin 1938a, 126, 1938b, 122). Why is this connection crucial? It alludes to a version of the well-known slogan, 'from each according to ability, to each according to need'. In order to see the connection, I need to engage is some further exegesis. Let us return to the 1936 constitution, especially article 12, which I quoted earlier. However, I quoted only the first half, for its second part glosses another biblical text: 'The principle applied in the U.S.S.R. is that of socialism: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work *[ot kazhdogo po ego sposobnosti, kazhdomu—po ego trudu*]"' (Stalin 1936a, article 12, 1936b, stat'ia 12).

I suggest that this principle is a reinterpretation of Acts 4:35 in light of 2 Thess 3:10. How so? The text of Acts reads: 'They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need'. The biblical context contains a brief account of early Christian communism, in which everything was held in common and no-one had private possessions (see also Acts 2:44–45).[33] Everyone would put whatever wealth they had into the common property and then it was distributed according to need. I do not wish to go into the long history of the various interpretations of this

[32]Gusev's Ph.D. thesis (2003) offers a detailed and careful study of the *Short Course*. To be avoided is Medvedev (2005).

[33]The initial proposal for early Christian or 'heterodox' communism appears in the work of Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, although they argue that it was a communism of consumption, not production, and thereby bound to fail (Kautsky 2007, 171–183, 1977, 347–373, 1895–1897, 25–49; Luxemburg 1970, 1982; Boer 2014a, 198–205).

passage, save to point out that Acts 4:35 eventually became a socialist slogan, 'from each according to ability, to each according to need'—found in the writings of Marx and Engels, and frequently in Lenin and Stalin.[34]

Yet, the Soviet Constitution of 1936 does not use this version of the slogan. Instead, it has 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his *work* [*trudu*]'. The new version is crucial, for it marks the stage of socialism in contrast to communism, of recompense based on work in contrast to need. Stalin makes the distinction quite clear on a number of occasions: in a discussion with Emil Ludwig; an address to the first conference of Stakhanovites; in his report to the Seventeenth Congress; in an interview with Roy Howard; and in his extensive reflections on the constitution. In both socialism and communism one was to contribute according to ability, but under socialism one would receive articles for consumption 'not according to his needs, but according to the work he performs for society [*obshchestvabe*]'. The reason is that the cultural and technical level of workers is not yet high enough and production is not yet sufficient for open distribution according to need. Even more, certain inequalities continue under socialism: not in terms of unemployment, exploitation and oppression of minorities, but in terms of what one receives in return for the quality and quantity of one's labour. By contrast, when these factors have developed sufficiently and when wage differentiation has been overcome under communism, one receives items for consumption 'not according to the work he performs, but according to his needs as a culturally developed individual' (Stalin 1935j, 92, 1935k, 81, see also 1934g, 362, 1934h, 355, 1936c, 141–142, 1936d, 108–109, 1951–1952a, 272, 275, 1951–1952b, 202, 205).[35] However, note the two crucial qualifications: it is not to be any type of work but work for society or the community (*obshchestvabe*); and one's needs are defined in terms of being the cultural needs for human development that one may have (*potrebnostiam kul'turno razvitogo cheloveka, kotorye u nego imeiutsia*).

For these reasons, the 1936 constitution was based on the socialist principle of work rather than need, for communism had not yet been achieved (Stalin 1936e, 164–165, 1936f, 127). Now we can see how the socialist principle of 'to each according to work' arose: it was the result of the conjunction of the biblical texts from 2 Thessalonians and Acts 4. The latter may speak of distribution according to need, but the former speaks of eating in recompense for work. So this text from 2 Thess 3:10—'anyone unwilling to work shall not eat'—becomes the interpretive

[34]The current form of the slogan appears first with Louis Blanc: '*de chacun selon ses facultés, à chacun selon ses besoins*' (1851, 92), although the principle can be traced back through socialist circles in other forms (Bowie 1971, 82). I am not the first to make the connection with Acts 4 (Berman 2001, 151–152), but I go well beyond a brief acknowledgement to focus on the variation on the slogan for socialism. Biblical commentators typically water down the text of Acts 4:32–35, in terms of an idealised generalisation that may indicate some sharing in the context of social welfare arrangements, or as a benign ethos of community sharing that had much in common with its Hellenistic context (Esler 1987, 186; Barrett 1994, 251–256; Marguerat 1996, 165–166; Talbert 2005, 47–49).

[35]The distinction first appears, albeit briefly, in the interview with Emil Ludwig (Stalin 1931g, 120, 1931h, 118).

frame through which Acts 4 is read. This connection was made explicit in the *Short Course* from 1938. Stalin invokes the biblical slogan from 2 Thess 3:10 as the principle of socialism in which the 'goods produced are distributed according to labour performed' (Stalin 1938a, 126, 1938b, 122). This is clearly an echo of the slogan, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work'. Not only does one need to work in order to eat, but one also works according to ability and is recompensed in light of the work done. Thus arose the socialist slogan, 'from each according to ability, to each according to work'. Not for nothing do the gloss on Acts 4:32 and 35 and text from 2 Thess 3:10 appear side by side in the constitution of 1936.

2.4 Dialectic of Mythical Communism

Defining socialism—after distinguishing it from a delayed communism—in terms of a creative conjunction of biblical texts may be a significant step, but Stalin was to go much, much further. At this point, my argument provides a very different angle on the much-debated question as to whether Stalin continued faithfully in the Marxist, if not Bolshevik, tradition or whether he broke with some or all of its major features. On the former, some argue for such continuity as a way to denigrate Marxism, assuming that Stalin realises the grave evil of Marxism itself (Kolakowski 1978–1981, 1–44, 91–105, 141–166; Walicki 1995, 398–424; Rees 1998b; Mawdsley 2003, 5–10). Others argue for continuity without such an agenda, simply pointing out that Stalin and indeed Bukharin were more orthodox (Burnham 1945; Akhminov 1970; Chalidze 1981; Meyer 1981; Von Laue 1981, 1983; Narayanswamy 1986; Lynch 1993; Van Ree 1998), even to the point of suggesting that the distinctly Russian 'characteristics' of Stalin's thought can be found in that tradition (Van Ree 2005). As for breaking with the tradition, some suggest that on the matters I discuss below Stalin distorted or simply abandoned Marxism for various reasons, whether Russification, pragmatism, historical conditions, or lust for power (Wetter 1958, 228–268; Lowenthal 1960; Nove 1962; Deutscher 1967, 292–344; Trotsky 1972; Leonhard 1974, 95–125; Allworth 1980; Cohen 1977, 1985, 38–92; Golubović 1981; Tucker 1990; 50–58, 319–328, 479–486; Daniels 1993b, 1993a, xxxii, 190; Brandenburger and Dubrovsky 1998; Krausz 2005, 237, 239). By now it should be clear that my argument differs: of course, Stalin introduced significant theoretical developments in light of the actual experience of constructing socialism, but these developments were the product of the delay of communism. At the same time, the delay of communism is not merely a cause or an explanatory framework for understanding the Stalin's theoretical innovations, for the delay is itself the main question. So I am interested in how a dialectical space opens up within socialism in the very act of pushing communism itself into a distant future. The latter provides the creative possibilities of the former, so I begin with what may be called mythical communism. This entails a pushing out of the stage of

communism into an ever more distant future, so much so that it gains near mythical status.

The first signal of this mythical communism appears in a fascinating discussion from 1929, in which the issue concerns nationalities and languages, specifically in regard to the eventual unity of many different peoples in a universal communist polity. Initially, Stalin adheres to Lenin's position concerning the stages that enable classless society and the integration of diverse nations within communism.[36] Each would require a preliminary stage characterised by diversity and emancipation rather than unity. As I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, many socialists took this a step further and argued for a universal language. But the way Stalin interprets Lenin's text is intriguing: he initially discerns two stages on the path to global communism: (1) during the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism in one country, we may expect a fluorescence of peoples, cultures and languages; (2) only under world-side communism does it become possible to consider overcoming divisions and explore what a global proletarian culture might be (Stalin 1929e, 357–360, 1929f, 341–345).[37]

At the same time, Stalin begins to stretch out the interim, pushing the era of full communism further and further into the future. He emphasises Lenin's phrase concerning the 'very, very long time [*ochen' i ochen' dolgo*]' that it will take for global communism with its global language to arrive (Lenin 1920a, 92, 1920b, 77; Stalin 1929e, 361, 1929f, 346).[38] A couple of years earlier, in response to a question from the first labour delegation from the United States, Stalin comments laconically: 'Clearly, we are still a long way [*eshche daleko*] from such a society' (Stalin 1927k, 140, 1927l, 134).[39] The sense of delay increases in the 1930s, precisely in the context of the socialist offensive. For instance, in a speech to collective farm shock-brigaders in 1933, Stalin observes that a 'happy, socialist life is unquestionably a good thing'. 'But', he continues, 'all that is a matter of the future' (Stalin 1933g, 252, 1933h, 245). And in his report to the Seventeenth

[36]The text reads: 'In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede' (Lenin 1916c, 147, 1916d, 256). The text is quoted by Stalin (1929e, 360–361, 1929f, 345). The following points also appear elsewhere (Stalin 1929e, f, see also 1930e, 372–383, 1930f, 362–372; Martin 2001a, 245–249).

[37]Very similar arguments, deploying a theory of stages, appear in his speeches at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930 and in reply to a correspondent's question in relation to his essay on linguistics (Stalin 1930e, 378–379, 1930f, 367–368, 1930k, 3–8, 1930l, 3–7, 1950a, 179–181, 1950b, 136–137).

[38]This crucial phrase is quoted on a number of occasions, first in 1927 (Stalin 1927k[1], 156, 1927l[1], 151, 1930e, 374, 1930f, 363).

[39]We should understand his statement from 1925 in this light: Stalin asks whether Lenin's thesis concerning a new epoch of world revolution holds good any longer. 'Does it mean that the proletarian revolution in the West has been cancelled?' His answer: 'No, it does not' (Stalin 1925a[1], 91, 1925b[1], 91).

Congress in 1934, he speaks poetically of 'the commune of the future', which will be based on high technical achievements, abundance and collective living in all dimensions.[40] 'When will that be?' He asks in his typical catechetical style. 'Not soon, of course [*Konechno, ne skoro*]' (Stalin 1934g, 360, 1934h, 353). Yet the question remains: when? In his analysis of nationalities and cultures from 1929, Stalin adds yet more reasons for the delay of communism: a common and global socialist culture must arise from the processes of class solidarity rather than a decree from above; one must be infinitely patient, for peoples and languages are remarkably resilient (Stalin 1929e, 363, 1929f, 347). In fact, a universal culture and society will not happen even in the second stage that Stalin mentioned earlier—of the global victory of communism and the establishment of a universal dictatorship of the proletariat. This stage marks only the beginnings of communism, for which we now need a further and near mythical stage in which communism innate in the daily life of peoples (Stalin 1929e, 364, 1929f, 349). For this to happen, communism—in economics, politics and culture—must become second nature to human beings and the planet.

By now communism has been delayed into a far-distant and barely articulated third stage, taking on near mythical characteristics. Each time a delay was encountered, each time capitalism seemed to consolidate, each time a revolution elsewhere failed, the interim was extended yet again. As with the delay of the Parousia among the early Christians, what was initially seen as a brief and transitional period had become the 'new normal'. Yet, the point is not that the determining instance never comes, but that its effect is profoundly dialectical. For Stalin, the same applied to the new normal, in at least four dimensions: language; class struggle; strengthening the state; and socialism in one country. At this point, my argument overlaps with a number of other themes that I will analyse in subsequent chapters—a situation that reveals the interrelatedness of these themes. Thus, the analysis of language in the following chapter indicates how this specific topic may be seen as a development in light of the delay of communism. The same applies to two other topics: the intensification (if not theology) of class struggle, which will appear in the fourth chapter, and strengthening the state, which I discuss in the final chapter. So I focus here on the question of socialism in one country, which provides an excellent example of a practical and theoretical development generated out of the delay of communism.

[40]The poet of old returns in this wonderful description: 'The future agricultural commune will arise when the fields and farms of the artel have an abundance of grain, cattle, poultry, vegetables, and all other produce; when the artels have mechanised laundries, modern kitchens and dining-rooms, mechanised bakeries, etc.; when the collective farmer sees that it is more to his advantage to get meat and milk from the collective farm's meat and dairy department than to keep his own cow and small livestock; when the woman collective farmer sees that it is more to her advantage to take her meals in the dining-room, to get her bread from the public bakery, and to have her linen washed in the public laundry, than to do all these things herself' (Stalin 1934g, 360, 1934h, 353).

The core idea of this doctrine is quite straightforward: socialism can be achieved in one country but it will never be complete and secure unless global socialism and indeed communism takes place.[41] It is clearly a doctrine at the intersection between local and international concerns, with the two dimensions intimately connected (Lih 1995, 5–6, 27–36, 62). Now the distinction between socialism and communism gains another dimension, for socialism may be established in one or more countries, but communism can happen only on a world-wide scale.

The detail of this doctrine was first clearly articulated in a key document from 1925[42] and then restated without significant development on a quite a number of occasions afterwards.[43] The doctrine turns on two contradictions, with the overcoming of one taking place in the context of the other. The first contradiction is internal, concerning the tensions between workers and peasants, between industry and agriculture. This contradiction, which runs back to pre-revolutionary activity, must be overcome if socialism is to be achieved in one country (Stalin 1925a[1], 110–

[41]Fitzpatrick (1994a, 114) calls it 'good political strategy' in light of circumstances. Given the clarity of this position, one wonders at why it has produced so much polemic. The most careful theoretical studies are by Van Ree (1998, 2002a, 84–95, 2010a, b, 2015), while the most comprehensive study remains E.H. Carr's multi-volume work (1978), which covers the historical, legal, political and economic dimensions, albeit over-stressing what he sees as the distinctively Russian characteristics of the doctrine. While he treats the international dimension in terms of foreign relations, this is curiously divorced from the domestic situation. Many misread the doctrine by leaving out the crucial international component, with some suggesting that it was a significant departure from Marxist or indeed Leninist theory, a 'figment' of Stalin's imagination, 'sloppy reasoning', 'messianism', a return of old-fashioned or perhaps a new form of nationalism based on class (Deutscher 1967, 292–293; Tucker 1973, 377–389, 1990, 28–32, 39–65; Daniels 1993a, xxix, 136; Mastny 1996, 149; Brandenburger and Dubrovsky 1998; Rappaport 1999, 246–247; Boobbyer 2000, 16–17; Duncan 2000, 54, 60; Brackman 2001, 166–167; Litvin and Keep 2005, 114; Wood 2005, 26–27; Szpakowski 2007). By contrast, the more insightful works never miss the complex interplay of the national and the international (Fischer 1932; Marcuse 1958, 80, 93–100; Das 1988; Clark 2011, 7).

[42]This was the report on the results of the work of the fourteenth conference of the Communist Party (Stalin 1925a[1], 110–122, 1925b[1], 109–121). Stalin had initially proposed the idea the year before (although it had precursors), but this material does not offer a full articulation (Stalin 1924e, 109, 1924f, 106, 1924g, 414–420, 1924h, 395–401). Van Ree usefully identifies the origins of this position in the German Social Democratic Movement, especially Georg Vollmar, Karl Kautsky and others (Vollmar 1878; Kautsky 1910, 102–103, 1905, 117–118; Van Ree 2002a, 94, 2005, 167, 2010b).

[43]In characteristic fashion, in nearly every engagement with the doctrine after its initial statement, Stalin not only reiterates the main points outlined here, but also justifies—in debate with Trotsky and various members of the 'opposition'—the new interpretation by claiming faithfulness to Lenin's texts and a pedigree for the doctrine than runs back to the early years of the twentieth century (Stalin 1925a[1], 110–122, 1925b[1], 109–121, 1925y, 205–207, 1925z, 202–204, 1926e, 64–80, 1926f, 60–75, 1926m, 227–232, 1926n, 216–221, 1926w, 292–299, 1926x, 279–286, 1926q, 326–347, 1926r, 312–332, 1926u, 30–40, 105–148, 1926v, 29–38, 100–144). See Van Ree's (1998, 91–98, 2010a) careful explication of the development of Lenin's thought on the question, in which he finally arrived at the position of the possibility of building socialism in one country, albeit in an incomplete form. Kolakowski (1978–1981, 21–25) intriguingly suggests that there was little difference between Stalin and Trotsky.

119, 1925b[1], 109–118, 1925y, 158–165, 202–204, 1925z, 156–164, 199–201). Here lies the initial theoretical justification for the socialist offensive of the late 1920s and 1930s, with its industrialisation and collectivisation drives. Yet this internal contradiction must be understood and is indeed enabled by another, between socialism in Russia and global capitalism, which cannot be resolved by internal dynamics alone.[44] Since a global socialist revolution will not take place soon, any country that has experienced a socialist revolution should not sit idly by but work to construct socialism as far as possible within the global framework of capitalism. However, such a country will never be entirely secure as long as capitalist states exist in the world. Security will come only with global socialism and then communism. In this definition we may see the distinction between socialism and communism in another form: socialism may be established in one country and perhaps a majority of countries, but communism can happen only on a worldwide scale.

Thus, Stalin warns his comrades that as long as capitalist encirclement exists, the danger of capitalist intervention and even restoration is always there. Much can be achieved in one country, such as driving away the landlords and capitalists, repelling imperialist attacks and beginning to construct a socialist economy, but this is not yet a '*complete* victory' (Stalin 1925o, 16, 1925p, 16). The reason is that the main contradiction between local socialism and international capitalism cannot be fully overcome by one country, for it cannot provide a guarantee against the danger of intervention. 'Hence', writes Stalin, the final victory of socialism is 'possible only on an international scale, only as a result of the joint efforts of the proletarians of a number of countries, or—still better—only as a result of the victory of the proletarians in a number of countries'. In other words, the victory of socialism is the 'full guarantee against attempts at intervention, and hence against restoration, for any serious attempt at restoration can take place only with serious support from outside, only with the support of international capital' (Stalin 1925a[1], 119–120, 1925b[1], 118–119).[45] All of which means that socialism in one country is possible and impossible: possible in terms of overcoming the tensions between industry and agriculture; impossible in terms of the completion of the socialist and indeed communist project without a favourable international context (Stalin 1926e, 69–71, 1926f, 65–66). The stage of socialism, at least in one country, is determined by such a contradiction and its risk.

[44]Marcuse (1958, 93–100) and Sanchez-Sibony (2014a, b, 25–56) go too far in suggesting that the international contradictions forced either the continuation of internal contradictions or indeed the policies of socialism in one country as such. That is, they remove Soviet agency from the process.

[45]This point is repeated on many occasions (Stalin 1925o, p, 1925y, 205–207, 1925z, 202–204, 1926e, 64–80, 1926f, 60–75, 1926m, 227–232, 1926n, 216–221, 1926o, p, 1926w, 292–299, 1926x, 279–286, 1926q, 326–347, 1926r, 312–332, 1926u, 30–40, 105–148, 1926v, 29–38, 100–144, 1927k, 100–101, 1927l, 95–96, 1938c, d).

2.5 Conclusion: Proleptic Communism

Socialism as an era in its own right now has a number of features, each of them emerging from specific practice and generating their own theoretical elaborations. Let me summarise the argument thus far in order to set up the conclusion. After tracking how Stalin distinguished socialism from communism, the rhythm of biblical themes began to pulse throughout my analysis in a way that translated the discussion of the delay of the Parousia. Thus, socialism may be defined in terms of 'anyone unwilling to work shall not eat' (2 Thess 3:10) and through a reinterpretation of Acts 4:35 in light of this verse: from each according to ability and to each according to work. Socialism is also marked by the dialectic of unity and diversity in relation to languages and cultures, the intensification of class struggle even in the context of achieved socialism, socialism in one country as never entirely secure in light of capitalist encirclement, and the strengthening of the state as the means of its withering away. At the same time, the era of socialism undergoes its own development, for it may well overcome class conflict through intensified struggle (the Red Terror), yet it remains socialism so long as capitalist encirclement exists. Or at least the reality of recompense in light of labour, socialism in one country and a strengthened proletarian state may do so. Mythical communism has indeed produced a rather dialectical understanding of socialism. But the question remains as to whether communism, as mythical, has become a well-nigh unattainable goal.

In my initial explication of the delay of Parousia, I elaborated upon the particular theological feature of proleptic eschatology. The future of God's rule functions in terms of a reverse causality, so much so that future events happen in the present. The present cannot be understood without such a creative force, which provides the basis for the anticipated future. Yet the eschatological future is not entirely manifest in the present, for it awaits the realisation of the fullness of time. So the final question I address is whether communism as conceived by Stalin is translatable in such terms? At one level, this has been the underlying burden of my study, for the delay of communism itself produced the dialectical formulations of the socialist stage. Yet this type of prolepsis presses more heavily on the delay rather than communism, in the sense that the delay is causative. But what of communism? Stalin seems to be of two minds, stressing at times what may more easily be seen as a proleptic position, in which communism transforms socialism, and at others distinguishing the two more sharply. Indeed, the need for new differences arises out of the increasing sense of the potential for socialism and communism to merge. Yet as he does so, he creates new ground for possible fusion. He cannot seem to escape the proleptic power of communism no matter which way he moves.

I begin with the tendency to fusion between the two stages by comparing some of Stalin's earlier depictions of a communism to come (see above) with his claims, beginning in the 1930s, concerning achieved socialism. Thus, he initially depicted communism in terms of free and collective labour, collective ownership of the means and instruments of production, socialist planning and organisation of society, a planned high-technology economy, harmony between town and country and

between agriculture and industry, material and cultural wellbeing, the flowering of arts and science, true individual freedom, withering away of the state and, of course, 'from each according to ability, to each according to need' (Stalin 1906–1907a, 336–337, 1906–1907b, 160–161, 1927k, 139–141, 1927l, 133–135). At the time, Stalin made it quite clear that such a society would not arrive soon, that it was very much a society of the distant future.

Nonetheless, in a few years he began to appropriate some of these features for socialism, especially in light of the claim that socialism had become 'the sole system in the whole of the national economy', that capitalism had been overcome in industry and agriculture, with a consequent improvement in material and cultural life (Stalin 1934g, 340, 1934h, 333, see also 1930a, 197, 1930b, 191, 1935c, 75, 1935d, 60, 1936e, 157–163, 1936f, 123–126, 1939a, 372–397, 1939b, 302–321). Feature by feature, socialism begins to resemble the former descriptions of communism. Now, he argues, labour has become free and collective, for the exploiters have been eradicated and the means and instruments of production are in the hands of workers and labouring peasants. Property is owned collectively, either by the state on behalf of workers or by collective farms. This has led to the end of unemployment in towns and of poverty in the countryside. The difference between town and country has begun to disappear, with modern apartments for workers and villages characterised by public farm buildings, with clubs, radio, cinemas, schools, libraries and crèches. Farmers increasingly work collectively on the best land, with the cooperative use of modern technology such as tractors, harvester combines, threshing machines and automobiles. Further, production in industry and agriculture has made the shift from the profit motive to planned guidance, with result of increasing material and cultural wellbeing.[46] Even national income has begun to focus on needs, being distributed for the purpose of raising material standards and increasing production (although he is careful to avoid a full invocation of the ability-needs slogan). All of this based on the fact that the workers and labouring peasants are masters of the country, working not for capitalists but for themselves and for society as a whole. As he adds yet more items to the description of socialism, he seeks to counter the impression that one may sit back and relax, for he urges his listeners and readers to continue to strengthen the system and overcome the myriad problems that remain (Stalin 1930e, 330–332, 1930f, 321–322, 1933g, 247, 250–256, 1933h, 241, 244–249, 1934g, 340–343, 1934h, 333–336, 1936a, articles 1–12, 1936b, stat'ia 1–12).[47]

Not much seems to remain for communism, since most of the items listed above have now been appropriated for socialism (I speak theoretically, for the practical realisation remains open to debate). One way of interpreting such appropriation is that socialism was gradually drawing nearer to communism. Once the last items had

[46]For details on material and cultural benefits, see the report to the Seventeenth Party Congress (Stalin 1934g, 343–346, 1934h, 336–339).

[47]For more elaborate warnings, see the texts concerning 'dizzy with success' (Stalin 1930a, b, 1934g, 384–385, 1934h, 375–376, 1937g, 283–292, 1937h, 179–185).

become reality—such as global socialism, the withering away of the state and the principle of ability and needs—one would have communism in a type of evolutionary development based on reform. Indeed, in his report to the Eighteenth Congress of 1939 (see above), Stalin argues for a shift in phases within socialism. It had moved from internal class conflict, from a period of persistent struggle, conflict, setbacks and victories, to one in which class conflict had been eradicated. All that remained was vigilance against interference from the capitalist encirclement. Yet, this incremental reading is really a minimalist approach; I prefer a more robust interpretation in which socialism cannot avoid the creative power of communism, so much so that socialism was beginning to resemble communism in many ways. It was, as it were, being drawn into the present from its near mythical status in a distant future. Even more, communism takes on a causative role in the present, thereby establishing the groundwork for its full realisation.

The risk is that socialism becomes indistinguishable from communism the more features from the latter appear in the former. But this is not by any means the end of process: the more they seem to draw nigh to one another, the more Stalin seeks out other ways to distinguish them. He could fall back on the conventional stages theory of socialism-communism, but few categories remained to distinguish the two. Or he could introduce new qualifications to differentiate the two from one another and maintain communism in its role of the last instance that never comes. This is precisely what he does on at least two occasions, one concerning equality and the other commodities and value under socialism. In each case, the effort at distinction produces yet further ground for the proleptic power of communism upon socialism.

Already in the 1930s, Stalin attacked the assumption that socialism is at core a project of equalisation, ranging all the way from wages to wearing the same clothes and eating the same food in the same quantity. Not so, he says, for that is a petty-bourgeois assumption, or perhaps one worthy of simple peasant 'communism' or gatherings of ascetics. Instead, Marxism and Leninism acknowledge the reality of differences in wages depending upon skills and capabilities and the nature of the work performed. Only with such differences can one encourage workers to increase their skills and capabilities (Stalin 1931e, 57–62, 1931f, 55–60). Further, tastes and needs among human beings vary, so that equalisation in all realms of life is absurd. At heart is the tension between individual and collective. Stalin comes out strongly on the collective side, arguing that Marxism concerns freedom from exploitation, classes and private property (Stalin 1934g, 361–364, 1934h, 354–356, 1931g, 120–121, 1931h, 118–119). The individual, as determined by the collective in which true individuality arises,[48] is constituted by his or her differences. Throughout this

[48]'There is no, nor should there be, irreconcilable contrast between the individual and the collective, between the interests of the individual person and the interests of the collective. There should be no such contrast, because collectivism, socialism, does not deny, but combines individual interests with the interests of the collective. Socialism cannot abstract itself from individual interests. Socialist society alone can most fully satisfy these personal interests. More than that; socialist society alone can firmly safeguard the interests of the individual. In this sense there is no

argument, the underlying assumption is that the existence of differentiation is a feature of socialism. Yet on two occasions, Stalin opens up the possibility that it will continue in communism. He does so by broaching once again the persistent (and biblical) theme of work and needs, with the point that recompense for work entails differences between people. They are recompensed at different levels depending on skills and the quantity and quality of labour performed. Indeed, 'it is quite clear that people's needs vary and will continue to vary under socialism' (Stalin 1931g, 120, 1931h, 118, see also 1936c, 143, 1936d, 109–110). Only under communism will labour become voluntary work for society and people will be recomposed according to needs. Does this mean that communism will see the overcoming of differences and the achievement of equalisation? Not quite, for the very principle indicates otherwise: from each according to ability and to each according to need assumes differentiation in terms of both abilities and needs. If so, then socialism has drawn nigh to the proleptic power of communism, precisely at the moment that Stalin seeks to differentiate them.

The second and more extended example comes from the late work, 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.' (Stalin 1951–1952a, b). Along with his essay on linguistics, this work is part of an effort to argue for certain type of scientific stability in terms of 'laws', especially after the long decades of revolutionary upheaval and wars with foreign powers. The effect in this case is to indicate that socialism too has certain stable laws of political economy that cannot be changed on a whim. Of course, a crucial difference with the laws of nature and science is that economic laws are subject to historical periods, although this does not mean that the laws are annulled when a period passes, but rather that they become irrelevant within a new era that is usually inaugurated with much struggle. Socialism too has such laws,[49] but the question is what they might be. Here the central categories of Marxist economic theory provide the basis, such as the forces and relations of production as the two dimensions of social production, but Stalin develops specific features that are important for my argument.

Of these I focus on three: commodity production, the law of value and the continuation of contradictions between forces and relations of production (Stalin

(Footnote 48 continued)

irreconcilable contrast between "individualism" and socialism' (Stalin 1934c, 26–27, 1934d, 27–28, see also 1936c, 143–144, 1936d, 110).

[49]'The laws of political economy under socialism are objective laws, which reflect the fact that the processes of economic life are law-governed and operate independently of our will' (Stalin 1951–1952a, 229, 1951–1952b, 159). Later, he proposes that the basic economic law of socialism is 'the securing of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society through the continuous expansion and perfection of socialist production on the basis of higher techniques' (Stalin 1951–1952a, 253, 1951–1952b, 182). Later, he clarifies by pointing out that basic law of socialism, which has the two parts of aims and means, is driven by focusing on the needs of human beings and not the production of surplus value (Stalin 1951–1952a, 281, 1951–1952b, 210–211).

1951–1952a, 230–241, 263–264, 273–274, 1951–1952b, 159–170, 192–193, 203–204).[50] Each of them provides a new way to distinguish the conventional stages of socialism and communism. To begin with, commodities (which exist in many forms outside capitalism) are very much present in the era of socialism, albeit in a rather different way. The reality is that two sectors exist, one run by the state the other by collective farms. The latter produce goods they need to sell to state-owned companies and individuals, for which in turn they receive commodities. All this happens in a way that harnesses commodity production for a very different purpose: socialist commodity production without capitalists. So too with the law of value, which exists under socialism as part of commodity production and consumption. Although Stalin sees a particular benefit, especially for the economic planners and directors who need to understand and act upon the law of value, he argues that it too is harnessed for a very different economic and social system from capitalism. In this case, the crucial factors are social ownership of the means of production and proportionate development of the economy, subject to the five year plans, in contrast to the anarchy and crises of capitalism in which value reigns supreme. In other words, like commodity production, the law of value is a servant of a socialist economy and not its master. The third item is perhaps the most telling, for it sums up the previous two. In a subsequent section of his study (in reply to Yaroshenko), Stalin argues that contradictions between the forces and relations of production continue under socialism, albeit in a new way. While the relations in question conform to productive forces, the very fact that the latter are growing means that contradictions are bound to emerge. As the forces leap ahead, the relations of production lag, especially in the commodity exchange between the state and collectively owned sectors. Indeed, they may hamper the growth of the production forces, so that it is necessary for planning bodies to act in order to prevent such tensions from becoming antagonistic. Ultimately, of course, the aim is to eliminate the tensions by carefully converting collective farm property into public property and replacing commodity exchange with products exchange.[51]

This final point indicates that Stalin is keen to maintain the differences between socialism and communism, although he has had to develop a number of new categories in order to do so. While socialism has tensions between the forces and relations of production, as well as commodity production and the law of value, under communism they will disappear. With commodities, he suggests that in the future era there will no longer be two sectors but one all-embracing and national sector in which commodities and its 'money economy' will disappear. Similarly, with the law of value, in communism the amount and distribution of labour will not

[50]He also argues for the abolition of essential differences between town and country and between mental and physical, but the continuation of inessential differences. The core issue is antagonism and conflict between them, which Stalin suggests has been overcome. Yet, under socialism the realities of the state and collective sectors, as well as different levels of production and management, mean that inessential (that is, comradely) differences continue (Stalin 1951–1952a, 241–245, 1951–1952b, 170–174).

[51]In other words, the process from socialism to communism is that of reform after the revolution.

be regulated in the roundabout way of value, but directly. Thus, production will be regulated by the needs of society and computing such needs will be the main task of planning bodies (Stalin 1951–1952a, 234–235, 239, 293–294, 1951–1952b, 164–165, 169, 221–222). Through these arguments a reformulation of the two principles of socialism and communism—ability-work and ability-needs—seeks to maintain the distinction.[52] Indeed, for Stalin, the principle of recompense according to work entails the harnessing of commodity production and the law of value for the sake of different socio-economic formation; by contrast, recompense according to need means that both have become irrelevant under communism.

Throughout, Stalin always has his eye on what communism might be, in a way that betrays its proleptic role in the very act of distinguishing it from communism. This role emerges in the fascinating final couple of pages of the long study on economic problems, where he espies the first shoots of communism in terms of even these new categories (Stalin 1951–1952a, 294–295, 1951–1952b, 222–223). The topic concerns the transformation of collective farms into public property (for they were still the property of the collectives). As he had pointed out on a number occasions, the existence of two sectors (state and collective) and the commodity relations between them would not remain under communism. How to achieve the transition? Already the land and means of production are public and labour is cooperative. So the only real property of the collective farms are the agricultural products and especially the surplus products that become commodities for exchange. Here may a transformation be effected: since such commodities are the greatest hindrance to collective farms becoming fully public, they need to be transformed into direct products exchange between state industry and collective farms. Actually, suggests Stalin, this is already happening through the 'merchandising' of produce such as cotton, flax and seed. Or rather, this should be called 'products exchange'— precisely what is needed for communism. They are nothing less than *zachatki*, the first rudiments, beginnings, inception, or, most appropriately, a dawn of communism, already emerging within socialism. And they should be extended, without hurry but persistently and consistently, until the whole economy operates in such a fashion. In the process, the collective farms would also become public property.

The upshot is quite extraordinary, for communism is already dawning or being born within socialism. Or in the terms I have been using, the proleptic power of communism shows up once again even within his new categories of differentiation. Perhaps it is not for nothing that he tended to use socialism and communism interchangeably even in his later writings.

[52]He mentions them explicitly later in his response to Yaroshenko (Stalin 1951–1952a, 272, 275, 1951–1952b, 202, 205).

Chapter 3
Babel Versus Pentecost, or, the Dialectic of Linguistic Diversity

> Until now what has happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages (Stalin 1925w, 141, 1925x, 139).

'I am not a linguistic expert'—so wrote Stalin at the beginning of his (in)famous essay on linguistics. Many have agreed, failing to pay attention to his subsequent observation: 'As to Marxism in linguistics, as in other social sciences, this is something directly in my field' (Stalin 1950a, 146, 1950b, 104). Was this an empty claim? In seeking to answer this question, the present chapter develops a specific aspect that arose in the context of the delay of communism, namely, the question of language. Stalin's reputation on such a matter usually turns on the late essay on linguistics. Those who focus on the essay alone tend to see it as either a common-sense or a heavy-handed intervention in linguistic debates in the Soviet Union. However, this essay is merely one of a much larger number of reflections on the broader topic of language. When we consider those works and thereby the full range of Stalin's thoughts on language, the essay on linguistics becomes somewhat anomalous.

In relation to language, Stalin's primary dialectical opposition is between unity and diversity—a resolutely theoretical focus.[1] We may speak of an opposition between Babel and Pentecost: between a longing for lost unity amidst multiplicity (Genesis 11) and a desired diversity that is generated by a totalising unity (Acts 2). It will soon become clear that Stalin was Pentecostal rather than Babelian in relation to language. Stalin the Pentecostal! This may seem like a perverted juxtaposition, linking the man of steel and the story of the Holy Spirit, tongues of fire, and multiple languages perfectly understood from the biblical Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2. Yet this is my contention, for Stalin's Pentecostal approach is signalled by his effort to develop an intensified dialectic of language: the greater the totalising unity, the more intense is the production of linguistic diversity; so also, through an

[1]As mentioned in the introduction, I seek the logic and contradictions in Stalin's own thought. In this case, it means that I focus less on his relation to the linguistic debates under way in the Soviet Union. That would another study entirely. For useful surveys of that dimension, see the articles by Reznik (2003) and Brandist (2005).

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increasing multiplicity of languages is the possibility of a universal language created.[2] The following argument begins by situating debates within the tension between Babel and Pentecost, before examining the production of diversity out of a totalising unity. This leads to an analysis of the idea of a universal language that was very much part of socialist debates. Only then is it possible to understand the late intervention on linguistics, which (for specific reasons) replaces the unity-diversity dialectic with an opposition between stability and flux.

Before proceeding, let me set the scene in regard to Babel and Pentecost.[3] In Genesis, we find that initially 'the whole earth had one language and the same words' (Gen 11:1). Soon enough, the gods—the text uses a plural in Gen 11:7—become alarmed at the immense potential of human power, revealed in the ability to build a city with a tower into the heavens. So the gods confuse human language and scatter them over the face of the earth. The account of Pentecost in Acts 2 may seem to provide a long-range resolution of this confusion of tongues. Here, the multiplicity of tongues, 'as of fire', appearing on the heads of the apostles, enables a united understanding of the new gospel of Christ. Multiplicity is therefore a way of understanding the same message, which may be spoken in many tongues. However, Acts has a dialectical kick: the unitary drive of the Holy Spirit, like the rush of a mighty wind, produces diversity. The result is 'differentiated tongues', 'other languages', people from 'every nation under heaven' hearing the apostles speak in their 'native language'.[4]

This biblical juxtaposition of linguistic unity and diversity has determined the very development of European (and European influenced) linguistic theory, so it should be no surprise that it also frames Stalin's deliberations. Usually, however, the singular language was presented as the one Adam spoke rather than in terms of its pre-Babelian nature. The search for an *Ursprache*, whether Hebrew, Gothic, Cimbrian, Scythian, or Sanskrit (the Indo-European and Aryan root), was explicitly and later implicitly a search for the Adamic language in the 'archives of Paradise'—

[2]We need to remind ourselves that this was the political leader of a world superpower engaging in serious philosophical debate (we have lost the ability even to imagine such a situation today).

[3]It should no longer be necessary to justify such a framework, although it may be done on a number of less or more persuasive bases. Less persuasive are traditional historical arguments, of a secularising or biographical variety. Thus, one may argue, problematically, that the pervasive authority of biblical frameworks for determining questions of state policy carried through into the twentieth century, only to be secularised into yet other influential forms (Boer 2015b). Or indeed one may argue that Stalin's extensive theological training provided the biographical basis for such a framework (Agursky 1984; Kun 2003). More persuasively, one may argue that the dispersal-unity pattern of Babel-Pentecost is translatable into, or analogous with, debates over language within radical politics.

[4]The text of Acts 2 mentions Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs (the text's care with the list manifests less comprehensiveness than sheer diversity).

with significant racist overtones.[5] Yet Babel is the real focus, since it is the turning point: before Babel was one language, after Babel a multiplicity. The overwhelming desire was to find a way to return to the pre-Babelian unity, to seek out traces of a universal language that was either lost or was to come.[6] We may map out the majority positions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in light of Babel. Two possibilities arise: (1) a reactionary reading of Babel, in which one attempts to recover the lost singularity of language, ultimately embodied in Adam;[7] (2) a progressive if not utopian reading, in which the desire for a unitary language expresses a hope for human harmony.[8] Yet, against this dominant framework, we also have Pentecost, which opens up in biblical fashion a third and minority position: a centralised, if not totalising approach produces hitherto unknown levels of diversity, which in turn produce new forms of unity. Although Stalin often fell back on the progressive socialist version of a pre-Babelian language to come, the real contribution from this erstwhile theological student with detailed knowledge of the Bible was a Pentecostal position.[9] Indeed, in his more creative and dialectical moments, Stalin sought to overcome the dominant pre-Babelian position.

3.1 The Pentecost of Languages: Producing Diversity

We may distinguish between two parts of Stalin's dialectic, one beginning with a totalising unity that produces diversity, and the other with a diversity that leads to unity. I examine first the totalising-diversity pattern. This insight appears, almost to Stalin's own surprise, in an important address called 'The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East' (Stalin 1925w, 1925x). Stalin begins by

[5]See especially Olender (1992, 138), who observes, 'The Bible remained important even though scientists consciously sought to free themselves from its community of meaning' (see also Slezkine 1996, 832–838).

[6]As Olender notes (1995), the path for most European theorists was through Japheth, the third son of Noah (Gen 5:32; 9:19; 10:1–5) and father of Europeans. By contrast, Shem was the father of the Semites and Ham of the Africans.

[7]This reactionary reading desires a pre-Babelian world of one language, before the confusion of tongues and scattering of peoples. Such a desire is predicated on the assumption that multiple languages are further signs of the Fall that begins in Genesis 3. Far better is a singular language (in which Adam is a trope of one's own language) that negates the strife and discord of many tongues.

[8]In an otherwise misleading study, Gray (2002, 175, 184–185) notes at least the pre-Babelian dimensions of the desire for a universal language. This was arguably the majority position among socialists. Proponents include Kautsky, who explicitly contrasts his position with the conservative Babelian position (or what he calls 'Mosaic'), Irish Republicans, Walter Benjamin and indeed the proponents of Esperanto. For Kautsky, language is the key to understanding the 'nation', which comes to its full realisation under socialism (Kautsky 2009, 381, 2010; Connolly 1898; Benjamin 1982, vol. 2: 140–157; vol. 4: 9–21, 1996, 62–74, 253–263).

[9]See also Kreindler's (1976) somewhat speculative proposal that Lenin's (and implicitly Stalin's) nationalities policy, with its fostering of national and linguistic difference, was indirectly indebted to the theory and practice of the Russian Orthodox lay missionary, Nikolai I. Il'minskii.

noting the argument—common in some socialist circles—that the global working class needed a single universal language. Instead, experience indicates the opposite:

> Until now what has happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages; for, by stirring up the lowest sections of humanity and pushing them on to the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little-known nationalities. Who could have imagined that the old, tsarist Russia consisted of not less than fifty nations and national groups? The October Revolution, however, by breaking the old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on to the scene, gave them new life and a new development (Stalin 1925w, 141, 1925x, 139).[10]

One cannot miss the Pentecostal invocation in this text, which would become one of the key texts used by those who sought to point out contradictions with Stalin's other observations on language. More is connoted here than the fact that unknown languages and peoples had been discovered, fostered and raised to a new life (Stalin's definition of cultural revolution). The revolution and its aftermath have broken the chains of oppression and released hitherto unknown energies and possibilities. But Stalin suggests more: the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather 'increased the number of languages'. I read this statement not merely in terms of Stalin's exuberance and enthusiasm in the wake of the revolution, but also dialectically, in terms of the diversity produced through the wholly new totalising project of socialism. Stalin is not being fanciful here, for the massive project of 'language construction' (*iazykovoe stroitel'stvo*, interchangeably used with 'language policy', *iazykovaia politika*), which may be understood as the deliberate intervention by society into the process of language development, did indeed lead to new languages where none existed before (Reznik 2003, 34; Smith 1998, 4).[11]

So we have a clear statement of the totalising-diversity position. But more follows, in which Stalin seeks to convert linguistic diversity into a question of translation. How do we account for such diversity? He argues that the content of socialism may be translated into many linguistic forms. In other words, he develops an argument for socialism with national characteristics.[12] As he does so, he risks a danger and does not quite realise the full dialectical possibilities of his argument. I begin with the danger. The connection between linguistic diversity and translation is initially obvious: the many new languages become alternate ways to express the truth of Marxism. But now he relaxes the dialectical rigour, deploying a favoured but rather wooden distinction between content and form. Socialism may provide the universal content of working class politics and hopes, but the specific forms are determined by the ethnic, linguistic and cultural contexts in which that message is

[10]Note also: 'the national languages are not only not dying away or merging into one common tongue, but, on the contrary, the national cultures and national languages are developing and flourishing' (Stalin 1930k, 6–7, 1930l, 5).

[11]For a full discussion of the 'affirmative action' policy of the Soviet Union, see Chap. 6.

[12]On this crucial topic, Stalin draws from Lenin but takes him much further (Lenin 1917k, l). This theme would be taken up by Mao Zedong and then Deng Xiaoping, each with their own interpretation of the signification of Marxism (Mao 1938, 538–539; Deng 1982).

to be delivered. In his earlier statements, Stalin had in mind the variety of peoples in the USSR, which provided the context for his theoretical deliberations on the national question.[13] But soon enough he saw the international implications: 'Proletarian in content, national in form—such is the universal culture towards which socialism is proceeding' (Stalin 1925w, 140, 1925x, 138, see also 1936e, 162, 1936f, 126).[14] Proletarian, socialist culture is a global movement and assumes different forms and modes of expression among the various peoples who are coming together to build socialism.[15] But what is the danger? Formulating the issue of the translation of Marxism into specific linguistic and cultural forms risks falling into a banal 'dynamic equivalence' or 'meaning based' approach to translation. According to this apparently common-sense and indeed commonly understood approach to translation, one seeks to convey the same message in many different ways, altering the language appropriately in order to translate the meaning as clearly as possible.[16] The danger is that one assumes a universal and unchangeable validity for the message itself, in this case socialism. As long as the message remains the same, the shape and nature of the container in which it is delivered matters little.

I stress that this is a risk rather than the reality of Stalin's usual mode of argumentation. Indeed, he was keen to avoid that tendency, reiterating time and again Engels's slogan that socialism is not a dogma, but a guide for action. And his observation that proletarian culture 'does not abolish national culture, it gives it content', just as national culture 'does not abolish proletarian culture, it gives it form' (Stalin 1925w, 140, 1925x, 138), hints at a more dialectical approach to the translation question. In order to bring that approach to the surface, we need to pick up the impulse from Stalin's comments on the creation of linguistic diversity, of new languages themselves. If we understand this insight as the point that socialism itself produces new meanings, then we may also conceive of the possibility that the particular forms taken by socialism actually generate new meanings. Socialism with national characteristics therefore means socialism in new forms and with new

[13]'In its content the culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. which the Soviet Government is developing must be a culture common to all the working people, a socialist culture; in its form, however, it is and will be different for all the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; it is and will be a national culture, different for the various peoples of the U.S.S.R. in conformity with the differences in language and specific national features' (Stalin 1927m, 72–73, 1927n, 68).

[14]Here he echoes Kautsky (2010, 153).

[15]Thus, with the Chinese revolution he argues strongly against an 'artificially transplanted "Moscow Sovietisation"' (Stalin 1927w, 233, 1927x, 229). And he castigates those who 'sincerely believe that the revolution in China can be directed, so to speak, by telegraph, on the basis of the universally recognised general principles of the Comintern, *disregarding* the national peculiarities of China's economy, political system, culture, manners and customs, and traditions' (Stalin 1927o, 338, 1927p, 335).

[16]Dynamic equivalence or meaning-based translation is an approach developed in evangelical Protestant circles to facilitate Bible translations into 'native' languages. It is a reworking of paraphrase—in the age-old metaphrase-paraphrase opposition—for the sake of evangelical missionary agenda (Nida 1964; Nida and Taber 1969; see also Boer 2012).

contents. To sum up both ideas—linguistic diversity and socialist translation—in one sentence: the content of socialism may be translated and thereby transformed into many new languages, which have been generated by socialism itself.

I have not yet answered the question as to what the totalising unity might be. It is none other than the dictatorship of the proletariat. By 1921,[17] Stalin was quite clear that 'the only regime that is capable of solving the national question, i.e., the regime that is capable of creating the conditions for ensuring the peaceful co-existence and fraternal co-operation of different nations and races, is the Soviet regime, the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat' (Stalin 1921s, 37, 1921t, 38).[18] A couple of years later, he was even more emphatic. There is no doubt, he points out, that the oppressed peoples would not have been able to achieve liberation 'if the dictatorship of the proletariat had not been established in central Russia' (Stalin 1923k, 188, 1923l, 185).[19] However, as soon as he identifies the dictatorship of the proletariat as the key, he opens up his position to a periodising pattern. Here we have the first indication of what will become a common fall-back position. Faced with potential contradictions in his statements on language, Stalin often opts for a stages theory. Thus, the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat is meant to be a transitional phase needed to smash the bourgeoisie; but eventually, the need for such a dictatorship will pass when communism is global. We will encounter similar moves when he deals with the thorny issue of a universal language, but here I would like to ask: what happens if such a universal communism is predicated on an equally global dictatorship of the proletariat? Does Stalin glimpse this possibility?

[17]Already in 1918 Stalin began to connect the dictatorship of the proletariat and affirmative action, pointing out that a central authority—which really means that dictatorship—is very much needed while the old order still remains (in part) and the new has yet to emerge (Stalin 1918u, 91–92, 1918v, 89–90).

[18]See also: 'the victory of the Soviets and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship are a fundamental condition for abolishing national oppression, establishing national equality and guaranteeing the rights of national minorities' (Stalin 1921e, 20, 1921f, 19).

[19]The obverse is that the bourgeois, capitalist approach simply cannot solve the national question (Stalin 1921e, 20, 1921f, 19, see also 1923k, l). At the same time, some of the diversity produced by the totalising dictatorship is not always welcome. I think here of what Stalin calls various nationalist 'deviations'. He would prefer to argue that such ethnic nationalisms are the relics of former cultural-nationalist chauvinism, fostered by the ruling bourgeoisies or old nobilities (Stalin 1921q, 2, 1921r, 2, 1925w, 145–146, 1925x, 142–143, 1925y, 169–171, 1925z, 166–169). Such cultural-national chauvinism usually obscures working class and peasant interests, serving instead the agenda of the ruling classes. They misdirect working class energies and split that class into antagonistic national bodies. By 'nationalist deviations' Stalin has in mind not only the nationalisms of smaller groups, but also Great-Russian chauvinism. Yet, a relics-argument is a little too easy, for it fails to deal with the persistence of such deviations. Much the same may be said for religion. Indeed, some of the new international movements were as much ethnic as they were religious. I think here of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism, which are hardly relics but new forms of religious politics. But how should such deviations be understood? An answer would begin with the point that the diversity-producing totalisation of socialism also produces new forms of resistance. Some may draw from the past, some may draw from the capitalist arsenal, but some are produced by socialism's own drive.

3.2 Towards a Universal Language?

If socialist totalisation produces diversity, what happens to the desired unity of the proletarian project? Is the global solidarity of the working class merely a prerequisite or does Stalin have a sense of the final unifying effect of the socialist project, in which all strife and difference is overcome? The immediate answer is yes, of course, for there is a natural striving among the labouring masses 'towards union in a single socialist family' (Stalin 1922g, 153, 1922h, 150). Thus, the constitution of 1924 saw the formation of the USSR as merely the first step to a World Socialist Soviet Republic (Stalin 1923c, 404, 1923d, 395). But if one delves a little deeper, it eventually becomes clear that the answer to these questions is twofold. First, Stalin finds that he must acknowledge an element of Lenin's thought which looks forward to the overcoming of ethnic and national differences, if not of languages themselves, for a universal communist polity. Second, he effects what may be called an Althusserian move, arguing that such a moment will appear in the last instance, but that the last instance is an extraordinarily long way into the future. The second move is particularly important, for it creates space in the extended interim for more dialectical formulations, in which the working-class movement can become universal only through intensified diversity, and diversity can happen only through the ever-greater global movement. Let me explicate these answers in a little more detail.

Stalin deals most extensively with Lenin's argument concerning the universalising of socialism in 'The National Question and Leninism' (Stalin 1929e, 1929f, see also 1930e, 372–383, 1930f, 362–372, Martin 2001a, 245–249). Tellingly, Stalin was drawn to deal with the issue by others who sought to contrast Lenin's position with the one put forward by Stalin.[20] Noting the position he had espoused concerning the production of yet greater diversity (discussed above), Stalin's interlocutors were fond of quoting this text from Lenin:

> The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the division of mankind into small states and all isolation of nations, not only to draw the nations together, but to merge them. … Just as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only by passing through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can arrive at the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through a transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., of their freedom of secession (Stalin 1929e, 360–361, 1929f, 345).[21]

Lenin foresees some form of an eventual merging or integration of peoples. Critics of Stalin were quick to seize on this text and assert that Stalin had missed Lenin's points: (a) socialism means not only abolishing divisions into states and nations, but merging them; (b) after the global victory of socialism, national

[20]'The National Question and Leninism' is framed as a response to questions from 'comrades Meshkov, Kovalchuk and others'. Further, Stalin's reply to the discussion at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930 deals with similar questions raised from the floor (Stalin 1930k, l).

[21]I have quoted this text from Stalin's *Works*, which offers a slightly different translation to that of Lenin's *Collected Works* (Lenin 1916c, 146–147, 1916d, 155–156).

differences and languages will fade away, to be supplanted by a common language. In other words, they opted for a utopian pre-Babelian reading of Lenin, a socialist version of the desire for a universal language yet to come. It may have been, especially in the 1920s, the new practical street language of '*zaum'* or 'nonsense' based on sound patterns, Bogdanov's planetary language imagined in *Red Star* (1984), or Esperanto (Smith 1998, 76–79). At times, however, this argument was twisted towards existing and dominant national languages. Thus, Kautsky (2009, 386–387) had argued for the eventual merging of smaller languages into one of the existing global languages (he speculates that it may be English), while some Russian socialists supported variously latinisation for Muslim areas, or the recovery of Russian itself in the 1930s (Smith 1998, 121–160; Martin 2001a, 182–207). Although Stalin dabbled at times with such possibilities, now he argues that this twist was far from Lenin's position (Stalin 1930e, 372–376, 1930f, 362–364, 1930k, 4–5, 1930l, 4–5).

But let us focus on the engagement with Lenin: his argument (in the text quoted above) does tend in the direction of a universal language under global communism, and such a reading is fair to the text. However, in the complex scriptural dynamic of engagements with Lenin's text, each side of the debate (as with many other debates) claimed fidelity to Lenin while developing positions beyond him. As I argued in the first chapter, a dialectic of spirit and letter applied (2 Cor 3:6). Stalin's response to his critics, in the form of an interpretation of Lenin, is both intriguing and insightful, for it eventually pushes the implicit dialectical pattern of Lenin's argument further. Stalin's initial response is less dialectical, seeking to discern two stages in the move towards global socialism (Stalin 1929e, 357–360, 1929f, 341–345). First, after the socialist revolution and during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism in one country, we may expect a fluorescence of peoples, cultures and languages, since they have been released from former oppression. But the absence of national oppression does not mean the overcoming of national differences and identities and their merging into one. Only in the second stage, of world-side socialism, is it possible to begin to think of overcoming divisions and seeking the means for a global proletarian culture and language.

It seems as though Stalin has complemented his Pentecostal approach with a utopian pre-Babel, in which the single language is an anticipation of the future rather than a conservative myth of a lost Golden Age. All too often he falls back onto this position, especially when challenged on contradictions in his arguments. We see such a move in this text ('The National Question and Leninism'), but also in his speeches at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930 and in reply to a correspondent's question in relation to his essay on linguistics (Stalin 1930e, 378–379, 1930f, 367–368, 1930k, 3–8, 1930l, 3–7, 1950a, 179–181, 1950b, 136–137).[22] Indeed, his tendency to deploy this stages theory in response to potential contradictions may

[22]In the first two texts, he was questioned about his comments concerning the flowering, of if not creation of new, languages under socialism; in the third, the question turned on how his argument in the essay on linguistics related to the conventional position concerning a universal language.

lead us to see his main argument concerning language in this way, as a pre-Babelian approach with a socialist inflection. The risks of such a stages theory are many, most notably how it remains within the current framework without asking how the framework itself may be changed.[23]

Stalin does not always adhere to a stages theory regarding the development of language. The possibility of an alternative and more dialectical position emerges from two arguments with significant implications. First, he invokes what may be called an Althusserian argument *avant-la-lettre*: universal language and society will appear only in the last instance, but the last instance is so far off that it may well never come.[24] Lenin comes to his aid at this point, especially with the observation that 'national and state differences among peoples and countries … will continue to exist for a very, very long time even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale'.[25] As I noted in the previous chapter, Stalin quotes this text on a number of occasions, stressing the 'very, very long time' (Stalin 1929e, 361, 1929f, 346, 1930e, 374, 1930f, 363). On each occasion, another factor stretches the time out even further: a common, universal language must happen through natural processes of class solidarity and not through a top-down approach of assimilation; one must never under-estimate the fact that languages and peoples 'possess an extraordinary stability and tremendous power of resistance' (Stalin 1929e, 363, 1929f, 347).[26] Given these factors, a universal language and culture will not happen even in the second stage that Stalin mentioned earlier—the stage of the global victory of socialism and the establishment of a universal dictatorship of the proletariat. It may happen a 'very, very long time' after this stage, so much so that Stalin must produce a near-mythical narrative of the far distant future. In that second stage, one may see the beginnings of a common language alongside the various existing languages, 'for convenience of intercourse and of economic, cultural and political cooperation'. Yet, even here one may find a number of common languages in different zones throughout the world. The fascinating hint here that we may have multiple universal languages remains no more than a hint, for Stalin then invokes a third and final mythical era in which communism 'becomes part and parcel of the life of the peoples' (Stalin 1929e, 364, 1929f, 349). Only when communism—in economics, politics and culture—becomes second nature to

[23]Such an approach once threatened to derail the October Revolution—now in terms of the maturity of the bourgeois revolution as the basis of the socialist revolution (held by the Mensheviks and good many Bolsheviks)—until Lenin's insistent intervention (Lenin 1917c, d, i, j; Anweiler 1974, 65–67, 129, 155; Cliff 2004, 93; Harding 2009, 144–149; Žižek 2001, 144).

[24]'In History, these instances, the superstructures, etc.—are never seen to step respectfully aside when their work is done or, when the Time comes, as his pure phenomena, to scatter before His Majesty the Economy as he strides along the royal road of the Dialectic. From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the "last instance" never comes' (Althusser 1977, 113).

[25]Translation from Stalin's letter to M. Ulyanova (Stalin 1927k[1], 156, 1927l[1], 151). This differs slightly from the translation of Lenin's text in the *Collected Works* (Lenin 1920a, 92, 1920b, 76).

[26]This point concerning the resilience of language will appear in another form in his essay on linguistics (see below).

human beings and the planet, will there be room for a world language, common to all. Stalin may as well have said (to gloss Althusser) that the last instance of a universal language and culture never comes. This is of course implicit in Stalin's argument, but the delay of the global victory of socialism provides him with significant space to develop a more dialectical argument with a distinct Pentecostal feel.

We find such a dialectic in the pattern of the text from Lenin (quoted earlier), in which a centrifugal action (complete liberation and freedom of secession) eventually leads to a centripetal one of drawing the nations together and merging them. Stalin takes this hint a step further in a short letter, which is once again a response to criticism that Stalin has betrayed Lenin's position on the tendency to a universal language and culture.[27] In this letter, Stalin tellingly distances himself from specific form of the stages theory I noted earlier. It is actually incorrect, he argues, to assume a first stage of diverse national cultures and a second stage of universal culture. Even more, one does not make a transition through national cultures and languages to a universal culture. Instead, there will 'be a *simultaneous* development *both* of national culture (in form) *and* of a universal culture (in content), and that only with such a way of this *transition* can the assimilation of the universal culture by the nationalities take place' (Stalin 1927k[1], 155, 1927l[1], 150). The process is simultaneous, with national and universal cultures mutually strengthening one another; national cultures will be enhanced by the assimilation of universal culture, which implicitly assumes that universal culture will find itself fostered by burgeoning national cultures.

Or is it implicit? In a slightly later text, Stalin explicitly evokes Marxist dialectics in his thoughts on language and the national question. 'It may seem strange', he writes, 'that we who stand for the future *merging* of national cultures into one common (both in form and content) culture, with one common language, should at the same time stand for the *flowering* of national cultures at the present moment, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat' (Stalin 1930e, 380, 1930f, 368). But it is not strange, for socialism seeks to foster the fluorescence of languages and cultures, since this provides the basis for any future common language and culture. This, claims Stalin, is Marxist dialectics. Such dialectics may appear contradictory, but its formulation is analogous to his (and Lenin's) position on the right to secession and the fostering of national cultures: disunion for the sake of union; diversity for the sake of the universal (Stalin 1930e, 380–381, 1930f, 369–370). Yet, we are still within the framework of an eventual socialist union that follows the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat, even if it is framed dialectically. What of the other side of the dialectic, when we begin with the universal? Is it possible to imagine that a global communist culture and language would actually foster hitherto unforeseen diversity? In a slightly earlier text, Stalin suggests as much: 'proletarian universal culture does not exclude, but presupposes and fosters

[27]The same texts that we find at issue in 'The National Question and Leninism' are also at issue here—from both Lenin and Stalin (Lenin 1916c, 146–147, 1916d, 255–256; Stalin 1925w, x).

the national culture of the peoples, just as the national culture of the peoples does not annul, but supplements and enriches universal proletarian culture' (Stalin 1925w, 142, 1925x, 140). The one relies on the other for its possibility and realisation. Stalin has provided the framework for a fully dialectical argument concerning language: the greater the linguistic diversity, the greater is the linguistic unity; conversely, the more universal the language, the more multiple are the languages. This is nothing less than a Pentecostal dialectic of languages.

3.3 The Essay on Linguistics

In light of these arguments, it is now possible to tackle the essay on linguistics from 1950, which may be understood as an alternative effort to counter a version of the pre-Babelian position. In assessing this essay, I do not follow the usual path of isolating the essay from Stalin's other works and focusing on its political import in relation to debates between the structural linguists and followers of Nikolai Marr.[28] The danger of such isolation is that the essay becomes normalised as Stalin's core position on linguistics. When seen in the larger context of Stalin's observations on language (see above), the essay may be understood in two ways. First, Stalin opposes an alternative version of the pre-Babelian hypothesis, embodied in the work of Marr. The latter may have rejected the Indo-European hypothesis (itself part of a long-standing Russian opposition to 'Western' European theories), but he replaced it with his 'Japhetic' hypothesis of linguistic origins. At least he did so in his earlier writings, proposing a Caucasian ur-language that derived from Japheth, the third of Noah's sons in Genesis 5:32 (also 9:19; 10:1–5) and connected with a host of other languages from Basque to African languages. In this respect, it was a Noëtic language, related to Semitic.[29] Later, Marr developed a utopian theory of a universal language entailing communication without spoken language, as a result of the 'universal glottogonic process' (Gretchko 2010). At the same time, Marr had to account for linguistic diversity. So he argued that languages did not change and spread due to migration, but did so through their internal dynamics, especially during periods of rapid and wholesale changes in social formations, in which the fundamentals of a language were transformed (Slezkine 1996, 843–844). Clearly,

[28]They tend to see it as a 'politically charged' intervention against the followers of Nikolai Marr and suggest that the essay reveals Stalin's 'well-known' vulgar Marxism and his 'totalitarian logic' (Bedford 1985; Oppenheimer 1993; Kojevnikov 2000; 162–166; Gray 2002; 164–188; Ilizarov 2003, 2012; Alpatov 2004; Pollock 2006; 104–135; Smith 1998, 59–103, 167–173, 2010). Others, some closer to the time itself, seek to understand the debate in its complexity (Ellis and Davies 1951; Lawrence 1957; Miller 1951; Rubenstein 1951; Medvedev 1997; Slezkine 1996), with at least one defending Stalin (Meek 1951) and another suggesting Stalin's thoughts are quite compatible with the arguments of Sapir and Evans-Pritchard (Taylor 1952).

[29]For the most judicious recent overview of Marr's theories, see Brandist (2015, 193–220).

Marr was offering in his own erratic (and rather non-Marxist[30]) fashion a version of the unity-diversity tension. What was Stalin to do?

This leads to the second and more substantial aspect of Stalin's response: he attempts to frame the issue of language in terms of stability and flux, instead of his preferred opposition of unity and diversity. This is a distinctly different approach, so much so that it becomes an anomaly in light of his overall understanding of language.[31] The result is to curtail the extremes of diversity—precisely what Stalin had emphasised in his earlier dialectical formulations. Even more, the question of a universal language sides with diversity, or rather with the flux and change under which he seeks to draw diversity. But his deployment of a stability-flux opposition has a curious effect, closing down rather than enlivening the dialectic. The main theses of the essay may be identified as follows:

(1) Language is not part of the superstructure relying on the base.
(2) Language is directly connected with production.
(3) Language is not determined by class, but is an instrument of communication for all classes. Class-based variations are analogous to dialects from a common language.
(4) Culture and language are distinct from one another. Whereas culture may vary (in terms of class), language is constant.[32]

The first two theses establish the framework of stability and flux. Thus, the first thesis, apart from its apparent practicality and common sense, seeks to establish the stability and longevity of language.[33] If language is not part of the superstructure, it does not undergo the process of change characteristic of the dialectical interaction between superstructure and base.[34] Again and again, Stalin stresses this slow, organic growth of languages, in a way that is strongly reminiscent of his deliberations on the 'nation' in 'Marxism and the National Question' (Stalin 1913e, f). This effort to ensure the stability of language by quarantining it from the perpetual tussle of modes of production has profound ramifications: it denies that language may undergo a revolution, an explosion into new forms in response to socio-economic changes; it seeks to undermine the desire to see myriad new,

[30]Marr sought to graft a few elements of Marxism onto his theories (Lawrence 1957).

[31]Here I argue against Smith (2010).

[32]I follow Lecercle (2006), who follows Marcellesi and Gardin (1974). However, I find only four theses rather than the five they find.

[33]Smith (2010) suggests that Stalin's basic model was the Platonic doctrine of the Forms, in which the stable language is such a Form. It was targeted as much at Bukharin (1925, 203–208) as at Marr and his followers. Implicit here too is a criticism of Bogdanov's argument (1925, 21–23, 1996, 32) that language is the core of ideology and therefore undergoes significant change.

[34]The almost unanimous assertion that Stalin offers a crude and vulgar understanding of base and superstructure misses his point that while the superstructure may be a product of the base, it is not passive, neutral or indifferent. 'On the contrary, having come into being, it becomes an exceedingly active force, actively assisting its base to take shape and consolidate itself, and doing its utmost to help the new system to finish off and eliminate the old base and the old classes' (Stalin 1950a, 147, 1950b, 105; Meek 1951, 178).

class-based languages arising from the socialist revolution; it curtails speculation concerning a universal language in light of the stability of language itself.[35]

Before I analyse in more detail how Stalin tackles these issues, I would like to discuss the second thesis. 'Language', writes Stalin, 'is connected with man's productive activity directly, and not only with man's productive activity, but with all his other activity in all his spheres of work'. Even more, for 'this reason language reflects changes in production immediately and directly, without waiting for changes in the base'. This means that the 'sphere of action of language … is practically unlimited' (Stalin 1950a, 150, 1950b, 108). The contrast is stark: if the first thesis asserts the stability of language, the second affirms its flux. It seeks to answer the question: how is language related to everyday social and economic life? The answer is immediacy. Unlike the superstructure, which is indirectly related to the base and engages in dialectical interaction with that base, language is directly connected to production.[36] The outcome is constant change, much more than those who asserted that language, as part of the superstructure, changed in response to the base, or indeed that it underwent near revolutionary change in response to massive socio-economic shifts (Marr). The connection between language and production means that it 'is in a state of almost constant change' (Stalin 1950a, 150; 1950b, 108). Industry, agriculture, trade, transport, technology, science—all of which had undergone such massive change in the extraordinary industrialisation of the 1920s and 1930s—had brought a plethora of new words and expressions, to the point of perfecting the grammatical system.

But is this contradiction between stability and flux an alternative form of the dialectic? Stalin seems to be aware that he is courting a massive contradiction, between the ponderous immovability of language and its frenetic pace of change. So he tries to distinguish between a stable core and epiphenomenal change. Thus, changes occur with some vocabulary and modes of expression. A 'considerable number of new words and expressions' has been added to the Russian language, especially in light of the 'new socialist production', as well as 'a new state, a new

[35]The sheer longevity of language outside the superstructure and even outside class means that any move to universality is well-nigh impossible: 'A language therefore lives immeasurably longer than any base or any superstructure. This in fact explains why the rise and elimination not only of one base and its superstructure, but of several bases and their corresponding superstructures, have not led in history to the elimination of a given language, to the elimination of its structure and the rise of a new language with a new stock of words and a new grammatical system' (Stalin 1950a, 149, 1950b, 107).

[36]Lecercle (2006, 80) notes the intriguing possibility that Stalin may anticipate the argument that language is actually part of the base, with its own productive force. However, he misses Stalin's later observation (in reply to correspondence regarding the linguistics essay) that closes down the possibility that language is part of the base: 'But perhaps language could be included in the category of the productive forces of society, in the category, say, of instruments of production? Indeed, there does exist a certain analogy between language and instruments of production: instruments of production manifest, just as language does, a kind of indifference towards classes and can serve equally different classes of society, both old and new. Does this circumstance provide ground for including language in the category of instruments of production? No, it does not' (Stalin 1950a, 169, 1950b, 125–126).

socialist culture, new social relations and morals' and the growth of technology and science (Stalin 1950a, 147, 1950b, 105). Even more, some words have gained a new signification, in light of such massive changes. Yet, the 'basic stock' and 'foundation' of the language has not changed: the grammar, syntax, and even the word stock.[37]

So we have the basic opposition of stability and flux, which Stalin has sought to tie down—in a rather undialectical fashion—in terms of core and epiphenomenon. Within this framework, he attempts to locate the tension between unity and diversity that I examined earlier. Here the third and fourth theses are the focus. Diversity in this case is the assertion that language is tied to class (propounded by some followers of Marr) and culture (based on a misreading of Lenin). Stalin goes to great lengths to refute the argument—which drew upon Marx, Engels, Lafargue, Lenin and even Stalin's own writings—that there is no language as such, but only class-based language—whether aristocratic, bourgeois, proletarian or peasant. The implication is that with the advent of socialism, proletarian language would dominate and come to form the basis of a new, possibly universal language. Stalin's answer is twofold. First, he distinguishes between language and culture, arguing that we may have bourgeois and proletarian culture (as Lenin observed), but that this does not apply to language. 'Culture may be bourgeois or socialist, but language, as a means of intercourse, is always a language common to the whole people and can serve both bourgeois and socialist culture' (Stalin 1950a, 157, 1950b, 114).[38] Second, he seeks to lock the question of linguistic diversity into the stability-flux opposition, instead of deploying the dialectic I examined above, in which such diversity is enhanced by the totalising presence of the socialist project. Thus, these class-based variations are just that, variations of a common language, analogous to dialects that rely on such a language, or, at worst, dialects that obfuscate and distort the communicative function of language.[39] They may offer variations in certain words, but their grammars and word stocks are the same as the parent language, without which they could not exist. They are 'offshoots of the

[37]Through the massive shifts of the last century, Russia has moved from feudalism through capitalism to socialism, yet the Russian language 'has not in this long span of time undergone any fundamental change' (Stalin 1950a, 149, 1950b, 107).

[38]This point jars a little with his pieces on the national question, where he argued that culture is part of what constitutes a nationality. Language is another feature, suggesting a closer connection between culture and language than he cares to admit in the linguistics essay. A hint of an awareness of the potential clash with his earlier position appears in the effort to distinguish between national culture and class cultures (Stalin 1950a, 158, 1950b, 115).

[39]In reply to one piece of correspondence that followed the essay, Stalin qualifies the difference between class and regional dialects. In the essay, he had observed that dialects would wither and die if they were separated from the parent language. However, in the correspondence he indicates that class dialects should be called jargons, to which his comments in the essay apply. By contrast, a regional dialect may have its own grammar and word stock, thereby being able to 'become the basis of national languages and develop into independent national languages' (Stalin 1950a, 174, 1950b, 130). He mentions the Kursk-Orel dialect and its development into the Russian language, as well as the Poltava-Kiev dialect which formed the basis of the Ukrainian language.

common national language' which are incapable of 'ousting and supplanting the national language' (Stalin 1950a, 153, 1950b, 110).[40] Thus, class variations are much the same as the epiphenomenal variations seen with new modes of production. They are the flux to which the stable central language, which has arisen over a significant period of time and enables communication across classes, provides the secure anchor.

The effect of this effort is to stifle any dialectic that may have arisen from the opposition of stability and flux. Such a dialectic is easy to identify, in terms of a greater variation in light of the immensely ponderous and age-bound stability of any language. But Stalin will have none of that, preferring to see the connection in terms of core and epiphenomenon. All of this suggests that the intervention in linguistics must be read either as an anomaly, if not an outright turn away from the over-arching framework of Stalin's deliberations on language (due to immediate issues relating to linguistics), or as a unique item of crude or vulgar Marxism—with a distinct twist. In this respect, he carried on a venerable tradition from Marx, Engels and Lenin, who ensured that the vulgar moment would always be integral to Marxist thought.[41]

One question remains: what has happened to the ongoing debate concerning a universal language? In light of his argument for the inherent stability of language, beyond the dynamics of base and superstructure and even of class conflict, the possibility of a universal language in the context of global communism now seems like another version of linguistic change. For such a language to appear, significant shifts would have to take place in precisely those areas from which Stalin had quarantined language, namely, modes of production and class. With global communism and the dominance of the working class, a universal language would then be enabled. But now that language is now longer bound to class and modes of production, the possibility of a universal language slips off the radar. The catch is, as I indicated earlier, that Stalin had already written on this matter, specifying a stages theory of the development of language in which a new global language would emerge in the final stage. It would not be long before someone would point out this problem, as we find with a letter from a certain A. Kholopov.

Stalin's reply to this letter is telling: he draws upon the need to understand the different contexts in which theoretical points are made. Thus, his earlier observations on the rise of a universal common language, beyond any that exist at present, apply to an epoch different from the one addressed in the linguistics essay. The situation addressed in that essay concerned the current situation, of socialism in one

[40]Stalin offers the somewhat misleading analogy with railways: 'At one time there were "Marxists" in our country who asserted that the railways left to us after the October Revolution were bourgeois railways, that it would be unseemly for us Marxists to use them, that they should be torn up and new, "proletarian" railways built' (Stalin 1950a, 156, 1950b, 113). He veers close here to a position he had condemned twenty years earlier. In his report to the Sixteenth Congress (1930), he attacked those who argued for the merging of regional languages into Russian with the advent of socialism (Stalin 1930e, 372–376, 1930f, 362–364).

[41]On the necessary moment of vulgar Marxism in Marx and Lenin, see Boer (2015a).

country, encircled by capitalist states intent on crushing socialism.[42] Absent is any sense of international cooperation, of trust, equality and mutual enrichment. In this context, national languages are all that one may expect, with their ponderous stability and epiphenomenal flux. If two languages do meet and merge, then one will end up dominating and absorbing the other. By contrast, in the very different situation of global communism, cooperation, trust, equality and enrichment will indeed be the way of the world. Then we shall have 'hundreds of national languages, out of which, as a result of a prolonged economic, political and cultural co-operation of nations, there will first appear most enriched unified zonal languages, and subsequently the zonal languages will merge into a single international language, which, of course, will be neither German, nor Russian, nor English, but a new language that has absorbed the best elements of the national and zonal languages' (Stalin 1950a, 180–181, 1950b, 135–136).

The effect is both momentous and may be read as an implicit acknowledgement of the anomalous nature of the linguistics essay: momentous because it relativises all of his theoretical points in that essay, for they apply only to the situation now and are not to be read as reflections on the nature of language as such; an implicit acknowledgement of anomaly, since in the very act of relativising the content of the essay, he has also relegated the moment of his intervention into a passing phase. An implicit slippage appears here, moving from the essay's arguments to the essay itself, a slippage that sidelines the importance of the much-debated essay. Yet this fall-back to a stages theory does raise a question: has Stalin finally come around to a pre-Babelian position? I suggest this periodising response should be seen in light of the earlier material, in which he pushed the global communist era into a well-nigh idealistic future. Of course, this raises another problem: which theory of language in the long interim are we to assume is Stalin's, one of the stability-flux opposition or the dialectic of unity and diversity? If we grant the implicit admission of the anomalous nature of the linguistics essay, then it must be the more dialectical formulations I examined in detail earlier. That such formulations constitute the bulk of his writings on language only reinforces this conclusion.

3.4 Conclusion: Cultural Revolution

I have been pursuing a dialectical tension concerning language in Stalin's thought, a tension I have described as Pentecostalist—assuming we understand the biblical Pentecost as the diversity of tongues that arises from the unitary drive of the spirit, as also a diversity that enables even more people to draw together in a very different union. This means that Stalin was at heart not so much a proponent of pre-Babelian

[42]One may also argue that the implicit message of the linguistics essay relates to socialism itself: 'we are here to stay; we are stable and even though there many various epiphenomena at our core we are the same'. After the revolution, the charisma (of Pentecost) must be institutionalised to survive.

unity—even of a utopian variety. At the same time, he found this latter position a convenient fall-back whenever he was challenged concerning potential contradictions in his various interventions on language. At those moments, a stages theory emerged, in which he differentiated between the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the context of socialism in one country and a global socialism when the possibility of a new common language might emerge. But this was very much a retreat to a more conventional position, shared with other socialists (Lenin included). Far more interesting were the moments when Stalin came to edge of and even made forays into a new insight. Such an insight was his dialectical and Pentecostal theory of language, in which the dialectic of diversity and unity was allowed space to do its work.[43]

However, I would like to finish on a slightly different note, one that picks up another dimension of Stalin's Pentecostal approach to language. The question remains as to how one actually fosters the diversity of tongues, especially in the absence of divine winds and tongues of fire that settle on individual heads.[44] The answer is Cultural Revolution, part of what has been called Stalin's affirmative action program (Martin 2001a).[45] We have been too influenced by the Chinese definition of Cultural Revolution, thereby missing the specific sense given to the term by Stalin. He of course attributes this slogan to Lenin, but defines it as 'the cultural development of the working class and of the masses of the working peasantry, not only the development of literacy, although literacy is the basis of all culture, but primarily the cultivation of the ability to take part in the administration of the country' (Stalin 1927c, 330–331, 1927d, 322).[46] Obviously, such cultural revolution applies in general to the working class and peasantry. But applied to the 'border regions', it means raising the cultural and political sensibilities among the workers of the minority peoples in the USSR. In many cases, this entailed creating literate languages, with new alphabets, transformation of old writing systems,

[43]Language was not the only topic on which he gave the dialectic free rein. Another example concerns the related area of education: 'They apparently fail to understand that national cultures are bound to develop *with new strength* with the introduction and firm establishment of compulsory universal elementary education in the native languages. They fail to understand that only if the national cultures are developed will it be possible really to draw the backward nationalities into the work of socialist construction' (Stalin 1930e, 379–380, 1930f, 368–369).

[44]For an insightful study into the close links between linguistic theory and practical language policy as conscious intervention, giving rise to one of the earliest forms of sociolinguistics as a distinctly Marxist development, see Reznik (2003). Useful for its data, but not so much for its theoretical discussion is Grenoble (2003).

[45]See further Chap. 6.

[46]This was part of the Bolshevik platform from before the October Revolution: 'The right of the population to receive instruction in their native tongue, to be realised by the provision, at the expense of the state and the organs of self-government, of the necessary schools; the right of every citizen to use his native language at assemblies; the introduction of native languages on a par with the official language in all local social and state institutions' (Party 1903, 290). See also the text of the 1924 Constitution of the USSR (Stalin 1923c, 404, 1923d, 394).

developing orthographies, vocabularies, grammars, and even new languages where none had existed before. When the program began, only twenty of the more than one hundred languages had a written form, and of these only thirteen were an established literary form (Reznik 2003, 34). Across the Soviet Union, such programs cost millions and billions of roubles, leading to the wholesale creation and recreation of cultures (as well as leading to a whole new range of problems not experienced thus far). Here too a Pentecostal dialectic may be discerned, for the strong role of the central government generated the sheer diversity of local cultures and polities. It may be called a materialist Pentecostalism, although one can never quite control where the spirit might go.

Chapter 4
A Materialist Doctrine of Good and Evil: Stalin's Revision of Marxist Anthropology

> These are new people [*liudi novye*], people of a special type (Stalin 1935j, 90, 1935k, 79).
>
> Dark are their aims, and dark is their path [*Temny ikh tseli. Temen ikh put*'] (Stalin 1917k[1], 81, 1917l[1], 148).

How does one begin to construct a Marxist theory of human nature (anthropology) that acknowledges not only goodness but especially the crucial role of evil? The burden of this chapter is to argue that Stalin provides the outlines of a thorough revision of Marxist anthropology. This revision entailed two related dimensions, the first of which concerns the extraordinary and widespread fervour for human construction of the socialist project, especially the massive process of industrialisation and collectivisation in the 1930s. All of this was captured in the sense that a new man and woman were emerging, harbingers of communism embodied in the Stakhanovites of the 1930s. The very possibility of such a new human being relied upon traditional Marxist assumptions concerning the inherent goodness of human beings. But it was also analogous to the Pelagian and indeed Russian Orthodox theological assumptions concerning basic human goodness (created in God's image), in which sin is a distortion or disfigurement of that goodness. The second feature entailed the greatest innovation, a well-nigh Augustinian irruption into both the Marxist tradition and Russian Orthodox assumptions: human beings can be far more evil than either tradition assumed. Neither was able to account for such evil. Stalin and the Bolsheviks found through the extraordinary effort to construct socialism that human evil could be much, much deeper that they had anticipated. It was precisely that effort which generated the reality and the awareness—as seen in the purges and especially the 'Red Terror' of the very same period in the 1930s. It may have been enough of a shock to realise that such evil existed in others, but the most difficult task was to recognise and deal with evil within oneself. Let me be clear: I do not mean evil as part of some mythical, eternal or universal human nature, but evil as part of the identification and construction of a new human nature which was a constituent feature of the socialist project.

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Due to the detailed nature of the material and the need for careful analysis of the texts, not to mention the importance of the question of human nature itself, this is a long chapter. I have divided it into four main parts, after setting these developments within a theological frame: the tensions between Augustine and Pelagius, in light of a Russian Orthodox context, concerning human nature and its transformation. The first part deals with the revolutionary passion of the socialist offensive of the 1930s, focusing on the glimpse of a new human nature embodied in Stakhanovism and its attendant features of emulation, tempo and grit, as well as the claim that the Pelagian project of socialism had been achieved in the Soviet Union by the second half of the 1930s. The second part concerns the question of 'sin', a terminology Stalin uses frequently in his writings, albeit on a materialist register. While it is relatively easy to identify and condemn the blameworthiness of others, while urging a turning away from such sins, it is far more difficult to identify the sin in oneself. My interest here is in the latter category, for it sets up the discoveries during the Red Terror. Before dealing with this material, I need to analyse another feature: what I would like to call the theology of class struggle—the third part. This emphasis is my own take on Stalin's well-known intensification of the Marxist dialectic, which I analyse in terms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the theory of the two camps of socialism and capitalism, and class struggle itself, in which the theological undertones rise to the surface. All of this brings me to the fourth and final part, which concerns the stark discoveries of the Red Terror in the 1930s. I mean neither the exercise of the Red Terror as evil nor primarily the identification of evil as other. Rather, I mean the affronting awareness of evil within oneself, which is understood as both a collective and individual self. Throughout and especially in the conclusion, I argue that the two sides—good and evil, passion and purge—should not be separated from one another: they are necessarily connected, for without one, the other would not have existed. All of this is central to a thorough recasting of Marxist understandings of human nature, with evil now playing a substantive role.

4.1 Anthropology and Theology

I begin by framing the analysis in theological terms, for in the various theological traditions anthropology, or the doctrine of human nature, remains a core problem. In societies that were both shaped by and gave shape to Christianity, the issue of human nature turned on a crucial theological question: are human beings endowed with the ability to do at least some good or are human beings incapable of any good at all, relying wholly on God's grace? Or, seen from the perspective of evil and sin, is evil relatively limited, enabling some scope for good works, or is evil exceedingly powerful, rendering any human effort futile? In the Latin speaking parts of

Europe,[1] the differing answers to these questions were established in the fifth-century dispute between the Irish monk, Pelagius, and the African theologian, Augustine of the Hippo. The debates were enticingly intricate (Augustine 1992; Pelagius 1993; Rees 1998a; Mann 2001; Wetzel 2001), but the names of Pelagius and Augustine have determined contrasting answers ever since: good works in light of the limitations of evil argued the former; grace in light of the pervasiveness evil argued the latter. By contrast, the Greek speaking tradition sought a mediation between what it saw as two extremes. On the one hand, one cannot do anything to earn salvation, for it is a gift from God; on the other hand, the gift needs to be accepted by a person, which is where human action comes into play. It may also be refused, for God does not enforce salvation.

But why argue over these questions? They were seeking the transformation of a fallen nature, although the transformation was predicated on a paradox. An 'eternal' human nature exists, embodied in Christ (the new prelapsarian Adam), but, due to sin, very few known human beings have attained this eternal nature (the saints). That is, the eternal nature appears in only very few, while the vast majority do not measure up. The reality, therefore, is that human beings seek transformation into an as yet unachieved ideal nature. But how can we be so transformed? In the Latin tradition, the differences were sharper. For Pelagius, transformation could take place through human discipline and cultivation, albeit with divine guidance and assistance. His own asceticism functioned as an indication of how a person might become more holy. For Augustine, the new human nature could be achieved only through God's grace, for human beings were simply unable to do so. In the Greek tradition, we once again find a mediation. God and human beings work together—*synergeia*—to the end that the entire human being, in terms of will and act, conform to the divine.[2] The primary aim is 'deification' (*theosis*), working with the deifying energy of grace and conforming to the divine plan, in which salvation is a negative moment that marks the need to deal with the reality of sin.

It may initially seem strange to mention the Latin debate between Augustine and Pelagius, for Stalin was raised within and studied at some length (1895–1899) the Russian Orthodox tradition. However, it will become apparent as my argument unfolds that he develops a unique counter-tradition that cannot be explained by mere dependence. He begins with a position that follows what may be called a dominant Pelagian Marxist approach to the transformation of human nature, albeit mediated through an Eastern Orthodox framework that is also keen on the basic goodness of human beings. Later, he comes to the stark awareness of the persistence and reality of evil, which I argue is an Augustinian irruption into both the

[1] I use the terms Latin and Greek speaking, since the terminology of 'West' and 'East' is highly problematic. Indeed, since Eastern Orthodoxy subscribes to Chalcedonian Christology, it too is a 'Western' form of Christianity.

[2] 'Certainly man was created by the will of God alone; but he cannot be deified by it alone. A single will for creation, but two for deification. A single will to raise up the image, but two to make the image into a likeness … Thus we collaborate in the definitive abolition of death and in the cosmic transfiguration' (Lossky 1978, 73, 86, see also Harrison 2008, 81–82).

Marxist tradition and the Eastern Orthodox mediation of the extremes of the Latin theological tradition. The result is a distinctly new departure. He draws together Augustinian and Pelagian approaches, in a way analogous to the mediation of the Eastern Orthodox approach. But unlike that position with its *synergeia*, he exacerbates the tension between them in a dialectical intensification. In other words, his position was enabled by the Eastern Orthodox mediation, but the stark opposition could happen only by appropriating the Latin opposition, marked by the names of Augustine and Pelagius.[3]

The Marxist approach to human nature Stalin inherited has tended to fall on the Pelagian side, albeit mediated through the European Enlightenment's assertion of the inherent goodness of human beings.[4] Or at least the proletariat and peasants are inherently decent people, who, once they have re-created history through their own hands, will be released from the oppression of their masters. Given such an opportunity, they willingly engage in the new forms of social organisation and economic production, since it is for the greater good. This understanding can be seen in Marx's image of throwing off the chain and plucking the living flower (Marx 1844a, 176, 1844b, 379).[5] Initially, Stalin too adhered to a more Pelagian position, particularly when he reflects on the nature of a future communist society. Thus, in an early piece from 1906–1907 (which I have already discussed in the previous chapter), well before the realities and perils of power, he presents an ideal picture of future communist society in which the competition, chaos and crises of capitalist society have been abolished (Stalin 1906–1907a, 336–340, 1906–1907b, 160–164). No longer will there be exploitation, wage-labour, classes, private ownership of the means of production, profits and the state. More positively, he speaks of 'free workers', 'collective labour', the collective ownership of raw materials and the means of production, socialist organisation and planning of production, satisfaction of the 'needs of society', and even the withering away of the state and political power.[6] Above all, Stalin gives the impression that the masses

[3]In doing so, I counter two tendencies of studies on the 'New Soviet Man and Woman': they tend to ignore the theological dimension and they glide lightly over Stalin's contribution, assuming he did not have the intellectual wherewithal to undertake such a task and that others played a great role (Bauer 1952; Clark 1993; Bergman 1997; Attwood and Kelly 1998; Müller 1998; Gutkin 1999, 107–130; Fitzpatrick 2000, 75–79; Hoffmann 2002; Rosenthal 2002, 233–422; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008). These studies variously mention the Enlightenment, a Nietzschean underlay, or Russian culture and intelligentsia from the nineteenth century (especially Chernyshevsky) through to Stalin, but barely touch theological matters.

[4]Witness the debate between Luther and Erasmus in the fifteenth century on freedom of the will. While Luther propounds an Augustinian position, Erasmus asserts the humanist argument in favour of such freedom (Luther and Erasmus 1969).

[5]Geras's argument (1983) that Marx did indeed hold to a theory of human nature misses the fact that he sought a transformation in that nature (Geras 1983).

[6]In 1927, Stalin adds the overcoming of the distinction between town and country, the flourishing of art and science, and the real freedom of the individual from concerns about daily bread and the powers that be (Stalin 1927k, 139–140, 1927l, 133–134).

of workers and peasants will, given the opportunity, willingly throw themselves into the new socialist society: 'it is obvious that free and comradely labour should result in an equally comradely, and complete, satisfaction of all needs in the future socialist society' (Stalin 1906–1907a, 338, 1906–1907b, 162). The slogan, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs', is of course the clearest expression of this assumption. All of this belongs to a dominant Marxist position, much closer to a Pelagian approach to human nature.[7] An Eastern Orthodox note may be identified in the gradualist understanding of deification, but Stalin veers away from such a position by refusing to discuss any earlier ideal state, as one finds in the Eastern Orthodox position that true human nature existed before the Fall, only to become an anti-nature thereafter.

However, this text already introduces an intriguing twist: Stalin is less interested in an eternal human nature that will finally find its true manifestation in future communism. Instead, it requires a change in human nature:

> As regards men's 'savage' sentiments and opinions, these are not as eternal as some people imagine; there was a time, under primitive communism, when man did not recognise private property; there came a time, the time of individualistic production, when private property dominated the hearts and minds of men; a new time is coming, the time of socialist production—will it be surprising if the hearts and minds of men become imbued with socialist strivings? Does not being determine the 'sentiments' and opinions of men? (Stalin 1906–1907a, 340, 1906–1907b, 163–164)

To be sure, the approach is a little simplistic. The 'hearts and minds' of human beings change under different social conditions and modes of production, or what he calls 'being'. Thus, under capitalism, private production and individualism becomes the dominant expression of human nature, but under communism these features will fall away in light of 'socialist strivings'. Yet, the implications of this approach are immense: not only does Stalin evince a concern with the transformation of human nature also found in the Latin and Greek theological traditions, but he opens up the possibility that communism itself both produces and requires such a transformed nature.[8] Precisely what the more Pelagian dimensions of this human nature might be, especially in terms of the extraordinary enthusiasm that drove the processes of industrialisation and collectivisation, is the focus of the next two sections of my argument.

[7]And close to the Enlightenment heritage. Indeed, Stalin speaks of a 'socialist enlightenment', which is nothing less than the development of 'socialist consciousness' (Stalin 1906–1907a, 339, 1906–1907b, 163).

[8]The potential for understanding the negative dimensions of human nature remain undeveloped in this text. These boil down to 'savage' sentiments that will pass with capitalism. Later, as I will argue, he develops a much more sophisticated approach to the question of evil.

4.2 A New Human Nature

4.2.1 Context: The Tensions of Industrialisation and Collectivisation

The context for the emergence of a new theory of human nature was the dual industrialisation and collectivisation drive, embodied in the two five year plans from 1928 to 1937.[9] At the Fifteenth Party Congress of December 1927, Stalin marked the end of the NEP and announced the drive to rapid industrialisation and indeed collectivisation, albeit with priority on the former (Stalin 1927c, d). By 1937, thousands of heavy industries had been established, electricity generation came on line and production had increased by three and four times, precisely at a time when much of the capitalist world was reeling from the Great Depression.[10] Much of this was constructed from scratch. The process created two layers of economic tensions, which were additions to an earlier and systemic problem: the inadequacy of traditional Russian farming methods in light of new developments. As Tauger points out (2005, 69–70),[11] rural famines were endemic to Russian life in the first three decades of the twentieth century, let alone in the nineteenth. The revolutions of 1905 and 1917 had taken place in the context of famines, which added to socio-economic chaos. Famines also blighted 1918–1920, were exacerbated during 1920–1921, and occurred again in 1927–1928.[12] Something obviously had to be done.

This situation was exacerbated by the process of industrialisation. As for the first layer of economic tensions, the whole process was achieved without capitalist modes of accumulating funds, namely, colonial expansion and international loans. So the industrialisation process had to rely on internal, or socialist accumulation (Stalin 1927m[1], 204–205, 1927n[1], 198–199, 1928m, 43, 1928n, 40). In order to generate such accumulation, the government set higher prices for the increasing abundance of manufactured goods, as a type of super-tax that would flow back into industry (Stalin 1929a, 162–167, 1929b, 156–161,1929i, 52–55, 1929j, 49–56,

[9]Since the processes of industrialisation and collectivisation are not my primary concerns, the following is an outline of the salient points. The most balanced works are by Davies (1980–2014), Davies, Harrison, and Wheatcroft (1994) and Tauger (1991, 2001, 2005). The same cannot be said of Nove's effort (1992, 159–225) to interpret the process in terms of neo-classical economics. Many are the ritual denunciations of the failures of the program (Davies 1997, 23–58; Boobbyer 2000, 29–64; Gregory 2004). By contrast, Allen's (2003) arresting reinterpretation of the significant gains made is well worth consulting. Throughout the 1930s, Stalin provided detailed overviews of progress (Stalin 1933c, 180–210, 1933d, 178–206, 1934g, 312–339, 1934h, 306–332, 1939a, 372–397, 1939b, 302–321).

[10]Sanchez-Sibony (2014a, 2014b, 25–56) argues that the programs were a response to the Great Depression. But I suggest that the Depression may well have been a signal of the massive shift under way in global economics, if not a response to the five year plans.

[11]Stalin makes a similar observation (Stalin 1933i, 273–274, 1933j, 266–267).

[12]See Retish (2008, 239–262) on famine during the Civil War and Bolshevik relief efforts.

1929q, 127–130, 1929r, 121–123, Allen 2003, 93–110). Meanwhile, prices on agricultural goods were set lower, albeit with fluctuations depending on seasonal shortages and in light of the constant efforts at speculation (Martens 1996, 49). This tensions of this 'scissors' method of generating revenue for further industrialisation created obvious problems, but these were exacerbated by a famine in 1927–1928, requiring enforced requisitions of grain in response to some peasants withholding agricultural produce for speculation.[13]

The second layer of economic tensions was between the rate of industrial change and the rate of agricultural change. The furious pace of industrialisation left agriculture far behind, exacerbated by a massive shift of millions of people from the countryside to work in the new industries, so that an ever larger gulf opened up between them (Fitzpatrick 1994a, 135; Allen 2003, 93–110).[14] The 'super-tax' or 'scissors' approach would not hold out forever in such a situation (indeed, it was conceived as a temporary measure), so the pressure to deal with agriculture increased (Hughes 1991). The government toyed with the idea that the small farmers should be fostered (as with the NEP), but in the end the Central Committee decided in November of 1929 to undertake a massive process of accelerated collectivisation.[15] The outcome was astonishing, achieved with utmost speed, profound disruption and not a little violence: in 1928 only 1% of agriculture was in some form of collectivisation; by 1937, more than 95% was collectivised and mechanised. Investment in agriculture leapt, the amount of land under cultivation increased, and in response the famine of 1932, peasants overcame initial opposition to work hard to ensure a greater crop yield in the following year and overcome the famine.[16] In many respects, this was the enactment and realisation of the unleashing of the forces of production under socialism.[17]

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[13]Withholding of grain for the sake of raising prices was an old practice, appearing not only during the NEP of the mid-1920s, but also much earlier (Deutscher 1967, 301; Stalin 1928e, 1928f, 1928c, 1928d, 1928m, 44–52, 1928n, 40–48).

[14]Kotkin (1997, 18) notes that the urban population between 1927 and 1939 leapt from 26.3 to 55.9 million.

[15]The best work on the process is by Tauger (1991, 2001, 2005), although see also the detail by Davies (1980–2014, vols. 1 and 2). Elaborations on collectivisation plans appear in Stalin's reports of 1929 and 1930 (Stalin 1929a, b, 1929q, 131–141, 1929r, 124–134, 1930e, 269–348, 1930f, 261–338, see also 1927i, 227–231, 1927j, 221–226). Realising the difficulties of such a massively disruptive process, the government designated three levels of collectivisation. They began with the Associations for the Joint Cultivation of Land, moved to another level with the artels (the later *kolkhoz*), and then eventually to full communes (*sovkhoz*).

[16]In 1928–1929 expenditure on agriculture was 714 million roubles; by 1939 it was 13.3 billion roubles.

[17]Already in 1906–1907 Stalin gives voice to this perspective: 'if we bear in mind that this capitalist property will not exist in future society, it is self-evident that the productive forces will increase tenfold' (Stalin 1906–1907a, 339, 1906–1907b, 163). By 1933, he could point to the evidence of such unleashing (Stalin 1933c, 169, 181, 1933d, 167, 178–179). Stalin's summary in 1936, in the context of his observations on the draft constitution, emphasises the positive achievements of the two processes (Stalin 1936e, 153–156, 1936f, 120–122).

This situation was both enabled by and produced a profound bifurcation in economic and social life.[18] Many, if not the majority, were those who enthusiastically embraced the production of a new life, even among the rural population (Siegelbaum 1988, 17; Scott 1989; Kuromiya 1990; Martens 1996, 35–43; Thurston 1996, 137–198; Buckley 1999, 300–302, 2006, 321–336; Tauger 2005, 66),[19] but many were those who dragged their feet, with some actively resisting (Danilov et al. 1999–2004; Viola et al. 2005). So we find that employment exploded and unemployment disappeared (and with it unemployment insurance), a full range of social insurance and retirement pensions became universal, free health-care and education (Grant 1964, 21) also became universal, literacy pushed towards universality, cultural institutions from libraries to cinemas became relatively widespread, women found themselves released into the workforce (although not without contradictions and still carrying heavy domestic burdens), and the material standards of workers and farmers generally increased (Kotkin 1997, 20–21; Allen 2003).[20] The result was a decrease in infant mortality and an increase in the birth-rate, life expectancy increased by 20 years and the new generation was the first one with universal literacy. At the same time, the ground-shaking disruptions had their negative effects: rapid industrialisation produced myriad new contradictions and the massive shift in agricultural production led to unanticipated problems and new agricultural shortages in the early 1930s (Stalin 1933c, 220–239, 1933d, 216–233). Those who opposed the process found themselves subject to purges, deportation and enforced labour. This is the context for the shifts in understanding human nature, first on the positive side and then the negative.[21] In the next section I focus on the positive dimension, specifically in terms of the development of Stakhanovite enthusiasm.

[18]See the documents collected by Siegelbaum and Sokolov (2000) for a fascinating insight into the varying positions taken by people in everyday life. Foreign media of the time already reveals such a bifurcation, with some predicting imminent collapse of the Soviet economy and others appreciating the immense gains made (Stalin 1933c, 165–172, 218–219, 1933d, 162–169, 214–215). Such approaches continue with more recent scholarship, with most typically emphasising the negative dimensions (Davies 1997, 23–58; Boobbyer 2000, 29–64; Gregory 2004; Davies 2005).

[19]Tauger (2005, 66) argues that 'resistance was not the most common response, and that more peasants adapted to the new system in ways that enabled it to function and solve crucial agricultural problems'. Retish (2008) shows how in the earlier period, from 1914 to the end of the Civil War in 1922, the majority of peasants opted for the Bolsheviks and the effort to construct a new society. And as Weeks (2005, 571) observes: 'One does not have to condone Stalinism to appreciate that for many … the exhilarating experience of the 1920s and 1930s meant—at least at the time—a striving for a more progressive, prosperous, and equitable society'.

[20]This was in the context of a massive shift by peasants to cities to work, which placed immense strains on, and thereby frequent time-lags in, the state's ability to provide such facilities (Siegelbaum 1988, 214–222). Stalin's assessments do not shirk such problems (Stalin 1930e, 299–308, 1930f, 290–300, 1933c, 193–196, 1933d, 190–193, 1934g, 340–346, 1934h, 333–339).

[21]'The rapid development of industry had to be matched by an equally "stormy growth" of the culture and consciousness of each individual' (Hellbeck 2000, 87).

4.2.2 The Passion of Stakhanovism

Indeed, Stakhanovism of the 1930s was not only the height of the passion and enthusiasm for the socialist project, but it was also a very Pelagian phenomenon.[22] In some respects, the movement may be seen as an effort to find a new form of extra-economic compulsion, particularly within a socialist framework. The problem of foot-dragging (noted earlier), manifested in managers and workers creatively blunting expectations by recalibrating production quotas and expected work practices, led to a search for new ways of encouraging them to be part of the new project (Siegelbaum 1988, 38–39). Yet this is to depict Stakhanovism as primarily an initiative from above. Instead, it was a much more complex phenomenon, catching the government off-guard through the genuine expression of workers' aspirations but then leading to a whole new policy framework (Thurston 1993, 143–145). The result was the celebration of and encouragement to emulate the 'heroes of labour', modest and ordinary people who became models of a new type of human being. The names include, among many others, the coal miner Aleksei Stakhanov,[23] the automobile worker Aleksandr Busygin, the shoe maker Nikolai Smetanin, the textile workers Evdokiia and Mariia Vinogradov, the railway train driver Petr Krivonos, the timber worker Vladimir Musinskii, the sailor and arctic explorer Ivan Papanin, the farmer Konstantin Borin, the sugar beet farmer Mariia Demchenko, and the tractor driver Pasha Angelina. A complex phenomenon it was, but my primary interest is in the outlines of the new person Stalin begins to see emerging, if not a new type of human nature characterised by the 'will to socialism', by 'passionate Bolshevik desire', by emulation as the 'communist method of building socialism', if not by Bolshevik 'tempo' and 'grit'.

The crucial text in which Stalin reflects on the theoretical implications of Stakhanovism is a speech given at the first all-union congress of Stakhanovites in the middle of the 1930s (Stalin 1935j, k).[24] Here the theme of 'new people' emerges strongly. He plies a double argument that threatens to become dialectical: the new techniques and conditions under socialism have enabled the Stakhanovites to achieve hitherto unexpected and extraordinary levels of work and productivity; the

[22]Although the studies of Siegelbaum (1988, 210–246), Benvenuti (1988) and Buckley (2006) are mines of detail, they do not address philosophical issues. A contrast is Kaganovsky's intriguing study (2008), saturated with cultural theory on the construction of the Soviet male, but ultimately assuming it was a 'cultural fantasy'. One should be wary of one-sided negative assessments, whether assertions that the movement did nothing more than create a capitalist 'labour aristocracy' or dismissals as a heavy-handed imposition from above (Trotsky 1972, 78–85, 123–128; Filtzer 1986; Fitzpatrick 1994a, 158; Davies 1997, 31–34; Kotkin 1997, 207–215; Boobbyer 2000).

[23]The moment is marked by Stakhanov's feat on the night of 30–31 August, 1953, when he hewed 102 tonnes of coal in less than six hours, which was fourteen times his quota. Although Stakhanov was actually preceded by Nikita Ozotov's comparable achievement three years earlier (May 1932), the time was not yet ripe for a full movement (Siegelbaum 1988, 54–71). See also Stakhanov's autobiography (1937).

[24]Siegelbaum's discussion of this text is inadequate (1988, 212–213).

potential of such workers has been held back by previous and even current conditions, but now it has burst forth from the deep. Let me develop these points. In terms of the first, he argues that Stakhanovism had become possible in the process of shifting to a new mode of production beyond capitalism.[25] In this context, new and higher techniques have become available and productive forces have been unleashed, not merely in economic and agricultural production, but also in the creativity of culture. Socialism results, for Stalin, in the achievement of productivity, prosperity and culture higher than capitalism. But it also means that workers are no longer exploited by capitalists, that they are now in charge and can undertake tasks in a new way. Free from the concerns of scraping enough together for their daily bread, workers and their labour are held in esteem, for they work for themselves, for their class and for their society. The result has been a rise in the material conditions of workers and farmers, which has in turn led to an increase in the population (Stalin 1935f, 115, 1935g, 95–96). All of which means, as he famously put it, that 'life has become more joyous' (*zhit' stalo veselee*), a joyousness that is manifested in the productiveness of the 'heroes and heroines of labour' (Stalin 1935j, 98, 1935k, 85).

Yet a question is left begging: what mode of production does Stalin have in mind? Is he suggesting that socialism is a distinct mode of production? Later he does indeed come close to such a position, appropriating elements from his descriptions of communism for the 'achieved socialism' of the post-constitution situation.[26] However, in this text he argues that Stakhanovism is actually a glimpse of communist life, when workers will be raised to the level of engineers and technicians, if not outstripping them in terms of insight and capability: 'In this connection, the Stakhanov movement is significant for the fact that it contains the first beginnings—still feeble, it is true, but nevertheless the beginnings—of precisely such a rise in the cultural and technical level of the working class of our country' (Stalin 1935j, 94, 1935k, 82).[27] This role as harbinger of communism raises a contradiction in the very nature of Stakhanovism: it signals a mastery of technique, time and labour, which would in communism entail the subordination of labour to life. However, in the socialist phase, Stakhanovism means the intensification of labour and productivity. In other words, socialism calls on the masses to work according to their abilities but to receive according to their work. By contrast, communism means working according to ability and receiving not according to work performed but according to need. How to pass from one to the other and thereby overcome the contradiction? The key is the very productivity of the Stakhanovites. In the same way that the path to the withering away of the state requires an intensification of the state, so also does the intensified productivity of

[25]'The Stakhanov movement, as an expression of new and higher technical standards, is a model of that high productivity of labour which only Socialism can give, and which capitalism cannot give' (Stalin 1935j, 90–91, 1935k, 80).

[26]See the previous chapter on the 'delay of communism'.

[27]The glimpse included socialist plenty: living in new and spacious apartments, healthy food, cultural pursuits and an abundance of goods (Siegelbaum 1988, 227–236).

the Stakhanovites and thereby the subordination of life to labour open up the possibility of the subordination of labour to life. They mark the beginnings of the 'transition from Socialism to Communism' (Stalin 1935j, 95, 1935k, 83; Marcuse 1958, 238).

The subjective dimension of Stakhanovism emerges from the midst of Stalin's deliberations over its objective conditions: now he stresses that it was not merely the conditions of a new mode of production—or at least the glimpses thereof—that enabled Stakhanovism, but also the release of pent-up ability. He deploys various images: a dam that has burst its containment; a match thrown that produces a conflagration enveloping the whole country in no time; a ripeness that produces a whole new harvest; a small wind that becomes a hurricane; above all, a spontaneous and vital force that arises from below and can no longer contained. The overall sense is of an unstoppable elemental force, arising deep from within and embodied in the term *stikhiinyi* (noun: *stikhiinost'*). But the implication is that ordinary workers always had such abilities, even if they may not have realised this fact—a distinctly Eastern Orthodox note that reminds one of the doctrine that *theosis* is the realisation of a true human nature concealed and distorted by sin.[28] Once given the opportunity, they took up the initiative, learned the new techniques and deployed them creatively, thereby showing the world what they could really achieve. Of course, they needed the conditions, techniques and their mastery in order to do so, but workers had this potential within them. Stalin makes much of the continued restrictions to the full realisation of such potential, especially by scientists, engineers and technicians—even under the early stages of socialism—who were still wedded to old ideas and outdated methods and argued that the achievements of Stakhanovism were not possible (Stalin 1938e, 330–331, 1938f, 251). But now the Stakhanovites have become teachers of these technicians, amending their plans, producing new ones and impelling the technicians forward.[29] Here Stalin uses the example of the speed of trains: the old-fashioned technicians said that trains could run at only 13–14 km per hour, but the workers took matters into their own hands and showed that the trains could run at 18–19 km per hour (Stalin 1935j, 108–109, 1935k, 91). The amount may make us smile at what appears to be a small achievement, but such a response neglects to note that the percentage increase is 26–28%.

Underlying these reflections of Stakhanovism are two features, both of them tending towards a dialectical articulation, which runs against the Eastern Orthodox tradition's emphasis on mediation and harmony. The first concerns the Marxist

[28]Earlier he spoke of the 'the colossal reserves latent in the depths of our system, deep down in the working class and peasantry' (Stalin 1929c, 116, 1929d, 110).

[29]Or as Siegelbaum puts it (1988, 12), Stakhanovism sought to abolish the distinction between managers' conceptualisations of tasks and workers' execution of them. At the same time, Stalin warns that new technical standards should not be set to the level of the Stakhanovites, since not everyone has their capability, indeed that they are but glimpses of the society to come (Stalin 1935j, 105–106, 1935k, 89–90; Siegelbaum 1988, 88–98).

staple of objective-subjective, which I have used to frame my presentation of Stalin's observations. In a more explicitly dialectical form, the tension may be stated as follows: the objective conditions and subjective intervention together produce Stakhanovism so much that the subjective intervention of Stakhanovism changes the nature of those objective conditions.[30] Or as he puts it, 'New people, new times—new technical standards' (Stalin 1935j, 106, 1935k, 90). Second, and following on from the previous point, is what may be called a dialectic of latency. On the one hand, the potential of Stakhanovism has always existed in workers and peasants, awaiting the right moment for coming to light—or what Ernst Bloch calls the latency of utopia (Bloch 1985). The moment is of course socialism. On the other hand, the realisation of this latency produces the first glimpses of what has never been seen or experienced before. In terms of human nature, the potential for a new nature lies within the old, yet the new does not rely merely on the old but is a qualitatively different nature.

Around this main theoretical text cluster a number of others that identify further features of this new human nature—beyond the glimpse of the creativity and productiveness of Stakhanovism. Taken together, these features provide a sketch of what the new nature might be. Already in 1926, Stalin spoke of the 'will to build socialism' (Stalin 1926w, 293, 1926x, 280) and by the 1930s he was speaking of a 'passionate Bolshevik desire [*strastnoe bol'shevistskoe zhelanie*]' (Stalin 1931i, 40, 1931j, 38). This is what Losurdo calls the 'fede furiosa' (Losurdo 2008, 137–143),[31] the furious faith of the 'socialist offensive', which was recognised at the time as a revolution on its own terms. In his famous call to arms in the report to the Sixteenth Congress (Stalin 1930e, f), Stalin elaborates on the plan for rapid collectivisation that would dominate the 1930s. Here he deploys military terminology, speaking of the upsurge in the socialist offensive on all fronts after the temporary retreat and regrouping of forces during the NEP, of the need to consolidate new gains while being aware that breaches may be made in the front from time to time (Stalin 1930e, 315–316, 319–320, 1930f, 306–307, 310–311). All of this would require 'exceptional effort and exertion of willpower', if not the 'tremendous enthusiasm' that would produce the 'ascending Bolshevik curve' of the furious decade of the 1930s (Stalin 1930e, 309, 360–361, 1930f, 306–307, 310–311).

[30]Such a formulation owes much to Lenin's re-engagement with Hegel at the outbreak of the First World War (Lenin 1914–1916a, 85–237, 1914-1916b, 77–218; Boer 2013, 103–127). Note also Krylova's effort (2003) to recover the flexibility of the category of 'class instinct' for the subjective side of the dialectic. This is a more fruitful approach than trying to identify a voluntarist, 'romantic-populist', revivalist, 'heroic', quasi-Romantic or 'charismatic' (in Weber's sense) element of Stalin's thought and practice (Daniels 1960; Clark 1995, 15–23; Van Ree 2002a, 165–168; Priestland 2005, 2007, 20, 37, 304–324; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008, 317).

[31]Secondary literature is usually wary about recognising the central role of this passionate desire to construct socialism. These include Viola's early study (1987), which focuses on the 25,000ers of the first Five Year Plan and the collectivisation drive. Even Fitzpatrick (2000, 67–88, see also 1994b, 272–279) notes this feature, although she attempts to show that such hopes were misguided and 'utopian'.

Alongside the passionate and furious faith is another feature: emulation. For Stalin, 'emulation is *the communist method of building socialism*, on the basis of the maximum *activity* of the vast masses of the working people'. How so? It is nothing less than the '*lever* with which the working class is destined to transform the entire economic and cultural life of the country on the basis of socialism' (Stalin 1929c, 115, 1929d, 109). At a mundane level, emulation means the desire to follow the examples of 'colossal energy' set by 'heroes' and 'heroines' of labour such as the Stakhanovites (Stalin 1933c, 218, 1933d, 213).[32] As with Stakhanovism, emulation and the shock brigades arose in a complex dialectic of initiatives from below and from above, although it is quite clear that the initial impetus for the movement from ordinary workers surprised the government (Stalin 1929c, d, m, n, o, p, 1929q, 125–126, 1929r, 119–120, 1933c, 189, 1933d, 186, 1951–1952a, 243–244, 1951–1952b, 173; Siegelbaum 1988, 66–67). So 'shock brigades' were formed, often from the Young Communist League (Siegelbaum 1988, 40–53; Strauss 1997, 136–171).[33] In order to foster emulation and its related 'socialist competition', these shock brigades were sent into areas that required models of the new modes of work, of the use of new techniques and technical equipment in industry and agriculture, of the way collectivisation should work. At a deeper level, the sense was that these brigades would indicate the contours of the new human nature, so much so that it would encourage people to shed the fetters of the old nature and foster the emergence of the new nature in yet more workers and farmers (Stalin 1933g, 246–251, 1933h, 240–245, 1934g, 342, 1934h, 334). That it would emerge was based on the idea that enthusiasm and the desire for emulation were very much part of that nature (Stalin 1931e, 61, 69–70, 1931f, 59, 67–68). Stalin hints at such a dimension already in his observations at the Sixteenth Congress of 1930, where he speaks of the 'tremendous change' in the 'mentality of the masses', so much so that one may witness a 'radical revolution' in people's 'views of labour, for it transforms labour from a degrading and heavy burden, as it was considered before, into a matter of *honour*, a matter of *glory*, a matter of *valour* and *heroism*' (Stalin 1930e, 323–324, 1930f, 314–315).

A further feature is what may be called Bolshevik tempo, manifested by the shock brigades and the Stakhanovites. This tempo has a triple register, the first of

[32]In terms of temporal development, emulation precedes the emphasis on Stakhanovism, for it emerged at the turn of the decade of the 1930s. However, at a logical level, it functions as another feature of the human nature more fully revealed by Stakhanovism (Stalin 1935j, 89–90, 1935k, 79).

[33]Shock work (*udarnichestvo*) first appeared during the civil war, designating dangerous and difficult tasks, but by 1927–1928 it referred to brigades of workers who sought to exceed obligations and requirements. They would forgo lunch breaks, work double shifts, reset targets and deal with bottlenecks and dangerous situations. Once formalised, the danger was always there that shock brigaders would try to game the system, especially when more than 40% of workers were designated as shock workers. Stalin comments extensively on these brigades, even expanding the idea to international communist movements (Stalin 1932k, 126, 1932l, 124, 1932m, 127, 1932n, 125, 1932e, 135, 1932f, 133, 1932c, 142, 1932d, 140, 1932i, 145, 1932j, 143, 1933c, 187, 218, 1933d, 184, 213, 1933a, b, g, h, 1952a, 318, 1952b, 227–228).

which concerns the acceleration of industrial and agricultural production based on the mastery of technique and its creative application. Thus, 'labour enthusiasm and genuinely revolutionary activity' serve to promote a 'Bolshevik tempo of constructive work' (Stalin 1930o, 235, 1930p, 229, see also 1931e, 75, 1931f, 73, 1932c, 142, 1932d, 140). The second register operates with a wider frame and sees the whole process—October Revolution, establishment of power, overthrow of capitalism, industrialisation and collectivisation—as a manifestation of such tempo. What remains is to raise such a tempo to yet another level, 'of which we dare not even dream at present' (Stalin 1931i, 44, 1931j, 42).[34] The final register concerns precisely that undreamed-of-level, which is the recalibration of time itself. These 'genuine Bolshevik tempos' (Stalin 1931s, 84, 1931t, 82, see also 1931q, 85, 1931r, 83) are not so much quantitative differences in the speed for production, let alone economic and social change, but qualitative. Through the creativity of workers, time itself has been reshaped so that time is not the master, but workers are masters of time. And with such mastery, the working day can be shortened to six if not five hours, in which time far greater productivity takes place while simultaneously leaving plenty of time for the physical, cultural and educational development of workers (Stalin 1951–1952a, 274, 1951–1952b, 204).

A passionate and furious faith, emulation and Bolshevik tempo—to these may be added 'Bolshevik grit [*bol'shevistskoĭ vyderzhkoĭ*]', which Stalin defines as the stubborn patience and determination to overcome failures and keep marching towards the goal. Such grit may have arisen from tough experience, from the threats and immense struggles with enemies, but it is also part of the character of Bolsheviks, who are 'people of a special cut [*liudi osobogo pokroia*]' (Stalin 1935c, 72–74, 1935d, 59–60). The outcome is that the more one's enemies rage, the more enthusiastic and passionate do Bolsheviks become for future struggles. Here the other side of this new human nature appears, for it involves struggle with innumerable foes both without and within.

By now the outlines of Stalin's vision of a new human nature should be clear, or at least the positive dimensions of this nature (Clark 2011, 213, 284). A significant role is granted to human endeavour, as may be expected from the Pelagian (or lop-sided Eastern Orthodox) tenor of this vision. This Pelagianism or indeed humanism is revealed in the midst of concerns over technique, science and engineering. Such an emphasis notably appears in a series of addresses to farm workers, metal producers, shock brigades, tractor drivers, combine harvester operators, kolkhoz members and so on (Stalin 1933g, h, 1934i, j, 1935a, b, f, g, h, i, 1937a, b).[35] These texts may speak of training more cadres to work the machines so as to produce more food and industrial products, with recognition and prizes for the highest producers, yet at their core is a noticeable emphasis on the need to foster,

[34]Often this increased tempo is presented as vital for overtaking capitalism so as not to be humiliated once again (Stalin 1931i, 40–41, 1931j, 38–39).

[35]These Stakhanovite texts are surrounded by numerous notes of greeting, appreciation and urging to greater effort, which were sent to all manner of industrial and agricultural projects in the 1930s and later. Only a sample can be cited here (Stalin 1931a, b, c, d, k, l, m, n, o, p).

encourage and care for the 'modest people' (Stalin 1937a, 301, 1937b, 236, 1945k, 57, 1945l, 232), who have only recently made the extraordinarily rapid move to mechanised production and new social organisation. We may detect a concern for the deep social disruptions resulting from such processes, but at the heart of these deliberations is the issue of human nature. This focus on human beings, embodied in the slogan 'cadres decide everything' rather than 'technique decides everything' (Stalin 1935c, 76, 1935d, 61), signals a shift in emphasis during 1934–1935. Technique may still be important, but far more important is the human being who deploys the technique. (Looking forward, this shift provides the practical and theoretical basis for the Red Terror and thereby the doctrine of evil, for the Terror was very much concerned with cadres, with human beings in their new form.) As Fritzsche and Hellbeck (2008, 305, 317) put it, 'the New Man in the Soviet Union was to approximate the ideal of a total man, which involved the soul as well as the body', so much so that this human being 'was coming into being as an empirical reality'. This being may be fostered by the new social and economic conditions, by the realisation of latency and indeed by the hard work of self-realisation or 'revealing oneself' (*proiavit' litso* and *proiavit' sebia*),[36] but he or she also needed to be nurtured and supported:

> We must cherish every capable and intelligent worker, we must cherish and cultivate him. People must be cultivated as tenderly and carefully as a gardener cultivates a favourite fruit tree. We must train, help to grow, offer prospects, promote at the proper time, transfer to other work at the proper time when a man is not equal to his job, and not wait until he has finally come to grief (Stalin 1934i, 48, 1934j, 49, see also 1935c, 75–77, 1935d, 61–62).

Yet, this human being is not an abstract entity with an indeterminate identity. Stalin clearly speaks of women and men.[37] The Stakhanovites may have involved men such as Stakhanov himself, or Busygin and Smetanin, but they also included Maria Demchenko and her feats with sugar beet, Natal'ia Tereshkova in milking, as well as Pasha Angelina's organisation of the first all-female tractor brigade (Buckley 1999, 301, 2006, 253–286). Time and again, Stalin discusses at some length (and at times with local people) the new Soviet woman, released from the restrictions of pre-revolutionary social and economic life and now involved in everyday working life, in the factories, collective farms and management of Soviet

[36]The most detailed study of these processes is by Kharkhordin (1999, 164–278), who also discusses the late Soviet practices of 'working on oneself [*rabota nad soboi*]'. Despite some awareness of theological precedents, he tends to see the processes as imposed 'from above', a perspective that is prevalent in other studies of diaries in which individuals sought to remould themselves (Hellbeck 2000, 2002; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008, 322–326). Neither this approach nor the 'resistance' literature entertains the possibility that common people sought to remake themselves from genuine, if somewhat ambivalent, enthusiasm for the cause (Kotkin 1997, 225–230, 358).

[37]The key studies here are by Goldman (1993, 2002), although she is less favourable to Stalin and does not deal with the philosophical question of the new woman. Few, if any, studies draw on the rich tradition of socialist feminism from within the Russian communists, preferring to see 'feminism' (a term regarded as bourgeois at the time) as a recent development (Ilič 1999; Chatterjee 2002).

work (Stalin 1935e, 127–130).[38] Older traditions of Russian life may still influence the attitudes of some men, so much so that they laugh at the new women (Stalin 1933g, 258, 1933h, 251), but Stalin reminds them of the crucial role of women in the socialist offensive, with an increasing number at the forefront of management and congresses. In an address to women collective farm shock workers in 1935, Stalin reflects on the extraordinary changes he has seen. He compares the women of old Russia, enslaved as they were to men at all stages of life, to the new emancipated and independent women of the collective farms who are in control of their own lives.[39] These 'heroines of labour' represent a 'slice of the new life', of 'socialist life':

> We had no such women before. Here am I, already 56 years of age, I have seen many things in my time, I have seen many labouring men and women. But never have I met such women. They are an absolutely new type of people [*sovershenno novye liudi*] (Stalin 1935l, 85, 1935m, 76).[40]

The theme of the new type of people, the new human being—woman and man—is clearly important for Stalin's thought.[41] Above all, the Stakhanovites provide the first glimpse of the as yet unseen and unknown Soviet man and woman, who arise in the spirit of Pelagius from their own efforts and thereby become exemplars for the whole of humanity. The excitement of this sense of the new may be seen in the representations of the period, in sculpture, art, film, literature, and propaganda (Groys 1992; Kaganovsky 2008).[42] Here we find the broad-shouldered and broad-hipped vigour of youthful working life: youth as a symbol of a new human nature and a new society; health and strength as signals of bodies honed by labour and able to perform hitherto unachievable feats; sheer height for the command of the heavens themselves.[43] All of which was theorised by Gorky in his 'On the Old and New Man', where he observed that such a human being 'is young, not only biologically, but also historically' (Gor'kii 1953, 289). Gorky may have propounded such views in the 1930s, echoing themes that ran deep in Christian

[38]This text is not available in the Russian edition.

[39]Elsewhere, he deploys terms redolent with simultaneously theological and Marxist associations of a new and redeemed human nature. Here he speaks of throwing off the old fetters of exploitation and capitalism for the sake of the new life of collective socialism (Stalin 1933g, 242–251, 1933h, 236–245). Compare Mark 5:1–13; Luke 8:26–33; and Marx's use of similar images (Marx 1844a, 175–176, 1844b, 378–379).

[40]All of this was captured in article 122 of the 1936 constitution (Stalin 1936a, article 122, 1936b, stat'a 122).

[41]Fitzpatrick (2000, 79) examines some dimensions of this sense at a popular level, although she ultimately describes it as 'grossly misleading'.

[42]In contrast to the mechanism of the early Soviet period, with its machine poets and Proletkult, the 1930s represented a turn to a more mature and holistic focus on the individual (Clark 1993, 35–45; Plaggenborg 1998, 35–45; Fritzsche and Hellbeck 2008, 315–326).

[43]'The Stakhanovites', a painting by the influential Andrei Deineka (1937), illustrates another dimension of this representation. Here the powerful and youthful workers are dressed in white, leading a multiethnic group.

theology, but he was following in the footsteps of the Left Bolshevik and erstwhile Commissar for Enlightenment, Anatoly Lunacharsky, who adds a distinctly Eastern Orthodox theological point: he spoke of an ideal human nature to which we are still striving, an ideal represented by the gods of old (Lunacharsky 1908, 95, 1981, 45–58, 165, 245, 247). My suggestion here is that Stalin too provides the theoretical outlines of a largely Pelagian view of a transformation of human nature, albeit with occasional Eastern Orthodox flourishes.

4.2.3 The Victory of Socialism and the Limits of Passion

The high point of the enthusiasm I have been examining above appears with the repeated claim in the mid-1930s that socialism—as distinct from communism—had indeed been achieved. The capitalist system, it was argued, had been overcome in industry and agriculture so that the socialist system was the dominant if not sole system in operation, resulting in the improved material and cultural life of the people (Stalin 1934g, 340, 1934h, 333, 1935c, 75, 1935d, 60, 1936e, 157–163, 1936f, 123–126, 1939a, 372–397, 1939b, 302–321). Earlier, I noted the ideal representations—in some of Stalin's earlier texts—of communist society, with free and collective labour, collective ownership of the means of production, socialist organisation and planning, satisfaction of needs and the withering away of the state. By the 1930s, we find that he begins to appropriate some of these features for socialism, especially collective labour, ownership of the means of production, a planned economy, equal distribution of produce, full employment and the absence of exploitation and class conflict (Stalin 1930e, 330–332, 1930f, 321–322, 1934g, 340–341, 1934h, 333–334, 1933g, h, 1936a, articles 1–12, 1936b, stat'ia 1–12). In the previous chapter, I pointed out that he is careful to maintain the distinction in at least three respects: (1) the continuing role for a strong state to crush the 'remnants of the dying classes' (Stalin 1933c, 215, 1933d, 210) and deal with the capitalist encirclement—well beyond administering public affairs, collecting information about the needs of society, distributing labour tasks and holding congresses (Stalin 1906–1907a, 337–338, 1906–1907b, 162); (2) the deployment of the work-needs distinction (Stalin 1936a, article 12, 1936b, stat'ia 12), in which—under socialism—the rewards for labour remain commensurate with the labour provided, which entails the principle of differentiation in the context of equality and thereby some gradations in pay scales in light of skills, experience and responsibility (Stalin 1931e, 57–62, 1931f, 55–60, 1931g, 120–121, 1931h, 117–118, 1934g, 361–364, 1934h, 354–357); (3) the precariousness of socialism in one country, which may be achieved to some extent, but will always be under threat until the global dominance of socialism (Stalin 1938c, d).

These three qualifications or points of distinction from communism indicate another feature of Stalin's approach to human nature: passionate enthusiasm has a more negative dimension. I have already hinted at this part of the new human nature, especially in terms of Stalin's considerations of the 'savage' sentiments of

human beings in the context of an ideal representation of communism, or in the need for Bolshevik grit in the face of opposition. But now it reappears in terms of the need for a strong state to deal with opponents and the need for differentiation under socialism. I would like to close with two instances where the negative dimension comes to the surface more clearly, to the point where it is inescapably tied to the positive.

On the 17th of January, 1930, Stalin wrote to Maxim Gorky. The letter was written at the outset of the first wave of accelerated collectivisation, which was itself a response to the extraordinary pace of industrialisation. Throughout the letter, Stalin addresses the positive and negative dimensions of the whole process, exploring ways to enhance the former. When he comes to the question of young people, the understanding of the tension between positive and negative rises to another level. One should expect differentiation, writes Stalin, when the old relations in life are being broken down and new ones built, when 'the customary roads and paths are being torn up and new, uncustomary ones laid', when those used to living in plenty are being disrupted in favour of those who were oppressed and downtrodden. In this situation, some will be enthusiastic, hardy, strong and with the character to appreciate the 'picture of the tremendous break-up of the old and the feverish building of the new as a picture of something which has to be and which is therefore desirable'. But some do not exhibit these characteristics, even among workers and peasants. Indeed, 'in such a "racking turmoil," we are bound to have people who are weary, overwrought, worn-out, despairing, dropping out of the ranks and, lastly, deserting to the camp of the enemy'. We may read this observation in terms of some enthusiastically embracing the new and others falling by the wayside, if not a brutal description of the 'the unavoidable "overhead costs" of revolution' (Stalin 1930c, 180–181, 1930d, 173–174).[44] But I suggest that a deeper dialectical point arises here: the passion for the new generates the falling away, the foot-dragging and even desertion to the enemy; but so also does the falling away produce yet more enthusiasm. The two are inseparably entwined.

The second emergence of the negative is with the famous piece from the same year, 'Dizzy with Success' (Stalin 1930a, b).[45] The basic point is obvious, which is not to let the enthusiasm for collectivisation overreach, not to become over-confident in light of success. One needs a little moderation, neither lagging nor running too far ahead (and thereby using coercion to achieve a uniform result), neither right nor left deviations. It may well be that the warning arose over concerns that too many people were showing signs of weariness and lagging, but I am interested in the nature of the enthusiasm in question. The argument reveals a slight

[44]On a similar note: 'The First Five-Year Plan had both sparked and accompanied an all-out push for industrialization and collectivization of agriculture, marked by unrealistic predictions and incredible confusion. It was an era when extremes became the norm; a period of the heroic and the horrendous, of industrial achievements amid terrible waste, miscalculation, and error; of hatred of the regime and dedication to the cause of building a socialist society' (Healy 1997, xi).

[45]A number of subsequent statements make largely the same points (Stalin 1930g, h, 1934g, 384–385, 1934h, 375–376, 1937g, 284–285, 1937h, 180–181).

recalibration of point in the letter to Gorky. There Stalin was concerned with the generation of the negative in terms of those who turn out not to have the toughness, strength and passion for the new; here the negative arises from an excess of enthusiasm. The words chosen by Stalin are telling: he speaks of the 'seamy side', intoxication, distortion, fever, vanity, conceit, belief in omnipotence, the singing of boastful songs, losing all sense of proportion and the capacity to understand reality, dashing headlong to the abyss (Stalin 1930a, 198, 1930b, 192, 1930g, 208, 214, 217, 1930h, 203, 208–209, 211–212, 1934g, 384–385, 1934h, 375–376). In other words, the danger is not merely the dialectical other produced by enthusiasm, but also arises from within enthusiasm itself. This is the first real suggestion of a rather different approach that will have profound ramifications for understanding human nature: the negative is not restricted to being an external, if necessary, other to the positive, but it appears internal to the very workings of the positive. With these signals, Stalin both draws upon the Eastern Orthodox theological preference for mediation, if not the tendency to see evil as related to the good (albeit in terms of deprivation), and yet strikes out on a unique path. Let me put it this way: he begins to bring together the 'foreign' opposition of Pelagian and Augustinian approaches, but now in terms of intensification. In all this, the Augustinian moment is truly an irruption, which challenges not only Eastern Orthodox dismissals of the Latin theologian, but also the Pelagian assumptions of Marxist anthropology.

4.3 On the Question of Sin

At the close of the preceding section, I pointed out that Stalin begins to see that the negative emerges from the internal dynamics of the good. This is not so much a sense of the universal balancing of forces as the sign of a more Augustinian and thereby anti-Pelagian (and indeed anti-Eastern Orthodox) position concerning human nature. The focus of this part of the chapter is to examine at some length the features of Stalin's arrestingly Augustinian approach to human nature, which is where his real contribution to a materialist doctrine of evil may be found. In what follows, I analyse three main dimensions of this doctrine. The first concerns the question of sin, in others but especially in oneself. The second deals with the intensification of the dialectic, concerning which I examine the dictatorship of the proletariat, the 'two camps' of socialism and capitalism and what I call the theology of class struggle. This dialectical intensification leads to the third feature: the crucial role of the Red Terror in developing a doctrine of evil. Throughout I am interested in the dynamics of external and internal, moving from the former to the latter.

However, I would like to begin with part of an important discussion concerning human nature between Stalin and H.G. Wells, who visited the Soviet Union in 1934:

> Stalin: You, Mr. Wells, evidently start out with the assumption that all men are good. I, however, do not forget that there are many wicked men [*zlykh liudeĭ*] ….

> Wells: I cannot yet appreciate what has been done in your country; I only arrived yesterday. But I have already seen the happy faces of healthy men and women and I know that something very considerable is being done here. The contrast with 1920 is astounding.
>
> Stalin: Much more could have been done had we Bolsheviks been cleverer.
>
> Wells: No, if human beings were cleverer. It would be a good thing to invent a five-year plan for the reconstruction of the human brain which obviously lacks many things needed for a perfect social order. (Laughter.) (Stalin 1934c, 33, 43–44, 1934d, 32, 38–39).

Stalin initially distinguishes between human beings, between those who are good and those who are evil. Or, rather, he observes that Wells assumes the basic goodness of human beings, while he is all too aware that many, if not most, are evil. The Augustinian echoes of this position should clear. I will soon examine the manifestations of such an understanding of human nature in relation to the myriad enemies of the Soviet project. However, Wells's joke at the close is the more important feature of this discussion. He suggests that a perfect social order might be possible if one engaged in a project of reconstructing the human brain. The comment may be light-hearted, but it bears much weight in at least two respects. First, it acknowledges the limitations of the human condition, that human nature is flawed and thereby that we are prone to act in ways that are detrimental to ourselves rather than beneficial. Second, it clearly concerns the transformation of human nature. Wells may not have realised that such transformation is also at the core of theological anthropology, but Stalin's laugh at the end may well indicate that he was all too aware of the connection. The following discussion turns on the issues that appear in this conversation between Stalin and Wells. Is evil external, to be identified in others, or is it also internal to our collective and ourselves? Further, is transformation possible?

I begin the analysis of these issues by focusing on sin (*grekh* and *sogreshit'*)—Stalin's own term. In particular, I am interested in the distinction between sin in others and sin in oneself. The Eastern Orthodox theological position on sin, which Stalin studied in some detail during his theological studies (1895–1899), held that sin involved 'missing the mark' (Greek *hamartia*), that is a failure to live up to God's expectation for human potential, which is to attain the deification (*theosis*) embodied in Christ. Other images also appear, such as an illness, deformation, imperfection and distortion of human nature. Thus, human beings do not inherit the guilt of sin or a state of total depravity, but rather we inherit the consequences and the freedom to sin—known not as 'original' but as 'ancestral' sin (Lossky 1978, 79–94; Romanides 2002; Bouteneff 2008, 94). This rather optimistic view of human nature, in which human beings are inherently good but this nature has been distorted, brings Eastern Orthodoxy closer to Pelagius in his debates with Augustine. For the latter, human beings through concupiscence inherent the sin of Adam and Eve, so that we are born into sin and guilt (Augustine 1957, I, 9.42; V, 4.18). The outcome is that human beings are unable to exercise good on their own initiative and must rely completely on God's grace, through which sin can be overcome.

Stalin too makes frequent reference to sin, with a distinctly Augustinian rather than an Eastern Orthodox tone. He expected those who worked for the government to be known for their 'great, irreproachable moral purity', but too often people fell short, 'staining [*pachkaiut*]' the honour of everyone else (Stalin 1920q, 381–382, 1920r, 368–369).[46] Yet, he clearly recognised that such behaviour was the reality of this 'sinful earth [*greshnuiu zemliu*]' (Stalin 1908e, 100, 1908f, 261). The terminology of 'sinning' appears most often when Stalin is talking about problems and defects in the Party. These may be sins of omission, when the Party fails to do enough on behalf of the proletariat, underestimates the strength of its enemies or falls short in managing collective farms and grain procurement: this lack of sufficient activity entails a 'great sin [*bol'shom grekhe*]' (Stalin 1906k, 272, 1906l, 19, 1933c, 238, 1933d, 232, 1939a, 412–413, 1939b, 330). They may also be sins of commission, such as the theoretical mistake of converting the forces of production and the relations of production into one another, which is to 'most seriously sin [*ser'eznešim obrazom sogreshit'*]' against Marxism (Stalin 1951–1952a, 269, 1951–1952b, 200).

4.3.1 Blameworthiness of Others

For my purposes, the main distinction on the question of sin concerns its detection in others and, more importantly, its detection in ourselves. The first is of course the easier and Stalin was an accomplished practitioner in this art. Already before the October Revolution, international forces were working frenetically to prevent the socialists from any revolutionary success, usually by assisting opponents in Russia. From the Kornilov revolt, through the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and international support for the civil War, to the blockade and economic sanctions of the Entente, it became perfectly clear to the Bolsheviks that the capitalist world and its bourgeois states were not going to leave them in peace.[47] 'We are surrounded by enemies', he says. 'The imperialist wolves who surround us are wide awake' (Stalin 1923u, 228, 1923v, 224). Indeed, it was one of the reasons for the formation of the USSR, which would in its economic and military dimensions be a 'citadel against attacks by international capitalism' (Stalin 1922c, 147, 1922d, 144, see also 1924q, 23, 1924r, 23). With this ever-present awareness, it is no surprise that every congress report began with a discussion of the international situation and the threats it

[46]He speaks here of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectors during the Civil War, who due to inexperience carrying out governing tasks had been given to pilfering and acting in domineering ways. 'Stain' is a very Augustinian and non-Eastern Orthodox term (Augustine 1985, X, 3; XX, 26).

[47]The references here are myriad, so I can give only a sample (Stalin 1917a[1], b[1], c[3], d[3], 1918a[1], 47, 1918b[1], 270, 1919i, 273–274, 1919j, 263–264, 1920e, f, m, n, 1921o, 119, 1921p, 117–118).

posed,[48] to the extent that socialism in one country could never be secure or complete in such a situation (Stalin 1925a[1], 119–120, 1925b[1], 118–119). All of this would receive extraordinary confirmation with the attack on the Soviet Union by Hitler in 1941,[49] or indeed by Winston Churchill's racist agenda and the effort to contain the Soviet Union behind an 'iron curtain' (Stalin 1946a, b). Ultimately, Stalin came to realise that the struggle for a new social system entailed 'a painful and a cruel struggle, a life and death struggle', precisely because the new world had to defend itself against the efforts by the old world to restore its power. No wonder constant vigilance was required to 'repel the attacks of the old world upon the new system' (Stalin 1934c, 35, 1934d, 33).

Let me say a little more concerning fascism, since this provides the best example of evil as other. We find an increasing awareness of the dangers of fascism as the 1930s unfold, but the greatest concentration appears during the war years, captured with an eerie immediacy in the orders of the day in volumes 15 and 16 of the *Works* and punctuated by longer addresses on May Day and anniversaries of the October Revolution. At one level, the depiction of fascists as 'monsters and cannibals [*izvergi i liudoedy*]' may be seen as part of the rhetoric of war, in which one side must demonise the other (Stalin 1941a, 3, 1941b, 57). Thus, in his extraordinary speech of 1941 (Stalin 1941c, d),[50] which celebrated the October Revolution while the Wehrmacht was as the gates of Moscow, Stalin paints a macabre picture of the new devil of fascism. Bestial, cannibalistic, blood-sucking, evil—these and more describe the enemy, with whom other powers collude to crush socialism. Not unexpectedly, such terms become common in the statements that follow, but I suggest something more is at stake than conventional demonization of the enemy. Fascism was the distillation of all that opposed the first communist project in the world: 'our country has come to death grips with its bitterest and most cunning enemy—German fascism' (Stalin 1941a, 4, 1941b, 58).[51] Even worse was the fact

[48]Again, the references are a multitude (Stalin 1924o, 247–252, 1924p, 235–240, 1925a[1], 91–102, 1925b[1], 91–101, 1925i, 267–304, 1925j, 261–297, 1926u, 28–30, 1926v, 27–28, 1930e, 242–269, 1930f, 235–261, 1934g, 288–312, 1934h, 282–306, 1939a, 355–372, 1939b, 290–301, see also 1924c, d, 1927m, 44–62, 1927n, 41–59).

[49]Seven years earlier, Stalin had presciently and graphically observed: 'But those who try to attack our country will receive a crushing repulse to teach them in future not to poke their pig snouts into our Soviet garden [*svinoe rylo v nash sovetskiĭ ogorod*]. (*Thunderous applause*.)' (Stalin 1934g, 312, 1934h, 305).

[50]A sample of further references (Stalin 1942c, 42, 1942d, 104, 1942g, 1942h, 1943a, 85, 1943b, 157, 1943g, 150–153, 1943h, 170–173, 1944c, d, 1945e, f, s, t).

[51]Some may wish to object that the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact—the 'Molotov-Ribbentrop' pact—with Nazi Germany on 29 August, 1939. Indeed, it is assumed that this acts as a symbol of the conjunction of Stalin and Hitler as two sides of the same coin. This *reductio ad Hitlerum* hardly stands up to rigorous analysis (Adler and Paterson 1970, Losurdo 2008, 171–231, 248–253). Roberts (2006, 30–60) offers a sober assessment of the pact as a move for Soviet neutrality in an expected European war, the context of the other non-aggression pacts signed by the Soviet Union at the time, as well as deep suspicions of the anti-Soviet motives of the United Kingdom and France.

that it called itself 'national socialism', which was nothing less than a travesty, through partial mimicry, of all that was socialist or indeed nationalist (Stalin 1941c, 16–17, 1941d, 77–78, 1942c, 42–43, 1942d, 104–105). It was and remains racist, anti-worker and anti-peasant.[52] Above all, it was implacably anti-communist, slaughtering more communists in the invasion of the Soviet Union than any other single group during the war. It should be no surprise that from 1941 a constant, well-nigh liturgical refrain at the close of Stalin's orders of the day and speeches was 'Death to the German[-fascist] Invaders' (Stalin 1941c, 19, 1941d, 79).[53]

Those to blame for attempting to wreck the first Soviet state were by no means restricted to international forces. As much, if not more, energy was expended in combatting the ever-changing oppositional groups within the Soviet Union, or even pre-revolutionary Russia.[54] To go into detail concerning such groups and individuals would take me too far from my path, although they are legion: Mensheviks, Kornilov, Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, the Opposition, Kulaks, Trotskyites …. Of these, two names stand out for their persistence in Stalin's texts, becoming ciphers for those who continually sinned and persisted in sinning against the Bolsheviks and the Soviet state. They are the Mensheviks and Trotsky, who gain an afterlife in the way they are invoked time and again even after their actual influence had long since passed. In whatever twist an opponent might take, Stalin espied a Menshevik or Trotskyite, or indeed a Menshevik-Trotskyite, tenor,[55] until at last they revealed their true nature, working together with international

[52]Stalin explicitly contrasts fascist racism with soviet affirmative action (Stalin 1942a, 31, 1942b, 97, 1942g, 58, 1942h, 124, 1944e, 394, 1944f, 198).

[53]The full closing lines would soon become: 'Eternal glory to the heroes who fell in the fight for the freedom and honour of our Motherland! Death to the German invaders!'.

[54]Losurdo (2008, 47–49) interprets this tendency as a 'dialectic of Saturn', in which the insurrectionary form of the Bolshevik seizure of power becomes its mode of exercising power. It should be no surprise, then, that plots against the government would continue to form. Stalin indicates an awareness of this dynamic (Stalin 1926u, 51–52, 1926v, 48–49, 1927u, 1927v). Many are those who argue that the threats were 'constructed' or 'fabricated' for the sake of internal mobilisation, citing the exonerations of the Khrushchev and Gorbachev eras (Connor 1972; Chase 2001, 2005; Baberowski 2003).

[55]The pieces by Stalin on opponents internal to Russia and the Soviet State are simply too many to cite. While the Kornilov conspiracy of 1917 gains perhaps half a dozen pieces in volume 3 of the *Works*, and while the concern over kulaks begins in the mid-1920s (volume 7) and rises to a crescendo with early stages of the collectivisation campaign (1928–1930 in volumes 11–12) for eliminating the kulaks as a class, the struggle with Mensheviks and 'Menshevism' runs through thirteen volumes, for three decades from 1906 onwards. Yet the omnipresent Mensheviks are outdone by Trotsky and the related Opposition, who first appears briefly in 1907—as 'pretty but useless [*krasivoĭ nenuzhnost'iu*]' (Stalin 1907e, 52, 1907f, 81)—but then dominates Stalin's thoughts until the end of volume 14, in the late 1930s and in the context of the Red Terror. Throughout, the reader is struck not by the brutality of 'crushing all the enemies of the proletariat' (Stalin 1920s, 402, 1920t, 389), but by the sheer leniency which allowed them to continue for so long (Stalin 1926k, l, 1927m[1], 196, 1927n[1], 189–190).

anti-communist forces as part of a 'fifth column'.[56] If anyone embodied all that Stalin found evil within the Soviet Union it was Trotsky and the movement his name came to mark—the 'monster', 'fiend', 'venal slave', fascist agent, spy, provocateur, assassin, saboteur, and outright enemy of the toiling masses (Stalin 1937c, 244, 1937d, 153, 1939a, 395, 1939b, 319–320).[57]

4.3.2 Blameworthiness of Oneself

The crucial feature of sin is not so much to accuse another of sinning but of admitting one's own sin. In order to be effective, admission, if not confession, requires not only self-examination but also the perspective of others who are able to see what we are not able to see for ourselves. Therefore, acknowledgement of sins requires both external and internal input, both inspection and introspection. In this context, we may understand the emphasis on what was conventionally called 'criticism and self-criticism',[58] which comprised a constituent feature of Bolshevik programs but gained intensity during campaigns emphasising the need for such criticism—most notably as part of the first Five Year Plan and massive industrialisation drive.[59] The dual term was used consistently to refer to both external, collective processes, and individual self-examination (Kharkhordin 1999, 149–154). External and public criticism is more conventional, encouraging workers and farmers—both Party and non-Party—to criticise ruthlessly the Party's activities, so much that Stalin warns Party members not to be afraid of having their sins revealed (Stalin 1924m, 333–334, 1924n, 319–320).[60] This openness to criticism—in front

[56]The argument for a fifth column first appears in 1926: 'Thus the logic of the factional struggle of our opposition has led in practice to the front of our opposition objectively merging with the front of the opponents and enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat' (Stalin 1926u, 57, see also 72–77, 1926v, 55, see also 69–70). It would of course become a crucial concern during the Second World War (Stalin 1941a, 6, 1941b, 60).

[57]Debate continues as to whether the plots uncovered, especially at the hands of Trotsky, had substance or not, although it is not my task to take sides in such a debate. That Trotsky and his followers were indeed involved in organising to overthrow Stalin is clear; that Stalin deployed guilt by association to impugn others is also clear.

[58]Another feature was 'unmasking', especially for those who sought to efface former ruling class origins (Fitzpatrick 2005, 91–113).

[59]Tellingly, Stalin launched a wave of criticism and self-criticism at the Fifteenth Party Congress in 1927, the same in which he announced the end of the NEP and the beginning of the first Five Year Plan (Stalin 1927c, 337–143, 1927d, 329–333). Elaborations on the theme appear frequently in volume 11 of the *Works*, of which only a sample can be cited here (Stalin 1928m, 31–42, 1928n, 28–38, 1928k, 75–78, 1928l, 70–74, 1928a, b).

[60]Even the much-decried Opposition of the 1920s could play such a role. For instance, when the Opposition accused the Central Committee of 'mortal sins', Stalin was not averse to admitting that the Committee could indeed be guilty of sinning by not following the Party line as it should (Stalin 1923q, 367, 1923r, 359, 1923e, 380–381, 1923f, 371–372). Criticism often extended to citizens denouncing others (Kharkhordin 1999, 130–131; Fitzpatrick 2005, 205–239).

of the whole people—is a sign of strength and not of weakness: 'A Party which hides the truth from the people, which fears the light and fears criticism, is not a Party, but a clique of impostors, whose doom is sealed' (Stalin 1925a[1], 123, 1925b[1], 122, see also 1927c, 343–344, 1927d, 335). This type of criticism was usually promoted as a very practical and democratic mechanism for ensuring that mistakes were corrected and that the Party did not become too comfortable.[61] Without criticism, the result would be 'stagnation, corruption of the apparatus, growth of bureaucracy, sapping of the creative initiative of the working class' (Stalin 1930c, 179, 1930d, 173). A caveat applied, however: one may engage in criticism—called 'honest'—that strengthens the Party, its project and the country as a whole; by contrast, criticism that seeks to undermine and destroy the Party and the thereby the country was out of the question. Criticism yes, but only of a certain type (Stalin 1927c, 343, 1927d, 334).

At this point, one may be tempted to see analogies with Christian practices of confession, especially in light of Foucault's claim (1981, 2014a, b) that confession was crucial to the development of the exercise of power in Western Europe. Apart from the fact that Foucault's genealogies tend to over-reach themselves, he fails to distinguish between Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox practices. In the first two, private confession developed as the primary practice, the one to a priest (and thereby through the church) and the other to God. By contrast, in the Eastern Orthodox traditions public and full confession (*exomologesis*) became the main form. It was developed from the early Christian theologians, Irenaeus and Tertullian, entailing a full and prolonged exercise of penance and verbal confession. Eventually it was codified in the twelfth century into four steps by Gregory Thaumaturgus (or 'the Neo-Caesarian'), moving from outside the church building to mixing with the faithful.[62] Enmeshment with the state's court system meant that the penance remained a very public affair (Kharkhordin 1999, 63–73). At first sight, it would seem that the public practice of criticism by the Bolsheviks was a secularised version of this Eastern Orthodox practice. Unfortunately for such an argument, two factors trouble the easy connection. To begin with, during the nineteenth century, public confession waned in the Eastern Orthodox Church, although one may argue that the Bolsheviks 'restored' such a practice. More significantly, however, they made full use of private confession, or self-examination and confession of one's failings and shortcoming in reshaping oneself in light of the

[61]'They shall not conceal evils [or: ulcers, *iazv*], but, on the contrary, help us to expose our mistakes, to rectify them and to conduct our work along the line now laid down by the Party' (Stalin 1925e, 22, 1925f, 22, see also 1925c, 31, 1925d, 31).

[62]In detail, there were the weepers, who stood outside the church and begged the parishioners to let them in; the auditors, who could listen to the liturgy near the entrance; the genuflectors, who kneeled in front of the auditors, but like them had to leave before the Eucharist; the bystanders, who could stand with the faithful but were not permitted the Eucharist (Erickson 1991, 26).

socialist project.[63] This development may be understood in two related ways: the irruption into a Russian context of a Latin and Western European approach that has strong theological dimensions; and the effort to create a counter-tradition within a Russian situation.

Indeed, the most important form of criticism was internal, undertaken upon one's own self—collective and individual. This was the primary sense of *samokritika*. The best example in Stalin's case is his response to accusations of earlier vacillations and sins, when he was quite willing to admit his own failings:

> I have never regarded myself as being infallible, nor do I do so now. I have never concealed either my mistakes or my momentary vacillations. But one must not ignore also that I have never persisted in my mistakes, and that I have never drawn up a platform, or formed a separate group, and so forth, on the basis of my momentary vacillations (Stalin 1927m, 64, 1927n, 61, see also 1926u, 78–79, 1926v, 74–75).[64]

As Stalin suggests here, admitting one's sins is the basis for forgiveness, albeit granted with due repentance. The theme of repentance (*pokaianie* and *raskaianie*) runs strongly through Stalin's texts, as also during the days of the Red Terror.[65] Sins confessed and repented are to be forgiven, such as the comrades who violated a decision of the Central Committee during the vital days of 1917, who were forgiven on the basis of their admission and repentance (Stalin 1925i, 395–397, 1925j, 384–386). At this point should be located the theory and practice of labour camps in remote areas, the 'deprived' or 'disenfranchised [*lishentsy*]', as well as the relocation of some national groups deemed to be less than enthusiastic about, if not hostile to, the socialist project. No matter how much they made things up as they went along, no matter how much they fell short in so many ways, the aim of the labour camps was to re-educate those sentenced so that they would become full participants in the new society (Getty 1993, 50–51; Losurdo 2008, 143–161). Many did so, with rights granted in light of evident self-transformation, loyalty and especially productive labour.[66] Repentance also entails that one makes the utmost

[63]For strange theoretical reasons (based on the slippery distinction between 'East' and 'West'), Kharkhordin (1999, 73–74) suggests that the Bolsheviks were not interested in confession of any type, preferring the lived example of a new life. The evidence here indicates otherwise.

[64]At this point, some may be tempted to refer to Stalin's much decried 'sins': the Katyn 'massacre', the Ukrainian 'genocide', the gulags, the Red Terror and so on. The founding works in such a tradition of demonization are by Robert Conquest (1986, 2015), the erstwhile intelligence agent and employee of the IRD (Information Research Department), which was tasked with providing anti-communist propaganda. Conquest's dubious 'historical' methods were based on émigré hearsay (Getty 1985; Thurston 1986b; Furr 2013).

[65]Evgenia Ginzburg (1967, 17) writes: 'Great concert and leisure halls were turned into public confessionals. Although absolution was not easy to come by—expressions of contrition were more often than not rejected as "inadequate"—the torrent of confessions grew from day to day'.

[66]The secondary work on the re-education project is immense, with some memoirs and detailed examinations revealing how extensive the rehabilitation process was (Andreev-Khomiakov 1997; Fitzpatrick 2000, 120, 124, 129; Alexopoulos 2002). However, the tendency in some scholarship is to decry yet further signs of Stalinist brutality, if not to link them—through the *reductio ad*

effort not to persist and repeat the sins in question (Stalin 1923g, 312, 1923h, 305). For instance, in relation to the various phases and forms of opposition groups from within the Bolsheviks, Stalin both praises those who have admitted their sins and returned to the fold while lambasting those who continue in their sins (Stalin 1926u, 78–82, 1926v, 74–78, 1934g, 353–355, 1934h, 347–348). Or during the over-confidence of the early phase of the collectivisation drive, he speaks of the 'courage to acknowledge one's errors and the moral strength to eliminate them as quickly as possible' (Stalin 1930g, 219, 1930h, 213). To reinforce his point and in response to the earlier tendency to make sons and daughters pay for the class sins of their parents and grandparents, Stalin famously invoked the prophet Ezekiel: 'A son does not pay for the sins of his father'.[67]

What is the response to sins not repented and not amended, especially if one fails to do so when given the opportunity or indeed if one repents, is forgiven and yet continues to sin as a 'double-dealer' (Stalin 1930k, 10–12, 1930l, 10–11)?[68] Quite simply, these sins must be 'punished with the utmost severity' (Stalin 1920q, 381, 1920r, 368). Such punishment is well-deserved for the 'heinous sins' committed (Stalin 1912u, 271, 1912v, 104). By now we can see how the myriad opponents to the socialist project—as understood by the Bolsheviks—could be punished severely for their odious sins. However, it is easy to punish others for their sins, as happened especially with the purges. The question is how one deals with the evil within. I have already indicated that such a shift to the internal, in both collective and individual senses, constituted a distinct departure from the public practices of Russian Orthodoxy, so much so that one can speak of a socialist counter-tradition. Its Augustinian tenor was also a departure from the Marxist tradition's Pelagian understanding of human nature. How distinct it really was would become clear only with the Red Terror of the 1930s, which provided the answer to the question as to how one dealt with and, if necessary, punished the sin within a transformed human nature. In order to set the scene for this final examination, I turn first to a characteristic dimension of Stalin's dialectic, after which I analyse the Red Terror.

(Footnote 66 continued)

Hitlerum—to the Nazi Concentration camps (Fitzpatrick 2005, 91–101; Viola 2007). Losurdo (2008, 143–161) provides the most telling rebuttal of this effort.

[67]The comment was an impromptu response, made towards the end of 1935, to the speech of a Stakhanovite who claimed that due recognition had been denied him since his father had been a dekulakised kulak. It was published in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 2 December, 1935, p. 2 (Fitzpatrick 2000, 130).

[68]'Double-dealing' was regarded as particularly egregious in the context of the trials of 1936–1938 (Chase 2005, 234–235, 241).

4.4 Dialectical Intensification, or, the Theology of Class Struggle

My argument has been focusing increasingly on the dynamic of evil as an internal process, as part of the larger redefinition of human nature in the Marxist tradition. The preceding analysis of 'sin'—through criticism and self-criticism—was really the initial step in relation to evil. In this section, I focus on Stalin's characteristic intensification of the dialectic—what may be called the theology of class struggle—in order to get to the crucial and painful discoveries of the Red Terror. I deal with three aspects of dialectical intensification in Stalin's thought: the dictatorship of the proletariat; the theory of two camps; and class struggle itself.[69] When we come to the last item, the theological undertones will come to the fore.

4.4.1 Revolutionary Experience

I begin with the point that Stalin clearly saw himself as a faithful disciple of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and this included a commitment to dialectical materialism (Van Ree 1997, 2005). However, unlike his revolutionary forebears, Stalin had extensive revolutionary experience, running through from the series of revolutions between 1905 and 1917 to the revolution of the 'socialist offensive' (industrialisation and collectivisation) in the late 1920s and 1930s. He may have inherited the framework of the Marxist dialectic, but the experience of revolution shaped the way he developed this tradition. Unlike Lenin, he was in Russia during the whole tumultuous time of revolution. During the long lead-up to the October Revolution, he was a professional revolutionary, living by his wits, continually escaping from prison and exile, and witnessing at first hand the utter devastation—produced by war, internal unrest, famine and economic collapse—that provided the necessary conditions for a successful socialist revolution. In this context, it is no surprise that sheer intensification and crisis should be a constant theme in his texts. Let me give a few examples.

To begin with, soon after the 1905 Revolution, Stalin depicts with some urgency the growing crisis. He speaks of an increasingly acute industrial crisis and a worsening famine, of a rotten government and rising anger among the people, so much so that the 'hour is near when the revolutionary anger of the people will burst out in a menacing flood' (Stalin 1906k, 253, 1906l, 3). In this situation, the many different social strata coalesce into two great opposing forces, which he

[69]Other examples with which I will not deal here include the tension between revolution and counter-revolution, and deviations between left and right (Stalin 1925a[1], 94, 1925b[1], 94, 1927s, 210–223, 1927t, 208–220, 1921c, 97–100, 1921d, 95–98, 1923k, 194–196, 1923l, 192–194, 1923g, 299–300, 308–326, 1923h, 293–294, 301–319, 1925a, 59–60, 1925b, 60–61, 1925w, 144–146, 1925x, 142–143, 1925y, 192, 210–211, 1925z, 189, 207–208, 1927m, 9, 1927n, 9).

characterises in rather conventional terms as revolution and counter-revolution. They stand opposed to one another, with all bridges burnt and the only resolution being revolution itself. Here we find one of the first appearances of a favoured opposition, either-or: '*either* the victory of the revolution and the sovereignty of the people, *or* the victory of the counter-revolution and the tsarist autocracy'. Indeed, with biblical echoes, 'Those who are not for us are against us! [*Kto ne s nami, tot protiv nas!*]' (Stalin 1906k, 253, 1906l, 4).[70] Yet Stalin could hardly know at the time that it would become much worse, especially during the heady days between the February and October revolutions of 1917. Now repeated statements appear concerning the catastrophic conjunction of war, food shortages, transport disruptions, a collapsed economy, peasants in dire straits, the army mutinous, all of which was exacerbated by widespread arrest, execution and repression. He frantically tries to think through the changing fortunes of revolution and counter-revolution (the latter often of the covert type, for which the Mensheviks function as a cipher) and offers persistent calls to choose for or against, to move forwards rather than backwards.[71] As October draws nigh the differences are sharpened, 'intensifying class antagonisms to the utmost' (Stalin 1917e^3, 91, 1917f^3, 166). So we find the constant deployment of the either-or distinction. The terms may change, but the intensifying of the opposition remains a constant feature: either peace through revolution or continuation of the war; either the proletariat and the poor peasantry or the capitalists and landlords; either for the Soviets or against them (Stalin 1917g^2, 187–188, 1917h^2, 269–270, 1917y, 1917z, 1917u^1, 327, 1917v^1, 408).[72] Until at last something had to break. On 13 October, 1917, Stalin wrote: 'The time has at last come to put the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" into practice' (Stalin 1917a^2, 393, 1917b^2, 464). This revolutionary experience profoundly influenced

[70]The biblical echo comes from Joshua 24:15. Further examples of very similar arguments appear at the time (Stalin 1906c, d, g, h, see also 1926u, 55, 1926v, 53). Lenin was given to similar pronouncements (Lenin 1905e, 543, 1905f, 316).

[71]Almost endless are the references (Stalin 1917q^1, r^1, q, r, g^1, h^1, 1917s^1, 96, 99, 1917t^1, 173, 175, 1917k^1, 71, 1917l^1, 141, 1917g^2, 184, 1917h^2, 267, 1917m^2, 101, 1917n^2, 235, 1917e^2, f^2, w^2, x^2, s^2, t^2, k^2, l^2, q^2, r^2, o^1, p^1, 1917g, 296, 1917h, 374, 1917g^3, h^3, k, l). A feature of the last days before October was the Kornilov revolt, which became the focus of all that was treacherously and desperately counter-revolutionary. A whole series of items in volume 3 of the *Works* deals with the revolt.

[72]Stalin deploys the either-or opposition on myriad occasions throughout his later works on a range of topics. Some examples include: socialism or capitalism, whether in relation to the peasants and the economy or in relation socialism 'over here' and capitalism 'over there' (Stalin 1925a^1, 112, 1925b^1, 111, 1930e, 326–334, 1930f, 317–324); either socialism in one country or not (Stalin 1925y, 168–169, 1925z, 167, 1926u, 22–23, 130, 1926v, 21–22, 125); various tactics of the Opposition (Stalin 1926w, 295, 1926x, 282, 1926u, 52, 154, 1926v, 50, 149–150, 1927m, 53–55, 1927n, 50–52, 1927u, 172, 1927v, 167, 1927q, 274, 1927r, 267–268, 1927c, 368, 373–375, 1927d, 358, 363–364, 1927y, 314–318, 1927z, 308–312); either a bourgeois revolution or a proletarian revolution (Stalin 1927a^1, 283–284, 1927b^1, 278), with specific relevance for China (Stalin 1927w, 225, 1927x, 221–222, 1927i^1, 267, 1927j^1, 262, 1927o, 358, 1927p, 354); either the particular or the universal, in terms of Leninism's applicability to an international situation (Stalin 1926e, 18, 1926f, 18).

Stalin's mode of thinking about practice. Yet, he was to find that October was not the end, but rather the beginning of even greater dialectical intensifications.

4.4.2 *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*

The first of these is the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Stalin inherited from the Marxist tradition but to which he gave his own twist.[73] Or rather, he inherited what was largely a theory with minimal practice (in the first years after the October Revolution) and gained the first substantial immersion in its practice. My interest here is not in the theory as a whole and its various articulations, but in the way Stalin intensifies such a theory.

At one level, Stalin held to the transitional nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It entailed the seizure of the machinery of state and the means of production by the proletariat—and later also by the poor peasantry (Stalin 1927a[1], b[1], 1927a, b)—so as to dispossess, defeat and destroy the bourgeoisie.[74] This was conceived as a necessary first step, which would lead to communism once the bourgeoisie had been vanquished (Stalin 1906–1907a, 346–348, 367–372, 1906–1907b, 169–171, 189–193, 1924g, 380, 1924h, 363, 1924e, 112–120, 1924f, 108–116). In other words, it entailed both violence and peace, dispossession and socialist construction (Stalin 1926e, 33, 1926f, 31). This position he inherited from his Marxist forebears, and he held to it later when called upon to define the term: 'The dictatorship of the proletariat is not an end in itself. The dictatorship is a means, a way of achieving socialism' (Stalin 1925y, 161, 1925z, 159, see also 1926e, 32, 1926f, 30–31).

At another level, the increasing reality of the 'delay of communism' meant—as I argued earlier—that the 'interim' of socialism became the norm and with it the dictatorship of the proletariat. Indeed, by 1924 Stalin was quite clear that the global dominance of socialism would take place in 'a remote and possible future', but certainly not in the foreseeable future (Stalin 1924e, 121, 1924f, 117–118). In this context, at least three theoretical developments served to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat. The first appears a little earlier, with the intriguing suggestion that sovereignty should be redefined in terms of such a dictatorship (thereby providing another dimension to the normalisation of the interim). This sovereignty entailed the domination of the many over the few, in public and not in secret: 'the victory of the revolution means the establishment of the dictatorship (sovereignty

[73]Especially from Lenin (1905a, 1905b, 1917g, 1917h, 1919a, 1919b, 1919c, 1919d, 1919e, 1919f).

[74]'We must not turn our backs on the positions of the bourgeoisie, we must face and storm them! We must not leave the bourgeoisie in possession of their positions, we must capture them, step by step, and eject the bourgeoisie from them!' (Stalin 1908e, 99, 1908f, 260, see also 1908c, 114, 1908d, 275–276, 1917a[2], 1917b[2]).

[*samoderzhavie*]) of the proletariat and peasantry' (Stalin 1907a, 21, 1907b, 9).[75] The second concerns the state, in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is manifested as Soviet power (Stalin 1924e, 121–126, 1924f, 118–122).[76] By embracing all workers, peasants and soldiers, such power is both the strongest and the only form of the state—a new type of state—that can secure victory.[77] The third is even more significant, for now the dictatorship becomes a way of reinterpreting democracy—as socialist democracy. For Stalin, such democracy is clearly partisan: it is for the majority, for proletarians so that it is a 'proletarian democracy', if not the most democratic form of mass participation hitherto seen (Stalin 1924e, 119, 122–123, 1924f, 115, 118–119). But then he goes a step further, arguing that the proletarian dictatorship is for the building of socialism '*in relation to the whole of society*' (Stalin 1925y, 189, 1925z, 186).[78] Implicit here is the point that the whole is defined by workers and peasants (and later intellectuals)—which he would soon call 'democratic dictatorship' (Stalin 1927i[1], 256, 1927j[1], 251).[79]

On the question of democracy I come to the most important feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat: through its intensification democracy and freedom arise. As Stalin puts it: 'if there is no such dictatorship, our country cannot be free and independent' (Stalin 1925i[1], 3, 1925j[1], 3). More explicitly, the exercise of violence, 'unrestricted by law' and directed at expropriating and overcoming the capitalists and landlords (Stalin 1925y, 189, 1925z, 186), is the condition of freedom, democracy and independence. Similarly, the affirmative action program of the

[75]Further statements appear along a similar vein (Stalin 1906–1907a, 367–368, 371–372, 1906–1907b, 189–190, 193, 1917e[1], 333–335, 1917f[1], 417–418).

[76]Note: 'Our state is the organisation of the proletarian *class* as the state power, whose function it is to crush the resistance of the exploiters, to organise a socialist economy, to abolish classes, etc'. (Stalin 1927a, 184, 1927b, 181).

[77]It is beyond my remit to discuss the debates over dictatorship of the proletariat (which Stalin defended) and dictatorship by the Party (of which he and others were accused). This was an often-delicate argument, with Stalin arguing the dictatorship of proletariat entailed the close bond between Party and proletariat and peasantry. The strength of the bond determined the strength of the dictatorship (Stalin 1926m, 236–237, 1926n, 225, 1925i, 352, 1925j, 343–344, 1926e, 27–30, 1926f, 26–28). It is easy to see how this might be (mis-)interpreted as an argument for the dictatorship by the Party (Stalin 1926e, 33–64, 1926f, 31–60, 1926u, 49, 82–84, 1926v, 47, 78–80, 1927i[1], 256, 1927j[1], 251–252).

[78]Balibar (2007, 49–55) completely misses this point, as well as the dialectic of intensification itself, in accusing Stalin of a scholastic 'abandoning' of the dictatorship of the proletariat with the 1936 constitution with the claim that class struggle had by and large been overcome. Apart from the fact that the term appears consistently throughout the 'Short Course', it is worth noting Stalin's reply to earlier versions of Balibar's criticism: 'If the broadening of the basis of the dictatorship of the working class and the transformation of the dictatorship into a more flexible, and, consequently, a more powerful system of guidance of society by the state is interpreted by them not as strengthening the dictatorship of the working class but as weakening it, or even abandoning it, then it is legitimate to ask: Do these gentlemen really know what the dictatorship of the working class means?' (Stalin 1936e, 177, 1936f, 135).

[79]Later, this would entail a search for a new term to embrace Soviet society, such as 'Soviet people' and 'Soviet Motherland' (Stalin 1945e, 33–34, 1945f, 220–221, 1945q, 52, 1945r, 228). See further Chap. 6.

Soviet Union, in which nationalities were liberated and fostered (albeit not without significant problems) could not have happened 'if the dictatorship of the proletariat had not been established in central Russia' (Stalin 1923k, 188, 1923l, 185). We may see this as the intensification of the basic principle of the dictatorship, in which force and peaceful construction are both necessary, except that now the tension between them is exacerbated to the extent that the intensification of one leads to the other: only with the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat does the possibility of true freedom, democracy and national liberation arise.

4.4.3 Two Camps

A second example of Stalin's characteristic tendency to exacerbate oppositions appears with his theory of the 'two camps' of socialism and capitalism, between two systems of economy and government.[80] This was a global distinction, so much so that it would increasingly become the determinative factor in international relations. While capitalism was radically unequal in terms of wealth and class, around socialism were rallying the 'workers of the advanced countries and the oppressed peoples of the colonial and dependent countries' (Stalin 1925u, 259, 1925v, 253).[81] This situation had not always existed, but after the 'Land of the Soviets came into being', an 'all-embracing world capitalism' was no longer a reality. Instead, there arose the camp of imperialism and the camp of mortal struggle against imperialism. At the head of one was the Anglo-American alliance, while at the head of the other was the Soviet Union. Each had its attraction, the one through wealth and the ability to obtain credits there, the other in its revolutionary experience in emancipating workers from capitalism and oppressed peoples from imperialism. As for the latter, 'what an attraction our country has for all that is honest and revolutionary all over the world' (Stalin 1925i, 289, 1925j, 282). Indeed, with the completion of the first Five Year Plan, Stalin claimed that more and more were being won over from the 'camp of those who never tire of snarling at us' to the 'camp of those who are amazed' at the plan's successes (Stalin 1933c, 173, 1933d, 170).

This point concerning the Five Year Plan indicates Stalin's sense of an intensification of the conflict as time progressed, with an increasing bifurcation between those who were revolutionary and those who were not. An international revolutionary is a person whose defence of the Soviet Union, as the first socialist state in the world, is unqualified, unreserved and unconditional. Anyone who tries to defend socialism with qualification, without the Soviet Union, will become an

[80]He was less interested in a major feature of Lenin's argument, during the first years of the NEP, of using capitalism to build socialism (Lenin 1921a, 334–357, 1921b, 210–237), although he made occasional statements on this line until the end of the NEP (Stalin 1925i, 374, 1925j, 364–365, 1926e, 80–96, 1926f, 75–90).

[81]Further basic statements also appear (Stalin 1925a[1], 95–102, 1925b[1], 95–101, 1925i, 288–295, 1925j, 281–288).

enemy: 'One has to choose between them, for there is not, nor can there be, a third position' (Stalin 1927m, 54, 1927n, 51). Even more, in the well-nigh mythical progression from socialism to communism, this opposition would be sharpened. In this situation, the capitalist world would work even harder to destroy communism, doing all in its power to crush any country that opted for the communist path: 'It must not be imagined that the working class in one country, or in several countries, will march towards socialism, and still more to communism, and that the capitalists of other countries will sit still with folded arms and look on this with indifference' (Stalin 1927k, 140, 1927l, 134). Here Stalin enunciates a principle in his development of the dialectic, in which the closer one comes to the goal, the greater will one's opponents rage and fight to resist such an achievement. This is the core feature of his dialectical intensification, which appears in his reflections on struggle with the kulaks, in relation to class struggle and ultimately with the Red Terror, in which he espied the fullest manifestation of this dialectic.

I close this section with an observation and a caveat. The observation: in a curious way, the theory of the two camps echoes a constituent feature of Eastern Orthodox theology. It may espouse a mediation between theological extremes, even relegating unresolvable problems such as theodicy to the realm of 'mystery', but it repeatedly sets itself against the problematic term 'West'. Eastern Orthodox theology, it is argued, does not follow the disparate and sectarian paths of the 'West' in either theology or ecclesiology, eschewing its legalism, individualism and tendency to make distinctions for what is in symphony. Of course, the 'West' becomes a useful fiction in order to identify what Eastern Orthodox theology might be. In his own way, Stalin carries on this opposition with the two camps, capitalism and socialism, even to the point of intensifying the opposition so that socialism, like Eastern Orthodox theology,[82] embodies the truth and future of humanity. The caveat: during the Second World War, the two camps shifted for a while, taking shape between the fascist pact and the freedom-loving peoples of the world, which now included Western Europe and the Anglo-American alliance (Stalin 1941a, 6–7, 1941b, 60–61, 1942g, 58, 1942h, 123–124). Yet, by the early 1950s, Stalin saw all too clearly that his old formulation was the more enduring (Stalin 1951–1952a, 245–250, 1951–1952b, 174–179).

4.4.4 Theology of Class Struggle

With the examples of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the theory of two camps in mind, I can now move the dialectical intensification of class struggle, where the theological undercurrent begins to rise to the surface. The core of what I would like

[82]This strategy appears in the famous *Catechesis* by Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov), which was *the* textbook in Russian imperial schools and theological colleges of Stalin's time. Philaret argues for the truth of Eastern Orthodoxy by mediating between the extremes of Roman Catholicism and Calvinism. An excellent and relatively recent example of the claim to truth by means of opposing the 'errors' of the 'West' appears in the work by Yannaras (1991).

to call a theology of class struggle is the notion of the desperation of the moribund, the last, desperate and intensified struggle of the doomed as the goal comes closer, or indeed as it is being achieved. The seeds of this position go back to the intense experiences and associated theoretical insights of the revolutionary years leading up to 1917 (see above),[83] but they rise to yet another level with the socialist offensive of 1928–1937, with its twin drive of industrialisation and collectivisation—which were recognised as revolutionary in their own right. So a new level of revolutionary activity produces a new level of dialectical intensification, specifically in terms of class struggle. All of this becomes even more significant when we recall that this was also the period of Stakhanovism, of efforts to define and discern the lineaments of a new human nature. The conjunction is not fortuitous.

I focus on four major overlapping statements by Stalin from the crucial years of 1928–1937.[84] The first comes from a central committee plenum in July 1928, in a speech focusing resolutely on the class dimensions of the peasant question (Stalin 1928g, h). As a harbinger of the campaign to destroy 'kulaks as a class' in the 1930s, Stalin's concern is the kulaks. He speaks of the New Economic Policy (then in its last stages) as a socialist attack on—rather than a retreat to—capitalism, as also of the bond between workers and poor peasants, in alliance with the middle peasants, in order to intensify the struggle against the kulaks. But how does one's class opponent respond?

> It never has been and never will be the case that a dying class surrenders its positions voluntarily without attempting to organise resistance … the advance towards socialism cannot but cause the exploiting elements to resist the advance, and the resistance of the exploiters cannot but lead to the inevitable sharpening of the class struggle (Stalin 1928g, 180, 1928h, 171–172).

Stalin is keen to point out that such a struggle is not so much fostered by the workers and poor peasants, but happens as a response by the former exploiting class, in this case the kulaks. They cannot help intensifying their resistance to the drive towards socialism as their situation becomes ever more untenable. So also, he points out, with the drive to socialist trade and industry, which infuriates the capitalist traders and industrialists who have been pushed out and denied their profits: they will never retreat in silence. This principle theoretical point, that the more one advances the greater will be the resistance and the sharper the class struggle, would remain a constant—with some variations depending on the circumstances—for almost two decades.

The second statement comes from the political report to the Sixteenth Congress of 1930, when the socialist offensive was in full swing, with its massive ruptures,

[83]Seeds also may be found in his comments concerning the extraordinary acceleration of revolutionary education and consciousness during the intense globules of revolutionary time, as also in Stalin's reflections on the dying of the old and the birth of new (Stalin 1906o, 201–207, 1906p, 367–373, 1927c, 339–340, 1927d, 331).

[84]The whole of the Fifteenth Congress of 1927 in many respects lays the more immediate groundwork for the new level of dialectical intensification. This is a very literate text, with sustained metaphors, story-telling, and careful rhetorical structures (Stalin 1927c, 1927d).

problems and stunning advances.[85] In this context, Stalin speaks of the ruin of the 'moribund classes', of the kulaks and petty-bourgeoisie. Above all, he observes: 'all this cannot but intensify the class struggle, the resistance of the moribund classes to the Soviet government's policy' (Stalin 1930e, 363, 1930f, 352–353). That this resistance should be reflected in the Party is to be expected, but at this point he rests with identifying the resistance and the fact that socialism—through industrialisation and collectivisation—cannot be achieved without class struggle (Stalin 1930e, 369–372, 1930f, 358–361).

By 1933, at a joint plenum of the Central Committee, he takes his argument a step further (Stalin 1933c, 211–216, 1933d, 206–212). His observations concern the completion of the first Five Year Plan, when he begins to claim that the principle of socialism has been established in all dimensions of the economy and that capitalist elements have been driven out. But have these elements—the 'moribund classes'[86]—simply disappeared? Not entirely, for they have wormed their way into the new structures, in industry and agriculture and trade and government. Some may have genuinely changed their ways, but many of these 'have-beens' harbour an unquenchable hatred for the new order. Since their overt opposition has spectacularly failed, they now resort to covert methods of sabotage and wrecking, of theft and pillage of public property. At one level, this may be read as the search for a scapegoat for the many problems involved in the socialist offensive, for the reluctance and resistance of some to the massive shift in economic and social life. Instead, I prefer to read this situation in terms of the profound bifurcation between those with a passion for the new project and those who dragged their feet and opposed it by whatever means were available—and they need not be restricted to the 'moribund classes'.

This bifurcation appears in Stalin's sharp theoretical observation:

> Some comrades have interpreted the thesis about the abolition of classes, the creation of a classless society, and the withering away of the state as a justification of laziness and complacency, a justification of the counter-revolutionary theory of the extinction of the class struggle and the weakening of the state power … The abolition of classes is not achieved by the extinction of the class struggle, but by its intensification. The state will wither away, not as a result of weakening the state power, but as a result of strengthening it to the utmost, which is necessary for finally crushing the remnants of the dying classes and for organising defence against the capitalist encirclement that is far from having been done away with as yet, and will not soon be done away with (Stalin 1933c, 215, 1933d, 210–211).[87]

[85]Some scattered references appear before this text (Stalin 1929i, 15–16, 37–41, 1929j, 14–15, 33–39).

[86]This colourful group included 'the private manufacturers and their servitors, the private traders and their henchmen, the former nobles and priests the kulaks and kulak agents, the former Whiteguard officers and police officials, policemen and gendarmes, all sorts of bourgeois intellectuals of a chauvinist type, and all other anti-Soviet elements' (Stalin 1933c, 211, 1933d, 207).

[87]A year later, at the Seventeenth Congress, he summarises these points (Stalin 1934g, 357–358, 1934h, 350–351).

This text makes three relevant points. First, one neglects subjective intervention at one's peril, for objective forces will not lead to the automatic abolition of classes and the withering away of the state. Second, and crucially, one achieves such abolition by the intensification of struggle and not gradual extinction. A little later Stalin elaborates, pointing out that it is precisely 'because they are dying and their days are numbered that they will go on from one form of attack to another, sharper form'. They will try anything, even appealing to sections of the population that may be less enthusiastic, for there is 'no mischief and slander' to which they will resort in their death-throws (Stalin 1933c, 216, 1933d, 212). Third, the point concerning the state links the previous points. Thus, strengthening state power to the utmost leads not merely to its withering away (in this respect, the point would be analogous to class struggle), but it is also the means of subjective intervention so as to enable victory in the intensified class struggle. In other words, evil—which is moribund and dying—increases its ferocity the more it knows it is defeated.

In this text, Stalin still tends to see the 'moribund' as external, as class remnants who are opposed to the socialist project. But implicit in his argument is a sense that they also be very much internal, part of the process itself. The image of them worming their way into industry, collective farms, government and even the Party leaves open the possibility that the 'moribund' are actually part of these socialist ventures, if not produced by them. Indeed, he suggests that it is precisely the growth of the Soviet state's power that 'will intensify the resistance of the last remnants of the dying classes' (Stalin 1933c, 216, 1933d, 211–212).

The fourth text comes from a plenum of the Party's central committee in early 1937. Here Stalin hones the intensification still further, in the context of having claimed that socialism had been achieved by 1936, if not earlier. He begins by pointing out that 'the more hopeless the position of the enemies becomes the more eagerly will they clutch at extreme methods', for these are the desperate methods of the doomed (Stalin 1937c, 244, 1937d, 153). He then elaborates:

> We must smash and cast aside the rotten theory that with every advance we make the class struggle here must subside, the more successes we achieve the tamer will the class enemy become … On the contrary, the further forward we advance, the greater the successes we achieve, the greater will be the fury of the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes, the more ready will they be to resort to sharper forms of struggle, the more will they seek to harm the Soviet state, and the more will they clutch at the most desperate means of struggle as the last resort of the doomed (Stalin 1937c, 263–264, 1937d, 166).

The main point is similar to the previous text I quoted from 1933 concerning the intensification of struggle, although then the point was located within a number of other points. Now the intensification of struggle is the key. The impression of achieving the goal is enhanced by the repetition of images of advance, as though indicating each stride: 'further forward', 'advance', 'greater successes', 'achieve'. But this repetition is met by even more intense opposition: 'the greater', 'the more', 'the more', 'the more'—as in 'fury', 'sharper forms of struggle', 'harm the Soviet state', 'desperate means of struggle'. Their intensification seems to match the

achievements and yet they are not signs of the impending collapse of the project but of the last desperate efforts of the doomed.

Although Stalin would use a similar argument concerning the defeated German fascists towards the end of the Second World War,[88] the argument itself clearly arose and was deployed on a number of occasions during the socialist offensive of 1928–1937.[89] As I mentioned earlier, this was a thoroughly revolutionary period with its deep tensions, so it is no surprise that it should generate a dialectical intensification in reflecting upon the experiences of the time.

4.4.5 Theological Resonances

Although I have suggested that this intensification may be called a theology of class struggle, I have not yet indicated in what sense it can be seen as theological. Three reasons for suggesting it has theological undertones may be adumbrated. First, this dialectical intensification constitutes a profound challenge to the Eastern Orthodox theological preference for mediation between oppositions (which are usually cast as 'Western'), if not synthesis, *synergeia* or *symphonia*, where the various parts work together in harmony. Time and again, one encounters efforts to bring about such a mediation, whether in terms of *gnosis* and *episteme*, transcendence and immanence, unity and diversity (Trinity), divinity and creation, nature and will, cosmic and anthropological, state and church, grace and free will, faith and works and so on (Lossky 1978). However, the dialectical catch is that this tendency in turn responds to a deeply binary nature in Russian culture, which is also manifest in politics and religion (Lotman and Uspenskii 1985; Ryan 2003). This binary has already appeared in Stalin's deployment of the 'two camps', which may be seen as a manifestation of the opposition between a healthy Russian culture and what is alien and unhealthy, but here it is worth noting that Stalin challenges the Eastern Orthodox effort to ameliorate contradictions by not only nodding to this tendency to bifurcation in Russian culture, but also by drawing on the dialectical tensions of Marxist thought. Or rather, he reshapes the former in light of the latter, yet he does so by deploying what that culture often rejects—a European intensification of oppositions.

Second, the intensification of class struggle is analogous to the theological argument that the more God's grace appears and begins to have effect, the more will

[88]'The doomed enemy hurls his last forces into action, resists desperately in order to escape stern retribution. He grasps and will grasp at the most extreme and base means of struggle. Therefore it should be borne in mind that the nearer our victory, the higher must be our vigilance and the heavier must be our blows at the enemy' (Stalin 1945c, 18–19, 1945d, 211–212).

[89]Apart from the four texts I have discussed, Molotov recalls that Stalin repeated this observation often at the time (Resis 1993, 254; Roberts 2006, 18).

the devil 'rage with the whole force of himself and his angels', making war 'war with those who have previously become Christians', especially in the last days (Augustine 1985, xx: 8). Or in more abstract terms, where good arises, evil will be present in greater force. At this theological level, the break with Eastern Orthodoxy once again appears. For Eastern Orthodoxy, since the devil was created by God (albeit one who turned away from the good), the devil is always constrained. Even the temporary victories of the devil, however furiously they may be achieved, happen only when God gives the devil some slack (as with Job). As John of Damascus (650–750 CE) puts it: 'But while the liberty to attack man has been granted to them, they have not the strength to over-master any one: for we have it in our power to receive or not to receive the attack' (1995, II: 4, see also Alfeyev 2008, 110). By contrast, although Stalin asserts that the 'devil' is defeated, he gives far greater scope to the 'devil', who works ever more energetically the more it appears that defeat is accomplished.

The third reason is more important, for it relates to the developing theory of human nature that underlies much of Stalin's thought at the time. To begin with, we find in the 1930s an effort to demarcate clearly between the passionate and the wayward, manifested in the intrinsic link between Stakhanovism and the purges. Clark calls this the conjunction of 'hyperbolically positive human beings' and 'hyperbolically negative human beings' a ratcheting up of a 'Manichaean drama' (Clark 2011, 213, see also Getty 1985, 1). My point is that they were in many respects part of the same human being, with the dialectic indeed ratcheted up to hitherto unforeseen levels. But Clark's 'Manichaean' allusion misses the point; or rather, it may be read as a three-fold allusion. To begin with, it alludes to the great distinction by Augustine between the city of God, which sojourns in the world and is determined by the 'heavenly love of God', and the 'city of men', which is the society of the ungodly, determined by the 'love of self' and the devil (Augustine 1985, XIV: 28). More significantly and in terms of human nature, it alludes to the tension between Augustinian and Pelagian approaches to human nature and its transformation (as I discussed at the beginning of this chapter). The grace of God due to the inherent evil of all human actions, argued the former; works in conjunction with God argued the latter. But why introduce what is usually regarded as a Latin distinction in analysing the thought of one who was trained (1895–1899) in the Russian Orthodox theological tradition? This tradition, of course, argued for a *synergiea* between human and divine effort, seeking to counter what it felt was the 'Western' bifurcation. Once again, Stalin's reflections on human nature, now in terms of a profound intensification, evince a notable break from Eastern Orthodox theological approaches. Yet, the dialectical point is that the break relies on the assumption that one must keep the two sides of an opposition in touch with one another.

Finally, I read this allusion by Clark in terms of the oft-repeated charge that Augustine was influenced perhaps a little too much by his Manichaean background. I do not wish to argue that Stalin was in some way influenced by Augustine or the Augustinian tradition, but rather that his reflections on dialectical intensification and human nature constitute what may be called an Augustinian irruption into a Russian

situation. Augustine differentiated sharply between the saved and the damned, between those destined to heaven and those to eternal damnation—in contrast with the Eastern Orthodox assumption that all creation is to be saved in a cosmological process (Bouteneff 2008, 95; Alfeyev 2008, 115–119). However, Augustine's interest was primarily in the potential transformation of human nature, the overcoming of our inherent evil through God's grace, from a fallen state to one of salvation. The catch was that such a theology of transformed nature must deal with the uncanny ability of the former, sinful human nature to persist in the new. One's sins may have been forgiven, but one continues to sin; salvation may be assured, but one continues to slip up and live in the way of the damned (see especially the Apostle Paul's reflections in Romans 7). So too was Stalin, the erstwhile theological student, intensely interested in the transformation of human nature, as this nature was both conditioned by and produced the new social and economic formation. However, the Bolsheviks were faced with continual problems and intensified resistance by those defeated, signs that the old human nature persisted far longer than they had anticipated. Socialism may have been achieved, but that did not mean that struggle was over.[90] If anything, it was intensified.

4.4.6 Towards an Internal Awareness

Nonetheless, Stalin prefers to use the externalising language of class in most of his formulations, identifying the moribund as class opponents who have been vanquished and yet resist ever more desperately. On one occasion, I suggested an implicit awareness that this may also be a process internal to the socialist project, arising from within and thereby with greater relevance for the question of human nature. I would like to close the argument of this section with three clearer indications of this awareness. The first is relatively brief: 'We must smash and cast aside another rotten theory [*gniluiu teoriiu*] to the effect that a person who is not always engaged in wrecking and who even occasionally shows successes in his work cannot be a wrecker' (Stalin 1937c, 264, 1937d, 167). Elsewhere, Stalin deploys the image of a mask, or a wolf in sheep's clothing, which creates the impression of deception and the need to unmask the one engaged in deception (Stalin 1937c, 242, 1937d, 151). In this text, he would like to think that a wrecker is always a wrecker, even if he or she shows another side, but his observation may also be read as an acknowledgement that someone engaged in the project, even contributing to its success, may at the same time engage in wrecking.

[90]Getty (1985, 204) notes this tension, but describes it in terms of a struggle between Stalin's 'moderate' and 'radical' positions, and that his effort to combine the two was 'facile', speaking—like any politician—out of both sides of his mouth. By contrast, Van Ree (2002a, 115–116) suggests somewhat unpersuasively that Stalin could maintain the argument for intensification after the proclamation of the achievement of socialism by suggesting that consciousness lagged behind actual circumstances.

Second, Stalin and the Party firmly believed that the wreckers in question were very much part of a fifth column. As his extensive justification of the trials and purges during the Red Terror indicate, he genuinely believed—in line with the doctrine of the intensification of struggle—that the various opposition groups had been merging into a general front enmeshed closely with foreign forces seeking to undermine the Soviet Union (Stalin 1937c, 264, 1937d, 166; Van Ree 2002a, 117–125; Khlevniuk 2009, 169–179; Jansen and Petrov 2002, 108; David-Fox 2012, 302–303). Indeed, Trotskyism—the cipher for this whole process—had moved from being a 'political trend in the working class' to working closely with hostile foreign forces (Stalin 1937c, 249–253, 1937d, 156–159). The catch with the category of a fifth column is that it becomes difficult to discern whether those involved are within or without. Or, rather, the category of a fifth column means that it is very much an internal phenomenon, perpetrated by holders of Party cards.

The third example is closely related, being more extensive and colourful and reminding one of Stalin's poetic and storytelling abilities:

> People look for the class enemy outside the collective farms; they look for persons with ferocious visages, with enormous teeth and thick necks, and with sawn-off shotguns in their hands. They look for kulaks like those depicted on our posters. But such kulaks have long ceased to exist on the surface. The present-day kulaks and kulak agents, the present-day anti-Soviet elements in the countryside are in the main 'quiet', 'smooth-spoken', almost 'saintly [*sviatye*]' people. There is no need to look for them far from the collective farms; they are inside the collective farms, occupying posts as storekeepers, managers, accountants, secretaries, etc. They will never say, 'Down with the collective farms!' They are 'in favour' of collective farms. But inside the collective farms they carry on sabotage and wrecking work that certainly does the collective farms no good (Stalin 1933c, 235, 1933d, 229).

These 'quiet', 'smooth-spoken' even 'saintly' people are 'inside the collective farms', occupying important posts. They support the collective farms, are in favour of grain procurements and see themselves as integral to the building of socialism. And yet they engage in sabotage, urging the collective farmers to reserve funds for this and that, so much so that the farms become unviable. Are they still external? Stalin seems to suggest so, speaking of 'kulak and kulak agents', but the text indicates a crucial shift. 'Kulak' is becoming as much a term designating a feature of human nature—in both collective and individual senses—as any specific class identification. Or rather, these class terms are becoming terms that concern human nature itself. Class conflict is also very much a conflict of human nature. All of this would come to fruition with the Red Terror.

4.5 Red Terror

The high point of the development of a materialist doctrine of evil is none other than the Red Terror. The Terror, with its 'uprooting and smashing methods' (Stalin 1937c, 261, 1937d, 164), was as much a policy, enacted by the OGPU-NKVD, for

protecting the revolution against counter-revolution as a practice that peaked at certain times, such as that following the assassination attempts on Lenin or Stalin's purges of the late 1930s. Here theory is born of practice and events, a nascent theory of the strength and power of evil. I mean not that the Red Terror is itself an evil per se,[91] but that the Terror entails an identification of and response to evil, and thereby a necessary other dimension of the new human being identified in the 1930s. In analysing the Red Terror, we face once again external and internal factors. The identification of external evil is the easier option, while the awful awareness of the internal nature of evil is an awareness gained with much pain. In what follows, I am concerned mostly the internal dynamics of evil, in both collective and individual senses.

4.5.1 On Terror

The first peak of the Red Terror followed the assassination attempts on Lenin and others in 1918. After the near fatal shooting of 30 August of that year,[92] Stalin suggested a systematic mass terror against the perpetrators of the assassination attempt, but also against opponents of the new government.[93] So the government directed Felix Dzerzhinsky, head of the Cheka, to commence what was officially called a Red Terror.[94] It matters little for my analysis as to how much Lenin and Stalin were directly involved, from arrests and imprisonment to the execution of the Romanov family, but what is important is the fact that it happened in response to an act of terror. That is, the Red Terror was not an initiator of violence, but a response to anti-revolutionary violence. It was thereby a response to the concrete reality of evil, a rude awakening to how vicious and desperate the internal forces opposed to the revolution really were. The Pelagian view of the inherent ability of human beings to achieve good, or indeed the Eastern Orthodox theological assumption of

[91]For some commentators the Red Terror functions as the epitome of the 'evil' of Stalinism, if not of communism per se (Volkogonov 1994; Figes 1998; Werth et al. 1999; Fitzpatrick 1994a, 163–170, 2000, 190–217; Harris 2000; Gellately 2007; Gregory 2009; Conquest 2015).

[92]After the bullets missed Lenin on 14 January, two found their mark on 30 August. One hit his arm and the other was embedded in his neck and spilled blood into a lung. They were fired by Fanya Kaplan, the Socialist-Revolutionary, and they left Lenin clinging to life. Even here, external forces seemed to have played a role, with the British agent, Robert Bruce Lockhart, engaged in inciting a plot to overthrow the Soviet government due to its efforts to seek a peace treaty with the Germans (Long 2008).

[93]'Having learned of the villainous attempt of the hirelings of the bourgeoisie on the life of Comrade Lenin, the world's greatest revolutionary and the tried and tested leader and teacher of the proletariat, the Military Council of the North Caucasian Military Area is answering this vile attempt at assassination by instituting open and systematic mass terror against the bourgeoisie and its agents' (Stalin 1918w, 130, 1918x, 128).

[94]It was officially announced in an article called 'Appeal to the Working Class', in the 3 September 1918 issue of *Izvestiya*. A couple of days later the Cheka published the decree, 'On Red Terror'.

the basic goodness of human beings (Bouteneff 2008, 94), came face to face with the deeply troubling and Augustinian realisation of human evil.

What of the oft-cited 'excesses' of the Red Terror, such as the summary executions of suspected saboteurs? One element here is the uncontrolled nature of revolutionary violence. It typically runs its own course, straying here and there in the euphoria of the moment. More significantly, a Red Terror may be seen as the belated outburst of deep patterns of working class and peasant anger at the long and brutal oppression by the former ruling classes, an oppression that makes any Red Terror look tame by comparison. In Russia, the long history of capricious and vicious violence at the hands of the landlords, factory tyrants, Black Hundreds (recall the frequent pogroms), and tsarist troops were remembered. Now at last was an opportunity to settle old scores, since the workers and peasants were finally in control. The remarkable consistency, which appears beneath the constant recalibrations, of the categories of the 'disenfranchised' and 'alien elements' in dealing with the old class opponents gives abundant testimony to the reality of the changed class situation.[95] Lenin's argument in *The State and Revolution* (Lenin 1917g, h),[96] that the dictatorship of the proletariat must smash the bourgeois dictatorship, had found ready acceptance and was enacted through the Red Terror.[97]

4.5.2 On Purges

The greatest peak of the Red Terror was constituted by the purges and trials under Stalin in the 1930s. Here it is worth recalling that the term 'purge' is an ancient theological idea. 'Purge [*ekkatharate*] the old yeast, so that you may be a new batch', writes the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 5:7, using the metaphor of yeast and bread for the Christian life. The 'old yeast' of malice and evil should be replaced with the new yeast of Christ, for it leavens the whole dough (1 Cor 5:6).[98] The verb, *ekkathairo* means cleansing, removing what is unclean. Crucially, the translation of the biblical passage in the Latin Vulgate is *expurgate* (*expurgare*), with a comparable sense (that at the same time opens up a slightly different semantic field) of cleansing, freeing or clearing away from unwanted matter, and then clearing oneself from blame. *Purgare* has a similar meaning, with the sense of cleansing from or ridding dirt and impurities. For the early Christians of these texts and afterwards,

[95]This consistency shows up in the very efforts, in secondary scholarship, to decry such a development (Fitzpatrick 2000, 115–138, 2005, 91–101; Alexopoulos 2002).

[96]See also Stalin's iterations of this position in my earlier discussion.

[97]By comparison, in China one of the most telling instances of counter-revolutionary brutality of the Guomindang before 1949 was the practice of shooting, without question, any woman found with natural feet and short hair. The assumption by the forces of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-Shek) was that any such woman was obviously a communist.

[98]In 2 Tim 2:21 the reflexive appears (*ekkathare eauton*), cleanse yourself, now by analogy with a utensil.

purging clearly related to the body and soul of the believer. Christ was the physician who heals the soul, if not the body itself (Moreira 2010, 63–66). The impurities that arose from sin or the activities of the devil included as much physical ailments, deformities, pain and illness, just as mental difficulties signalled an afflicted soul. Thus, the resurrected body would be one that was whole and vigorous, freed from the deleterious effects of sin and where an equally whole and clean soul would be at peace. And it was God who purged one of sin so as to be purified and restored to God. But one could also participate, through redemptive pain (like Christ), ascetic practice, fasting, chastity and self-deprivation. Under the influence of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (of the late fifth and early sixth centuries CE), purging became crucial to the stages in the Christian life: purification, illumination and union. It applied to individual life, hierarchies of angels and the church itself (catechumens, baptised and monks). As the Latin and Greek traditions diverged, the theory and practice of purging took distinct paths in some respects (notably the Latin doctrine of purgatory) and overlapped, especially in terms of monasticism. Indeed, in Eastern Orthodox theology, monasticism became a core feature and the source of renewal.

As I begin to analyse Stalin's usage, let me note the official Synodal Russian[99] translation of 1 Cor 5:7, which uses *ochistite* (perfect of *chistit'*)—to clean, clear and purge—for the Greek *ekkatharate*. The noun, *chistka* would be the main term used by the Bolsheviks. I am not of course claiming a direct and conscious lineage from the biblical text of 1 Cor. 5:7, but rather a terminological, cultural, if not theological framework within the terminology of purge that was translatable across theological and Marxist political usage. This was already the case with Lassalle's famous slogan, cited often by Stalin and indeed Lenin: 'the Party become strong by purging itself [*Partiia ukrepliaetsia tem, chto ochishchaet sebia*]' (Stalin 1921m, 73, 1921n, 72). In Stalin's texts, a purge is a natural process of the Party. The term was applied to the regular screening of Party members, seeking to weed out the 'hangers-on, nonparticipants, drunken officials, and people with false identification papers, as well as ideological "enemies" or "aliens"' (Getty 1985, 38).[100] Already from early on, it was seen as a necessary and beneficent revolutionary process, 'purging [*ochishcheniia*] the revolution of "unnecessary" elements', one that would continue with the Party when in power (Stalin 1917i[1], 38, 1917j[1], 36). Over the following years, he came to depict purging in different ways, including the natural

[99]The Synodal translation was first published in full in 1878, and would have been used by Stalin. Begun in 1813 under the auspices of the Russian Bible Society, it was eventually completed under the direction of the Most Holy Synod. As with most major Bible translations, its distinctive features influenced the Russian language and literature deeply. With some revisions, it remains the Bible used by a number of churches in Russia today, including the Russian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholics and Protestant Churches.

[100]Although Kharkhordin (1999, 133–142) does not deal with Stalin in any extended way, his discussion of the theory and practice of purges in the strict sense has some useful insights, especially in terms of the need for unity and 'fusion' or 'cohesion [*spaika*]'. It is important to note that trials, operations, arrests and terror were not designated purges. However, since scholarly usage has since included such matters under the label of 'purge', I do so here as well.

process of tidying up the Party's membership, of a 'cleaning up [*chistka*]' and 'sifting' or 'filtering [*filtrovki*]' the cadres of the Red Army so as to ensure reliable Bolsheviks at its core, of theoretical re-education of aforesaid members, of strengthening the Party through struggle and getting rid of unstable and unreliable elements, of 'purging itself of dross [*ochishchaet sebia ot skverny*], of reminding members that the Party exists and of ensuring quality rather than quantity so as not to become a 'colossus with feet of clay'.[101] On a more theological register, a purge reminds people that a master exists, the Party, which 'can call them to account for all sins committed against it'. It is necessary that 'this master [*khoziainu*] go through the Party ranks with a broom every now and again' (Stalin 1924s, 240, 1924t, 229).[102]

4.5.3 The Trials

The trigger for the major trials[103] of the 1930s was the assassination in December 1934 of Sergei Kirov, head of the Leningrad Party branch.[104] As with the assassination attempt on Lenin in 1918, this prompted the sense of an imminent coup and a vigorous response in seeking out the enemy within, resulting in the trial and execution of many thousands.[105] The Red Terror reached a climax between 1936 and 1938: the trial of Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre (the Sixteen), of the anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre (the Seventeen), of the Anti-Soviet 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites' (the Twenty-One) and of the generals (most notably Marshall Tukhachevskii).[106] Eventually, many of the 'Old Bolsheviks' were caught up in the

[101]Many are the references here (Stalin 1919q, 190, 1919r, 186, 1919o, 195, 197, 1919p, 191, 193, 1919m, 211, 215, 230–231, 1919n, 204, 208, 222–223, 1919a, 1919b, 1921m, 73, 1921n, 72, 1921c, 100–101, 1921d, 98–99, 1924s, 239–240, 1924t, 227–229, 1939a, 400–401, 1939b, 322–323).

[102]This reference to a master undermines Kharkhordin's proposal (1999, 154–161) that the connection between self-criticism and purge in the collective brought about an internal dynamic of purging that led to the Red Terror. Implicit in his analysis is the absence of an external arbiter, such as an independent legal system, but implicit here is the absence of a God.

[103]Trials took place at all levels of the complex judiciary, the purpose of which was both judgement and education (Kotkin 1997, 256–257).

[104]See the key document from the Central Executive Committee legitimating the Red Terror, from 1 December 1934 and a few hours after Kirov's murder (Boobbyer 2000, 65–66).

[105]I have no need to add to the interminable debate over the number of deaths, although Wheatcroft's and Nove's analyses are the soberest (Wheatcroft 1993, 1996, 1999; Nove 1993).

[106]A number of collections of primary documents relating to the Red Terror are worth consulting (USSR 1936, 1937; 1938; Getty and Naumov 1999; Boobbyer 2000, 65–82; Weinberg and Bernstein 2011, 184–207).

purge, including Grigori Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukharin and Leon Trotsky. In the purge of the Red Army alone, 34,000 officers were arrested (although 11,500 were reinstated), including 476 senior commanders. However, I am less interested here in the public relations disaster that the trials became (Stalin 1939a, 395–396, 1939b, 319–320; Bliven 1938),[107] in the level of Stalin's involvement,[108] in the nature of the opposition bloc, the plots and Trotsky's involvement,[109] in the widespread debate they continue to generate, as scholars seek causes while (rarely) defending them or (mostly) condemning them in a way that curiously echoes some elements of Cold War propaganda.[110] Instead, I wish to focus on the way they reveal a more realistic (and arguably pessimistic) assessment of the propensity to evil.

Four theoretical features of the trials and purges stand out. First, there was the bifurcation between the vast number who enthusiastically supported the heady project of the 1930s and the many who found it was far too much. Whether or not

[107]It is worth noting that the trials fooled the High Command of Hitler's *Wehrmacht*, who, believing that the Red Army had been weakened by the military trials, anticipated that it would collapse and that Moscow would fall in short order. The military was far stronger than expected and, given the enmeshment of the army with the people, public morale and support of the government held strong (Thurston 1996, 199–226; Roberts 2006, 15–19).

[108]It was much less than has often been imputed. The most judicious assessments remain those by Getty (1993) and Getty, Rittersporn, and Zemskov (1993).

[109]Getty (1985, 119–128) offers an insightful assessment of Trotsky's involvement through his son, Lev Sedov (see also Martens 1996, 119). Getty concludes that a bloc and plot did form, that Trotsky knew of it, and that the NKVD was aware of its development (see further Furr and Bobrov 2010).

[110]For instance, even the U.S. Ambassador to the USSR at the time, Joseph E. Davies, found the trials perfectly fair (Larina 1994, Martens 1996, 142). Debate over the purges and trials continues to produce an increasingly diverse range of assessments. As a sample, these include: repetitions of Cold War denunciations; counter-revolutionary thermidor; Stalin's childhood trauma; personal paranoia (as a defence against latent homosexuality); political paranoia; routinisation of evil; methodical application of incalculable violence; detailed dictatorial control; chaos and disorder (which was counter-productive); intentionalist versus decisionist; a world of signs removed from the real world; a unique innovation by Stalin; elimination of political alternatives; diversion of dissent; response to economic problems; a species of revivalism; theatre; inquisition; production of 'official fear' in contrast to 'cosmic fear'; 'communist sacrifice' in which the Party's 'failure' is reinscribed on itself; and the usual *reductio ad Hitlerum* (Leites 1955; Marcuse 1958, 112; Tucker 1965, 1990, 171; Trotsky 1972, 86–114; Shernock 1984; Rittersporn 1986; De Jonge 1988; Argenbright 1991; Manning 1993b; Roberts 1995; Davies 1997, 113; Kotkin 1997, 327; Ihanus 1999; Žižek 1999; Lih 2002; Bauman 2004; Service 2004; Roberts 2006, 17–18; Priestland 2007, 304–393; Gerlach and Werth 2008; Conquest 2015). Many have been influenced implicitly by Khrushchev's misleading 'secret speech' at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR in February 1956 (Furr 2011; Losurdo 2008).

the latter group had something to lose in the process, their reluctance, noncompliance, resistance and outright opposition did not stand them well. The Red Terror was not so much the 'hard line' in contrast to a 'soft line' of fostering Stakhanovism and affirmative action,[111] but rather the necessary other dimension of one and same process.[112] Second, the Red Terror may be seen as the last moment of the dominance of a Pelagian-cum-Eastern Orthodox view of human nature, which had to be defended at all costs by eliminating those who revealed a starker, Augustinian perception. Wavering and oppositional elements—it was felt—had to be weeded out, as well as sections of the Red Army that may have been less than resolute during the soon-to-come struggle with Hitler's massed forces (for by far the main struggle and thereby locus of victory was on the Russian front). Evil had to be excised. Third, the Terror reveals an over-compensation for the lack of a properly robust doctrine of evil in the Marxist tradition. In the sweeping nature of the trials and purges, along with the relocations of parts of the population who resisted Stalin's moves, we encounter the surprise and shock at the presence of evil and thereby a response that attempts to compensate for the overly benign heritage of Pelagian Marxism, if not of Russian Orthodox assumptions concerning human nature. Finally, in this very effort the power of an Augustinian approach is revealed. Thus, the Red Terror marks the explicit recognition of the propensity to evil, which is now raised to a whole new level during the socialist offensive. Evil could not be excised so easily.

4.5.4 Evil Within

This awareness was all the more powerful since it was realised that the evil in question was just as much an internal reality, understood in both collective and individual senses. On a more clearly collective level, it is telling that the Red Terror of the 1930s was very much a public experience, and not the shady and covert program that it is so often depicted to have been (Fitzpatrick 1994a, 168–169). It involved mass participation, in which people crowded the many trials, upheld a general belief in social justice, and believed the guilt of the accused—often leaders in the Party itself (Thurston 1986a; Rittersporn 1993; Fitzpatrick 1993; Davies 1997, 119; Kotkin 1997, 269; Chase 2005, 240). Indeed, the level of participation in general may be seen in the remarkable volume of letters to government figures and to newspapers, letters that ran into the millions (Fitzpatrick 2000, 115–138, 2005, 155–181; Alexopoulos 2002). So also with the 1937 elections to all levels of government, especially in the collectives, which entailed detailed self-criticism and

[111]This is Martin's distinction (2001a), in relation to various policies surrounding the national question.

[112]Stalin recognises as much in his observation, 'We must smash and cast aside the fourth rotten theory to the effect that the Stakhanov movement is the principal means for the liquidation of wrecking' (Stalin 1937c, 266, 1937d, 168).

often went on for days and weeks, running beyond Party expectations (Kharkhordin 1999, 159–160; Priestland 2007, 371–372). Common workers and farmers enthusiastically denounced Party and economic officials suspected of—among a large range of potential crimes—sabotaging the economy, technicism, ideological doubt, efforts to undermine the government, or acting on behalf of a foreign enemy (Manning 1993a). Popular enthusiasm for the self-cleansing was very common indeed.[113] It is de rigueur to decry such mass brutality, but this reaction misses both the fact that the majority of ordinary people did not fear arrest (Thurston 1996, 143–144) and the collective nature of the old communist process of self-criticism. Here, the self-examination for failings in fostering the cause becomes a collective venture that seeks to strengthen the body through purging what is harmful. Yet purging threatens to become a never-ending process, not because one needs to find continual scapegoats for failure to achieve the goals of the cause, but because evil remains no matter how much one attempts to excise it.

In the trials themselves collective and individual merge, although in order to see how this came about I would like to turn to Bukharin's confession, in the third and last trial of 1936–1938, to explicate what is implicit in Stalin's formulations (as I examined earlier in relation to wreckers, the fifth column and the 'saintly' members of collective farms). Like other confessions, Bukharin's indicates not so much cowering before the threat of coercion or even the result of such coercion (the common position of those who condemn the trials), but the fact that those charged owned the confessions. That is, even if they had not committed some of the acts confessed, they came to believe that they were true. The confession of Bukharin is the paradigm of this process. This central figure in the Communist Party, with senior roles—among others, member of the Politburo, secretary of the Comintern, chief editor of *Pravda* and author of major works—and for a while Stalin's closest ally, fell out due to his opposition to Stalin's move leftward, especially the push to undertake rapid collectivisation. His initial confession, the spectacular withdrawal, the reinterrogation, admission to the totality of the crimes but denial of knowledge of specific crimes, 34 letters to Stalin (written from prison) with their tearful protestations of loyalty and admission, the four books written, and then his conduct in the trial in which he subtly criticised the very confession he had made, even to the point of questioning the outdated role of the confession itself—all these illustrate the sheer impossibility of locating the dividing line between good and evil.[114]

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[113]Stalin captures this situation in his comments from 1939: 'At the beginning of 1938 Rosengoltz, Rykov, Bukharin and other fiends were sentenced to be shot. After that, the elections to the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics were held. In these elections 99.4% of the total vote was cast for the Soviet power' (Stalin 1939a, 396, 1939b, 320).

[114]The trial and Bukharin's behaviour have perplexed observers ever since. Apart from the dismissal of the confessions as coerced, some have suggested it was the last service of a true believer in the cause, that he used Aesopian language to turn the trial into a trial of Stalin himself, that he subtly pointed to his innocence while ostensibly admitting guilt and that the charge was primarily political and ideological. These interpretations not so much misread the material, but rather manifest at a formal level precisely the tension at the heart of a materialist doctrine of evil (Cohen

Above all, Bukharin's last plea plays out all these contradictions in extraordinary detail. Once again, he admits all his guilt in opposing the rapid push towards communism, even in plotting to overthrow the government, but then he turns around to question and deny individual charges, saying at times that he can neither deny nor confirm a charge or his own admission (USSR 1938, 767–779). The most telling section is when he identifies within himself a 'peculiar duality of mind', even a 'dual psychology' that was caught in the contradiction between a degenerating counter-revolutionary tendency and what he calls a 'semi-paralysis of the will', a contradiction that was in turn generated by the 'objective grandeur of socialist construction'. He is nothing less than the Hegelian 'unhappy consciousness' (USSR 1938, 776–777).[115] I suggest that this extraordinary text reveals a deep awareness of the impossibility of distinguishing between guilt and innocence, for we are all so in any given moment.[116] So he concludes: 'The monstrousness of my crime is immeasurable especially in the new stage of struggle of the U.S.S.R. May this trial be the last severe lesson, and may the great might of the U.S.S.R become clear to all' (USSR 1938, 779).

In light of all this, Stalin's call to vigilance—precisely when it had waned in the context of the heady successes of the socialist offensive—is as much a watchfulness for the opponents who constantly arise as a vigilance of oneself in order to identify any such tendency within (Stalin 1937c, 255–259, 1937d, 160–163).[117] I mean not merely the political blindness, 'carelessness, complacency, self-satisfaction, excessive self-confidence, swelled-headedness and boastfulness', which are sins

(Footnote 114 continued)

1980, 370–381; Medvedev 1989, 367; Larina 1994; Service 2004; Koestler 2006; Priestland 2007, 360–364).

[115]Stalin's earlier observation on Bukharin is uncannily prescient: 'In general, Bukharin was in a repentant mood. That is natural: he has been sinning against the nationalities for years, denying the right to self-determination. It was high time for him to repent. But in repenting he went to the other extreme' (Stalin 1923u, 271, 1923v, 266). See also Stalin's earlier criticisms of Bukharin, already back in 1917 and then when he 'out-lefted' Bukharin in the socialist offensive (Stalin 1917g^2, 195–199, 1917h^2, 182–186, 1929i, 102–113, 1929j, 96–107). Those familiar with Hegel may well be reminded of the famous section of the *Phenomenology* on 'Absolute Freedom and Terror' (1977, 355–364). Hegel was, of course, rather horrified by the Terror of the French Revolution, seeing it as the (momentary) effacement of 'all distinctions and all continuance of distinctions' within the absolute freedom of abstract self-consciousness (361). No constituent parts, no mediation, no alienation, in which the general will is coterminous with an individual. Despite recoiling and eager to move on, Hegel glimpses in his own way the possibility that evil is a heartbeat away from the good: the absolute positive of freedom 'changes around to its negative nature' (361).

[116]An echo of Bukharin's experience may be found in the complex policies of disenfranchisement (*lishentsy*), in which both people and officials were never quite sure that they were really able to distinguish and identify the enemy, for the enemy always seemed to elude their grasp (Alexopoulos 2002, 86–95).

[117]Fitzpatrick's comment (2000, 192), 'anyone could turn out to be an enemy', may be read—against her intentions—in such a way. Similarly, her treatment (2005, 114–152) of the double-lives of many individuals provides further evidence of this deeply internal process.

enough, but the possibility that an Old Bolshevik like himself may well become a 'wrecker' (Stalin 1937c, 257, 1937d, 161).[118] In this respect, let me recall an earlier comment to the effect that a class term such as 'kulak' seems to have made a transition in Stalin's thought to include dimensions of human nature. Here I would add the ciphers of bourgeois, Menshevik and Trotskyite. Commentators have from time to time stressed the flexibility of such terms, which could be applied to opponents who were neither aware of nor fit any objective criteria for such identity (Getty 1985, 125; Viola 1993; Fitzpatrick 2000, 191–192, 2014). However, what they miss is that the terms themselves become part of the internal dynamic that I have been examining. Collectively, the point is easy to see, for Menshevik and Trotskyite especially are terms internal to the workings of the Party and socialism in a Russian situation. They arise from within and become points of extended struggle. But is it possible that they also apply to the individual within the collective? I suggest that they do, that each person, no matter how genuine a Bolshevik, may evince such traces. Bolshevik and Menshevik, Stalin and Trotsky, become two dimensions of the same person.[119] In these ciphers is embodied at yet another level the stark insights into Marxist anthropology.

4.6 Conclusion: The Necessary Conjunction of Good and Evil

I have argued that Stalin, especially in the context of the socialist offensive of the 1930s, came to develop the outlines of a new human nature in which evil loomed large. I framed this development in terms of a tension between Pelagian-cum-Eastern Orthodox and Augustinian views of human nature, with a distinct focus on transformation. Initially, I suggested that Stalin moves from a common Marxist Pelagianism, in which human beings have the ability to transform themselves (collectively and individually), to a more Augustinian position, in which evil looms large and hobbles any project for improvement.[120] This Augustinianism emerges initially in the practices of self-criticism and admission of 'sins', but especially in the purges of the Red Terror.

[118]It may be possible to read the constant switches between repressive and anti-repressive positions in this light, rather than as mere indecision and wavering (Getty 1985, 1993).

[119]This metaphoric internalisation of class goes beyond the suggestion that class struggle ceased to be a central motif of the 1930s (itself contestable), in favour of rooting out cadres with bureaucratic and anti-communist tendencies (Priestland 2007, 324–329).

[120]Deutscher (1967, 262) unhelpfully casts this opposition as one between revolutionary optimism and pessimism in relation to the working class, which he then attaches to Trotsky and Stalin.

However, it should be clear by now that an either-or hardly does justice to the complexity of the material. Instead, I have emphasised a bifurcation that runs through the extraordinary decade of the 1930s. This began with the distinction between the many who were passionate for the socialist offensive, for the industrialisation and collectivisation drives, and the many who lagged behind, at times actively opposing the revolutionary push. Enthusiasm cuts both ways.[121] It reached a whole new level with dialectical intensification, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the 'two camps' and particularly of class struggle, in which the 'moribund' and the 'doomed' would fight ever more ferociously the closer they sensed the socialist project might succeed. The purges of the Red Terror were then an effort to rid the collective and individual body of these elements. Yet, in the very process of doing so, the Red Terror marks the stark realisation of the strength and reality of this evil—especially the fact that it was generated from within. All of which brings my argument back to the constitutive feature of the socialist offensive of the 1930s: the necessary connection between passion and purge, between Stakhanovism and Red Terror, affirmative action and repression, or indeed between the ciphers of Stalinism and Trotskyism. Both dimensions were crucial to the effort to construct socialism and especially for the new, transformed human nature that was felt to be emerging.[122] It was neither Pelagian nor Augustinian, but radically intensified forms of both at one and the same time.

I would like to close on a slightly different note: what did Stalin regard as the most important side of this new human nature? Was passion or purge, Stakhanovism or the Red Terror, good or evil, more important? On the one hand, he indicates that the dangers to the socialist project were primary, that vigilance was needed and the Red Terror vital (Stalin 1937c, 246, 1937d, 154). In this situation, the GPU or Cheka was 'the terror of the bourgeoisie, the vigilant guardian of the revolution, the naked sword of the proletariat [*obnazhennym mechom proletariata*]' (Stalin 1927i, 240, 1927j, 235). On the other hand, he points out: 'Measures of repression in the sphere of socialist construction are a necessary element of the offensive, but they are an auxiliary, not the chief element'. Instead, the chief element is the positive side of the socialist offensive, by which he means not only industry and collective farming, but also mobilising 'the masses around socialist construction' (Stalin 1930e, 318, 1930f, 309–310). These two positions signal not so much Stalin's inability to decide, but rather the importance and necessity of both.

[121]The memoirs by Andreev-Khomiakov (1997) indicate very well the double nature of the process, for in his anti-communist effort to show up bitter experiences by many at the time he also reveals the sheer enthusiasm and significant achievements.

[122]Naiman (2002) hints at but does not develop the necessity of the connection between what he calls 'healing and terror' in the Soviet project.

Chapter 5
Party and People, or, Transcendence and Immanence

> Our Party is … a militant organisation of the proletariat, which is intellectually vigorous, acts independently, lives a full life, is destroying the old and creating the new (Stalin 1923q, 371, 1923r, 362).

This chapter concerns what may be called the dialectics of Party and people, which will turn out to be a political form of the philosophical dialectic of transcendence and immanence, with a rich history and not without significant theological moments.[1] I establish the reasons for using such a framework in the first section of my argument, where I seek to show how the abandonment of the world by God (in a European context) should actually be understood as a recalibration of the interaction between transcendence and immanence. The remainder of the argument has three main sections, each of them tackling the transcendence-immanence question in Stalin's thought from a slightly different angle. The first deals with the Marxist staple of working from above or from below, the second with the nature of socialist consciousness, and the third with Party and people. Although they provide different approaches to the same question, there is also a progression: Stalin moves to a gradually more complex understanding of the dialectic, from validating what comes from below (and thereby being cautious of transcendence) to a careful effort to understand—in light of changing circumstances—how the dialectic of Party and people, of transcendence and immanence, operates in the context of socialism in power. It turns out that Stalin is far from the crude advocate of 'revolution from above', imposing his or the Party's will on a recalcitrant people. Indeed, his main concern is less with the inner workings of the Party and more with

[1]This is by no means the only occasion of implicit or indeed explicit dialectical thinking on Stalin's part. Apart from other chapters in this book, these dialectical examples include his arguments for the generation of active revolutionary engagement from the determinism of history, a nascent constitutive resistance, the simultaneity of non-simultaneity, and the necessity of contradictions under socialism. These dialectical modes are apart from the explicit engagements with the Marxist staples of quantity and quality, subject and object, base and superstructure, and the forces and relations of production (Stalin 1906-7a, 1906-7b, 1938a, 105–131, 1938b, 99–127). Kolakowski's vain effort (1978–1981, vol 3, 94–99) to account for this material should be avoided.

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the absolutely necessary relation between Party and people, so much so that he begins to develop the outlines of what socialist democracy might mean in theory and practice.

5.1 The Persistence of Transcendence

Let me begin by identifying the pertinent features of the philosophical dialectic of transcendence and immanence, with an eye on its theological cadences. Of the two main forms of the dialectic that have appeared—ontological and temporal (think of God and eschatology as examples)—I focus initially on the ontological.[2] The terms may vary: nature and super-nature, absolute and contingent, sensory and suprasensory, inside this world and outside; but the core concerns qualitatively different modes of existence. Yet, transcendence has suffered under the onslaught of the European Enlightenment and modernity, which entails a world abandoned by God, as Lukács would have it (1971, 88, 1994, 74). Human beings, of course, believe that they have banished God, thereby ridding the world of baleful authority structures and the assumed subservience that such transcendence entailed. The trail of this abandonment is long, running at least from Spinoza, through—with distinct permutations—Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Weber, Deleuze, Derrida, Rorty, Habermas and Badiou,[3] let alone theologians such as Schleiermacher, Tillich and Altizer. At the core of this lengthy and elaborate European (or rather, Atlantic) effort is the assumption that every postulate of transcendence can and must be ambushed and explained by the workings of immanence in all fields. To this the only response by those keen to salvage transcendence seems to be a searching among the scraps and cracks of immanence, ranging from mysticism, through ethics and vague notions of the 'other', to the psychoanalytic category of the Real (Levinas, Nancy, Marion, Žižek [see Faulconer 2003; Schwartz 2004]).[4] This assumption may best be illustrated by the Feuerbachian move: instead of transcendence determining immanence (the gods create and determine the human world), it is immanence that creates the

[2]A common move is to deploy the myth of classicism (Boer 2014b) and suggest that Plato and Aristotle constitute the origin of the two ways in which transcendence may be understood, as either without or within the world.

[3]The accounts of this process are many and varied. These include: the 'death of God' first proposed by Hegel (1977, 190, see also Kosky 2004); a narrative of the loss of enchantment in all its dimensions, alongside a splintering of spirituality (Taylor 2004); the supposed radicalisation of God's transcendence, which began in medieval thought but culminated with the Reformation, which led to secularisation and thereby immanence (Taylor 2007, 130–140, 186–205); theology as the historical and ontological conditions for the immanence of modern politics (Schmitt 2005); occasional protests against the grain (Jonkers 2012). Studies of these figures are legion, so I resist the urge to cite more ere.

[4]See also a couple of useful studies of Nancy and Marion that address some of these issues (Kate 2012, Schrijvers 2012).

transcendence we assume to be prior (Feuerbach 1841a, b). Immanence seems to have become the untranscendable horizon.[5]

Marxism too is usually understood as an inheritor of the world's abandonment by God. As such, it is part of the larger dynamic of modern politics, which is supposed to partake of the narrative of abandonment, moving away from the use of transcendence by the ruling class to justify their hold on power (monarchs ruled 'by the grace of God …') to a sovereignty of the immanent frame, focused not on a singular ruler but on the people. In response to this assumption, I point out that Marxism has offered a thorough recasting of temporal transcendence, in which communism becomes the goal of history (distinguished from socialism in the context of socialism in power). Perhaps the first to provide a thorough philosophical framework for this temporal transcendence is Bloch (1995). His preferred terminology is that of utopia, but he clearly sees this as a way of discerning transcendence (utopia) in a world abandoned by God. At times, Bloch may seem to be advocating the discernment of the traces of transcendence that emerge from within immanence, especially when he speaks of breaking out of immanence, of the awareness that the barriers have already been transgressed (for *transcendo* is cognate with *transgresso*), which signals that they have in fact been transgressed, but he is even more conscious of the fact that temporal transcendence exists independently of immanence (Bloch and Adorno 1988, 12; Boer 2014a, 307–310). It draws us on and is creatively active in the present, a home that we have never seen but will know that it is home when we arrive. Temporal transcendence may be all very well, but what about ontological transcendence? For Bloch, the two are intimately connected, as he realises when he engages with religion and especially the Bible. Religion provides an expression of what is not right here and now, so much so that Bloch attempts a rereading of religion, within a Marxist framework, for understanding ontological transcendence in a world abandoned by God. Utopia is not merely a question of time but also of being, an ontology of utopia, if you will.

At the same time, Bloch is somewhat wanting when it comes to the actual dynamics of this ontological transcendence within Marxism. Or, rather, he did not have the experience of power, in which practice generates acute questions. Here Stalin comes into play, for my argument in what follows is that he does indeed offer a recasting of the dialectic of transcendence and immanence, specifically in terms of his deliberations concerning above and below, socialist consciousness and the relations between Party and people. This may seem like an ambitious claim for Stalin, even with the caveat that I am thinking through Stalin (since he provides the raw materials for thinking further), but the proof is in detailed analysis of his texts and thought. Let me put it this way: for Stalin, socialist politics does not mean the abandonment of transcendence for the sake of immanence, but rather a translation between philosophical-theological and political languages, in which the dialectic is

[5]I leave aside here the point that the effort to render transcendence immanent in immanence mirrors inversely the early theological effort to render immanence immanent in transcendence, especially in terms of the divine trinity (Ritter 1995, vol. 4, 221–222).

translated into another language (Boer 2015b). In such a process of translation, neither part of the dialectic has priority, however much traditional theologians or European moderns may protest.

5.2 From Above and from Below

The first angle through which I examine Stalin's thoughts on transcendence and immanence concerns the distinction between above and below. In communist circles, this distinction is well-known, although it is usually understood in terms of the genuineness of the movement 'from below' and the inauthenticity of the one 'from above'. As a mark of Stalin's waywardness, he is often accused—through misquotation—of being a proponent of the latter and thereby betraying the validity of what comes 'from below' (Lichtheim 1961, 365; Cohen 1980, 341, 345; Fitzpatrick 1994a, 2–4, 120, 128, 138). The reality is rather more complex, with Stalin not only committed to the value of what comes from below, but also to a distinct socialist recasting of the dialectic of transcendence and immanence. In the following two sections, I tackle the question from two angles. I begin by focusing on transcendence and then come from the other direction, from immanence. In each case, Stalin begins with a strong preference from what comes from below, only to develop the rudiments of more complex approach to their interrelation.

5.2.1 Cautious Transcendence

I begin with transcendence, especially Stalin's profound wariness of what comes from above. Transcendence there is, but one must be very careful indeed as to how it functions. A major source of this wariness is the experience of the way the Russian autocracy functioned in relation to worker agitation. Indeed, Stalin's pre-1917 comments on 'from above' are uniformly negative. Thus, while worker agitation came from below, the different responses of the autocracy came from above. The more brutal version was easy to denounce, for it referred to the old police force, orders given by the autocracy, such as shooting the workers in the Lena goldfields strike of 1912, if not outright counter-revolutionary repression (Stalin 1912q, 242, 1912r, 73–74, 1913e, 317, 1913f, 173, 1917k[1], 74, 1917l[1], 143). The theological underlay should not be missed, for the autocracy claimed to rule by the sanction of yet a higher authority.

Less obvious were the various reforms reluctantly granted by the autocracy, or indeed bourgeois democracy, in response to worker or peasant unrest. For example, Stalin draws an analogy between the emancipation of the peasants in 1861 and the reforms reluctantly granted by the autocracy in the wake of 1905, specifically in terms of a Duma. Putting words into the mouths of ruling class ideologues, Stalin compares the two situations: '"We must emancipate the peasants ourselves from

above, otherwise the people will rise in revolt and secure their emancipation themselves from below"'; "'We must give the people a State Duma from above, otherwise the people will rise in revolt and convoke a Constituent Assembly themselves from below"' (Stalin 1906m, 208–209, 1906n, 376). In both cases, the reforms 'from above' were designed to hoodwink peasants and workers, appearing to grant concessions but using them to subdue those affected. In other words, these measures were simply the tools of reaction, from a ruling class fearful of losing its power. Subsequent invocations continue in the same vein, with reforms and concessions 'from above' wide open to suspicion of ulterior motives (by oil owners, government representatives, 'bigwigs', if not bourgeois democracy itself) and the struggle 'from below' is valorised as one carried through by various groups of workers and peasants (Stalin 1907c, 87–88, 1907d, 109–110, 1912e, 245, 1912f, 81, 1913c, 1913d, 1917c[2], 4, 1917d[2], 24, 1934c, 42–43, 1934d, 38).

Did this situation change after 1917, when the Communist Party was in power? At one level, everything changes when one has power, especially when one seeks to create a new economic and social order. At another level, Stalin maintained throughout his life a profound wariness of arbitrary transcendence. Many are the examples. When responding to the argument that the Party is like an army, Stalin replies strongly—and against his earlier deployment of the analogy (Stalin 1921m, 73, 1921n, 72)—that while an army is 'built from above, on the basis of compulsion', the Party is 'built from below, on the voluntary principle [*na nachalakh dobrovol'nosti*]' (Stalin 1923m, 399, 1923n, 389). Thus, the 'General Staff' is not appointed from above and the Party does not rely materially for its existence on this staff. Or, when the 'left' tends to impose communist practices and production methods on different areas without considering the specific histories and natures of those areas and their nationalities (as in Ukraine), Stalin castigates such an approach as counter-productive and dangerous (Stalin 1923g, 318–319, 1923h, 311–312).[6] More generally, any effort to decree collectivisation from above should be prevented at all costs (Stalin 1930g, 216, 1930h, 210, 1930e, 295, 1930f, 286–287). Or any action to 'amputate' or remove members of the Central Committee from above leaves a 'bad aftermath' (Stalin 1924a, 283, 1924b, 271). Or, in his response to the common expectation of the fading away of national differences and even languages in favour of—with the advent of global communism—a world community and universal language, Stalin speaks of the dangers of imagining such a process could be achieved by decree, by compulsion from above (Stalin 1929e, 362, 1929f, 347).

In the midst of this caution, Stalin does begin to see a role for transcendence, as is clear from two texts, one from 1905 and the other after 1917. In the first, the immediate issue was an argument with the Mensheviks, who insisted on working

[6]Further, the effort to 'Ukrainise' the Russian workers 'from above' would be a curious form of national oppression, harmful if not utopian, that would generate anti-Ukrainian sentiment (Stalin 1926a[1], 159–160, 1926b[1], 151–152). This situation has its own dialectical complexity, since the Russian workers and indeed industry in Ukraine tended to be 'from above', inserted into the Ukrainian situation (Stalin 1923g, 337–338, 1923h, 329–330).

only from below, from the immanence of the working class. They argued that any revolutionary action from above to below was to be avoided at all costs, since the only viable action should proceed from below upward.[7] Such a suggestion carried with it the criticism that the Bolsheviks, if not the Social-Democratic Party as such, was no more than a group of intellectuals interested only in working from above (Stalin 1905c, 96, 108, 1905d, 38, 47–48, 1907e, 73–75, 1907f, 97–99). In order to refute this position, Stalin draws on Engels's argument against the Spanish Anarchists of the 1870s. The issue at stake, for both Engels and Stalin, was participation in a provisional government.[8] Should one participate, argued the Anarchist-Mensheviks, then such an act entailed a betrayal of the principle of immanence. However, as Engels shows, the Anarchists of the 1870s could not avoid the transcendence that arises from immanence, for they soon discarded their principles and joined a provisional government. So also with the Mensheviks, argues Stalin. The restriction to action 'from below' is not only an anarchist phrase that contradicts socialist policy, but it will also be refuted by the reality of revolutionary activity. One cannot escape the necessity of transcendence (Stalin 1905k, 148–150, 1905l, 87–89).

More telling is the new situation after 1917. In a *Pravda* interview of 1920, Stalin makes a rare mention of 'from above' in a positive light. The issue concerned reforms instituted by the government. Whereas such reforms may be insecure during instability and civil war, only those 'reforms and liberties are secure which are granted from above after the enemy has been vanquished' (Stalin 1920o, 423, 1920p, 410). The immediate point is that who is in power makes all the difference. Thus, in the debate over concessions to and agreements with the bourgeoisie (both externally and internally) during the NEP, Stalin argues that the situation of power is crucial. If the bourgeoisie is in power, then any agreement in exchange for reforms 'from above' supports such a power. By contrast, if the proletariat is in power, agreements take on a very different nature. Now they are for the purpose of strengthening proletarian power, if not using such power to disintegrate the bourgeoisie. After all, it is necessary for the proletariat to 'keep a tight hold on the power it has won' and to use it for the sake of economic revival (Stalin 1921c, 95, 1921d, 93). Analogous to Lenin's argument for the particular universal of freedom based on the proletariat and peasants (and in contrast to bourgeois claims to freedom), Stalin's point is direct: socialism in power may, for its inherently valid tasks, make use of various methods from above; bourgeois power, by contrast, does not have a valid reason for doing so.

[7] 'The Bakuninists moreover had for years been preaching that all revolutionary action from above to below [*von oben nach unten*] was an evil, and everything should be organised and carried through from below to above [*von unten nach oben*]' (Engels 1873a, 590, 1873b, 485). Stalin quotes this text via Lenin (Lenin 1905g, 391, 1905h, 136, Stalin 1905k, 148–149, 1905l, 87–88).

[8] A comparable argument ensued in relation to participation in the Duma between 1905 and 1917. Such participation functioned to raise worker consciousness (Stalin 1912i, 258, 1912j, 91).

5.2.2 *Validating from Below*

With this first glimmer of—an admittedly guarded—realisation of the need for action from above, some may feel that I have finally uncovered the first seeds of the theoretical justification of an arbitrary 'dictator', who was primarily interested in moulding the world after his own image. But if we pay attention to Stalin's texts, this is far from the case. Let me now tackle the question from the other side, from immanence. Initially, Stalin comes out with a strong preference for the value of below, concomitant with his suspicions of transcendence. But as the specific examples unfold (I offer analyses of three key texts), the relationship between below and above becomes more sophisticated.

The first example—an assessment of the Stakhanovite movement—seeks to valorise what comes from below, with little qualification. Thus, he speaks of the Stakhanovite movement as arising 'somehow, of itself [*samoproizvol'no*], almost spontaneously [*pochti stikhiĭno*], from below, without any pressure whatsoever from the administrators of our enterprises' (Stalin 1935j, 96, 1935k, 83–84). The key term is *stikhiinyi*, which is usually translated as 'spontaneous'. The problem is that the semantic field of *stikhiinyi* includes far more than 'spontaneous', for it designates an unstoppable and elemental natural force, which is simultaneously tenacious, inexplicable, unexpected, unplanned, but also disorganized (Lih 2005, 309–317, 389–398). This concept and reality was crucial in the lead-up to the October Revolution, providing the basis for Lenin's extensive analogies between revolution and miracle.[9] For Stalin, this elemental force is one aspect of what comes from below. He finds it particularly in the Stakhanovite movement, which not only arose in such a fashion, but did so despite the resistance of those above—administrators, leaders, and even other workers. It is nothing less than the 'most vital and irresistible movement of the present day' (Stalin 1935j, 97, 1935k, 84).

Thus far, we have a direct and simple opposition: worker initiatives and movements come from below, while tardy administrators and leaders come from above. The second example reveals a little more subtlety. It concerns criticism and self-criticism, which became a major feature of the socialist offensive (industrialisation and collectivisation from the late 1920s and into the 1930s). On this matter, we find a consistent pattern that runs through Stalin's thoughts: any action from above is initially tempered or balanced by that from below; soon enough, the perspective from above is found to be lacking in effectiveness, so that what comes from below is valorised more highly. Thus, in a 1928 speech given at the eighth congress of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, Stalin deals with criticism of bureaucracy (as part of the larger criticism and self-criticism campaign). Criticism may come from above, from the Central Committee or inspection agencies. This is all very good, Stalin points out, but 'it is still far from enough', for it requires 'twofold pressure—from above and from below' (Stalin 1928k, 77–78,

[9]For a full analysis, with all relevant references to Lenin, see my *Lenin, Religion, and Theology* (Boer 2013, 135–174).

1928l, 73). The impression may be one of mutual balance, but Stalin soon argues that it is not merely that what comes from above is insufficient; it is actually inadequate. The 'principal stress' should be from below, for the mass of workers has far more experience in how industry should be organised. Indeed, the 'one sole way' of ensuring that criticism is effective in reducing, if not abolishing bureaucracy, is through sustained criticism from below—even if the comrades who have provided excellent service in leadership should be made uncomfortable. All of which can be summed up as follows: 'And the chief thing: do not substitute for mass criticism *from below* "critical" fireworks *from above*; let the working-class masses come into it and display their creative initiative in correcting our shortcomings and in improving our constructive work' (Stalin 1928a, 144, 1928b, 138). Lest we suspect that Stalin later abandoned such an approach, preferring to look down from the heights of transcendence, let us consider a later piece, from 1937, where he once again addresses the matter of criticism. Initially, he observes that the view from above is limited, but so is that from below, even though it may see matters differently. So the principal should be: 'In order to find the proper solution to a problem these two experiences must be combined'. Indeed, only 'then will the leadership be correct' (Stalin 1937g, 289, 1937h, 183). A carefully balanced approach is called for. But then Stalin provides two examples, one from industry in the Donetz Basin and the other from the Party organization in Kiev. In both examples, the leadership was unable to come up with a satisfactory solution. By contrast, the perspectives and proposals from the 'little people', from workers and ordinary Party members, turned out to be correct. Paying attention to them, spending time listening to their ideas, was the only viable way for the leadership to function (Stalin 1937g, 289–290, 1937h, 183–184). This position, in which Stalin valorizes criticism from below and the perspective from above is clearly secondary, was remarkably consistent throughout his deliberations on the question of criticism and self-criticism.[10]

With this second example, Stalin has provided a somewhat more sophisticated analysis of the relations between transcendence and immanence, although he ends up defending the priority and importance of what comes from below. The third example is the most complex. It comes from the argument concerning coercion and persuasion in the early 1920s. On this matter, Stalin differed from Trotsky in an unexpected direction. At issue was not a simple opposition between above and below, but what the best approach from above might be. Trotsky, with his experience in building the Red Army, was not averse to strong-arm tactics. For Stalin, coercive methods, seeking to shake up the unions, are a baleful form of action 'from above', leading to conflict, splits and disintegration (Stalin 1921i, 14, 1921j, 13). Trotsky for coercion versus Stalin for persuasion: the opposition seems to be quite simple. But now a crucial qualification appears, turning on the relative weight of coercion and persuasion. Trotsky, according to Stalin's depiction, is in favour of the

[10]Examples from texts between those of 1920 and 1937 reveal such a consistency (Stalin 1928m, 31–42, 1928n, 28–38, 1928i, 246, 1928j, 236–237, 1937g, 282–283, 1937h, 178–179).

primacy of coercion, although this does not preclude persuasion. By contrast, Stalin prefers the *primacy* of persuasion, in which coercion is subordinate to and an auxiliary of persuasion. Lest one thinks this is merely a matter of degree, Stalin points out that it 'is just as impermissible to confuse these two methods as it is to confuse the army with the working class' (Stalin 1921i, 6, 1921j, 4–5, see also 1925m, 243, 1925n, 238). Stalin once again (see above) draws a distinction between the army and the working class, except that now it is not a simple opposition of above and below.[11] Instead, the working class differs in terms of the dynamic of above and below. From below, its 'economic position disposes it towards socialism, it is easily influenced by communist agitation, it voluntarily organises in trade unions and, as a consequence of all this, constitutes the foundation, the salt, of the Soviet state' (Stalin 1921i, 6–7, 1921j, 6).[12] The response from above should be far from coercion, for persuasion is most appropriate to this situation.

By now we have reached a point where the basic opposition of below and above has become more complex, if not problematized. I tackled the question from either direction, beginning with Stalin's profound suspicion of transcendence and finding that he began to find some room for a valid role for what comes from above. A similar result appeared when I focused on his valorising of immanence (in line with the trend of European modernism), for here too he began to work his way—in the framework of an above-below opposition—towards a somewhat more sophisticated position.

5.3 Socialist Consciousness

I would like to examine this position in some detail. This initially entails going back to the early debates over socialist consciousness, before turning to the situation of socialism in power and the Party itself (in the next section). At the turn of the century in Georgia, as indeed elsewhere, various factions within the socialist movement argued back and forth over whether socialist consciousness arises spontaneously and naturally among the working class, or whether it requires a Party to clarify and introduce such a consciousness. Is it one or the other? Stalin's answer is that the question implies a false dichotomy, for it is both. Explaining how takes one into core features of Marxist dialectics: a praxis-interpretation model; the denial of priority to either term; and the co-dependence of impetuses from above and from below, so much so that the very existence of socialist consciousness, and indeed the movement itself, relies on this co-dependence.

[11]See the detailed elaboration of this point a little later (Stalin 1923e, 384–387, 1923f, 374–377, 1923u, 200, 1923v, 198).

[12]Compare the discussion below of the tendency or gravitation of the working class to socialism.

Let me summarise Stalin's argument before explicating each of these features. Like Lenin before him, Stalin follows Kautsky's Erfurtian formulation,[13] but gives the answer his own emphases (Stalin 1905c, d, m, n).[14] Although consciousness arises from the class conditions of capitalism, so much so that 'socialist consciousness corresponds to the position of the proletariat' (Stalin 1905m, 164, 1905n, 100) and the working class 'gravitates' towards socialism (Stalin 1905c, 98–100, 105, 108, 110, 1905d, 39–41, 45, 47–48, 49), it remains an open question as to who is responsible for identifying and articulating such consciousness. This is the task of activist intellectuals, such as Marx and Engels (here Stalin explicitly invokes Kautsky). But this is by no means enough, for it needs to be publicised, spread, discussed and analysed by the working class itself: 'It is here that Social-Democracy (and not only Social-Democratic intellectuals) comes in and introduces socialist consciousness into the working-class movement'. To get his point across, Stalin quotes Lenin quoting Kautsky: 'This is what Kautsky has in mind when he says "socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without [*izvne vnesennoe v*]"' (Stalin 1905m, 165, 1905n, 101; Lenin 1902a, 384, 1902b, 38).[15]

A number of ramifications follow. To begin with, the statement quoted above risks being misinterpreted (once again) as a heavily weighted top-down approach, in which transcendence trumps immanence. So here we need to pay careful attention to Stalin's terminology. He speaks of the Party as a 'vehicle' or 'bearer [*nositel'nitsa*]' that should 'imbue [*vnedriat'*]' the working class with socialist consciousness.[16] By 'vehicle' he means not an idea that arises in someone's head, but a means of conveying, a medium for giving clarity to the raw materials of consciousness that can already be found among the working class. At the same time, the working class cannot clarify such matters on its own, so the consciousness articulated must be imbued, or carefully taught and absorbed, by the working class. In other words, this is the dialectic of praxis and interpretation, in which theoretical reflection responds to the realities of the material situation, only to intervene in that situation so as to clarify what is going on and influence the course of events. To put

[13]'The task of modern socialists is no longer that of *inventing* a new social order, but of *discovering* the requisite material thereto that is furnished by modern society; it is no longer that of bringing salvation to the proletariat from above, but of assisting the proletariat in its class struggle by enlightening it, and by promoting its economic and political organizations to the end that it may move onward all the more quickly and painlessly towards the time when it will be able to emancipate itself. In short, the task of the socialist labor Party is to mold the class struggle of the proletariat into the most adequate shape, and to instil into it the clearest possible understanding of its aims' (Kautsky 1910, 1905, see further Lih 2011, 56–57). Note Stalin's observation that 'Kautsky does not differ one iota from Lenin on that point' (Stalin 1905c, 113, 1905d, 52).

[14]See also Lenin's approving summary of the main argument of 'A Reply to *Social-Democrat*' (Lenin 1905c, d).

[15]The original text appeared in *Neue Zeit*, 1901–02, 20.1, No. 3, p. 79.

[16]'It is the duty of the vehicle of this consciousness, Social-Democracy, to imbue the working-class movement with socialist consciousness' (Stalin 1905c, 94, 95, 100, 104, 1905d, 36, 37, 41, 44).

it this way risks giving priority to practice, a tendency to be found in Stalin's reflections from time to time. Given his bent for the objective side of dialectics, he observes some years later that 'facts occur first of all', which are reflected in the most 'advanced elements of the Party' and subsequently perceived by the 'minds of the mass of Party members'. Hegel's owl of Minerva, he opines, teaches us that 'consciousness lags somewhat behind the facts' (Stalin 1930i, 238, 1930j, 232, see also 1924q, 37–38, 1924r, 36–37).

Just as Stalin seems to have solved the problem of the chicken and the egg, another feature of the dialectic kicks in. Now it becomes clear that neither side of the dialectic has priority. Here Stalin repeats a Marxist staple: ideas do not drop from the skies, for they arise from the conditions of life, but ideas can become a potent force, uniting, organising and transforming history (Stalin 1905c, 120–121, 1905d, 57–58).[17] More specifically, let us return to the initial summary, where Stalin observes that socialist consciousness arises among the working class in the very conditions of capitalism.[18] It may lack clarity, but it is consciousness nonetheless (with the caveat that it is accelerated and intensified during revolutionary upheaval). At the same time, socialist consciousness is the product of intellectuals, who formulate and articulate what this consciousness might be and mean. In revolutionary periods, these formulations play a crucial role in the rise of working class consciousness. The reality is that socialist consciousness would not exist without both sides, from below and from above. Neither has priority.[19]

All of this leads to the final feature that emerges from Stalin's deliberations: the co-dependence of within and without, of immanence and transcendence. Here we have the famous 'merger' of the working class and the Party, embodied in the slogan from Kautsky: 'Social-Democracy is a combination of the working-class movement with socialism' (Stalin 1905c, 90, 94, 97, 107, 117, 1905d, 33, 36, 39, 46–47, 55; quoted via Lenin 1900a, 368, 1900b, 373). As is his wont, Stalin has recourse to literary and biblical imagery to make his point: while scientific socialism without the working class is like an unused compass, which would soon become rusty and useless, the working class without socialism is like a ship without a compass. It may get to its destination, but this is by no means certain and fraught with risks. Combining the two produces a 'splendid vessel', which will reach its haven, its 'promised land' (Stalin 1905c, 104, see also 106–107, 117, 1905d, 44, see also 46–47, 55, 1934g, 385–386, 1934h, 377).[20] By now it should be clear that

[17]The most complete elaboration of this approach may be found in Stalin's contribution to the *Short Course* (Stalin 1938a, 115–117, 1938b, 110–112).

[18]The problem here is what may be called the struggle of ideologies: it may be that the more deeply-rooted bourgeois ideology permeates the working class and causes it to deviate from its path to socialism (Stalin 1905c, 97–99, 1905d, 39–40).

[19]Stalin's analysis of the two early revolutionary moments of 1905, in January and December, provides an excellent example of this theoretical point in relation to practical action (Stalin 1906o, 201–204, 1906p, 367–370).

[20]For a brief recapitulation of the history of this co-dependence—through strikes, insurrections and repressions—see the report on the London congress (Stalin 1907e, 73, 1907f, 98).

this is far more than a simple merger or combination of two forces. Instead, it becomes a manifestation of the dialectic of below and above. The upshot is that if one stresses only the process from below, then socialism would hardly exist as a movement, let alone as a Party. Indeed, the absence of such a clear articulation of socialist consciousness would mean disarray, groping in the dark, if not a complete absence of socialist consciousness—the position of the 'Economists', who left everything up to the spontaneity of the working class (Stalin 1905c, 92–97, 1905d, 35–39).

5.4 Party and People

On three occasions now—beginning at the different points of caution over transcendence, valorizing from below and socialist consciousness—I have explicated an argument that arrives at the promise of a more sophisticated articulation of the dialectic of transcendence and immanence. But the fullest elaboration of the dialectic appears in Stalin's reflections concerning Party and people, for which the discussion concerning socialist consciousness functions as a microcosm. Apart from earlier deliberations, arising in the context of the continual debates among various individuals and groups, Stalin developed a pattern in his conference and congress reports of devoting an entire and—usually—final section to matters relating to the Party, with a particular concern with problems that need to be addressed in relation to non-Party masses.[21] Although these reports often deal with immediate practical matters, I am interested in the theoretical dimensions that arise from these practical concerns. Given his bent for what comes from below, Stalin sought a way to account for the place of the Party that has significant dialectical implications. I have organized this material thematically, beginning with an ideal picture in which the Party is deeply rooted in the masses and is fully merged with them (the echoes of the Erfurtian paradigm should be obvious). Stalin was acutely conscious of the fact that the Party was surrounded by an 'ocean of non-Party people' (Stalin 1924k, 316, 1924l, 303), so much so that this is often his primary concern in what I am calling the relation between transcendence and immanence. Subsequently, I focus on the problems facing the Party, where Stalin's suspicions of transcendence surface once again. The main problems concern divorce of the Party from the people and the charge that instead of a dictatorship of the proletariat, it had become a dictatorship of the Party. This material sets up the consideration of a more complex dialectic of Party and people, which produces in embryo a theory of socialist democracy.

[21]These sections in the conference reports are often lengthy (Stalin 1924s, 199–230, 1924t, 191–219, 1924k, 1924l, 1925a[1], 123–130, 1925b[1], 121–128, 1925i, 351–361, 1925j, 343–352, 1927c, 333–361, 1927d, 325–351, 1930e, 348–385, 1930f, 338–373, 1934g, 353–388, 1934h, 347–379, 1939a, 398–429, 1939b, 321–341).

5.4.1 Between Connection and Divorce

I begin with the ideal, in which the Party is integrally connected with workers and peasants. As an expression of Soviet power, it has 'sprung from the Russian masses', if not all peoples, including Muslims, and is 'near and dear to them [*rodnaia, blizkaia dlia nikh*]'.[22] Already in 1913, Stalin observes that the slogans of the Party 'are deeply rooted [*prochnye korni*] in the heart and mind of the working class' (Stalin 1913c, 283, 1913d, 140). They are—ideally—the natural expression of working class ideals, which means that the workers automatically opt for the Party. Apart from actual members of the Party, it also has a 'broad, non-Party active of sympathisers', without whom the Party would not be able to exercise its leadership. This non-Party support, of both workers and peasants, is the 'sap [*sokami*] on which the Party lives and develops' (Stalin 1925m, 245, 1925n, 240). All of this provides the reason for continued echoes of the Erfurtian paradigm, in which the Party—in contrast to bourgeois parties that are separated from the masses—is merged with the people, for the Party 'cannot and must not stand above the masses if it wants to remain a Soviet state apparatus, for it cannot be alien to these masses if it really wants to embrace the millions of working people' (Stalin 1925y, 162, 1925z, 160). As he sums up:

> The leaders come and go, but the people remain. Only the people are immortal, everything else is ephemeral. That is why it is necessary to appreciate the full value of the confidence of the people (Stalin 1937a, 302, 1937b, 237).

This may be the ideal, but the reality is a constant threat of divorce from the people. If the Party is deeply rooted among and merged with the masses, it will be invincible, but 'as soon as the Bolsheviks become severed from the masses and lose their connection with them, as soon as they become covered with bureaucratic rust, they will lose all their strength and become a mere squib' (Stalin 1937g, 291, 1937h, 184).[23] This divorce may have two levels, between the Party and the state apparatus and between the Party and the masses, although Stalin's main concern was overwhelmingly with the latter (Stalin 1925y, 211–214, 1925z, 209–211). The signals of such a divorce may be strikes over conditions and wages, suspicion of the government and leadership, but the causes run deeper. It may be that Party influence is restricted to ideological factors, while organisational realities mean that the Party is actually isolated from the people (Stalin 1909a, 150–151, 1909b, 351–352). Or it may be that the Party line is one of everyone working together for the common cause of workers and peasants, but that the enactment of policies reveals vestiges of war communism, of the heavy weight of bureaucratic practices, of insufficient

[22]Literally, 'family and friends for them' (Stalin 1920k, 370, 1920l, 358, 1918a, 95, 1918b, 93–94).

[23]See further the stories that illustrate this point in the text preceding and following this quotation (289–292), which draw on both the everyday experience of socialism in power and Greek mythology (Stalin 1937g, 289–292, 1937h, 182–185).

enthusiasm and training, and of the simple matter of information (Stalin 1923q, 365–370, 1923r, 356–362, 1925y, 212–214, 1925z, 209–211). Or it may be that democratic processes have become external forms, so that the election of representatives had become a mechanism for elevating one's cronies (Stalin 1925y, 186, 1925z, 184). Or the crucial mediation provided by the non-Party 'active' may be virtually non-existent, or perhaps even introduce 'unhealthy moods', which will leave the Party 'sick' (Stalin 1924k, 318–319, 1924l, 304, 1934g, 355–356, 1934h, 348–349). Or it may be that the leaders, who have arisen from the hard school of revolution and the construction of socialism, have become increasingly distant from the masses, who progress more slowly. Here the risk is that the leaders will lose the 'permanent and indissoluble contact [*postoiannyĭ i nerushimyĭ kontakt*] between them and the masses', upon which their prestige is built (Stalin 1928m, 35, 1928n, 32, see also 1923q, 364, 1923r, 356, 1924s, 238, 1924t, 226). Once this is lost, the Party will be ruined. In this light, the constant struggles within the Party, its debates and disagreements, even to the point of purging the membership from time to time, as well as the constant need for criticism and self-criticism, are signs of strength rather than weakness and disintegration (Stalin 1923q, 362–363, 1923r, 354–355, see also 1928m, 34–35, 1928n, 30–31).

Stalin was particularly sensitive to the charge that the Party was no longer an embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but had itself become a dictatorship over the proletariat (Stalin 1924q, 26, 1924r, 25). Trotsky may have spoken of the disintegration of the Party, but the very possibility that the phrase 'dictatorship of the Party' should have been mentioned at a congress resolution leaves Stalin incensed. 'Sheer nonsense', he says, an 'absurdity' that gives rise to misunderstanding, confusion and harm, let alone the fact that it overthrows Lenin's approach and would simply dispense with most of the mechanisms of the state (Stalin 1924o, 270–271, 1924p, 258, see also Van Ree 2002a, 149). In short, such an approach would make the Party like an army (as noted earlier), with a command structure operating only from above, material dependence by the masses on the Party and compulsion as the primary method of discipline. By contrast, the Party is based on a voluntary principle, focused on the people from below, operating in 'conformity with the economic and political interests of the class of which the Party is itself a part' and preferring persuasion and expulsion to compulsion and the death penalty (Stalin 1923e, 385, 1923f, 376).

5.4.2 Towards a Dialectical Approach

In this very same text, with its contrast between the Party and an army, Stalin speaks of the Party being the 'vanguard' or 'advanced detachment [*peredovoĭ otriad*]' of the workers and peasants (Stalin 1923e, 385, 1923f, 375). Not only is this a direct adoption of the Leninist idea of the vanguard, but it also opens up the most significant features of Stalin's implicit dialectic of transcendence and immanence. At this level, he neither provides a simple opposition of above and below,

nor a theory of the organic connection between Party and people, nor an effort to balance either side, but a more finely calibrated dialectic.

The clearest statement of this dialectic appears in the 1924 lectures, 'The Foundations of Leninism' (Stalin 1924e, 175–193, 1924f, 169–186). Here Stalin develops his own approach through the interpretation of Lenin (what I earlier called the scriptural dynamic of revolutionary movements). He proposes six theses in relation to the Party, with a dual outcome: transcendence is unimaginable without immanence (which we have already met); but immanence is impossible without transcendence. The core is the first thesis, which speaks of the classic Leninist proposal that the Party is the 'advanced detachment' of the working class, with the emphasis on *advanced*. It simply will not work—and note the terminology—if the Party 'drags at the tail', weighed down by 'inertia and indifference', if not the 'momentary interests' of the proletariat.[24] Instead, while the Party should 'absorb [*vobrat'*]' the best of the working class, it must 'stand at the head [*stoiat' vperedi*]', 'see farther [*videt' dal'she*]' and 'lead [*vesti*]', if not 'raise' the masses as such to the class interests of the workers (Stalin 1924e, 177–178, 1924f, 170–171). This is one of Stalin's clearest statements of the transcendence of the Party. But as soon as he has done so, he stresses the *detachment* part of the key phrase 'advanced detachment'. The Party is nothing less than a part of the working class, 'closely bound up with it by all the fibres of its being', existing only through this 'bond' and the 'moral and political credit' granted by the masses. In short, the Party is 'near and dear' to them. A little later, in the fourth thesis concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat, he once again stresses that the Party is not an end to itself, a self-sufficient force. Instead, it is a 'weapon' or 'instrument [*orudie*] in the hands of the proletariat', a tool that seeks to achieve the proletarian dictatorship and expand it when achieved (Stalin 1924e, 187, 1924f, 179–180). For this reason, as Stalin comes to emphasise later, the Party must not simply issue orders but must be immensely flexible when dealing with the concerns of workers and peasants, for they often know better than Party members what is needed (Stalin 1927c[1], 164–166, 1927d[1], 160–162). Transcendence is unimaginable without immanence.[25]

At the same time, immanence is impossible without transcendence. He does not, of course, suggest that the working class as such would not exist without the Party. Or, to use Marxist categories, the objective economic conditions for the working class cannot be denied. To some extent, he also recognises that a certain basic form of subjective identity also exists, in terms of a tendency towards socialist positions (as we saw earlier). But this subjective consciousness is quite limited, given to spontaneity, inertia and indifference. Precisely at this point does the Party constitute the working class as a fighting force, imbued with a clear and distinct class consciousness that is crucial for its very existence as a fully-fledged working class. This

[24]Or indeed nebulousness and chaos (Stalin 1912m, 235, 1912n, 57).

[25]'It scarcely needs proof that without these intangible moral threads which connect the Party with the non-Party masses, the Party could not have become the decisive force of its class' (Stalin 1924e, 180, 1924f, 173).

creative role entails at least four tasks: articulating a clear consciousness of the class interests of the proletariat, in light of a firm grasp of revolutionary theory and the laws of revolutionary movement; educating and training the most advanced sectors of the working class so as to raise the whole class—a point Stalin stresses again and again; organising the working class—second thesis (Stalin 1924e, 180–184, 1924f, 174–177, see also 1934g, 372–383, 1934h, 364–375)—with discipline and endurance for the revolutionary struggle, and especially the construction of socialism after the revolution; determining the line for all of the various working class organisations,[26] since the Party is the 'highest form of class organisation of the proletariat'—third thesis (Stalin 1924e, 184–186, 1924f, 177–179). Without the Party, the working class would still be wandering in the wilderness: 'Only a Party which adopts the standpoint of the advanced detachment of the proletariat and is able to raise the masses to the level of understanding the class interests of the proletariat' is able to 'convert [*prevratit'*] the working class into an independent political force' (Stalin 1924e, 178, 1924f, 171). And once power has been achieved, the working class needs the Party to maintain, consolidate and expand the dictatorship of the proletariat—for the sake of the wellbeing and viability of the working class, if not the 'complete victory of socialism' (Stalin 1924e, 187, 1924f, 180). Thus, the immanence of subjective identity, of clear class consciousness if not of a political force, would be impossible without the transcendence of the Party.

Two further points require a little more comment. First, running through the theses is an increasing emphasis on unity and singularity within the Party itself. This emphasis has a history longer than Stalin, running back to early struggles between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, but for Stalin the issue of unity arose in the debates with Trotsky and others within the Party. Stalin speaks of a 'single system', of a 'formal union' into a 'single organised whole', a 'single leadership', if not gathering all the threads of the revolutionary movement into 'one spot' (Stalin 1924e, 182, 185, 187, 1924f, 175, 178, 180). Above all, the fifth thesis states directly that the Party embodies a 'unity of will [*edinstvo voli*]' that cannot entertain the struggle between factions (Stalin 1924e, 189–191, 1924f, 181–183, see also 1926g, 153–154, 1926h, 145–146). But Stalin is keen to distinguish between factional struggles and healthy criticism. The former is unacceptable, for it weakens the Party by developing multiple centres, if not allowing room for a fifth column that would destroy the Party (hence the need for purges, as stressed in the sixth thesis [Stalin 1924e, 191–193, 1924f, 183–186]), while the latter is the basis of the Party's health, leading to the iron discipline that arises from conscious submission to the unity of will in the Party (Stalin 1925a[1], 123–124, 1925b[1], 121–122). The reality, of course, was somewhat different. I mean not the imposition of a dictator's will on trembling Party leaders and members, but the difficulty of distinguishing

[26]These include trade unions, co-operatives, Young Communist League, Young Pioneers, organisations of working men and women, army, voluntary public associations (diverse cultural and educational circles and societies, sports organisations, auxiliary societies, organisations of worker and peasant correspondents, physical culture organisations, and so on) (Stalin 1924s, 200–206, 1924t, 192–197).

criticism from factionalism. The fact that struggles between various groups continued as long as Stalin was in power, if not for the whole life of the communist government of the Soviet Union, indicates that the desire for unity and discipline was as much a signal of these struggles as it arose from them.

More significantly, the question is how such an emphasis on unity gels with the dialectic of transcendence and immanence. Does it break down the dialectic, asserting an iron discipline in which immanence and transcendence are in lock-step with one another? The emphasis threatens to run in this direction, until we recall that Stalin has shifted his focus to transcendence as such. Here unity and discipline is needed. But another threat to the dialectic appears with Stalin's assertion that this particular articulation applies only to the situation in which classes exist: 'when classes disappear and the dictatorship of the proletariat withers away, the Party also will wither away' (Stalin 1924e, 189, 1924f, 181). This would suggest that Stalin later—when he argued more strongly for the continued role of a strengthened Party—betrayed an orthodox Marxist position bequeathed to subsequent communist movements by Engels. Yet, as I argue elsewhere in this book, Stalin always held such a quasi-anarchist position at arm's length. While he paid lip service to what seemed an article of faith for some communists, he also realised clearly in the exercise of power that such a move would be fatal. Instead, the specific form of the dialectic that applied to a situation of class antagonism, as evidenced by the civil war after 1917, by the socialist offensive of the late 1920s and 1930s, would be rearticulated in the era of socialism.

Following this substantial statement in 'The Foundations of Leninism', Stalin offers a couple of later modulations to the position enunciated there, the first of which entails discerning valid and invalid forms of both transcendence and immanence. Thus, in a text from 1925, he distinguishes between two types of transcendence: 'Not divorce from the masses, but the closest connection with them; not feeling superior to the masses, but going in front of them and leading them; not alienation from the masses, but merging with them and winning their confidence and support' (Stalin 1925g, 87, 1925h, 87). The oppositions are revealing: divorce versus closest connection; superior versus leading; alienation versus merging, winning confidence and support. The weight is clearly with the second side of each opposition, signalled by the piling up of terms, such as going out in front, leading, merging, confidence and support. We have met the opposition between connection and divorce earlier, as well as his caution over transcendence itself, but now this material adds another layer to the dialectic examined in 'The Foundations of Leninism'. Transcendence itself has both invalid and valid forms. The former include divorce, feeling superior and alienation. But the valid forms are key. These involve going in front and leading, thereby winning confidence and support. Stalin concludes that without these 'methods no kind of socialist construction is conceivable' (Stalin 1925g, 87, 1925h, 87).

A comparable distinction in relation to immanence appears in a text from 1927. Here too we find the invalid and valid forms of transcendence, in terms of 'break away', 'leap ahead' and 'prevent the advance of the masses', while the positive side means securing the 'following of the vast masses'. Of more interest is the statement:

'But in order that the vanguard should not break away from the masses, in order that the vanguard should really secure the following of the vast masses, a decisive condition is needed, namely, that *the masses themselves should be convinced through their own experience that the instructions, directives and slogans issued by the vanguard are correct*' (Stalin 1927m, 29–30, 1927n, 27–28). This statement implies that the masses may well not be convinced that the various utterances of the vanguard are correct. Of course, this may mean that the leadership, the vanguard, is out of touch with the masses. But it may also mean that the masses are not sufficiently aware of what their experience means. Of course, this echoes his observations on socialist consciousness: although the working class may have a natural inclination towards socialism, it is inevitably spontaneous and inchoate, easily misdirected in bourgeois directions. And, as he points out frequently, this situation requires that the Party 'develop the consciousness, independent activity and initiative of the working class, systematically to educate it in the spirit of communism by organising it in trade unions and drawing it into the work of building a communist economy' (Stalin 1921i, 14, 1921j, 13). Immanence too may have its invalid forms. The crucial point is that the invalid types of transcendence and immanence happen when the connection between both sides becomes fragile or is broken. By contrast, the valid forms are determined and fed by close, strong and—hopefully—'indissoluble' bonds.

The second modulation concerns what may be called practical measures, in relation to both the masses and the Party itself. I mean here those measures that relate to the bonds between Party and people. As we have seen, the Party must constantly learn from the masses, so much so that it needs to be reminded of the value of proposals and criticisms 'from below', from the ordinary people. Alongside this education from below is education from above, a recurrent theme throughout Stalin's reflections on Party and people. Raising up the 'most experienced and influential of the advanced workers', raising the quality of cadres, developing independent activity and initiative, fostering socialist consciousness—these and more are constant refrains, even when institutional training was widespread, for non-Party people and leaders still outnumbered Party leaders (Stalin 1909a, 156–158, 1909b, 355–157, 1923q, 373–174, 1923r, 365–166, 1924e, 185, 188, 1924f, 178, 181, 1924s, 212–217, 229, 1924t, 203–207, 217–218). But by the 1930s and in the context of the massive socialist offensive, and its creation of those who both enthusiastically supported the process and those who dragged their feet and opposed it, Stalin began to stress the need for inner-Party practical measures. Thus, education was not merely concerned with raising the masses, but also raising the theoretical level of the Party itself, intensifying ideological work and Leninist propaganda—which includes the crucial dimension of internationalism, and, of course, criticising and exposing ideological deviations (Stalin 1934g, 355–388, 1934h, 348–379, 1939a, 406–411, 1939b, 327–329). Such moves were not merely the result of inner-Party struggle, nor even the increases in Party membership and the presence of opportunists and careerists, but the sense that the problems and failures identified through criticism and self-criticism had much to do with practical shortcomings in the Party, in the areas of mobilisation, organisation and personnel.

The 'incorrigible bureaucrats', 'red-tapists' and 'windbags' were among those in constant need of education, training and correction (Stalin 1934g, 372–380, 1934h, 364–372, see also 1939a, 399–406, 1939b, 322–327).

Finally, it is not for nothing that Stalin resorts to poetic and literary images to express what he thinks on the whole issue of Party and people. He speaks of 'feelers' that convey to the Party the will of the working class, of the 'spiritual threads', if not the 'transmission belts'—such as trade unions, cooperatives, youth leagues, women, schools, the press and the army—that link the Party to the class it represents. The metaphors are simultaneously theological and industrial, as befits the erstwhile theological candidate and champion of the working class. Or perhaps these complex patterns are like a car, which embodies the ultimate image of socialist modernity (beating capitalism) in its sleekness. The car in question is ideally a Soviet Car, but if it does not run properly and if it is not steered properly, it will crash (Stalin 1923u, 209–212, 1923v, 207–209, 1924e, 186, 1924f, 179).

5.5 Socialist Democracy

All of this brings Stalin to the crucial question of socialist democracy. Apart from the continued use of metaphors and images, such as feelers, bonds and transmission belts, Stalin's main point is that socialist democracy concerns the dialectical relation between the Communist Party and the workers and peasants. This position entails a number of important points. To begin with, Stalin follows Lenin in understanding democracy (and indeed freedom) in an openly partisan way, providing the basis for a new definition of democracy as a universal.[27] This is in contrast to the subterfuge of bourgeois democracy, which pretends to be for all but restricts the meaning of 'all' to a select group. Socialist democracy is very different, focusing on the majority, workers and peasants, and redefining democracy from this basis. While classes continue to exist, this type of democracy is the 'most all-embracing and most democratic state organisation of all possible state organisations' (Stalin 1924e, 124, 1924f, 120, see also 1924o, 268–269, 1924p, 256–257, 1918m, 73, 1918n, 71). Or as Stalin puts it in more poetic form:

> But when the working class sends 200,000 new members into the Party, that is real democracy. Our Party has become the elected organ of the working class. Point me out another such Party. You cannot point one out because so far there does not exist one … I am afraid they will have to migrate to Mars in their search for a better Party. (*Applause*.) (Stalin 1924s, 242, 1924t, 229–230).

Further, Stalin deploys a distinction common among the Bolsheviks at the time, between formal and real or genuine democracy. But he recalibrates the distinction in light of the situation of socialism in power, thereby developing Lenin's initial use

[27]For a full discussion of Lenin's approach to freedom and democracy, see my *Lenin, Religion, and Theology* (Boer 2013, 163–172).

of the distinction. For Lenin, formal democracy meant not the restriction due to current circumstances of an ideal to which strives, but a structural or constitutive exclusion in its very definition. Bourgeois democracy seems to offer a choice, but the choice itself is constrained by the unseen and unacknowledged conditions under which it operates. By contrast, genuine freedom and democracy is the ability to change those very conditions, as one finds with a socialist revolution (Lenin 1918a, 74, 1918b, 63). Everything, as I have pointed out on a number of occasions, changes with socialism in power. Does this mean the constitution of a new type of formal freedom? It would initially seem so in Lenin's terms. But Stalin offers, especially in his debates with Trotsky, another level to the distinction. Now formal democracy means a 'constructed apparatus', an organisational and bureaucratic form. One may have all of the apparent trappings of democracy, but this misses the core of what makes it democracy in a socialist context: the absolutely necessary linkage between Party and class, the contact and interaction between them, the prestige and respect—if not 'moral capital [*moral'nyĭ kapital*]' (Stalin 1924m, 327, 1924n, 313)—the Party must gain among the non-Party masses. Without such a linkage—which I have argued is dialectical—any 'democracy' is worthless and the Party is doomed. 'The Party is part of the class; it exists for the class, not for itself [*Partiia est' chast' klassa, sushchestvuiushchaia dlia klassa, a ne dlia sebia samoĭ*]' (Stalin 1924s, 238, 1924t, 227, see also 1925i, 394, 1925j, 383).

Indeed, a major contextual factor in the development of a specific theory of socialist democracy was the heated and prolonged debates with Trotsky. The latter charged that the Party had lost its way, was decaying and had become authoritarian, so much so (as we saw above) that it was becoming a dictatorship of the Party rather than of the workers and peasants, if not a dictatorship of the small circle of leaders at the expense of the Party (Trotsky 1972, 94–100, 265–272). This suggestion has become enormously influential, so much so that it threatens to obscure the other side of the debate. The solution, according to Trotsky, was to foster inner-Party democracy, with unlimited debate and open-ballot elections (Stalin 1923q, 376–378, 1923r, 368–369, 1927q, 266–270, 1927r, 260–264, 1927c, 343–344, 1927d, 334–336). In reality, this meant room for groups and factions within the Party, especially the various configurations in which Trotsky was involved. Given their long history of mutual antagonism, Stalin would not accept such a proposal. Among his long responses to Trotsky and others, he argued that freedom for factional groups (which he took as Trotsky's definition of democracy) would mean splitting up the Party into different centres and thereby weakening the Party so that it would disintegrate.[28] Instead, the Party is a militant association of 'like-minded' and 'like-acting' people (Stalin 1923q, 378, 1923r, 370), and socialist democracy involves simultaneously 'raising the activity and political understanding of the mass of Party members' (Stalin 1924q, 40, 1924r, 39–40, see also 1926g,

[28]By the time of the socialist offensive, Stalin would link the proposals of Trotsky and others with the opposition from the 'moribund classes' to the dual processes of industrialisation and collectivisation (Stalin 1930e, 362–372, 1930f, 352–361).

153, 1926h, 145–146, 1926m, 236–238, 1926n, 225–227) and 'freedom for the mass of the Party membership to decide questions connected with our work of construction', so much so that they will develop the 'feeling that they are the masters in the Party' (Stalin 1927c, 336, 1927d, 327).

Thus, socialist democracy means not the exercise of multiple parties or factions, but rather the close and organic bond between the Party and the workers and peasants, so much so that the latter actually determine the Party's direction. The second point we have seen already, but the first point is new: it distinguishes socialist democracy in a unique direction, away from the multiplicity of political parties, since the Communist Party is by its nature the democratic expression of the workers, peasants and, by the 1930s, intellectuals. To allow multiple parties would dissipate this particular democratic focus. Indeed, once one has achieved socialism and the only classes are these three, then there is simply no need for other political parties—although this does not preclude non-Party candidates in elections (Stalin 1936c, 144–145, 1936d, 111).

This distinction leads to a further point: the differentiation between distinct types of democracy. Stalin's main distinction is between bourgeois or liberal democracy and socialist democracy. The former he argues (following Lenin) is a mechanism of both economic exploitation and of disenfranchisement. Economically, the mirage of suffrage enables the leaders of finance capital—such as the Bank of Lyons or the Rockefellers—to secure power. Or even more sharply, such democracy is nothing less than the coalition of fascism and the social democracy that had made its peace with capitalism and thereby with bourgeois democracy (Stalin 1924c, 293–295, 1924d, 281–283). In other words, bourgeois democracy conveniently neglects a basic feature of democracy, which entails freedom from economic exploitation. The emphasis on what may be called economic democracy comes to the surface clearly in Stalin's observations on human rights in his comments on the 1936 constitution. He begins by distinguishing between formal and proactive rights, or between abstract and exercised rights. The former is what one finds in bourgeois constitutions, the later in the Soviet constitution, which includes methods for ensuring and enacting the rights in question. What is the benchmark? Economic realities: 'there cannot be real equality between employer and workman, between landlord and peasant, if the former possess wealth and political weight in society while the latter are deprived of both—if the former are exploiters while the latter are exploited' (Stalin 1936e, 169, 1936f, 130). Apart from observing that these initial observations would feed into a distinctly Marxist approach to human rights, in which the right to economic wellbeing is fundamental (and so often neglected by the purveyors of the Western European tradition of human rights), my point here is that any socialist democracy worthy of the name must deal with the primacy of economic concerns. As for disenfranchisement, Stalin observes in the same piece that bourgeois democracy always contains reservations as to who can actually participate. The claim to providing representation for all is predicated on limiting what the category of 'all' actually means. The limitation may vary over time and space, but it is constitutive of bourgeois democracy (Stalin 1936e, 166–169, 1936f, 128–130). In contrast to this 'bourgeois parliamentarianism' is 'genuine democracy', which is the

power of the 'majority over the minority', if not the 'dictatorship of the lower classes' (Stalin 1918s, 37–38, 1918t, 36–37, see also 1917m, 337, 1917n, 413, 1927k, 100, 1927l, 94–95, 1937e, 307–308, 1937f, 239–340).[29]

Implicit in Stalin's analysis is the point that there is no such thing as 'pure' democracy. There may be a genuine democracy—socialist democracy—but this is a particular type of democracy.[30] Stalin occasionally provides hints of an awareness of the particularity of democracy when he observes that democracy means 'definite classes are in control of the state power' (Stalin 1917y[1], 53, 1917z[1], 102). Indeed, democracy is not 'something absolute, without relation to time or space [*absoliutnoe, vne vremeni i prostranstva*]' (Stalin 1924q, 7, 1924r, 7).[31] So what are the specific forms of democracy, determined by particular circumstances? To date, four types of democracy have existed: Greek democracy, which was restricted to adult male citizens of the *polis*, thereby excluding the majority (women, slaves, children, foreigners); liberal or bourgeois democracy, which offers the tainted gift of suffrage in relation to a limited range of political parties to ensure the control of the state apparatus by the bourgeoisie; illiberal democracy, which is really a version of the former, using the structures of liberal democracy to keep one particular Party in power (Singapore, Turkey, Hungary and Russia are good examples); and socialist democracy, which was very much a term under debate and clarification in the material I am analysing.[32] Stalin's various reflections—which do not amount to a full theory—are part of this development.

To sum up, central to Stalin's approach to socialist democracy is the argument that the Party is tightly bound up with the workers and peasants—which brings us back to the relations between transcendence and immanence. Ideally, they simply cannot be separated. The Party may engage in education and raising the level of socialist consciousness of the masses, but the Party exists only because of these masses. Without them, it would not exist. A number of implications flow from this core theoretical position. It is openly partisan, at least while classes exist, for it is the democracy of the majority over the minority, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Once the minority has been vanquished or absorbed into the new system, this partisan democracy can become universal. It also means that the external apparatus of democracy is not what counts, but rather the intrinsic relationship. It entails that

[29]As for the practical matter of elections, see especially Stalin's comments to the first American Labour Delegation in 1927 (Stalin 1927k, 113–114, 1927l, 107–109).

[30]At times Stalin veers close to the equation: democracy = socialism. This was a common assumption in the lead-up to the October Revolution, when the various socialist parties represented democracy as such, and when democracy was equated with socialism (Stalin 1917o, 14, 1917p, 52, 1917y[2], 391, 1917z[2], 459, 1918c, 106, 1918d, 105; Kolonitskii 2004).

[31]Note also his comment: 'But in the name of which democracy are you speaking?' (see also 1917m, 337, 1917n, 413).

[32]Socialist democracy needs to be distinguished from social democracy, which became part of the bourgeois democratic structure. Stalin describes such social democratic parties as 'election machines adapted for parliamentary elections and parliamentary struggle' (Stalin 1924e, 176, 1924f, 169).

multiple factions and parties are not necessary, since the Communist Party is the Party of workers, peasants and intellectuals (the reality of consistent factional conflict notwithstanding). And socialist democracy has a resolute focus on economic democracy. Many are those who would dismiss Stalin's approach as sophistry, hypocrisy or thinly-veiled justification for control by the Communist Party, thereby simply missing the point (Plamenatz 1947, 111–117). But if we are to take his theory seriously, then it has a number of significant implications. Not least here is the continuation of the Communist Party as the government under socialism. Further, Stalin stresses again and again the need for a strong transcendence, a strong Party that can implement policies. Indeed, only a strong Party, steeled through conflict, could introduce the extensive affirmative action program in relation to minority nationalities, let alone undertake the profoundly transformative (and disruptive) socialist offensive. Yet immanence should never be forgotten, for the strength in question—in theory at least—depends on the unity and support of the masses of workers and peasants.

For these reasons, Stalin could claim—at an acceptance speech after elections in 1937—that the socialist democracy that had developed in the Soviet Union was the best that has been achieved thus far:

> Never in the history of the world have there been such really free and really democratic elections—never! History knows no other example like it. (Applause.) The point is not that our elections will be universal, equal, secret and direct, although that fact in itself is of great importance. The point is that our universal elections will be carried out as the freest elections and the most democratic of any country in the world (Stalin 1937e, 307, 1937f, 239).

This claim may come as a surprise to some, let alone the fact of elections, but it follows if one accepts the theoretical elaboration I have examined.

5.6 Conclusion

I have approached Stalin's deliberations from three angles: above and below, socialist consciousness, and Party and people. The first set the scene, with its caution over transcendence and enthusiasm for below, only to find that Stalin seeks a more careful and—dare I say it—sophisticated approach to the relationship. The beginning of what I have not hesitated to call a dialectic appears in his reflections on socialist consciousness, but the fullest expression emerges with the deliberations over Party and people, which then leads to the matter of socialist democracy. In doing so, I have not fallen into the trap of assuming that these moves are simply part of an immanence bereft of transcendence, preferring to argue that what is really at stake is a recalibration of the dialectic of transcendence and immanence. Further, I have not assumed a default position of many, who assume that Stalin was a hypocrite or sophist, with the result that one may simply ignore what he actually thought and wrote.

However, two objections may be raised against the material I have examined in some detail in this chapter. The first comes from Hannah Arendt, although it will soon become apparent that her oft-invoked hypothesis concerning totalitarianism misses the mark (Arendt 1976, 465, 1958, 261, 1977, 277).[33] For Arendt, European modernity's eclipse of transcendence takes the form of an escape from the uncertain otherness of the world and into the certainty of the self. The outcome is that the self seeks to transform the world in one's own image, rather than seeking value in others as such, to efface the world beyond our power and create a world which is peopled only by images of ourselves. Apart from its individualist focus, in which Stalin is the individual self *par excellence*, the underlying assumption is that the only type of transcendence remaining is to be found in the diversity of otherness—a very liberal notion. More significantly, Arendt simply misses the development of whole new forms of transcendence, far more robust than the weak version she peddles.

The second objection comes from Adorno, who takes the reality of the new forms of transcendence and immanence seriously. In his resolute suspicion of Enlightenment and modernity (Adorno 1973a, 2003a), Adorno argues that the drive to immanence entails not an abandonment of transcendence but its translation into another and potentially more dangerous form. The danger is that the checks and balances of theological thought are lost when this transition takes place. Subordination to a transcendent absolute authority threatens to become more virulent once God disappears from the picture and is replaced by another authority. Instead of revealed authority, insured by the institutional structures of the church, transcendent authority seeks to reside in rational thought, science, conceptual philosophy, human beings, or indeed political structures and leaders (Adorno 1973b, 136, 397, 2003b, 140, 389). Indeed, if one collapses the transcendence that separates divine and human, one struggles to avoid the elevation of the human being, as divine, full of wonder, incapable of sin or evil, the image of itself rather than another being. European modernity may have thought it had broken the shackles of theological subservience only to find itself in far more dangerous and unknown territory.

The question is whether Stalin is guilty. Did he manifest an extraordinarily pernicious form of transcendence on a political, social and cultural register? An affirmative answer would have to assume that Stalin advocated a revolution from above, if not a dictatorship of the Party with little regard for what was below, for the masses of workers, peasants and (later) intellectuals. It would also entail a profound hypocrisy, if not sophism, throughout the positions I have examined. Apart from my observations on these matters in the introduction, it should now be clear that Stalin's position was quite different. His wariness of transcendence is only a starting point, for I found that he consistently argues for an inseparable bond between Party and people. Even more, he was quite aware—in his own way—of the dangers

[33]See also the careful study of Arendt by Roodt (2012).

Adorno identifies. I think here of the constant warnings of the dangers of divorce between Party and people, of the many ways such a disconnect could appear, thereby threatening the bonds, the spiritual threads and transmission belts, that maintained the dialectic. In short, he was keen not only to ensure that the 'no road' sign before another and more dangerous form of transcendence was not breached, but that the dialectic between Party and people, between transcendence and immanence, did not break down. Whether he lived up to these ideals is another matter, but we cannot ignore the fact that he held to them sincerely.

Chapter 6
Towards a Theory of the Socialist State

> We now have an entirely new, Socialist state [*sotsialisticheskoe gosudarstvo*], without precedent in history (Stalin 1939a, 421–422, 1939b, 336).

I begin this final chapter with an observation: the Soviet Union was not a federation, not a nation-state, not an empire, not a colonising power but an entirely new state formation (Suny 1993, 85; Martin 2001a, 15, 19, 461; Weeks 2005, 567).[1] Similar comments have been made about China, but the question arises: what type of state was the Soviet Union? This chapter is an initial effort to answer this question.

The answer is somewhat lengthy and requires one to seek the underlying connections between a series of crucial points. They begin with the effort to produce a socialist approach to the national question and end with a redefinition of the state. The necessary links in the argument concern the dictatorship of the proletariat, affirmative action, the discovery of the logic of anti-colonial struggles and the search for a new identity for the 'Soviet people'. However, the connections between these points were by no means obvious at the time and required considerable theoretical work. The core of this work is the dialectic of universal and particular, which in this case means international and national. This dialectic has a number of inter-related steps. First, the international category of class is not opposed to that of nation, but actually enables a new approach to the latter, all of which is embodied in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which totalising unity produces new levels of diversity. This in turn leads to the second step, which concerns the theoretical elaboration of the world's first affirmative action program. Third, this program provides the basis for the international anti-colonial struggle. Fourth, within that international context, a new definition of the social entity and state emerges, in which the 'Soviet people' are constituted by workers, collective farmers and intellectuals. These four points, woven together through the leitmotiv of unity and

[1] It was also not a 'neo-patrimonial state' (Gorlizki 2002; Gorlizki and Khlevniuk 2004, 58–65). And one cannot take seriously the non-description of a 'limping Behemoth' (Edele 2011, 98–122).

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diversity, may be seen as part of an ongoing effort to identify and define what Stalin begins to call the 'socialist state'.

In a little more detail: among the Bolsheviks, Stalin was the primary theorist of what was called the 'national question', that is, the policies for dealing with 'ethnic' and cultural diversity. The problem was that the socialist movement's focus was primarily on the international category of class, on workers and peasants, rather than 'nation'. But Stalin took a different path, arguing dialectically and not without stiff resistance within the Party: by focusing on the unifying dimension of class, one achieves a new and strong state, which is then able at a far deeper level to foster hitherto unforeseen forms of diversity. This formulation is then sharpened through the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which a resolute focus on class intensifies the production of diversity. Through this process, the world's first 'affirmative action' program arose, which entailed fostering local languages, cultures, literatures, education, judiciaries and political leadership. Implementing this policy after the October Revolution entailed not a few mistakes and breakthroughs, but it was predicated on the assumption that one could actively create a plethora of national and cultural diversities through 'cultural revolution'. Thus far, Stalin's concerns were within the Soviet Union, but these were always undertaken with an intense international focus. Such a focus emerges once again with the international implications of the affirmative action program. This program should not be restricted to the multiple peoples of the USSR; it should also be a model for anti-colonial struggles the world over. With this new level of international involvement, Stalin glimpsed yet another possibility, which entailed a redefinition of what the Soviet Union might be, for which he preferred the terms 'Soviet people' and the Soviet or 'socialist state'. Since the vast bulk of the population was made up of workers, collective farmers and intellectuals, they were the true people, the Soviet people. The old aristocracy and bourgeoisie did not count in such an entity. Finally, the question of the state. Although 'socialist state' appears occasionally before the 1930s, it becomes a focus of attention, especially with the formulation of the 1936 constitution. Although Stalin offers a few brief comments on the nature of such a state, I seek to add to these rudiments through the content of the whole chapter. Explicating this argument in full requires—yet again—careful and patient attention to Stalin's texts.

6.1 Nation and Class, or, Against Culturism

The first step concerns the 'national question'. This position was surprisingly dialectical: only through the focus on international class is the issue of nationality able to be solved at a new level; or, more philosophically, only through a totalising unity is new and unexpected diversity able to be fostered. The argument moves from the search for a definition of the 'nation', through debates over the priority of either class or 'cultural-national' factors, to the position of what may be called 'affirmative action' as the unexpected outcome of the focus on the totalising unity

of class. Stalin's argument may be seen as a sustained attack on culturism—a notably persistent tendency even in our own time. By culturism I mean the propensity to identify an intangible 'culture' as the basis for collective identity, to which may be attributed certain traits, such as ways of thinking, behaviour and temperament. Often, culturism includes religio-cultural factors, in which religious features have entered into a particular culture and thereby enable one to assert cultural distinctness and difference on the basis of those features. For Stalin, this approach is misguided, for it prioritises 'culture' and isolates it from crucial factors such as economics, history and, above all, class.

Although Stalin's work on the national question spans more than three decades (beginning with Stalin 1904a, b),[2] I focus on a number of his earlier pieces, especially 'Marxism and the National Question', where we find the most sustained criticism of culturist approaches.[3] The reason he criticises culturism is that it was common among a number of social-democratic organisations at the turn of the twentieth century: the Austrian Marxists, the Caucasian movements, the Southern Slavs, and above all the Bund (The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia).[4] Two factors are important in his criticism. The first is to define 'nation' in order to sideline the culturist position, although his own definition is not without its problems. The second tackles the question of the structure of the socialist state: does one begin with 'national culture' or with class? In contrast to the Austrian Marxists and the more nationally minded among the Bund, Stalin proposes that class is the determining factor, which then enables a very different approach to 'national culture'. The unexpected result is that the unity provided by a focus on the workers and peasants produces both new levels of cultural diversity and enables a stronger approach to ensuring such diversity.

6.1.1 Defining 'Nation'

The first item in the struggle between the Austrian Marxists, the Bund, the Caucasian movement and Stalin's Bolshevik position concerns definition. If one is seeking to develop a viable socialist position on the national question, then one needs a definition of 'nation'. Before proceeding, a warning: we need to be careful

[2]While the many archival studies have provided a wealth of information on the national question, they tend to glide over Stalin's arguments, where these arguments are mentioned at all (Blank 1994, 68–81; Pipes 1997; Smith 1999, 2005; Slezkine 2000; Suny and Martin 2001; Crouch 2002; Yekelchyk 2002; Baberowski 2003; Hirsch 2005). Of these, the most astute are by Suny (1993) and Martin (2001a). Despite the promise of Van Ree's engagement (2003) with Stalin's texts, he misses some of the complexity and nuance of those texts.

[3]It was originally published as 'The National Question and Social-Democracy [*Natsional'nyi vopros i sotsialdemokratiia*]' in the Bolshevik journal *Prosveshchenie*.

[4]Stalin offers further arguments against the Caucasian position (Stalin 1904a, 36–40, 1904b, 154–158, 1913g, 295–296, 1913h, 150–151).

not to read back into these debates the assumptions of an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) that inform our own perceptions. Thus, a 'nation' was not the political entity of a state, but rather the 'nationalities' within a state.[5] These are now often called 'ethnic minorities', but this term is potentially misleading, since ethnicity was not necessarily a basic feature and the debates focused on both majority and minority nationalities. With this in mind, I begin with the definitions of the Austrian Marxists, the Bund and the Caucasian Social-Democrats, before turning to Stalin's anti-culturist response.

For Otto Bauer, the leading theorist among the Austrians, 'a nation is the totality of human beings bound together by a community of fate [*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*] into a community of character [*Charaktergemeinschaft*]' (Bauer 2000, 117).[6] By community of 'character' he seeks to designate what makes one people distinct from another—the 'national character' that marks the Germans from the English, the Russians from the Ruthenians, and so on. But this character is neither causal in terms of individual behaviour nor a given. Thus, one cannot attribute certain individual characteristics (Germans are ordered, French are temperamental, Jews given to abstract thought) to national character. Instead, the identification of a national character is the beginning of analysis. Now community of 'fate' or 'destiny' comes into play: by this term Bauer means the long and complex historical process by which a community of character comes into being. He stresses that such a community is always relative, subject to change in light of historical developments (Bauer 2000, 22). So he investigates how changes in this national character take place, particularly in terms of the interactions between historical and contemporary forces. Instead of an unchanging national spirit, each generation inherits a certain cultural framework that may be modified in light of experience and events.[7] Thus 'national character' is not the explanation, but the reality that needs to be explained in historical terms.

Bauer clearly remains wedded to a very European notion of 'national character', according to which one may identify distinct differences in ways of thinking, behaviour and assumptions between one small state and another (Bauer 2000, 119–125). He does give this assumption a unique twist, arguing that it is not a cause of behaviour but a reality that needs to be historicised in a way that renders it contingent and thereby changing. This is also the case with the different socialist movements, which are determined in the way they express socialism by their

[5]The literature at the time uses 'nation' and 'national question' to refer to the 'desire for a particular type of social and political cohesion based on belonging to a historical, territorialized community that is politically sovereign' (Sanborn 2001, 94).

[6]Egry (2005) provides a useful analysis of Bauer within the context of wider debates over the national question in Austro-Marxism. Löwy (1976) is less useful.

[7]These historical modifications produce both 'historical nations' and 'non-historical nations', determined by the presence of a ruling elite and high national culture: nations may pass from one to the other in light of changing conditions. 'Non-historical nations [*geschichtslosen Völker*]' is borrowed from Engels, concerning peoples that have never formed a state and seemed to be disappearing (Engels 1849, see further Egry 2005, 98–99).

cultural and national traditions. Tellingly, he uses a religious analogy to make his point, deploying the common content-form distinction: in the same way that Roman Catholicism, even with its centralised leadership and doctrinal form, acquires national specificity in the different nations, so also 'in each nation inherited national characteristics are giving international socialist ideology a particular national form' (Bauer 2000, 18).

Alongside this analogy, Bauer (like Stalin) focuses a good deal on the Jews. Not only does he constantly use the Jews as examples for the various moments in his argument, but he also argues that the Jews are gradually ceasing to have the national status that they had during the European Middle Ages. With the advent of capitalism, especially in Western Europe, they have become increasingly assimilated to the cultural communities of the nations in question, passing from historical nation to 'non-historical' nation to full assimilation. The persistence of national identity among Jews in Eastern Europe may be attributed to the fact that capitalism has not yet become as pervasive as in Western Europe. But Bauer argues that assimilation will happen there too, although it will be a gradual process (Bauer 2000, 291–308, 343). As we will see, in 1913 Stalin agreed with Bauer, although for different reasons (the Jews do not meet all of the requirements of his definition of a nation). In this light, the Bund's endorsement and appropriation of the Austro-Marxist proposals concerning 'national character' and 'cultural-national autonomy' may initially seem curious. But they did so by dispensing with Bauer's argument concerning Jewish assimilation and disappearance as a 'nation'.

Perhaps more than any other social-democratic Party, the Bund found itself constantly struggling over the national question.[8] Yet, there was surprisingly little theoretical effort to move beyond the Austrian definition of the nation. On the one side were the internationalists, such as Leon Goldman and Dovid Kats, who argued strongly that the focus should be the international working class and not 'cultural-national' interests, which they saw as a species of nationalism and thereby divisive and diversionary. On the other side were those—like John Mill, Yekutiel Portnoi and Vladimir Kossovskii (Nokhem Mendl Levinson)—who argued equally strongly for Jewish identity as a nation. These nationalists obviously needed a definition of nation, which they saw in terms of culture and language. Somewhere in the middle were the proposals of some of the more creative theorists, such as Vladimir Medem. For Medem, 'national character'—a term borrowed from the Austrian Marxists—was nothing more than a cultural content common to all human beings, which took distinct forms due to historical reasons and the conjunctions of particular social forces. In that light, he argued that citizenship of what he called a 'state of nationalities' should be neutral in terms of national identification. Everyone was to be included, without identifying one's nationality. While Medem's approach may be seen as an effort to negate the divisive force of the national question in the Bund, it did not solve those struggles. Those in favour of a distinct

[8]Detail on the following may be found (with qualification) in a number of key works (Frankel 1981, 171–257; Gechtman 2007; Pickan 2001, see also Kossovskii 1943; Medem 1943).

focus on the Bund as the representative of Jewish workers were able to get the fourth congress (1901) to adopt the following resolution: 'The congress recognizes that the term "nationality" is applicable also to the Jews' (Frankel 1981, 220). This principle—albeit without stipulating concrete guidelines as to how it would function in practice—was located within the context of continued oppression of not only one class by another, but also of one nationality by another. The sixth congress (1905) was even clearer, speaking of 'cultural-national autonomy', 'free cultural development' and the need for self-government to be transferred to the 'nation' (Frankel 1981, 195, 247). Yet, the internationalist forces within the Bund resisted being overwhelmed by such resolutions, ensuring that the statements of principle had no concrete program to ensure enactment. Indeed, the internationalists were able to persuade the majority to overcome the 1903 split with the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and re-join that Party in 1906.

The Caucasian Social Democrats, or at least the dominant Menshevik section, had adopted the 'cultural-national autonomy' position already outlined in detail by Renner and Bauer, which then became part of the lively debates in the Bund. So, little theoretical elaboration is to be found, except for one point. The Caucasian movement developed perhaps the most extreme culturist position. In light of the complex history of the Caucasus and the dispersal of peoples,[9] especially the Armenians, they argued for the predominance of cultural factors over history and economics. Such factors were signalled by a common language and religion. Georgians may be united wherever they might be by language and culture, while for the Armenians identification with the church was paramount for cultural-national identity (Stalin 1913e, 361–362, 1913f, 211).

In response, Stalin's definition is more comprehensive, seeking to restore categories that had been excised by the Austrians and the more nationally minded among the Bund and the Caucasians. He writes: 'A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture' (Stalin 1913e, 307, 1913f, 164). Of these items, only history and 'psychological make-up', or better, 'psychological storehouse', featured in the position of Bauer and the Bund. Indeed, they ultimately favoured the final category in what may be called a revised culturist position.[10] Given its importance for the debates, let me begin by focusing in this item concerning 'national culture'. Van Ree argues that its inclusion marks a distinct shift from Stalin's earlier criticisms of the very idea of a 'national spirit [*natsional'nyĭ dukh*]' (Stalin 1904a, 52, 1904b, 167), so much so that Stalin ends up with an 'organicist' position (Van Ree 2002a, 62, 2003, 218, 222–223). It is indeed a shift, with Stalin coming closer to Bauer in the conjunction of the apparent intangibility of such a culture and its temporal

[9]See especially Suny's excellent overview (1993, 38–43, 58–64, 72–76) of the complexity of the Caucasian situation. Marshall (2010, 10–50) provides a focus on political and military matters.

[10]Bauer (2000, 113–116) had already sought to refute most of the items listed in Stalin's definition. Stalin's response was comprehensive (1913e, 308–313, 1913f, 165–170).

contingency: the 'peculiarities of national culture' change both over time and due to the specific conditions of existence (Stalin 1913e, 306–307, 1913f, 164). Yet, Van Ree is mistaken in assuming that 'national culture' becomes the core of Stalin's position, for the following reasons. First, it is one of a number of items required for defining a nation. Thus, the Austro-Marxist and Bundist focus on 'national character' at the expense of all but history is inadequate for defining a nation. Second, Stalin places the item last on his list, thereby indicating its relative unimportance. In this respect, he continues in the anti-culturist direction of his earlier work.[11] Third, Stalin makes it clear that he understands the idea of 'national culture' differently from Bauer and the Bund. His choice of terminology is significant, describing this culture as 'psychological storehouse [*psikhicheskogo sklada*]' in the summary definition (quoted above) and elsewhere as a 'specific spiritual complexion [*osobennosti dukhovnogo oblika*]', which indicates the religio-cultural dimensions of this category. But his use of this phrase is in this case a two-edged sword: on the one hand, spiritual or indeed religious factors are important; on the other, they cannot be isolated as the key. In both respects, he sought a way to counter the arguments of the Austrians and the Bund.

Stalin knew full well that such a focus would be met by efforts of the Austrians and the Bund to distance themselves from religious considerations. Bauer, for one, had attacked an approach to the nation in terms of what he called 'national spiritualism': the attribution of distinct national characteristics to 'a mysterious "spirit of the people [*Volksgeist*]" or "soul of the people [*Volksseele*]"' (Bauer 2000, 23). Such an approach sees 'national character' as a transcendent and eternal reality, as a 'metaphysical presence' if not a 'ghost' (Bauer 2000, 24). Bauer's response to this 'mystical' approach was to locate 'national character' in historical terms. Yet, Stalin's criticism is that Bauer was still too close to a mystical and indeed spiritualist approach, precisely because of his adherence to 'national character', no matter how historicised. Such a nation, determined by a 'national spirit', is an 'invisible, self-contained force', something 'intangible and supernatural' (Stalin 1913e, 311–312, 1913f, 169).[12] This is precisely what happens when one isolates 'national culture' as the determining feature of the nation. Instead, argues Stalin, it finds its proper place only with the other features.

A similar criticism applies to the Bund. They were keen to argue that their sense of 'national culture' was not explicitly religious.[13] As non-believers, they distinguished between Jewish 'religion' and Jewish 'culture', seeking to foster the latter among the workers of the Bund, so much so that the Jewish community might

[11]These theoretical tensions may be seen as manifestations of a personal struggle with deeply ingrained culturist assumptions. Van Ree (2007) has some useful comments (with qualification) on Stalin's ambivalent personal opinions.

[12]Earlier he had spoken of the 'fog' and 'mystery' that envelops ideas on the national question (Stalin 1904a, 41, 1904b, 159).

[13]Indeed, a worker joining a socialist Party such as the Bund found that it entailed a rupture with religious commitment and practice (Frankel 1981, 179; Kanatchikov 1986, 27–36, 147–148, 172–173).

become secular. Yet the distinction is somewhat artificial, for the line between culture and religion—as Stalin is quick to point out—is difficult to define and highly porous. Stalin's criticisms are directed at the more nationally minded among the Bund, who had been able to steer through the resolutions at the fourth and sixth congresses and then increasingly assert their position in the seventh through to ninth congresses. His response may be seen as an attack on such a group and an implicit appeal to the internationalists (Stalin 1913e, 355, 1913f, 205–206). So he argues that the Jews may have asserted a national character or a spiritual complexion; they may have taken a stand for Yiddish (the language of Jewish workers) as a recognised language; they may have argued for education and the promotion of Jewish national culture and arts; and they may even have proposed recognition of the Sabbath as a rest day and Jewish hospitals (Stalin 1913e, 302, 352–354, 1913f, 160, 203–205, see also Frankel 1981, 202). But Stalin argues both that this risks preserving what is reactionary and objectionable and that it is still insufficient for the status of 'nation', for they have no common territory, language or economic structure (Stalin 1913e, 352, 354, 1913f, 203, 205). 'If there is anything common to them left', he writes, 'it is their religion, their common origin and certain relics of the national character'. But this is hardly enough: 'petrified religious rites and fading psychological relics' (Stalin 1913e, 310, 1913f, 167) fostered by pockets of the 'clerical-reactionary Jewish community' (Stalin 1913e, 374–375, 1913f, 222) have little hope in resisting the social, economic and cultural forces of the nations amongst whom they live. By itself, this was simply not enough.

How do the other items in Stalin's definition fare, which he sought to enlist against what he saw as a culturist position? On closer analysis, his argument contains not a few problems. In respect to stable community, Stalin stresses the need for long historical development, concomitant with a distinct territory and language. This emphasis on a lengthy history will soon clash with his argument concerning the development of nations under capitalism.[14] With the question of territory, the ever-present religio-cultural dimension of the topic is once again at the forefront. Here, one of the arguments of the Austrian Marxists and the Bund is his target, for they asserted—as we saw above—that a distinct group should be regarded as a nation no matter how dispersed it might be. For Bauer, a nation is 'a community of individuals without ensuring it exclusive control within a particular region' (Bauer 2000, 222).[15] The Bund agreed. Obviously, the situation of the dispersed multi-nationalities of Austria and the reality of the Jewish Diaspora—without a territory from which they had been dispersed—provided the reality to which they sought to respond.

Against this argument of the Bund, Stalin makes two points. First, he agrees with the Austrian Social Democrats that the Jews do not have a common territory, which

[14]It also returns, in a rather different context, more than three decades later in his essay on linguistics (Stalin 1950a, b).

[15]Similarly, Renner speaks of a 'community of individuals' without any connection to 'a particular territory' (Renner 2005, 21).

has forced them to take a 'cultural-national autonomy' position. Second, they have little connection with the soil, which would provide a stable basis to unite them as a nation, enabling a framework for social and economic life (Stalin 1913e, 345–346, 1913f, 197–198). Instead, Jews—like the five to six million Russian Jews—tend to engage in trade, industry and 'liberal' professions, being largely town dwellers who adapt themselves to the prevailing social, economic and linguistic conditions. This suggestion is clearly Eurasian-centric, assuming that the specific conditions under which socio-economic life operates in Eurasia is universal—tilling the soil and thereby claiming territory as one's 'own' on that basis. This assumption had already played havoc with peoples subjugated by European colonialism, where the colonisers assumed that anyone who did not till the soil had no claim to the land being appropriated—the doctrine of 'terra nullius' in the colonisation of Australia is perhaps the most telling example.[16] At this point in his argument, Stalin risks assuming a common position at the time (shared, for example, with Bauer whom he quotes): the situation he describes can lead to nothing less than the assimilation of the Jews. Indeed, he goes so far as to observe that the future of the Jews as a distinct people is uncertain and that their continued existence is still to be proved (Stalin 1913e, 345–346, 352, 1913f, 197–198, 203).[17] Later, he will realise that the Jews do exist as a nation with a distinct future, but for that we will need to wait a little.

Language is the final item that is supposed to show the age-old character of a nation. Here Stalin encounters the most significant difficulty thus far. As for the Bund, he is in two minds: at times, he criticises the Bund's position that Yiddish should be the recognised language of Jewish workers (Stalin 1913e, 352–353, 1913f, 203–204); at others, he questions whether they have a single language at all, for they inhabit 'different territories, speak different languages' (Stalin 1913e, 307, 309–310, 312, 1913f, 165, 167, 169). This inability to decide on the singularity or multiplicity of language among the Jews is but a microcosm of the problems with his position concerning the connections between language and nation. His problems begin with a distinction that he sometimes undermines: a nation cannot be the same as a state. True enough, in the terms of the debate at the time. The reason given here is that a nation has a common language, while a state has multiple languages. But now he stumbles. He argues that nation and state are coterminous in places like Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, for they have a common language, but Austria or Russia (or, I would add, Canada or Switzerland or Belgium or many other multilingual states) are designated 'state communities'. The latter may be stable communities, but not 'national communities' in which nation and state coalesce. But what does he mean by multiplicity of languages? 'We are referring, of course, to the spoken languages of the people and not to the official governmental languages' (Stalin 1913e, 304, 1913f, 162). He has Russia in mind,

[16]The connection between tilling and private property in land was also crucial for the development of the early myths of capitalism, especially in the work of Hugo Grotius and John Locke (Boer and Petterson 2014).

[17]He acknowledges that this was a common position at the time (Stalin 1913e, 344–345, 1913f, 197).

with its official Russian of the tsarist autocracy and the multitude of languages spoken in its many regions. The problem is that the same applies to his examples of nations-as-states with one common language: in Germany, as in the United Kingdom and United States and indeed Australia, many languages were and are spoken on a daily basis. It seems as though nations-as-states are few and far between, while 'state communities' are the norm.

Stalin's difficulties are not at an end, for a deeper tension runs through his argument, between a longer history that focuses on historically constituted stable communities (discussed above) and an account that attributes the rise of nations to the more recent spread of capitalism.[18] Indeed, the category 'economic life' in his definition signals the second narrative. Initially, he suggests that a common territory is the basis for identifiable and stable economic life. Yet, 'economic life' gains a whole new sense in the second narrative concerning the growth of nations: now capitalism looms large, challenging the idea of a historically constituted stable community.[19] Instead of a community that has arisen over a long and slow process, the rise and spread of capitalism becomes the trigger for nationalism, if not 'nations' themselves: 'The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into nations' (Stalin 1913e, 313, 1913f, 170). This narrative is at least dialectically nuanced, for capitalism has both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. Thus, the divisions generated under capitalism—in terms of labour and then classes—actually serve to knit people together within an economic system. Yet, in its 'higher stages' capitalism actually disperses people, through the exacerbation of class struggle, the shifting needs of labour and imperialist colonialism (Stalin 1913e, 339, 1913f, 192–193). Further, this focus on capitalism also undermines his earlier narrative in terms of the distinction between nations and states. There, Stalin argued problematically that a nation has one common language, while a 'state community' has multiple languages. But now he argues that 'national states' are indeed possible, especially in Western Europe where capitalism established itself earlier (Stalin 1913e, 314, 1913f, 170).

[18]Martin (2000, 348–349) sees the tension, but mistakenly identifies the second as the core of Stalin's position in the article and the first as typical of his turn in the mid-1930s to 'Great-Russian' nationalism.

[19]Here he draws nearer to Kautsky, who stressed the role of capitalism in developing centralised political 'organisms' with a national language. But for Kautsky, only territory, economic cohesion and language were the key features of a 'nation' (Kautsky 2009, 2010). In many respects, the emphasis on the historical production (or construction) of nations and nationalism lays the basis, via the Marxist tradition, for the later proposals of Deutsch, Gellner and Anderson (although they tend not to recognise this foundation). As Brudny puts it (1998, 5), a nation is a 'modern political form of group solidarity based on jointly held beliefs that the group's origins, territory, language, history, culture, and political or religious creed make it distinct from any other social group. These beliefs are not immutable. They change over time and often are subject to manipulation' (see also Deutsch 1966; Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991). Suny (1993, 1–19) offers the best recent analysis of the historical development of 'nations' under capitalism—much in line with Kautsky and Stalin.

Thus far, Stalin has not really proposed a convincing definition of 'nation'. He may have sought to challenge the culturist definitions—with their amorphous 'national culture'—of the Austrians and the Bund, but his own proposal has too many problems to be viable. On each of the points in relation to 'stable community' he is in trouble: history, territory and language. Only when comes to economic conditions, with the contrasting focus on nations in relation to the development of capitalism, does he begin to gain some traction.

6.1.2 Class and/or Nation

Stalin is on a better footing when he moves from the question of definition to the question of class and nation. On this matter, the extended and often polemical debate over the national question was not undertaken merely for the sake of theory, for it had an urgent practical dimension. All of the participants sought a socialist solution to the same problem: how to provide space and protection for the many minority nationalities living in the same state. However, their disagreements turned on two contrasts. The first was class and nation: does one begin with class as the basis of the national question, or is 'national culture' to be the primary category? If one begins with the latter, as the Austrians, the Bund and some of the Caucasians did, then one developed what may be called a culturist federalism, seeking a federated state that accounted for such differences. By contrast, for Stalin the core category was class, from which one then dealt with the issue of national culture. The second and related issue concerned diversity and unity: if one begins with 'cultural-national diversity', then one struggles to find unity within a federated state; but if one begins with class, then unity follows. However, this emphasis on unity through class produces a somewhat unexpected dialectical outcome. Unity through class resulted not in assimilation under a uniform culture, but in a diversity that fostered national differences. In this light, Stalin sought both explicit recognition of territorial claims of nationalities and stiff protections for minorities without territory.

In unpacking this brief statement of the main issues, I begin with the position of the Bund, especially Vladimir Medem's argument for federation. The key here is that one begins with diversity, with the individual national groups, and attempts to locate them within what he called a 'state of nationalities', in which minorities would be protected through limited jurisdiction over cultural matters.[20] Like the Austro-Marxists, he used the terminology of 'cultural-national autonomy' but understood it in terms of governing bodies with jurisdiction over cultural matters—and thereby not political, economic or territorial autonomy. So also, the Bund argued for federation, for both the Party structure, in which the Bund represented

[20]He saw his proposal as avoiding the 'bourgeois' extremes of nationalism (ending up with Zionism) and assimilation (which he saw as the policy of the Russian Social Democrats).

Jewish workers, and in the proposals for a federalist state. Thus, the resolutions at the fourth congress (1901) stated that in Russia, with its 'many different nationalities', a socialist state 'must in the future develop into a federation of nationalities in which every nationality enjoys full national autonomy, regardless of the territory which it occupies' (Frankel 1981, 220). And the sixth congress (1905) explicitly used the term 'cultural-national autonomy', understood in terms of 'governmental-juridical institutions which would permit each nation its free cultural development'. The focus was clearly culturist, in which 'cultural questions', such as public education, should be removed from state jurisdiction and be 'transferred to the nation' (Frankel 1981, 241). The underlying assumption was that true working class internationalism should seek ways to reconcile the aspirations of the various nationalities.

As for Otto Bauer, not only was religion a constant point of reference in his effort to trace the development of distinct 'national cultures' (Bauer 2000, 65–69, 167–174), but he also uses a religious analogy, borrowed from Karl Renner, in his proposal for a multinational state: in the same way that religious groups may live within a city or a state, so also may national groups do so in a state, having their own institutions and organisations but without claiming territorial sovereignty (Renner 2005, 17–18, 25, 30; Bauer 2000, 281–289). Both Bauer and Renner agreed that nationalities should exist as autonomous units without claiming territory in multi-national states. However, both argued that affiliation to religious groups is no longer as strong as the hold of the national cultural communities, so the latter require widespread democratisation and autonomous self-administration as the guarantee of their distinctness.

Stalin's attack on this culturist federalism uses a number of arguments, such as the danger of applying a position developed in Austria (or even the United States) to the very different situation in Russia, or the point that the Bund's position would work very well within a bourgeois democracy such as France or Switzerland, or indeed that it is a subtle form of nationalism (Stalin 1913e, 325–331, 347–350, 1913f, 180–185, 199–202). However, the key to Stalin's argument concerns class as the basis for dealing with the national question,[21] an emphasis that leads him to argue for the priority of unity over diversity. Whence comes this connection between class and unity? Theoretically it comes from Marxist analysis, in which class is the core category that unites workers across varying nationalities. Practically it derives from his direct experiences in the Caucasus where the Bolsheviks were a distinct minority in comparison with the Mensheviks. As Suny deftly shows, the complex political and national history of the Caucasus had produced a situation in which national aspirations were often seen as one with class. He writes of a 'unique ethnoclass structure' (Suny 1993, 38–43, 58–64, 72–76), in which Georgians were largely a peasant people with a nobility both hankering after the glories of the Georgian past and now integrated with the tsarist Russian

[21]Characteristically for one not attentive to Marxist categories, Martin (2001b, 75) misses the core issue of class in the opposition to federalism.

administration, the dispersed Armenians formed the bulk of the new bourgeoisie in control of commerce and Baku oil, and the Azerbaijani (and immigrant Persian) Muslims made up the lower workers in the oil fields, with less wages and skills. The results were distinct forms of class and nationalist formations: the Georgian nobles came to espouse a 'feudal-monarchist' nationalism tied in closely with their Eastern Orthodox faith; the dispersed Armenians pursued a 'bourgeois' non-territorial nationalism in competition with the large Russian and European bourgeoisies; the younger and more radical Georgian intelligentsia, among whom Stalin found himself, managed to develop a mass political movement that welded together Georgian peasants and both Georgian and not a few Azerbaijani workers. For them, the enemies were the tsarist autocracy (and therefore Georgian nobles) and the bourgeoisie (largely Armenian). In this way, class and nation were interwoven, although the problem for Stalin was that such an interweaving led to disunity rather than unity.

In this light, we can understand Stalin's criticisms, in the early 'The Social-Democratic View on the National Question', of 'feudal-monarchist nationalism' with a 'clerical form' and bourgeois nationalism (Stalin 1904a, b). As for the former, he uses the example of the old Georgian nobles, who, aided by significant parts of the church, sought independence from Russia (after Georgia came under Russian control in 1801). For Stalin, their agenda was obvious: they sought to dominate their subjects unmolested by powerful neighbours. By contrast, the bourgeois nationalists, in a situation of rising nationalist movements engendered by the spread of capitalism, sought to harness such movements for the sake of maximising profits. The forms of such nationalism may differ, emphasising variously agrarian issues, language, civil equality, religious freedom or self-government. But underlying these forms is the same struggle: the bourgeoisie of the oppressed 'nation' struggles with the bourgeoisie of the dominant (in this case Russian) state. In reply, the dominant nation bourgeoisie represses the local bourgeoisie in both economic and political forms—restriction of movement, franchise, language, education and religion. In their turn, the relatively weak local bourgeoisie actively courts proletarians and peasants. They claim that their own nationalism is actually in the interests of all, rallying common people around the banners of 'fatherland', 'national pride' and the 'native folk'. All need to band together in a common front for the greater good—national independence.[22]

In reply, Stalin initially undertakes some conventional Marxist ground-clearing, arguing that the national question from the perspective of the proletariat requires the demolition of the barriers between workers of different nationalities. His next step is far more interesting. He could have argued that the proletariat and peasants offer the only true leadership of the nationalist movement—assuming a position where class and nation are coterminous. Or rather, he does argue such a position, but not in the

[22]However, in 'Abolition of National Disabilities', Stalin argues for a limited value in the bourgeois drive to emancipation and equal rights—including religion—for minorities. It is, of course, inadequate and needs to be completed with a socialist revolution (Stalin 1917a, b).

way that might have been expected. In light of the Caucasian situation, the expectation would have been that true national independence can be achieved through none other than the socialist movement. Instead, Stalin takes a different line, for such a focus would lead to disunity rather than unity. Yes, the proletariat should lead the nationalist movement, but in a way that redefines how nationalism should be understood. That is, only through a focus on class as an international category can national aspirations be reconfigured. Already in this article we find the initial contours of the argument that class unity fosters national diversity. These contours appear in his defence of some of the positions of the Russian Social-Democratic platform: civil equality, freedom of language and self-government (Stalin 1904a, 42–44, 1904b, 159–161).[23] He may argue explicitly that a Marxist focus on class offers a far better response to the national question, but implicit here is the dialectical point that class unity fosters national diversity.

The implicitness of that point appears in his attack on federalism, which already emerges in this early piece. Here his opponents are the Armenian Social Democrats, who had a distinct interest in a federalist cultural-national approach due to the dispersed nature of Armenians in the Caucasus. Since the more sustained criticism of federalism appears in 'Marxism and the National Question', I focus on this criticism here. However, a close examination of Stalin's argument reveals an intriguing twist: he may have begun by sharply opposing the position of the Austrians, some Caucasian Social Democrats and especially the Bund, but he then draws nearer to them in some respects, nearer than he might have anticipated.[24] Initially, Stalin argues for a stark difference between the Bolshevik position and that of his opponents. The latter sought, as we have seen, a primary recognition of cultural-national difference in both Party structures and a future socialist state. Thus, the starting point was multiplicity, which would then lead to a federation. For Stalin, they began at the wrong point, with cultural-national autonomy rather than international class solidarity. A federalist approach 'substitutes for the socialist principle of the *class struggle* the bourgeois "*principle of nationality*" (Stalin 1913e, 342, 1913f, 195). Typically, Stalin seeks to sharpen the opposition in terms of a clear either-or: the first principle is either the unity of class or the multiplicity of autonomy. One's starting point determines a very different path, leading to distinct outcomes. Thus, the Bund's approach leads to separatism, while the Bolshevik approach produces unity. The Bund may have sought unity through federalism, but since it began with multiplicity, its search for unity would always be of a superficial form, masking a persistent multiplicity that would eventually lead to separatism.[25] For Stalin, this was analogous to bourgeois movements for national autonomy, albeit 'skilfully masked by socialist phrases' (Stalin 1913e, 342, 1913f, 195).

[23] Harding has usefully provided a copy of the program itself (Party 1903).

[24] The following is a careful exegesis, seeking to draw out the philosophical implications, of the final pages of 'Marxism and the National Question' (Stalin 1913e, 373–381, 1913f, 220–227, see also 1917y[1], 56–57, 1917z[1], 104–105).

[25] Elsewhere, Stalin uses the analogy of the anatomist, who must have knowledge of the whole body in order to understand its parts (Stalin 1904a, 46–47, 1904b, 163).

If we consider this argument more closely, the difference is not so sharp. Stalin argues that the path followed by the Bund begins with autonomy and moves to federalism, which can lead only to separatism and splits among the workers rather than union. By contrast, Stalin proposes class unity first, which may then lead to a different type of autonomy and a federalism that avoids separatism. In short, we may formulate their disagreement as autonomy-federalism-separatism versus class-autonomy-federalism-unity. When put in this way, the difference is less one of stark opposition and more of degree, or correction. Thus, the Bund's approach is incomplete without class as the primary, unifying category. To be sure, for Stalin the reinsertion of class, thereby correcting the Bund's argument, has significant consequences. As the first step on the path, class has a unifying function which affects the remainder of the sequence. Thus, when we move through autonomy and federalism, we arrive not at separatism, but at unity. Yet this is clearly a correction of the Bund's argument, via the reinsertion of class, rather than two utterly different arguments.

This partial rapprochement with the Bund at a theoretical level sets the scene for the argument of a piece from four years later called 'Against Federalism' (Stalin 1917c, d). The initial impression of this article is that Stalin blatantly contradicts himself. He still attacks federalism, but he does so from a very different and historical perspective. Federalism, he argues, may be appropriate in parts of the world that sought unity from multiplicity. The United States, Switzerland and Canada are his examples, where distinct colonies or states entered into federal relations.[26] However, federalism is but a transitional stage, applicable in some situations, as a mechanism for unity.[27] The contrast with his earlier argument against the Bund should already be clear, for now he recognises that unity may result from federalism. Aware that he may have endorsed the Bund's position in this article from 1917, he now uses a very different argument against federalism: in the Russian situation, such an approach is useless. The reason is that Russia is already a unity (even if it is an imperial unity), so one cannot deploy a federalist approach unless one breaks Russia into multiple states and then begins a process of passing to federalism on the way to unity. In making this historical argument, he tries to hold onto a primary unity, but it is reduced to a historical argument relating to Russian conditions. Even this effort fades away in a fascinating endnote to the article, written after the October Revolution. In this endnote, Stalin acknowledges that changing conditions after the revolution have led the Bolsheviks to adopt a federalist approach.[28] The reason given is that Russia had actually disintegrated and fragmented during the period of the revolution and the 'civil' war, so much so that it had become a country of multiple states, which had seceded and become isolated from one another. In these conditions, federalism was needed to generate unity.

[26]He reiterates this position in 1918 (Stalin 1918m, 68–70, 1918n, 66–68).

[27]Once again, we see the same position in 1918 (Stalin 1918m, 74–75, 1918n, 72–73).

[28]A temporary federalist approach was adopted by the Central Committee in 1918 and at the Eighth Congress of 1919 (Stalin 1917c, 32, 1917d, 76).

Once again, class is crucial, for federalism is designed to bring together the various national working classes, who found themselves isolated and out of contact with one another.

Has Stalin backtracked completely, adopting a federalist approach that was similar to that of the Bund and the Austrian Marxists? Initially, this may seem to be the case, especially with his argument in 'Against Federalism'. However, we need to see this argument within his overall position. First, the overriding emphasis remains on unity. Initially, his insertion of class as the primary category sought a final unity from autonomy and federalism. Later, in the context of a fragmented Russia after the October Revolution, the adoption of a temporary federalism was predicated on the desire for class unity. One may argue that the Bund and the Austrians also sought some form of unity in a federated state, but now the second reason comes into play: Stalin resolutely insisted on class as the primary category rather than 'cultural-national autonomy'. Any form of federation should be understood from this perspective, and it is the strongest argument against the culturist position. Third, one may wonder what has happened to diversity, especially the cultural-national diversity so dear to the Bund and the Austrians. Has it been thoroughly assimilated under the unitary category of class? Now we come to Stalin's unwitting dialectical discovery, already implicit in his earliest reflections: a totalising unity produces hitherto unexpected levels of diversity.[29] I cannot emphasise enough how significant this discovery is for understanding the subsequent development of Stalin's thought on the state. Indeed, we have already seen it at work in his deliberations on language, and it will emerge in relation to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the affirmative action program of the Soviet Union.

6.1.3 *Concretising Class: The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*

The somewhat surprising conclusion is that Stalin's theoretical position, in contrast to those of the Bund and the Austrian and Caucasian Marxists, is—despite its initial problems—the stronger. The Bundist (and Caucasian) proposal was the weakest, for it offered a limited program focused on guarantees for cultural differences, while Bauer and Renner sought a little more in terms of control over institutions for the protection of minorities. But the strength of Stalin's position arises from his emphasis on class and unity in dealing with the national question, leading to the production of regional autonomy and recognition of dispersed minorities. Thus, it was not so much a question of either class *or* nation, as Stalin himself tended to frame the problem, but of class *and* nation. This was not a compromise by a Marxist

[29]Many simply miss the dialectical nature of this position (Guins 1954, 213–225; Pinkus 1988, 50–51; Pipes 1997; Martin 2000, 2001b; Weeks 2005, 567–568). Rakowska-Harmstone (1974) is a notable exception, albeit focused on practical policy issues rather than Stalin's thought.

internationalist in light of the persistence of nationalism, but a different way of dealing with the national question itself. But why surprising? Stalin's initial definition of the nation did not provide much hope of a stronger position, precisely because of its problems. However, in his efforts to tackle the culturist position of the Austrians, the Bund and the Caucasians, he developed his emphasis on class and unity, thereby leading to a dialectic of which he was perhaps only half aware, a dialectic in which totalising unity produced an even greater diversity of 'national cultures'. I add that Stalin's theoretical argument challenges the persistence of culturist approaches today, in which the amorphous 'culture' becomes a catch-all category for characterising behaviour, beliefs, temperament and indeed clashes (as with post-communist Eastern Europe). The core of that challenge lies not so much in questions of territory or language, but in the issue of economic history and above all in the dynamics of class.

But my interest in this chapter is the way Stalin's initial intervention into the national question sets the scene for the next step in my exploration. His discovery that unity produces unexpected forms of diversity is not any sort of unity and not any garden-variety diversity: this is a totalising unity based on class that produces new levels of diversity, which would lead to the world's first affirmative action program.

However, a number of theoretical steps are required in order to get to that point, in which Stalin concretises the class unity he sought in terms of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[30] The term seeks to capture the tensions between unity generated from below (proletariat) and from above (dictatorship), which may be seen as yet another dimension of the dialectic of transcendence and immanence examined in the previous chapter. In other words, while the 'world of Soviets' fosters among working people a 'natural striving towards union in a single socialist family' (Stalin 1922g, 153, 1922h, 150, see also 1923u, 247, 1923v, 242),[31] so much so that it assumes the eradication of national oppression and the establishment of 'mutual confidence and fraternal co-operation between peoples' (Stalin 1922g, 158, 1922h,

[30]I return to the dictatorship of the proletariat here with a somewhat different focus from that in the fourth chapter, where I was interested in the intensification of the dialectic.

[31]Indeed, Stain suggests that the impetus to form the USSR came from the minority republics (Stalin 1922c, 141, 1922d, 138). We may already see this feature in article 2 of the 1918 constitution of the RSFSR, which speaks of the 'principle of a free union of free nations' (1918a, b). See also article 8: 'At the same time, endeavouring to create a genuinely free and voluntary, and therefore all the more firm and stable, union of the working classes of all the nations of Russia, the Third Congress of Soviets confines itself to promulgating the fundamental principles of a federation of Soviet republics of Russia, leaving it to the workers and peasants of each nation to decide independently at their own representative congresses of soviets whether they wish to participate in the federal government and in the other federal Soviet institutions, and on what terms'. This process entails a prior one of disintegration, or rather the necessity of a centrifugal impulse after the destruction of the tsarist autocracy to a centripetal one manifested in the new world of the soviets: 'Thus, *from* the breakdown of the old imperialist unity, *through* independent Soviet republics, the peoples of Russia are coming *to* a new, voluntary and fraternal unity' (Stalin 1919c, 237, 1919d, 229).

155), this is possible only by the ability of the 'new Russia' to 'destroy the old' and 'build the new' (Stalin 1922a, 161, 1922b, 158–159). Or, to put it in terms of Stalin's well-known statement, 'revolution from above' cannot be thought without the support of the bulk of the people.[32] But how does the dictatorship of the proletariat—as the expression of unity from above and below—produce the diversity of affirmative action?

In this relatively brief section, I examine four steps in Stalin's argument concerning such a dictatorship. The first entails the necessary extension of liberation from class oppression to liberation from national oppression: the existence of socialism is inconceivable 'without the liberation of the oppressed nations, without national freedom' (Stalin 1921e, 20, 1921f, 19). One cannot logically argue for liberation in one form and not foster liberation in the other. I have written of 'extending' and of the 'logic' of such a connection, but Stalin seeks to knit them together as closely as possible. So the process of establishing and strengthening the socialist Soviet republics and the overcoming of national oppression are 'two sides of one and the same process of liberating the working people from imperialist bondage' (Stalin 1921e, 21, 1921f, 20).

Stalin's point is at this stage nothing more than an assertion. He has yet to provide a reason for the connection between the two forms of liberation. This reason is the common ground of all workers. In other words, it draws upon the international nature of the working-class movement, in which workers of all nationalities have in common the fact that they are workers. This focus, argues Stalin, has 'struck at the root of the old national enmity, removed the ground for national oppression and won for the Russian workers the confidence of their brothers of other nationalities' (Stalin 1921e, 20, 1921f, 20).[33] The point is subtler than it first appears to be, for it requires a necessary and dialectical detour by way of class. If one is to deal thoroughly with national oppression, then one does not tackle it directly; instead, one focuses on class and the common ground of all workers in order to achieve the aim of liberation from national oppression.

With these two steps of Stalin's argument in mind, we can now move to the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat—after liberation in terms of class and nation and even the common ground of workers has been established as the reason for such a connection. This brings me to the third and fourth steps of Stalin's argument, which appear in the following text: 'the victory of the Soviets and the establishment

[32]'The distinguishing feature of this revolution is that it was accomplished from above [*sverhu vniz*], on the initiative of the state, and directly supported from below [*snizu vverh*] by the millions of peasants' (Stalin 1938a, 305, 1938b, 300, see also 1950a, 164, 1950b, 120).

[33]Note also: the establishment of the Soviet system fundamentally altered the relations between 'the labouring masses of the different nationalities' by removing the basis for national oppression and thereby fostering trust and confidence between workers of different nationalities (Stalin 1921e, 20, 1921f, 20).

of the proletarian dictatorship are a fundamental condition for abolishing national oppression, establishing national equality and guaranteeing the rights of national minorities' (Stalin 1921e, 20, 1921f, 19, see also 1923u, 269–270, 1923v, 262–263). Quite simply, this is the 'only regime that can actually solve the national question' (Stalin 1921s, 37, 1921t, 38). The abolition of national oppression we have already encountered, but it is worth noting here that he connects it directly with the dictatorship of the proletariat.[34] In this light the next two phrases bear much weight. To begin with, such a dictatorship is necessary for 'establishing national equality'. This takes the argument a step further, beyond liberation and the common ground of workers. The dictatorship is the necessary foundation for equality between peoples of different nations, after liberation has been achieved. We are now in the period of the long and arduous task of socialist construction, but with this assertion we are still left with the question as to how such equality can be achieved. The answer is the fourth and final point of his argument: the dictatorship of the proletariat does so by 'guaranteeing the rights of national minorities'.

In light of these theoretical developments, we may read Stalin's slightly earlier statements—as part of his deliberations on the 1918 constitution of the RSFSR—as a logical summary of his position.[35] The text in question presents three points, which became articles 9–11 of the first constitution (1918a, b). In the introduction, Stalin begins by stressing the primary role of the dictatorship of the urban and rural proletariat and of the poor peasantry in suppressing the bourgeoisie, abolishing exploitation and establishing socialism. Immediately following are two points: the first is that the Russian Republic is a 'free socialist society' and the second that there will be regional soviets 'distinguished by a specific manner of life and national composition' (Stalin 1918g, 81, 1918h, 79). By now the conjunction of dictatorship, freedom and regional diversity should not jar, for the freedom in question is precisely for workers and peasants previously denied freedom, and the regional diversity is a direct outcome of the class focus and strength of the dictatorship of the proletariat. With this argument, Stalin has both provided the theoretical basis for and reached the threshold of the affirmative action program, to which I now turn.

[34]Or, as he puts it elsewhere, 'there is no doubt that the oppressed nationalities could not have achieved their liberation if the dictatorship of the proletariat had not been established in central Russia' (Stalin 1923k, 188, 1923l, 185). Earlier, he saw the dictatorship—following Lenin—as the necessary agent of a transitional stage while the old order remains in part and the new has yet to emerge in full (Stalin 1918u, 91, 1918v, 89). By now the dictatorship assumes a more crucial role.

[35]Even though these statements appear earlier and have yet to be explicated, they may also be read in a logical fashion as the summary of his position.

6.2 Affirmative Action

The affirmative action program[36] entails a gradual move from the particular to the universal. The initial impetus may have arisen from opposition to tsarist repression, which was as much religious as it was national, but the theory and enactment of the program required far more than a negative impetus.[37] The program involved a comprehensive effort at social, cultural and economic recreation. Minorities were identified, named and established in territories, where language, culture, education and governance were fostered. Dispersed minorities with no territory were provided with strong legal protections. I use the term 'recreation' quite deliberately, for it was very much a creative act, in which the biblical act of naming (Genesis 1–2) itself entailed the creation of groups, peoples and nations. As the report to the Fifteenth Congress of 1931 observed, this involved 'the creation of new nationalities out of tribes which had earlier never dreamed of national existence' (quoted in Martin 2001a, 155–156, see also Northrop 2001, 199). This dimension becomes clearer, as I mentioned earlier, with the interchangeable use of the terms *politika* (policy) and *stroitel'stvo* (construction)—as with language policy (*iazykovaia politika*) and language construction (*iazykovoe stroitel'stvo*). In other words, the process was understood as the deliberate intervention by socialists into the process of producing and developing a new society, among which national groups played a central role (Reznik 2003, 34; Slezkine 2000, 323–324; Martin 2001b, 67). Most of the material concerning Soviet affirmative action involves policies, research teams, concrete programs, government departments (central and local) and the many significant achievements and mistakes made in the process.[38]

[36]Although I apply the term 'affirmative action' retrospectively, I follow Martin (2001a, 17) who translates *polozhitel'naia deiatel'not*' as 'affirmative action'—as shorthand for the policies fostered by Stalin.

[37]Stalin often stressed this point: 'Religious and national persecution, forcible Russification of the "alien" peoples, suppression of national-cultural institutions, denial of the franchise, denial of liberty of movement, incitement of nationality against nationality, pogroms and massacres—such was the national oppression of shameful memory' (Stalin 1917a, 17, 1917b, 64, see also 1904a, 44–45, 1904b, 161–162, 1905s, 1905t, 1917y[1], 52–53, 1917z[1], 101–102, 1918s, 31, 1918t, 30, 1918m, 69, 1918n, 67–68, 1923k, 187, 1923l, 184). Note also: 'The policy of tsarism was to obliterate these minorities by every possible means, even by pogroms (the anti-Jewish pogroms)' (Stalin 1921e, 27, 1921f, 27).

[38]Terry Martin's work (2001a, see also Smith 1998), *The Affirmative Action Empire*, remains, despite its flaws, the primary reference point for detailed archival investigation of such a program. Martin's work is peerless for its use of archival material, along with the sheer detail presented. However, he is less strong on theoretical matters, especially in relation to Stalin. See Suny (1993, 98–112) for an earlier overview of the process and its contradictions. Hirsch (1997, 2002, 2005) provides a study of the immense ethnographic efforts and participatory process, with a focus on 'census, map and museum', in the new project of defining and determining such 'nationalities'.

6.2.1 From Creative Naming to Cultural Revolution

By contrast, my interest is primarily theoretical, particularly in relation to Stalin. He was in many respects the architect, if not the creator of such a program. Four features of his theoretical deliberations require attention: the creative act of naming itself, the 'raising' of the minorities to socialism, the equation of such raising with affirmative action and cultural revolution, and the crucial role of the constitutions.

Let me begin with a favoured phrase, used by Stalin in his pieces on the national question in the lead-up to the 1918 constitution: one must take into account the 'specific manner of life and national composition [*osobym bytom i natsional'nym sostavom*]' (Stalin 1918g, 81, 1918h, 79, see also 1918s, 34, 1918t, 33, 1918m, 69, 70, 1918n, 67, 68). Are these manners and forms of composition givens that may be recognised for what they are? At one level, they seem to be (Stalin 1918m, 70–71, 1918n, 68–69), but in the midst of these assumptions, another dimension to such diversity emerges: they also need to be determined. Thus, in a slightly earlier piece from 1918, he speaks of the way their participation in the union will be 'determined [*opredeliaetsia*]' by the appropriate government institutions—regional soviets, central executive committees of the regional soviets and the All-Russian committee (Stalin 1918s, 34, 1918t, 33). I suggest that with this acknowledgement of the need for 'determination' Stalin speaks less of the heavy hand of the state upon hapless minorities and more of the creative role of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Indeed, he is at the threshold of the creative role of naming itself. The emergence of this role may be identified in a shift between his deliberations over the 1918 constitution and that of 1924. In relation to the former, he stresses the importance of historical evolution and economic integration in identifying a nation—harking back to his work on the national question from 1913. So he lists recognised peoples, such as those in the Ukraine, the Crimea, Finland, Poland, Transcaucasia, Turkestan, the Middle Volga, the Kirghiz territory, the Tatar-Bashkir territory and Siberia (Stalin 1918m, 69–71, 1918n, 66–69). However, even here he begins to speculate concerning sub-groupings, suggesting that Transcaucasia may be distinguished into 'a number of definite national-territorial units, e.g., Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan-Tatar, etc'. (Stalin 1918m, 71, 1918n, 69–70). This process takes full flight in his deliberations over the 1924 constitution. Now the list of potential nations grows exponentially. For instance, the Turks have many names, being distinguished in terms of Turkestan, most of Azerbaijan, the Volga and Crimean Tatars, Daghestan, Bukhara, Khiva, Kirghiz, the Bashkirs, Chechens, Ossetians, Ingushes and Highlanders, who may in turn be named as Kabardinians, Cherkesses and Balkarians (Stalin 1921e, 25–26, 1921f, 24–25, 1921s, 46–48, 1921t, 46–48). As if this were not enough, he goes on to speak of 'floating' minorities, 'interspersed among compact majorities of other nationalities', the names of which include the Letts, Estonians, Poles, Jews and other minorities (Stalin 1921e, 27, 1921f, 27). The process is potentially endless, even to the level of the indigenous Mordvinians, who had been highly assimilated, but took advantage of the affirmative action program to claim a distinct identity and were granted an autonomous

oblast in 1929 (Martin 2001a, 52). Within the vast expanses of what would soon become the Soviet Union, this example was not unique.[39] But I would go further: naming is less a process of recognition than a creative act in itself. To name is to create.[40]

Earlier, I pointed out that the Bolsheviks used the terms *politika* (policy) and *stroitel'stvo* (construction) interchangeably, seeing their task as an immense one of social and economic recreation. Or, as Stalin put it:

> We stand for the affirmative action policy [*pokrovitel'stvennaia politika*] in relation to the development of the national cultures of the backward nationalities. I emphasize this so that [it will] be understood that we are not indifferent, but actively supporting [*pokrovitel'stvuiushchie*] the development of national culture (quoted in Martin 2001a, 17).

Some have interpreted this process as a well-high hubristic effort at social engineering, creating peoples, languages, and even classes where they no longer 'existed' after the chaos of world war, revolution and civil war (Martin 2000b; Fitzpatrick 2014). But this is to misunderstand what is entailed with the creation of a whole new mode of production, not merely in terms of its economics but also society and its ideologies. The Marxist framework for Stalin's thought, and indeed the whole Bolshevik program, embodied the insight that any mode of production or social formation is as much constructed as it is a given. Or rather, such a mode of production may provide the context by which people are formed, but human beings shape the mode of production in question; or, to gloss Marx and make us wary of naturalising any social formation, we may be subject to the given circumstances of the past, but we make our own history (Marx 1852a, 103, 1852b, 96–97). In this light, the affirmative action program established territories of identifiable nationalities, and for dispersed minorities, even within such regions, they were provided with a stiff framework of protections, including strong penalties for any form of racial denigration and abuse.[41] They too—in a program of indigenisation *(korenizatsiia)*[42]—should be able to use their own languages, operate their own schools, law-courts and soviets, and have freedom of conscience in matters relating to

[39]For the plethora of such names, see the various lists in Martin's text, the collative effect of which is to create yet more names for distinct groups (Martin 2001a, 11, 68, 71, 167, 381–384, 386, 426, 436).

[40]Michael Smith (1998, v) somewhat misses this dimension, suggesting merely that 'to name was to know'.

[41]During the Second World War, Stalin explicitly contrasts the emphasis on racial equality in the Soviet Union, and indeed the strong penalties for any manifestation of racism, with Nazi racial hatred (Stalin 1942a, 31, 1942b, 97, 1944e, 394, 1944f, 198).

[42]*Korenizatsiia*, a term coined by the Bolsheviks, is 'derived directly not from the stem *koren*—("root"—with the meaning "rooting") but from its adjectival form *korennoi* as used in the phrase *korennoi narod* (indigenous people)'. The term was coined by the government, although Stalin consistently used *natsionalizatsiia* (Martin 2001a, 11–12, 2001b, 74).

religion.[43] Across the Soviet Union, such programs required significant investment, both (re-)creating cultures and producing a whole range of new problems (Slezkine 2000, 322–323). The task of delineating and indeed creating groups, with their various levels—running into the tens of thousands, down to national districts of 25,000–10,000 people and even village Soviets with as few as 500 people (Martin 2001a, 38)[44]—generated continual debate as to who belonged to which group, to what the various levels and groups were entitled, and constant alterations and refinements.[45]

That it should undergo constant change and adaptation is no surprise, since such a project of social construction produced profound changes in the nature of the groups in question.[46] This change brings me to the second point concerning affirmative action: the task of 'raising' the cultural, social and economic level of the minority groups of the 'border' regions. At times, Stalin takes a slightly paternalistic tone, in which 'backward' peoples—as in 'the East' which is his model—should be brought up, should 'catch up' to the same level as 'advanced' peoples, in

[43]Indeed, by the mid-1930s the Jews too were identified as a 'nation' with territory, having the Jewish Autonomous district in Birobidzhan (Stalin 1936a, article 22, 1936b, stat'ia 22). This importance of this move (part of Crimea had also been proposed) is rarely recognised, for it was the first—albeit problematic—move to Jewish territory on the modern era. Pinkus provides some detail (1988, 71–76).

[44]For example, in 1937 there were 11 union republics, 39 oblasti and kraia, 22 autonomous republics, 52 autonomous regions and okrugs, 3307 districts and 62,484 village soviets (Davies et al. 2003, xviii).

[45]As an example, see endnotes 30 and 35 to volume 7 of Stalin's *Works* (vol. 7, 410–412), which explains the revision of the compositions of the Soviet republics in Central Asia, from the Turkestan, Bukhara and Khoresm republics to the Turkmenian and Uzbek republics, and the Kara-Kirghiz and Kara-Kalpak autonomous regions within republics. Indeed, the two autonomous regions eventually became the Kirghiz and Kazakh republics. This process also involved—as part of the cultural and national issues at its core—practical issues relating to economics (raw materials and industrial production), political and military strength in relation to foreign intervention, and the profound gratitude for the support of the 'border' regions during the civil war (Stalin 1921g, h, 1922c, d, 1923k, 188–189, 1923l, 184–185, 1923c, 404, 1923d, 394, see also 1919g, 297–301, 1919h, 285–288, 1920k, 1920l, 1923g, 305–306, 329–31, 1923h, 298–299, 321–323). This material belies the charge of 'ethnic cleansing' first developed, via highly dubious methods, by Conquest (1992). At the same time, there were targeted deportations of 'dangerous' nationalities or 'enemy nations', usually in newly acquired border regions. In the lead-up to and during the Second World War, they were identified as anti-Soviet and were at times pro-fascist (as in western Ukraine), proving tacit and active support to the German invaders. The overlapping issues were strategic and demographic. Strategically, the borders needed to be secured, where most of them lived. Demographically, the old problem of the thinness of the population in eastern parts could be remedied, it was hoped, by such a strategy. They were resettled, forcibly where needed, in other parts of the Soviet Union (Mawdsley 2003, 67–73).

[46]It also entailed a comprehensive discovery of the necessary paradox: equality could be achieved only through unequal emphasis on the minority nationalities. Stalin spoke often of 'equal rights of nations in all forms (language, schools, etc.)' and of the Party's demands for 'full equality of status in educational, religious and other matters' (Stalin 1904a, 42, 1904b, 159–160, 1913e, 376, 1913f, 223, 1917y[1], 57, 1917z[1], 105–106). Yet the implementation of this policy requires that some—minorities—be treated differently from dominant groups (Martin 2001a, 20).

terms of economic, political and cultural organisation (Stalin 1921s, 39, 1921t, 39). At other times, it was seen as an extraordinary effort to bring them to the level of socialism within a short period (Stalin 1919k, 246–248, 1919l, 237–239; Priestland 2007).[47] Thus, some areas may still have a pastoral economy and patriarchal-tribal ways of life, while others may function in terms of semi-patriarchal and semi-feudal structures (Stalin 1921e, 26, 1921f, 25, 1921s, 46, 1921t, 46, 1923k, 190–191, 1923l, 187–189). To raise them to the new and still developing level of socialism really meant taking them directly from much earlier modes of production (tribal society and feudalism) to socialism (Stalin 1921s, 41, 1921t, 41).[48] Yet, this could be done only by taking into account their specific economic situations, class structures, cultures and manners of life. So we find stipulations that they should develop and strengthen their Soviet statehood in light of their particular conditions; establish courts, administration, economic organisations and organs of power; foster presses, schools, theatres, recreation clubs and cultural and educational institutions —all of the above operating with the local language and staffed with local people who understand the specificities of local habits and customs (Stalin 1921q, 2, 1921r, 2, 1921e, 25, 1921f, 24, 1923g, 304, 1923h, 298, 1925y, 210–211, 1925z, 207–208).

In other words, as the affirmative action project gains specificity and scope, it becomes equated with raising such peoples to a socialist level. All of which is then summed up in Stalin's definition of 'cultural revolution'. As I mentioned earlier (in Chap. 2), we need to pay careful attention to Stalin's sense of the term, which is the 'cultural development' of the working class and working peasantry for the sake of literacy, but above all 'the cultivation of the ability to take part in the administration of the country' (Stalin 1927c, 330–331, 1927d, 322).[49] Applied to the 'border regions', the aim was to raise the cultural and political sensibilities among the workers of the minority peoples in the USSR to the point where a new Soviet intelligentsia was created.[50]

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[47]Even on this point, Stalin occasionally equates what is 'literate and cultured' with closeness between the people and the 'Party and Soviet apparatus' (Stalin 1923g, 335, 1923h, 328). He stipulates five dimensions of this 'raising': (1) the study of the economic conditions, manner of life and culture of the backward nations and nationalities; (2) the development of their culture; (3) their political education; (4) their gradual and painless introduction to the higher forms of economy; (5) the organisation of economic co-operation between the toilers of the backward and of the advanced nations' (Stalin 1921a, 59–60, 1921b, 59, see also 1919k, 1919l, 1925w, 138–139, 1925x, 136–137). At times, he is forced to realise that the 'East' also includes imperialist, if not capitalist, states such as Japan (Stalin 1925c[1], d[1]).

[48]Martin (2001a, 126) hints at this dimension, but does not see its full sense.

[49]See Martin's useful explication (2001a, 155–156) of the two dimensions of such cultural revolution, one involving attacks and 'terror' directed at the old cultural guard and the other an extraordinarily creative process of raising educational and cultural levels, especially in the 'border regions'.

[50]Myriad are the references, of which only a representative sample can be given (Stalin 1913e, 363–364, 1913f, 213, 1919s, 238, 1919t, 230, 1921q, 1921r, 1925w, 138–139, 1925x, 136–137, 1925y, 210–211, 1925z, 207–208, 1939a, 391–393, 1939b, 316–318).

6.2.2 *Affirmative Action Constitution*

Creative naming, raising the border regions to socialism and cultural revolution—these three theoretical components of the affirmative action program of Stalin's USSR provide the framework for the developments in the three constitutions of 1918, 1924 and 1936. Thus, in 1918 we read not only that the constitution recognises the equality of rights of all citizens, 'irrespective of their race or nationality', but also that any privileges or advantages of dominant groups or the oppression of minorities and restrictions to their equality 'to be contraventions of the fundamental laws of the Republic' (1918a, article 22, 1918b, stat'ia 22). In a text from the same time, Stalin clarifies that decisions and the implementation of general decrees relating to education, judicature, administration and so on, would be the responsibility of the regional Councils of People's Commissars. Even more, there would be no official state language imposed on peoples; instead, each 'region will select the language or languages which correspond to the composition of its population', leading to the 'complete equality of languages both of the minorities and the majorities in all social and political institutions' (Stalin 1918m, 72, 1918n, 70).

In many respects, these remained basic statements, which were to be enhanced in the 1924 constitution, the first of the USSR itself as a union of the four Soviet republics of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Transcaucasian federation. Or rather, this constitution lays out clearly the underlying logic of the affirmative action program, in which diversity flows from the nature and actions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such a dictatorship serves to 'eradicate national oppression, to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence, and to lay the foundation for the fraternal co-operation of peoples' (Stalin 1923c, 403, 1923d, 393).[51] This dialectical principle, which I discussed in some detail earlier, is then embodied in the two main organs of government: The Congress of Soviets and its Central Committee, as the institutional embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and the Council of People's Commissars, which both represented the increasing number of minorities but was also subject to the power of the Congress of Soviets (Stalin 1923s, 407–409, 1923t, 398–400, 1923u, 263–266, 1923v, 258–261, 1923g, 301–303, 331–333, 342–344, 1923h, 294–297, 323–326, 334–336).[52] As for detail, the only explicit item concerning affirmative action appears in the stipulation (article 14) that local languages are to be used in each of the republics (Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Georgian, Armenian and Turk).

Only with 'Stalin constitution' of 1936—'one of the most liberal of all time' (Clark 2011, 190)—does real detail appear, as though needing time to digest the principles of the earlier constitutions and embodying what was by this time real

[51]See also Stalin's answer to a question on this matter from the first Labour Delegation to the Soviet Union from the United States (Stalin 1927k, 130–132, 1927l, 124–126).

[52]It is worth noting that China's two houses of parliament follow this model: The National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

practice. Even more, the 1936 constitution reflects the logic—in relation to the dialectical detour via class to minority nationalities—I outlined earlier and takes it further. Thus, if one sees the logic of moving from class to minority nationalities, then it should also apply to gender and religion. So we find the crucial article 123, which established equality of rights for all citizens 'irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life' (Stalin 1936a, article 123, 1936b, stat'ia 123). In order to avoid the impression of a neutral statement of rights, the article clarifies that any restriction of rights or the establishment of privileges of account of nationality, as well as 'any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt', is to be punished by law.[53] So also for women. Article 122 states that 'women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life'.[54] Again, the proactive nature of this article is explained in terms of equality—rights to work, pay, rest and leisure, social insurance, education—and specific measures for women in terms of 'state protection of the interests of mother and child, prematernity and maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens' (Stalin 1936a, article 122, 1936b, stat'ia 122). Yet, the greatest surprise may well be article 124 on religion. While the separation of church and state, and school from church, is stated, the reason is crucial: 'to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience … Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens' (Stalin 1936a, article 124, 1936b, stat'ia 124). Indeed, this article, which Stalin included in the face of stiff opposition, eventually led to the rapprochement between Stalin and the church during and after the Second World War. The church petitioned for churches to be re-opened, religious personnel to be admitted to jobs, and religious candidates tried to run in the 1937 legislative elections (Fitzpatrick 2000, 179).[55]

[53]In this case, the constitution formally recognised existing practice. Already in 1933, Stalin could write: 'The U.S.S.R. is one of the few countries in the world where a display of national hatred or an unfriendly attitude towards foreigners as such is punishable by law' (Stalin 1933e, 265, 1933f, 258).

[54]Grant (1964, 41) notes the relative success of this policy in Soviet education.

[55]By 1977, the revised constitution summed up the affirmative action position as follows: 'Article 34. Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude to religion, type and nature of occupation, domicile, or other status. The equal rights of citizens of the USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social, and cultural life. Article 35. Women and men have equal rights in the USSR … Article 36. Citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights. Exercise of these rights is ensured by a policy of all-round development and drawing together of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, by educating citizens in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, and by the possibility to use their native language and the languages of other peoples in the USSR. Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility, or contempt, are punishable by law' (1977).

Constitutions are works in progress and not immemorial statements, as the revisions indicate.[56] But what strikes one is the way this working out reflects not opportunistic and unaccountable changes of direction, but a profound consistency in principle. If we go back to the early Bolshevik platform from 1904 on the national question, we already find the basic position concerning equal rights, local languages, education, assembly and the judiciary (Party 1903, 290–291, Stalin 1904a, 42–46, 1904b, 159–163). Were these idealistic aspirations, easy to formulate in opposition but rapidly discarded with the brutal reality of power? The Bolsheviks under Stalin stuck to the principles of this program with remarkable consistency after the revolution, albeit not without significant problems, setbacks and reformulations. The result was that the new government of the Soviet Union, especially with Stalin, was the first in world history to develop an affirmative action program, so much so that 'no country as yet has approached the vast scale of Soviet Affirmative Action' (Martin 2001a, 18).[57] Although it may not have lived up to some of its lofty aims, and although the path was strewn with immense hurdles,[58] many of its achievements were significant.[59] Not only did this take place precisely during the hectic 'socialist offensive' of the 1930s, with its immense upheavals, criticism and self-criticism, purges and trials, but it also became the model for other socialist states in Eastern Europe, most notably with the diverse peoples of Yugoslavia. And it is the basis of Chinese minority nationalities policies today, modified and developed in a different context for fostering more than fifty minorities (Mackerras 2003).

[56]'The Constitution is the registration and legislative embodiment of the gains that have already been achieved and secured' (Stalin 1936e, 182, 1936f, 138).

[57]As Martin points out on the same page, the Soviet Union's affirmative action program significantly predates that of India's 'scheduled tribes' program of 1951.

[58]Not least of which were the constant 'left' and 'right' deviations: the former entailed a lack of flexibility in relation to local conditions and sensibilities, imposing a uniform template from the centre and thereby fostering national opposition precisely when one was seeking to overcome it; a 'right deviation' was to prioritise local, national concerns over those of class, and so losing sight of the socialist project itself and confusing it with dangerous nationalist concerns (Stalin 1921c, 97–100, 1921d, 95–98, 1923k, 194–196, 1923l, 192–194, 1923g, 299–300, 308–326, 1923h, 293–294, 301–319, 1925w, 144–146, 1925x, 142–143, 1925y, 210–211, 1925z, 207–208). At times, Stalin presents both deviations as forms of pernicious nationalism, one 'Great-Russian' and the other of the minorities. The difference is due to conditions: those who have not experienced national oppression, such as the 'Great-Russians', ignore the specific concerns of minorities (Stalin 1921e, 28, 1921f, 27, see also 1921q, 1–2, 1921r, 1–2); those who have experienced national oppression tend to focus too much on these issues and either ignore the class interests of the proletariat and peasants or confuse the two, leading to bourgeois-democratic nationalism, or indeed Pan-Islamism or Pan-Turkism (Stalin 1921s, 39–40, 1921t, 39–40, 1923g, 313, 1923h, 306).

[59]Martin's account begins by suggesting that the program failed, producing more conflict than solving such issues, but by the end of the book he produces statistics that indicate the program did in fact make a significant difference. As a good example of the difficult, ruptural and at times violent dimensions of such a process, see Payne's (2001) excellent study of the Kazakh experience.

6.3 Anti-colonialism

Building on his theoretical deliberations on the national question, dictatorship of the proletariat and affirmative action, the next step is Stalin's crucial insight into anti-colonialism: the October Revolution and the affirmative action program of the Soviet Union provide a microcosm of the global struggle against colonialism.[60] This insight is a logical extension of his earlier argument, in which a focus on class provides a distinct, dialectical approach to the national question that leads to the world's first affirmative action program and constitutions. Once this logic is applied to national minorities, it also may be applied to gender, religion, and then anti-colonial struggles. In 1921, Stalin observed that it was 'the Communists who first revealed the connection between the national question and the question of the colonies, who proved it theoretically and made it the basis of their practical revolutionary activities' (Stalin 1921a, 53, 1921b, 53). However, this theoretical breakthrough took some time to emerge, which I will follow through a number of key articles.

The first hint of the connection with anti-colonialism relates to what was called 'the East', by which was initially meant the south-eastern and far-eastern parts of Russia itself.[61] In an address to a congress of Soviets from the Tatar-Bashkir Republic, Stalin speaks of a 'sacred duty' to support the emancipation of the most down-trodden peoples of all, the peoples of the East:

> The whole character of our revolution, the very nature of Soviet power, the entire international situation, and lastly even the geographical position of Russia, situated as it is between imperialist Europe and oppressed Asia, are all factors which undoubtedly dictate to the Soviet power a policy of rendering fraternal support to the oppressed peoples of the East in their struggle for emancipation (Stalin 1918u, 93, 1918v, 92).

The 'oppressed peoples of the East' are here envisaged as those within the orbit of what would become the Soviet Union, but the statement is full of implications: these oppressed peoples may also be outside that orbit. Let me focus on the reasons for focusing on the Soviet East, with all its implications. The very nature of the socialist revolution as liberation from oppression (first of class, then logically of nationalities, women and so on), Soviet power as committed to such liberation and thereby affirmative action, the international context of capitalist and colonial oppression—all these cannot avoid leading to an anti-colonial position. That would come soon enough, but the last item has its own dynamic: Russia's situation between East and West (understood from a northern hemispheric perspective) not

[60]More than half a century ago, Carr (1953, 234–235) noted the anti-colonial feature of Soviet policy as a 'natural and logical extension of national policy', but none of the commentators I have consulted note this development in Stalin's thought.

[61]As Martin points out (2001a, 57–58), the 'east' included the peoples of Tatarstan, Crimea, Chuvashia, the Volga German Republic, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Bashkiria (eastern regions), Buriat-Mongolia, most North Caucasus Mountaineer regions, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

only enabled a unique insight into patterns of colonial oppression, but also lent itself to an emphasis on the role of the Soviet Union as a 'standard-bearer' and 'beacon' to the nations (Stalin 1919w, 252, 1919x, 243).

The implications of this early statement would soon be realised, especially in a piece from 1918, called 'The October Revolution and the National Question' (Stalin 1918k, l). Stalin notes the uprisings—inspired by the Russian Revolution—in Austria-Hungary and Germany, seeing them as the beginning of much wider revolutionary activity in the common struggle against imperialism. Thus far, we may attribute his position to the widespread expectation of a European revolution, of which the Russian Revolution was the harbinger. But then he points out that such a focus misses the real revolutionary upsurge, for that is taking place in 'the East'. Does he mean here the eastern parts of Russia, the so-called 'border regions', as we saw earlier? No, for now he makes the transition, moving beyond the orbit of Russian influence: 'the East' becomes a term for all peoples oppressed by colonialism and semi-colonialism, including 'China, India, Persia, Egypt and Morocco' (Stalin 1918e, 175, 1918f, 172, see also 1923a, 182, 1923b, 178–179, 1923u, 243, 268, 1923v, 237–238, 263, 1925w, 135–136, 1925x, 133–134). In this light—the 'Light from the East' (Stalin 1918i, j)—can he make the explicit connection between the national question and anti-colonial struggles: 'Thus, from the particular question of combating national oppression, the national question is evolving into the general question of emancipating the nations, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism' (Stalin 1918k, 168, 1918l, 165). Aware of the breakthrough he has made, Stalin repeats his point in the conclusion, where he observes that the October Revolution has widened the scope of the national question, converting it from 'combating national oppression in Europe into the general question of emancipating the oppressed peoples, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism' (Stalin 1918k, 170, 1918l, 166, see also 1927g[1], 175, 1927h[1], 170).

With this breakthrough concerning the 'international significance of the national question' (Stalin 1923u, 241, 1923v, 238), Stalin begins to explore what it means. Initially, he offers a slogan or two, stating that the task of the communists is to 'infect the workers and peasants of these countries with the emancipatory spirit of revolution', to intervene directly in the spontaneous anti-colonial struggles and develop their consciousness into a struggle against imperialism (Stalin 1918e, 175–176, 1918f, 172–173).[62] By 1921, he sees the need to examine how the national question is inescapably connected with the global colonial question—beyond mere assertion and an awareness of the general context of global imperialism.

In a number of crucial articles, we may trace the theoretical elaboration of this insight, especially in the early 1920s. In 'Concerning the Presentation of the

[62]He makes these observations not without some relics of common attitudes to 'the East', which has lain in an 'age-long sleep' and from which communism must arouse its oppressed peoples (Stalin 1918e, 175, 1918f, 172).

National Question' (Stalin 1921a, b),[63] Stalin begins by castigating socialists, especially of the Second International, for restricting their concerns on the national question to 'civilised' nations, such as the Irish, Czechs, Poles, Finns, Serbs, Armenians and Jews, thereby neglecting the millions upon millions of oppressed peoples in Asia and Africa. These global second-class citizens were not even on the radar of such socialists, except perhaps as an assumed necessity for the sake of maintaining 'civilisation'. By contrast, it was precisely the revolutionary communists who 'first revealed the connection between the national question and the question of the colonies, who proved it theoretically and made it the basis of their practical revolutionary activities' (Stalin 1921a, 53, 1921b, 53). Stalin is not reticent in claiming such an insight, one that he had first seen a few years earlier. Communism has broken down the invisible wall separating blacks from whites, the 'uncultured' from the 'cultured'. How so? The connection is imperialist capitalism: communists make that their target, thereby connecting the various aspects of capitalist exploitation and uniting the proletarian movement and national liberation movements in the colonies into a common front. In particular, capitalism relies on the colonies for food and fuel, raw material for industry, markets to sell the items produced and labour-power. Thus, imperialist capitalism depends upon on—here Stalin uses a favoured military metaphor—the 'rear' of the colonies for the 'war' waged at the 'front' (Stalin 1923u, 242, 1923v, 237). It follows, therefore, that one must attack both front and rear: the colonies cannot be liberated without the overthrow of capitalism; so also, liberation movements in the colonies challenge the rule of capital. Without such activity, the victory of any socialist revolution is never entirely secure: 'the victory of the world proletarian revolution may be regarded as assured only if the proletariat is able to combine its own revolutionary struggle with the liberation movement of the labouring masses of the unequal nations and the colonies against the rule of the imperialists and for the dictatorship of the proletariat' (Stalin 1921a, 57, 1921b, 57, see also 1923k, 187–188, 1923l, 185, 1924e, 144, 150, 1924f, 139, 145, 1927g, 247–248, 1927h, 243).

A few years later, in 'The International Character of the October Revolution' (Stalin 1927g, 247–250, 1927h, 243–245), Stalin both reiterates the points noted above and takes the argument a few steps further, with an arresting implication. To begin with, he argues that national-colonial revolutions also happened in Russia. He has in mind the minority nationalities, who were liberated from internal tsarist colonialism as a result of the October Revolution. Without landlords and capitalists

[63]Many of the same points are made in 'The Foundations of Leninism' (Stalin 1924e, 143–155, 1924f, 138–149). By contrast, in his report to the Twelfth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in 1923, he begins by noting the international significance of the national question in what would soon become the USSR, but then focuses on the internal complexities of the question (Stalin 1923u, v). The fourth conference of the Central Committee in the same year continues this focus on internal complexities (Stalin 1923g, h). In another piece from the same time, he lists more specific contextual reasons: the colonial conscripts for imperialist armies, who resisted such conscription in the name of a learned national identity; the situation in Turkey, which colonial powers sought to dismember, had led to a rousing of the 'peoples of the East' against imperialism (Stalin 1921s, 33–38, 1921t, 33–38).

to oppress such nationalities, they too were freed like the proletariat and peasantry. Still the leadership and example of the proletarian revolution is to the fore, although the new note is the realisation that Russia too was a colonised country. The next step becomes more interesting, for he argues dialectically that national-colonial liberation happens only through internationalism—of the working class and peasantry: 'It is a characteristic feature of the October Revolution that it accomplished these national-colonial revolutions in the U.S.S.R. … not in the name of *nationalism*, but in the name of *internationalism*' (Stalin 1927g, 248, 1927h, 243). Here Stalin has taken his earlier argument that class is the best way to deal with the national question and turned it into the international nature of class that produces national liberation.

I have followed through the articulation of the world's first and most comprehensive affirmative action program, based as it was on deliberations over the national question. This provided the theoretical basis for developing a consistent anti-colonial position, in which colonialism was understood as capitalist. But what of the practical implication? Here two factors are important. First, Soviet policies insisted on the right to self-determination by colonised peoples. This right meant that they should and could throw off the colonial yoke and manage their own affairs. But since colonial powers were often far more powerful, the colonised peoples would need assistance (Stalin 1924e, 144–145, 1924f, 139–140). Thus, the 'Land of the Soviets' became directly involved in anti-colonial struggles. Not only was the October Revolution also a national-colonial liberation (as I pointed out above), and not only was liberation from capitalist imperialism a core Soviet policy, but the ultimate fate of the Soviet Union itself depended on revolutionising of the 'remote rear' of imperialism in order to overcome the latter (Stalin 1923u, 241–243, 1923v, 236–238). The Soviet Union, along with other socialist movements, should 'support —resolutely and actively ... support—the national liberation movement of the oppressed and dependent peoples' (Stalin 1924e, 147, 1924f, 142). For these reasons, the consistent flow of arms, technology, advice, and much more assisted these anti-colonial movements, from the Chinese Revolution to liberation movements in Africa and Latin America (Stalin 1924e, 147–149, 1924f, 142–144).[64]

This concrete manifestation of the anti-colonial policy, arising from the affirmative action program of the Soviet Union itself, greatly assisted with creating the historical conditions of *post*-colonialism. The massive decolonisation of many parts of the world in the 1950s and 1960s was in many respects a direct result of these policies. But affirmative action and anti-colonialism also provided the theoretical groundwork for postcolonial theory, for through them the subaltern was enabled to

[64]Albeit not without discernment: Stalin realises that every case is different, depending on the stages of capitalism and class development, and implying that workers are not always in a situation of defining the nation. In each case, the task of the communists is different, predicated on supporting any struggle that challenges capitalism. This may require a united front with all groups (as in Morocco), a distinct Party that works with and leads the revolution with the petty-bourgeoisie (China and Egypt), or Party that works on its own against a compromising bourgeoisie (India) (Stalin 1924e, 147–149, 1924f, 142–144, 1925w, 147–152, 1925x, 144–149).

speak in hitherto unexpected diversity. However, with the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989–1991, along with the hastily proclaimed 'end' of communism, these achievements were both consigned to the garbage bin of history and furtively scavenged for a de-historicised and de-contextualised theoretical elaboration after 1989 (Petterson in press).

6.4 A New State?

We have reached the final unfolding of the dialectic of international and national. In the process of identifying the international implications of the affirmative action program, Stalin begins to produce a redefinition of what the Soviet Union itself might be. This process has two main dimensions. The first concerns the effort to find a new terminology (and in the process provide old terms with new meaning) for the Soviet Union in terms of the 'Soviet people'. The second follows, in which the main question of this whole chapter comes to the fore: what, exactly, is the form of the state that emerged in the Soviet Union.

6.4.1 Soviet People

I begin with the increasing use in the 1940s of the terms 'people' and 'Soviet people'. But what Stalin meant by this term is an open question, one that I seek to answer in what follows—albeit with the caveat that the redefinition is glimpsed rather than fully articulated, as often happens with Stalin's thought. In seeking an answer, I turn to the insights from the anti-colonial struggle for understanding the proletariat. If colonised peoples are under the yokes of landlords and international-imperialist capitalists, then they are like the proletariat who have been struggling in similar conditions (Stalin 1925w, 146, 1925x, 144).[65] They too are 'pariah', 'slave' and 'oppressed' peoples. That is, the proletariat had, as a class, also been living under a form of colonial-national oppression. The implication is that in some respects the October Revolution was also a colonial-national revolution. In this sense, I suggest we understand his claim: 'This means that the October Revolution *has ushered in* new era, the era of *colonial* revolutions which are being carried out *in the oppressed countries* of the world *in alliance* with the proletariat and *under the leadership* of the proletariat' (Stalin 1927g, 248, 1927h, 243).

The common struggle against capitalism is but one side of this increasing connection between the workers and peasants in the Soviet Union and colonised

[65]Stalin did not develop such a position in a vacuum, as Khalid's useful study (2001) of Jadidism in Turkestan indicates. Here the revolutionary category of class was a crucial feature in the growth of anti-colonial nationalism.

places. The other concerns the internationalisation of the affirmative action program by means of the actual equalisation of all nations in the common struggle. An abstract or juridical declaration of the equality of rights is important, but by no means enough (Stalin 1923u, 247–248, 252–253, 1923v, 242–243, 246–247). This involvement has three dimensions. One concerns 'cultural revolution', namely, 'raising' cultural and economic levels. As I noted earlier, this idea was often laced with paternalistic dimensions, but its core was a desire to 'raise' peoples to socialism. This involved lifting the level of education and socialist action by workers and peasants themselves, training them in the principles and programs of Marxism in order to produce solid and reliable cadres. And what was good for the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union was good for their colonised comrades. Another dimension concerns the right to self-determination, which I mentioned earlier. Arising from debates over the national question and the affirmative action program, self-determination entailed that colonised peoples should make their own decisions about their future, but also that the leading example, or 'banner', of the land of Soviets is both a model and source for stirring up revolutionary activity. This land becomes a crucial test case for dealing with the national question. If it is able to succeed in developing fraternal relations and cooperation among its many nationalities, then it will become a model for the oppressed throughout the world. In light of this theoretical work, the international question became a regular feature of Stalin's congress reports from the second half of the 1920s onwards. He would routinely report on anti-colonial struggles in various parts of the world (Stalin 1925a[1], 102–107, 1925b[1], 102–106, 1925i, 275–277, 1925j, 269–270),[66] with a particular focus on China as the long struggle there waxed and waned.[67]

But what does Stalin call these entities, made up of the workers and peasants in both the Soviet Union and colonised places? The best way to gain an insight is to consider the shifts in terminology in the late 1930s and especially the 1940s. Initially, Stalin's terminology seems rather loose, speaking of nations, peoples and states interchangeably. This is particularly the case when he mentions the world's 'freedom-loving' and 'peace-loving' nations, peoples and states—*natsii*, *narodov*, *gosudarstva* (Stalin 1945m, 27, 1945n, 215, 1945o, 61, 1945p, 235, 1945g, 28, 1945h, 216, 1945a, 29, 1945b, 217, 1946c, 87, 1946d, 34, 1947a, 114, 1947b, 69, 1946e, 70, 1946f, 6, 1948a, 116–117, 1948b, 93). However, this looseness is only apparent, for the terminology is quite restricted: it appears in the plural and applies to the coalition of countries—including the Soviet Union—opposing Nazi Germany

[66]He would also summarise his earlier point concerning the international dimensions of the national question whenever called upon to address the issue (Stalin 1925s, 224–225, 1925t, 221–222).

[67]For these reasons, Stalin could already in 1927 speak of the 'mutual confidence and fraternal rapprochement' of the workers and peasants 'of the most diverse nations' (Stalin 1927g, 248–249, 1927h, 243–244).

and its collaborators, if not working together after the war.[68] It may be seen as a convenient shorthand in a global context, indeed as an idiom understandable for international communication. However, when he is addressing domestic audiences, Stalin's usage (as was the practice in Soviet parlance) was quite clear. Thus, he never uses the term 'Soviet nation'. In an international context, 'nations' may apply to the countries of the world, and in a local context 'nation' and 'nationality' may be understood in terms of the original usage, but the Soviet Union is never designated a 'nation'. Instead, Stalin's favoured term is 'Soviet people [*sovetskiĭ narod*]', if not the 'entire [*ves*'] Soviet people'. Despite his occasional usage of 'peoples' for the countries of the world, if not also for the nationalities within the Soviet Union, the overwhelming use of *narod* is for the Soviet Union as a whole.[69]

The word has powerful connotations, bearing the senses of 'people', 'folk', 'popular', 'public' (which was quite distinct from 'race' and 'nation'). This has led some to argue for a retreat from the category of class and the adoption of a renewed nationalism in Stalin's thought, especially when he speaks of the Russian people, *Russkii narod*. Initially, Stalin and the government had been keen to curtail 'Great-Russian chauvinism', especially in light of the long tsarist heritage and in light of the need to foster minority groups through the affirmative action program (Stalin 1921e, 28, 1921f, 27–28, 1921q, 1–2, 1921r, 1–2, 1923k, 190, 1923l, 187). Needless to say, this caused some resentment among Russians, not least in the Party (Martin 2001a, 20–21, 245). In the wake of the 'Great Consolidation' of the 1930s,[70] Russia began to be identified as a distinct nationality. However, this recovery was not generated primarily by such resentment, nor was it a retreat to a supposedly bourgeois, tsarist, primordial or inherent nationalism (perhaps coupled with religion) after castigating it earlier, nor was it pure pragmatism, nor was it a delicate balancing act between opposed positions that resulted in 'national

[68]Similar usage of 'nations' and 'peoples' appears in material designed for international readership, such as the response to Churchill's 'iron curtain' speech and interviews with foreign press agents (Stalin 1946a, b, g, h, i, j).

[69]The term is extremely common in volumes 15 and 16 of the *Works*, in the 1940s and early 1950s. The references are too frequent to give in detail. In the 1930s, Stalin tended to use *liudi*, with the sense of people, folk and humanity. So he speaks of 'the new people, the Soviet people [*novye liudi, sovetskie liudi*]' (Stalin 1932g, 151, 1932h, 149, see also 1934c, 31, 1934d, 30, 1936c, 137, 140, 146, 1936d, 105–106, 108, 112). By the 1940s, *narod* is the preferred usage.

[70]I use the term 'Great Consolidation' deliberately, rather than the misleading 'Great Retreat' (Timasheff 1972, Reichman 1988, 74, Fitzpatrick 1994a, 148–72). The 1930s constituted not a 'retreat' from the breakneck remaking of Soviet economy and culture—with the extraordinary process of industrialisation and collectivisation—but a consolidation of the achievements made and an opportunity to address the significant problems that had arisen. As Martin writes, 'in the political and economic spheres, the period after 1933 marked a consolidation, rather than a repudiation, of the most important goals of Stalin's socialist offensive' (Martin 2001a, 415, see also Priestland 2007, 245–249). Hirsch (2005, 268) goes further and argues for an intensification of revolution in response to the Nazi threat, while Clark (2011, 7) argues that the 1930s constituted the adoption of an 'even grander narrative', which she calls 'cosmopolitan'.

Bolshevism' (Cliff 1987, 405; Brandenburger and Dubrovsky 1998; Brandenburger 2001, 276, 2002; Rees 1998b; Boobbyer 2000, 5, 130; Duncan 2000, 56–58; Yekelchyk 2002, 52; Van Ree 2002a, 196–197; Miner 2003, 12–13, 67–68; Smith 2005, 48–49; Clark 2011, 311).[71] These suggestions make much of Stalin's toast in May, 1945, to the Russian people, where he speaks of them being the first, leading and the most outstanding among all the peoples of the Soviet Union (Stalin 1945q, r).[72] However, not only is this piece relatively isolated, but a closer study reveals a careful demarcation between the 'Soviet people' and the 'Russian people'. The overwhelming weight of his other writings indicates a clear focus on the 'Soviet people', although what Stalin means by the term has implications for understanding the 'Russian people', if not 'Russian nation', as with any other nationality.[73]

Finally, I am able to answer the question as to what Stalin means by 'Soviet people': he seeks to redefine it in terms of workers, peasants and—a new category—intellectuals.[74] The initial step appears in the 'Stalin Constitution' of 1936, in the closing stages of the 'socialist offensive' when old landlord, bourgeois and kulak forces had been decisively beaten. Thus, the constitution claims that the old capitalist classes had been overthrown and that the political and economic order was now in the hands of workers and peasants (Stalin 1936a, articles 1–5, 1936b, stat'ia 1–5). The implication is that the new entity excludes the former and is defined by the latter. However, the major step in Stalin's redefinition of the 'Soviet people' appears in precisely those pieces from the 1940s in which he widely uses this term. Here Stalin speaks not of workers and peasants, but of workers, collective farmers and intellectuals (Stalin 1941a, 7, 1941b, 61, 1941e, 24, 1941f, 84, 1943g, 146–150, 1943h, 166–170, 1944a, 259, 261, 1944b, 186, 188, 1944e, 391–393, 1944f, 196–197, 1945e, 32–33, 1945f, 219–220). The shift is significant: collective farmers instead of peasants, and the emergence of a socialist intelligentsia as a force in what was felt to be a new society and polity. Yet, this redefinition entails not so much new wine in old wineskins, of emptying the old content for the sake of the new, but rather a reclaiming of the rich resources of the old content for the sake a new meaning. It is precisely in a term redolent with powerful and ancient associations that one may espy the deep sources of socialism, which is embodied in farmers, workers and intellectuals. In other words, the Soviet people is a socialist people, so much so that socialism is a 'truly popular [*narodnyi*] system that grew from the depths of the people [*nedr naroda*]' (Stalin 1946f, 8).[75] It is not for

[71]As Priestland points out, Stalin was 'not trying to replace socialism with nationalism' (2007, 178).

[72]Much also is made of the invocation of the pre-revolutionary Russian heroes (Stalin 1941e, 26, 1941f, 86). However, the purpose here is to connect with a longer history of struggle that culminates in Lenin. A similar pattern can be found in other socialist states, such the DDR with Thomas Münzer and Czechoslovakia with Jan Hus.

[73]Yekelchyk (2002, 53), Weeks (2005, 579) and Priestland (2007, 284) come to the edge of this point, but fail to see its implications.

[74]Van Ree (2005, 176) notes this point but fails to make much of it.

[75]*Nedr naroda* powerfully evokes the subsoil, bowels or depths of the people.

nothing that Stalin was able to speak also of the 'Soviet Motherland [*Rodina*]' (Stalin 1943c, 34, 1943d, 143, 1945c, 19, 1945d, 212, 1945e, 33, 1945f, 220, 1945i, 58, 1945j, 233, 1946c, 89, 1946d, 36).[76]

6.4.2 Socialist State

From a disparate range of materials, I have sought to construct an argument that follows in its own way a dialectic of particular and universal: an effort to deal with the particular nature of the national question through the international category of class; the identification of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the basis for the production of diversity; the particularity of the affirmative action program, with its creative act of naming, raising of the border regions and cultural revolution; and the international implications of this argument, in which the national question in relation to the affirmative action program leads logically to an anti-colonial position. Once he has reached this point, Stalin glimpses the possibility of redefining what the Soviet Union and its people might be, now in terms of workers, collective farmers and intellectuals. Throughout these arguments, the interconnection of particular and universal, or national and international, were inextricably entwined. I have tracked this interconnection at various points in my argument, but I stress here that the final steps of Stalin's reconstructed argument constitute a return of the dialectic to the starting point of international class solidarity. In other words, the discovery of the anti-colonial dimensions of the national question (via affirmative action), as well as the redefinition of 'people', offer a new perspective on that solidarity. However, this return is not simply one of class as an above-nation category, indeed one that would lead to the abolition of particular differences, but rather a whole new level of understanding class in an international register. The most telling signal of such a development is the way internationalism became an intense focus in the heights of the 1930s, precisely when the purges were under way in light of the fascist threat and when the idea of the people was being reformulated. Instead of being contradictions, the need for local consolidation was enmeshed with the push to greater internationalism. The international cause may have demanded

[76] *Rodina* evinces rich connotations of home, family, household, birthplace and homeland. Johnston's work (2011) on 'being Soviet' in light of 'Official Soviet Identity', as crucial in shaping the way ordinary citizens viewed the world around them, is the most detailed study of this focus during the 1940s and 1950s. In some respects, he follows Kotkin's (1997, 130) earlier insight that 'what stands out about the surprisingly powerful new national identity developed under Stalin was its Soviet, rather than solely Russian, character and how a sense of belonging to the Soviet *Union* was melded with the *enhancement* of a parallel, but subordinated, ethnic or national character: Soviet citizens, and Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, or Uzbek nationals'. Van Ree (2002a, 195) fails to see the implications of such terms.

local action, but so also did the local cause demand international action (Clark 2011, 172).[77]

Let me draw the argument to a close by returning to the title of this chapter 'Towards a Theory of the Socialist State'. The question is now: what, exactly, is a socialist state? Stalin's effort to answer this question had to deal with what was already a reasonably developed Marxist approach to the state, deriving from Engels and articulated further by Lenin. In a crucial section of *The Origin of the Family* (Engels 1884a, 268–272, 1884b, 263–267),[78] Engels makes the following points: (1) the state arises from a society riven with 'irreconcilable opposites', which are 'classes with conflicting economic interests'; (2) so that society does not tear itself to pieces, a power (*Gewalt*) is necessary to 'alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"'; (3) this power 'alienates itself more and more' from society, so that the apparatus stands, as the organs of a society, '*above* society'; (4) the state becomes an 'instrument for the exploitation of wage labour by capital', an 'organisation of the possessing class for its protection against the non-possessing class'[79]; (5) the state divides its subjects '*according to territory*', not tribe or gens; (6) it 'establishes a *public power* [*Gewalt*]', separate from the population and comprised 'not merely of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds'; (7) in order to 'maintain this public power, contributions from the citizens are necessary—*taxes*'; (8) with the advent of full communism, the state will 'wither away'.

This definition really marks the beginnings of the modern tradition of analyses of the state, which then runs along two related lines. One is the Weberian line, which emphasises certain aspects of Engels's definition,[80] and the other is the Marxist line, which was reworked by Lenin and then passed down to more recent Marxist approaches to the state.[81] Given that Lenin framed the debate in the Soviet Union, I focus on his argument. The important steps in the opening pages of *The State and*

[77]This insight goes beyond Suny's observation that 'internationalism was less the servant of the Soviet state than the Soviet state was the servant of internationalism' (1993, 85).

[78]Apart from the fact that much of the material by Marx and Engels evinces shared positions (Engels wrote the work on the basis of Marx's notes), Engels was most influential on the second generation of Marxists, including Lenin. It may be possible to trace elements in Marx's texts (Carnoy 1984, 45–56), but the clearest statement was provided by Engels. The following quotations are drawn from these pages. Emphases are in the original text.

[79]In more detail: such state is not only the state of the 'economically dominant class', but this class, 'through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class', which now 'acquires a new means of keeping down and exploiting the oppressed class'.

[80]Weber defines the state as "the form of human community [*Gemeinschaft*] that (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* [*Gewalt*] within a particular territory" (Weber 2004, 33; emphasis in the original). Curiously, Weber does not acknowledge Engels with this definition. Subsequent definitions in this part of the tradition attempt to tweak Weber's approach and emphasise aspects (such as the ideological) that he left undeveloped (Tilly 1990, 1985; Elias 2000; Bourdieu 2014, 4; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Foucault 2014a).

[81]Most of these Marxist contributions come after Stalin. For a full discussion, see Boer (forthcoming).

Revolution (Lenin 1917g, 392–402, 1917h, 7–18)[82] are as follows: (1) the 'state is a product and a manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms', so much so that 'antagonism objectively *cannot* be reconciled'; (2) the state is 'a power which arose from society but places itself above and alienates itself more and more from it'; (3) it becomes in the hands of the bourgeoisie 'an organ of class *rule*, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another'; (4) the oppressed class cannot simply take over the existing apparatus but must overcome and destroy 'the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class'; (5) since the existing state functions as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, it 'must be replaced by a "special coercive force"[83] for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat)'; (6) when the former enemies have been vanquished (or absorbed), the state is no longer necessary and will wither away.

In responding to Lenin and thereby Engels, Stalin was faced with a number of hurdles. The first concerns the tension between the state as a neutral instrument and as a form indelibly shaped by the particular situation and the class in control, while the second concerns the doctrine of the state's withering. Let me say a little concerning the tension or ambivalence in both Engels and Lenin. On the one hand, the state appears as a neutral tool, a weapon wielded by a class to achieve its aims. Thus, the state becomes an apparatus that is above class struggles. Its various mechanisms for imposing order also appear neutral, such as a standing army, police, prisons and so on. At the same time, the state and its various mechanisms are very much a part of those struggles since they are crucial to the class rule by the bourgeoisie. That class imposes its own order on society, asserts the universality of its own values, cements a specific economic system in place, and sets limits for what positions are acceptable within political debate. Above all, it does so by curtailing the opportunities of its enemies, depriving them of the means and methods of struggle to overthrow the system itself, including the possibility of self-armament. As Engels puts it elsewhere: 'The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital' (Engels 1877–1878a, 266, 1877–1878b, 260).[84] This ambivalence will be crucial for Stalin, since he eventually decides for the second element of this ambivalence, arguing that the state's very nature is infused and shaped by the class in power.

Engels's observation raises a further point: both his and Lenin's definitions concerned the specificity of the bourgeois or capitalist state, especially of European provenance (this is also the case with the Weberian and Marxist lines that developed later). Their concern was as much to define this form of the state as to seek ways to overcome it. This situation meant that any theory of the socialist state

[82]The following quotations are drawn from these pages. Emphases are in the original text.

[83]Lenin defines a 'special coercive force' as 'an organisation of violence for the suppression of some class' (1917g, 407, 1917h, 24).

[84]See also the statement in the second German edition of 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party': 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes' (Marx and Engels 1872a, 175, 1872b, 96).

would have to chart new ground, moving beyond Engels and Lenin. Thus, elements of their theory would gradually fall away, such as the argument that the state is a manifestation of class struggle and that the existence of the state indicates the presence of class struggle, or the need for the withering away of the state. At the same time and in the very different situation of socialism in power, Stalin found himself needing to engage in a 'scriptural dynamic', in which he sought to interpret the letter of Lenin's text through the spirit of changing circumstances.

The crucial period for Stalin's intense study and deliberations over the state took place in the turbulent 1930s, especially in the context of preparing for the 1936 constitution.[85] Concerning the first hurdle—between a neutral (and implicitly universal) tool or a specific form—Stalin initially tends towards the former position but then shifts decisively to the latter. In his earlier reflections, Stalin tended to see the state as a somewhat neutral tool that can be used in one way or another. Thus, if one speaks of a 'bourgeois' or 'proletarian' state, one speaks of the class that is wielding the state for its own purposes. For instance, in 1925 Stalin mentions, with reference to Lenin, a 'new proletarian type of state' (Stalin 1925i, 313, 1925j, 306). He defines it as a state that exists not for the oppression of workers—as with a 'bourgeois state'—but for their emancipation. Clearly this is a position close to Lenin's notion of the tool, as the quotation from Lenin regarding a 'socialist state' in the same year indicates (Stalin 1925y, 163, 1925z, 161). Indeed, earlier references to a socialist state continue in a similar vein, where Stalin offers any hint of a definition at all.[86] So, in a report to Lenin he speaks of an 'apparatus' needed to 'build' the socialist state (Stalin 1919m, 231, 1919n, 224, see also 1929q, 129, 1929r, 123, 1933c, 178, 1933d, 175), or of the socialist state systematically raising the wages of workers and reducing prices so as to provide the basis for economic wellbeing (Stalin 1927e[1], 198, 1927f[1], 195), or of such a state not being one that exploits peasants even in the 'scissors' situation of the late 1920s, since improvement of economic conditions is a basic feature (Stalin 1928g, 168–169, 1928h, 160, 1929i, 53–54, 1929j, 50).

By the 1930s, a subtle but significant shift begins to take place, especially in preparations for the 1936 constitution when it became clear that the state was becoming relatively permanent and not a transitional class instrument. A major issue of debate was the doctrine of the 'withering away of the state'. The wider theoretical context is vital, for it was the major hurdle Stalin had to overcome. Although Marx had hinted from time to time concerning such a withering (Marx 1847a, 212, 1847b, 182; Marx and Engels 1848a, 505–506, 1848b, 482), Engels actually coined the phrase itself.[87] However, he did so only in the third edition (1894) of the deeply influential *Anti-Dühring*, where he adds 'Der Staat wird nicht

[85]Van Ree (2002a, 136–138) indicates that Stalin was studying the question closely in the 1930s, as marginal notes in the works by Marx, Engels and Lenin in his library indicate.

[86]Early references without any effort at definition, apart perhaps from building a socialist state, appear occasionally (Stalin 1919s, 238, 1919t, 230, 1926e, 87, 1926f, 81, 1927e[1], 1927f[1]).

[87]See Lovell (1984, 71–89) for an argument that the doctrine was from Engels and not Marx.

"abgeschaft", *er stirbt ab*' (1877–1878b, 262)—'The state is not "abolished". *It dies out*' (1877–1878a, 268).[88] And in *The Origin of the Family* Engels had spoken of the machinery of state being relegated to the museum of antiquities (1884a, 272, 1884b, 110). As for Lenin, the logic of his argument leads him also to this position, particularly in his exegesis of Marx's brief comments on the stages of communism (Marx 1875a, 1875b; Lenin 1917g, 472–479, 1917h, 95–102). As we saw earlier, Lenin interprets this argument as the difference between socialism and communism. Only in the stage of communism, argues Lenin, in which the distinction between mental and physical labour has passed (and thereby classes), in which human beings work voluntarily rather than under compulsion, and in which the last vestiges of the bourgeois state have passed, will the basis be established for the state's withering away. That is, the state will not die out with communism, but only after communism is well and truly established. I stress one further point: the inability to predict when this will happen: Lenin observes, 'how soon … we do not and *cannot* know'. Indeed, he emphasises the 'protracted nature of this process', leaving the question of time open, 'because there is *no* material for answering these questions' (Lenin 1917g, 473–474, 1917h, 96). What are we to make of this doctrine? As Losurdo (2016) points out, both Marx and Engels equivocate over what is really an anarchist position. While they suggest—especially Engels—that the state would die out, they also repeatedly assert that certain administrative functions would need to continue for the sake of organisation and distribution of production. One of course needs a state for such tasks.

With such a pedigree, Stalin could not avoid adhering to this position (Stalin 1906–1907a, 336–338, 1906–1907b, 160–162, 1925y, 161, 1925z, 158). But as we may expect by now, he gives his own distinct and very dialectical interpretation in light of the ever-prolonged era of socialism. This appears in 1933, in the midst of what one may initially suspect would be a rather droll joint plenum of the Central Committee (Stalin 1933c, 211–216, 1933d, 206–212).[89] The immediate context is the completion of the first Five Year Plan, with claims that socialism had been founded in all aspects of the economy. One may expect that capitalist elements have been eradicated, but not quite, for he picks up a point I noted earlier concerning the intensified resistance of the 'moribund classes'. Defeated, they have resorted to worming their way into the new forms of industry, agriculture, trade and even government in order to sabotage the new project. Let me return to a text I quoted earlier, now focusing on the state. As he reflects on the intensification of class conflict (following Lenin's famous point that the state is a sign and means of class struggle), Stalin observes:

[88]A comparison between the first and third editions in MEGA reveals the absence of the phrase there (Engels 1878, 445, 1894, 535). Only the third edition is published by MEW and MECW (cited above).

[89]For useful analyses from the 1950s and 1960s, see the detailed discussions and disagreements in Daniels (1953), Medalie (1959), and Möller and Picht (1963).

> The state will wither away, not as a result of weakening the state power, but as a result of strengthening it to the utmost, which is necessary for finally crushing the remnants of the dying classes and for organising defence against the capitalist encirclement that is far from having been done away with as yet, and will not soon be done away with (Stalin 1933c, 215, 1933d, 210–211).[90]

No objective or even mechanical withering away here, due to the state having passed its use-by date. Instead, it requires subjective intervention, actively strengthening the state in order to deal with the ferocious mischief and slander of one's class opponents. As he put it elsewhere in debate with Bukharin, the purpose of a strengthened 'proletarian state' is to 'smash' the bourgeois state, which will only then enable a withering away of the state (Stalin 1929i, 77, 1929j, 73). Crushing one's opponents requires an even stronger state, let alone the need for a professional army in order to deal with international marauders.[91] Yet, the full force of his dialectic requires another turn. The state's strength is not merely the basis for its withering: the growth of the Soviet state's power intensifies 'the resistance of the last remnants of the dying classes' (Stalin 1933c, 216, 1933d, 211–212).

Let me pick up the phrase 'will not soon be done away with' from the text quoted above. Obviously, this relates directly to the theme of the delay of communism, in which socialism becomes a distinct stage. Thus far, I have argued that the dialectic of the state's increasing strength as the means for its withering away is part of defining the stage of socialism. But when will the state wither or die away? Six years later, in perhaps his most substantial reflections on the nature of the state, Stalin once again returns to the theme of withering (Stalin 1939a, 411–426, 1939b, 330–339).[92] Now the situation was widely agreed to be an achieved socialism, with the exploiting classes abolished as a result of the socialist offensive. Why not give the state a push, argued some, enabling it to wither and become a feature of the museum of antiquities? Stalin replies by returning to Engels's much-debated text. True enough, suggests Stalin, but he invokes the spirit of Marxism rather than the letter: at an abstract theoretical level Engels may be correct in light of the circumstances in which he wrote, but circumstances change and Marxists should reinterpret the situation. The relevant circumstances in 1939 include the reality of specific internal developments in the country and the international situation. Thus, class opponents have been abolished within the Soviet Union, which entails that his argument from six years earlier concerning the intensification of class conflict is no longer necessary, or, at least, it is not necessary *internally*. The external situation is

[90]A year later, at the Seventeenth Congress, he summarises these points (Stalin 1934g, 357–358, 1934h, 350–351). Boobbyer (2000, 83–99) quotes this text but then misses its significance entirely, preferring to seek for signs of the personal-cum-bureaucratic structure of Stalin's role in the state. Already in 1954, Aspaturian suggested that Stalin's approach to the state was a fundamental break with Marxism.

[91]Van Ree (2002a, 138–139) makes much of the military dimension, in which an army presupposes a state.

[92]See also his brief comment in the lengthy treatment of socialist economics (Stalin 1951–1952a, 289, 1951–1952b, 218).

another matter. In a global situation, enemies abound, with the capitalist encirclement, persistent interventions and the ever-present threat of a fifth column. The new proletarian state may be able to withdraw from the internal situation, if not die away to some extent, but it would be foolhardy to imagine that international forces would simply leave the Soviet Union alone. The class struggle has shifted, from an internal reality and constitutive of the state, to an external and international reality, in which socialism faces off with capitalism. In this situation, one can hardly expect the dismantling and withering away of the socialist state. As van Ree (2002, 137) observes, he 'was realistic enough and not enough of a utopian to embark on a course of self-destruction'. The pertinence of such a practical assessment in 1939 should not be missed.[93]

Thus far, Stalin has made in clear that the founders of Marxism could hardly have known what the actual situation would have been under socialism in power, especially in terms of the development of socialism in one country, and so their abstract formulations need to be reconsidered. He goes a step further: even Lenin's *The State and Revolution* remained incomplete, with a second volume unwritten due to the realities of the October Revolution. Lenin may have tentatively called this section 'The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917', but Stalin seeks to deal with the experience of the socialist state after 1917.[94] In short, Stalin argues that this second section should now—in light of experience—deal with nothing less than the second stage of socialism.

I cannot emphasise enough this distinction, between a first and second stage of socialism and thereby of a socialist state. The move here is one of both form and content. Formally, in the act of distinguishing between two phases of the socialist state, Stalin has opened up the possibility, if not necessity, for a socialist state in its own right. It remains to provide some content, beyond Lenin's initial formulations. Stalin attempts to do so in one paragraph, so he can make only a few points. In the first stage, the socialist state functioned as Lenin stipulated, dealing with class enemies internally and externally, predicated on the interests of the labouring majority. This majority seizes control of the state apparatus and, through the dictatorship of the proletariat, wields the state apparatus to crush its enemies. Stalin adds the need for economic reconstruction and education, which includes the crucial component of ideological education.

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[93]Will a new form of the state appear under communism? Stalin offers this tantalising hint: 'We are going ahead, towards Communism. Will our state remain in the period of Communism also? Yes, it will, unless the capitalist encirclement is liquidated, and unless the danger of foreign military attack has disappeared. Naturally, of course, the forms of our state will again change in conformity with the change in the situation at home and abroad. No, it will not remain and will atrophy [*otomret*] if the capitalist encirclement is liquidated and a Socialist encirclement takes its place' (Stalin 1939a, 422, 1939b, 336). All too brief are the comments, but they open up the possibility of communism in one country and the need for a state in such a situation (Van Ree 2002a, 141–142).

[94]Unfortunately, Krausz's analysis (2005, 238–239) is decidedly unhelpful on this crucial point.

Only in the second stage does the socialist state begin to come into its own. In one paragraph of the piece I have been analysing thus far Stalin provides only the briefest of suggestions (Stalin 1939a, 420–421, 1939b, 335–336). The first three of the following points are drawn from this paragraph, but for the remainder I bring together the points made throughout this chapter.

1. The elimination of the last remnants of capitalist elements.
2. The establishment and reality of a socialist economic system (as a result of the socialist offensive).
3. Cultural revolution, by which Stalin means educating and raising the masses to socialism.
4. The internationalisation of the class struggle, since the internal repression of class enemies is no longer needed. This also entails an internationalisation of what is now the dictatorship of the proletariat, farmers and intellectuals,[95] in which the military, punitive organs and intelligence services turn their focus to external enemies. Thus, in his interview with Emil Ludwig, Stalin observes that the new state is not a 'national' state but an 'international' state, which strengthens the international working class (Stalin 1931g, 107, 1931h, 105; see also 1937c, 248, 1937d, 155; Van Ree 2002a, 138–139).[96]
5. The consequent need for a strong socialist state, internally for the sake of enacting comprehensive reforms and externally for the purpose of protecting socialism in the context of capitalist encirclement. As Losurdo points out (2008, 95–102, 2015, 77–78), it was the genius of the Bolsheviks not merely to recover the state when it threatened to dissolve during the disasters of the Japanese War, First World War and Civil War, but to develop a strong state. I would add that it was a strong socialist state.[97]
6. A new approach to the national question, in which the international category of class provides a new angle on the diversity of nationality, so that the socialist state is a multi-national state. Thus, in his reflections on the 1936 constitution, Stalin speaks of 'fully formed multi-national Socialist state [*mnogonatsional'noe sotsialisticheskoe gosudarstvo*]' (Stalin 1936e, 163, 1936f, 126), which has weathered all manner of shocks and withstood all tests.
7. The positive or affirmative action program of the Soviet Union, which was not only the world's first in terms of minority nationalities, but also requires a strong state and has been followed and modified by socialist states since.

[95]As Van Ree observes (2002a, 140–141), Stalin began to abandon the explicit use of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the 1930s. Yet, we may see its redefinition in terms of a strong socialist state focused on dealing with international class enemies.

[96]Only a couple of years later, the need for such institutions became all too evident with the Nazi attack on the socialist state (Stalin 1941c, 16, 1941d, 77).

[97]Van Ree (2002, 136) pays due emphasis to the strong state. However, Kotkin (2014, 289–295) cannot see past this feature of the state, while Poulantzas (1980, 253–256) is decidedly unhelpful on the question of Stalin's approach to the state as such.

8. The resolute anti-colonial drive that arose, theoretically and practically, from the internal experiences of affirmative action and provided the basis for the post-colonial era.
9. From the previous chapter, I add the need for the Communist Party to hold the reins of power, although—in a dialectic of transcendence and immanence that constitutes socialist democracy—the party should never forget that it arises from the masses and is responsible for guiding them forward.

6.5 Conclusion

I have argued that Stalin has arrived at the threshold of a theory of the socialist state, although this has required drawing together many threads. By now it should be clear that the theory goes well beyond the proposals by Engels and Lenin (let alone other Marxist approaches), whose concern was the bourgeois or capitalist state of European provenance. Indeed, I suggest that the theory of the state's withering signals the constraints of their approach within such a framework. The differences are apparent when we compare the main points of Engels and Lenin with those of Stalin. The only intersection between them concerns struggle. For Engels and Lenin, the bourgeois state arises from class antagonisms, but then alienates itself from them to become a distinct structure shaped by the concerns of capital. By contrast, for Stalin the socialist state is clearly involved in struggle. It prosecutes socialism—the interests of workers, farmers and intellectuals—internally and increasingly externally. This takes place at many levels, in terms of economic construction, cultural revolution, nationalities policy, affirmative action, anti-colonialism and an internationalisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants.

Clearly, they are speaking of rather different entities. For some, the differences are simply too great, so they dismiss Stalin's arguments as a betrayal of Marxist 'orthodoxy', as opportunistic and a finding of excuses to maintain the power of the Communist Party and thereby his own power through what was nothing more than a 'bourgeois' state riven with class conflict (Aspaturian 1954; Balibar 1977, 49–55; Poulantzas 1980, 253–256; Cliff 1987, 144–161; Resnick and Wolff 2002).[98] Of course, one may suggest that theory is all very well, but that the proof is in the analysis of the actual practice of the state—to which a few have devoted some attention (Therborn 1978; Harding 1984; Hagen 1990). Yet, the fact remains that Stalin was arguably the first to develop a theory of socialist state from the context of socialism in power, indeed that he does so on the basis of distinguishing between bourgeois and socialist states. But his suggestions remain very much first steps towards a much fuller theory of the socialist state. He may have spoken of the 'twenty years of practical experience in state affairs which provides rich material for

[98]Cockshott and Cottrell (1993, 4–5) offer a useful counter-argument.

theoretical generalizations' (Stalin 1939a, 414, 1939b, 331), but his offerings remain only a beginning. At the time of writing, a full century of practice is available for analysis in many different parts of the world, so much work remains to be done.

Conclusion

> We must know whether Stalin took his own publicly avowed doctrines seriously. The evidence is overwhelming that he did (Van Ree 2002a, 118).

This book has been an extraordinary journey, for me at least. I began working on the book with a distinctly European focus, coming to the Soviet situation from further west (if one thinks of a Eurasian context). By its end, the Soviet Union had become a north-western phenomenon. How so? By this time, I was ever more deeply ensconced in the context of Chinese Marxism. In some respects, then, this book is as much the beginning of an effort to think through the Chinese situation as the end of an effort to understand western Eurasian Marxism through the lens of theology and religion. Part of this is due to the fact that in the 1930s and 1940s in China, Stalin's influence—including his theoretical work—was larger than many are willing to admit. And partly it is due to the situation of socialism in power. Stalin was the first leader to find the necessity of developing the living—rather than ossified—tradition of Marxism in light of the very different situation of actually exercising power. As I have mentioned earlier, both Lenin and Mao pointed out repeatedly that winning a socialist revolution is relatively easy, but exercising power in the construction of socialism is far, far more complex. And the founders had relatively little to say on this score, since they had never been in this situation. More of all this later, beyond the current book, as part of long project called 'Socialism in Power'. For now, I seek to draw to a conclusion the forays I have made deep into Stalin's texts and thought, before dealing with the question of veneration and demonization.

Implications for Socialism in Power

There is no need to summarise my arguments here, for I have done so in the introduction. Instead, I seek to develop the consequences of the topics I have studied in some detail, with a distinct focus on the situation of socialism in power. I follow the order of the chapters in dealing with the main topics, although they coalesce around the core question of the socialist state. To begin with, the exercise

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in tracking, with some effort, the biblical tenor of Stalin's thought and mode of expression may be seen for what it is: a comprehensive effort to show how deeply the patterns of biblical, if not theological, expression permeate Russian culture, even in the context of the multi-faith society that the Soviet Union was in reality. Obviously, in other contexts where this tradition does not run deeply or is peripheral, one must begin again with assessing the philosophical and religious background.[1] More pertinent to my discussion here is what I called the 'scriptural dynamic' of any movement that relies on the interpretation of specific texts written by founders. Rather than simple oppositions between 'orthodoxy' and 'revisionism' or 'deviations', or indeed 'letter' and 'spirit', Stalin's approach is to adhere to the letter in light of the spirit. In other words, Marxism is a living tradition, which faces unforeseen and unexpected situations that require new developments and interpretations. One might agree or disagree with the nature of certain contribution to the tradition (and many disagree with Stalin, attempting to excise him from the tradition), but this only highlights the ongoing nature of the tradition.

Second, one of Stalin's signal discoveries is the production of diversity out of unity, if not of a totalising approach. This point may have been rediscovered much later in the very different context of the challenge to 'master narratives' characteristic of postmodern debates, where the liberal celebration of difference and tolerance led to no position at all, while the determination of a totalising explanation produces whole new levels of diversity (McHale 1992).[2] The context for Stalin was quite different, born out of the complex and hectic practice of trying to construct socialism. In this context, he faced significant challenges, whether the expectation of a universal language when global socialism had arrived, or the push from socialist parties (or subsections thereof) for the primacy of cultural-national factors in dealing with the national question, or the tendencies of Great Russian chauvinism in the context of the Soviet Union, or indeed the pressures from Western European socialist parties (especially in Germany) where they had begun to accommodate themselves to the multi-party system of liberal or bourgeois democracy. Stalin's answers wove a distinct line that held to the dynamic of interpreting the spirit through the letter. Thus, in terms of language, he came gradually to a position that I called Pentecostal—given how the biblical stories of Adam, Babel and Pentecost have shaped in so many ways the linguistic theories emerging from the wider European and indeed Russian scene. In response to the cultural-national focus of different socialist parties, he focused resolutely on the international category of class in seeking a new way to deal with the national question, with the result that the many nationalities of what became the Soviet Union by and large discovered themselves in a way not seen before. This theoretical position led to the first

[1]For example, as Mao Zedong put it in a very different context, 'The history of this *great* nation of ours goes back several thousand years. *It has its own laws of development*, its own *national* characteristics, and many precious treasures … From Confucius to Sun Yatsen, we must sum it up critically, and we must constitute ourselves the heirs to this precious legacy' (Mao 2004, 538).
[2]McHale's observation applies directly to Fredric Jameson's unfashionable—at the time—deployment of the master narrative of Marxism to understand postmodernism.

comprehensive affirmative action program in the Soviet Union, which not only fostered, if not created, minority nationalities, but also had to weave a delicate path in countering Great Russian chauvinism and recognising the Russians too as an important nationality. This affirmative action policy has been followed in other socialist states. Terry Martin (2001a, 18) may argue that 'no country as yet has approached the vast scale of Soviet Affirmative Action', but by now it is clear that China has both learnt and surpassed the Soviet Union, especially after the revision of its policy in the 1990s (after the dismantling of the Soviet Union). In this case, the integrity of China's borders has been strengthened while the minorities policy has become much more robust and far-reaching (Mackerras 2003, 39). Further, the push from other socialist parties to accommodate to a liberal democratic system was firmly resisted in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants, which entailed that the Communist Party should continue to hold the reins of power.

The third main topic concerned the delay of communism, which I sought to interpret in light of a translation with the Christian delay of the Parousia. The main point here is that such a delay was highly productive, leading to an awareness of the need for a strong socialist state (see below), the development of stages of socialism and communism, as well as what I have called proleptic communism. I have nothing further to add here on proleptic communism, so let me focus on the distinction between socialism and communism, which was initially developed by Lenin through the interpretation of a key passage in Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, a distinction that Stalin eventually came to apply. Initially, socialism was seen as a transitional stage, but soon enough the interim became the norm, so much so that socialism itself was divided into stages. Speaking after the 1936 constitution, Stalin delineated a second stage of socialism, after the internal class opponents had by and large been vanquished, and after the massive socialist offensive of the late 1920s and 1930s. In this second stage, peaceful development (reform) continued, while one remained very watchful of international opponents. Once again, I draw a Chinese comparison, where one finds a theory of the stages of socialism as well. Indeed, as I write, China under Xi Jinping is preparing for the shift to a moderately prosperous society in all respects (*xiaokang shehui*), or a socialistically modernised country (*shehuizhuyi xiandaihua guojia*) in light of the two centenaries, one of the foundation of the CPC and other of the People's Republic. This may also be interpreted as preparing for a shift from first or preliminary stage of socialism to the next stage. This shift entails many dimensions, such as ensuring that as many as people as possible no longer live in poverty, a whole new level of economic activity with the Belt and Road initiative, the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the acceleration of one of the most significant domestic infrastructure projects in recent history, and the development of cultural, social and welfare needs beyond economic issues. The preparation also entails focusing on Party unity and strength (the anti-corruption campaign has this as one of its main aims) so to enact these policies, regular study groups for all Party members for the sake of raising the awareness of members, and regular statements to the press, educational bodies, writers and artists, among others, that they should develop creativity and robust approaches in

light of socialism with Chinese characteristics (Boer in press-b). These developments may be criticised in light of Lenin's challenge, before the October Revolution, to a stages theory in which a bourgeois revolution had to be allowed, if not enabled, to run its course before a socialist revolution was possible. Instead, Lenin argued that the very conditions that determine such stages need a subjective intervention that changes those conditions. Is the recourse to stages theory for socialism and communism a reversion to what Lenin criticised? Apart from the fact that Lenin himself initially distinguished between socialism and communism, the crucial factor here is between the perspectives of before and after October. If one is pursuing a socialist revolution, then seizing the course of history and shifting it is definitely needed, but once in power the process of reform—in light of the revolution—becomes the norm (this is not to say that Stalin was averse to ruptural interventions, as the socialist offensive reveals very clearly).

Fourth, the question of human nature. I stress again that socialism is very much focused on the transformation of human nature (as indeed is Christian theology). This has often been dismissed as the futility of 'social engineering' in light either of an assumed universal and unchanging human nature, or in light of a liberal notion of the sacrosanct private individual (the two approaches are not necessarily exclusive). The reality is that human nature does change, precisely through the acts of human beings in constructing different socio-economic systems, or modes of production. The paradox, as Christina Petterson and I have found in another study (2014), is that such changes are marked by intense debates to ascertain what a universal human nature might be. The reality of the debates and the differing positions taken, if not the eventual new position, signal the general fact of change and immediate reality of a transition underway. In the Soviet Union, the crucial period was the 1930s, with the massive programs of industrialisation and agricultural collectivisation, with their winners and losers, the affirmative action program, educational explosion ('cultural revolution'), the campaign to eliminate the kulaks as a class and the consequent gulags, and the purges culminating in the Red Terror. It was an immensely tumultuous period, during which stunning achievements worked side by side with the uncontrollable brutality of the Red Terror, if not the dislocations of those who had something to lose from the socialist offensive. This has implications for the sharp bifurcations in attitudes towards Stalin (see below), as well as the intensification of the dialectic and thereby on Stalin's unwitting contribution to Marxist anthropology. His challenge, as I have argued, is to introduce a robust, if somewhat stark (and Augustinian) awareness of the role of evil, understood in a materialist sense. It is easy enough to decry evil or indeed sin in others, but the real challenge is to find that the possibility for immense good and evil exists in the fabric of the collective and individual. In Stalin's terms, anyone can become a kulak or a Trotsky.

The fifth topic concerned the Communist Party, which I sought to interpret in light of the dialectic of transcendence and immanence, now translated within a Marxist framework. However, this topic really folds into the question of the socialist state, so let me tackle it from that perspective. The question of the state is both immensely important (especially in a Chinese situation), but also seriously

under-studied. It includes questions of the minority nationalities, affirmative action, anti-colonialism, the Party, socialist democracy, socialist civil society, a socialist approach to human rights, and indeed the need for a strong state. In many respects, the question of the socialist state—quite different from the bourgeois state as defined by Engels and Lenin—turned out to be a significant direction of this study as a whole.

I would like to make a few further comments on five of these items, although they really require a much fuller study in their own right. First, a crucial feature of the socialist state is the continued hold on the reins of power by the Communist Party. No matter how much one may object to such a situation, this is the historical reality that Stalin, at least, was brave enough to tackle at a theoretical level. Given this situation (and I, for one, find it desirable), the longevity of the Party raises a host of fascinating questions: how to maintain legitimacy over the *longue durée*; the constant need for rejuvenation, reform and purges so as to recover strength and unity; the complexities of policies, feedback and input from the masses; and the relationship between the Party and people. Stalin's answers to these matters should be clear from the chapter on the Party, in which the relations between Party and people follow a complex dialectic. Second, this situation has obvious implications for understanding socialist democracy, in which the majority find full representation through the Communist Party. In Stalin's formulation, this approach negates any modulations of bourgeois democracy with its pretence of multiple political parties, not least because fully developed bourgeois democracy is one of the most effective weapons against a socialist revolution, let alone a socialist state. At the same, it should be noted that China has eight other political parties, although they all work to support the Communist Party through many means, not least through constructive criticism.

Third, within the context of a socialist state the possibility of a socialist civil society arises. As with the state, civil society is not so much a universal term that can be applied in all situations, but rather a reality that emerges in distinct historical locations. So often, the model of this universal civil society derives from the specifics of bourgeois civil society,[3] which entails a basic alienation between private individual and the state, as well as a systemic exclusion of the majority. The constant danger of bourgeois civil society is that it easily becomes a lynch mob. Instead of this type of civil society, socialist civil society operates in a different way. This takes place in terms of a recalibrated dialectic of collective and individual. In alternative terms, this civil society appears in the space between official communist policy and individual expression. Indeed, socialist civil society is based on a redefinition of freedom, which provides a new universal based on the open particularity of the majority. In sum, this freedom is a *freedom from* bourgeois civil society and *freedom for* the socialist project.

[3]Kolakowski (1978–81, vol. 3, 95), as with many others, simply equates bourgeois civil society with a curious universal civil society.

Fourth, it follows that a Marxist approach to human rights also finds a place in such analysis, although we need to look to the Chinese situation to find a more fully developed form of this position, in contrast to Stalin's initial comments. These deliberations turn on the following points. (1) It recognises that there should be a careful balance between collective and individual dimensions in human rights—in contrast to a European, if not North Atlantic tradition, in which the individual tends to be paramount, although the collective is by no means absent even if is mediated through the individual. By contrast, a Marxist approach does not simply oppose the collective to the individual, but seeks a mediation between them. This means that specific collective groups also have distinct rights: women, newborns, minority nationalities, classes and even whole societies. (2) Related to the previous point is the importance of sovereignty in the giving and exercise of human rights. This is based on the idea that human rights are given by a society and are not inherent in human beings. But if a country is colonised and subjected to another country, human rights are not possible. Therefore, a sovereign country is crucial for human rights. (3) There is a necessary tension between the between universal and particular, in which one may—with qualifications—agree to a universal category of human rights, but be wary of universalising from a particular situation. These situations are determined by history, culture and politics. For example, European and indeed North Atlantic history has led to an emphasis on political and civil rights at the expense of economic rights. By contrast, countries with different histories and Marxist influences have found that human rights are political, social and economic. (4) Of these the most important are economic rights, especially the right to economic wellbeing. By contrast, the liberal tradition of human rights tends to focus on political and civil rights, especially in relation to political expression, the press and religion. It neglects other central human rights, of which the economic right to wellbeing emerges from within both specific situations (I think of the Chinese situation) and Marxism. Indeed, this feature explains the consistent policy of the Chinese government in improving the economic level of the population. For example, today the emphasis is on developing the economic conditions of people in central and western China, who have lagged behind the eastern seaboard—the Belt and Road initiative has this focus as one of its aims. It also explains a major plank of each of the five year plans, which set targets for how many tens of millions will be lifted out of poverty.

Finally, it became quite clear in Stalin's thought that a socialist state is a strong state. Apart from the points that the genius of the Bolsheviks was to develop a strong state in a context where Russia had devolved into a collapsed state, or that capitalist countries were always seeking to undermine the Soviet Union, if not engaging actively in doing so wherever possible, I am interested here in the need for a strong state in order to enact the policies that transform society, economics and culture. Losurdo in particular has insisted that only a strong socialist state can do so. And some of the material I have discussed indicates precisely this situation. The massive affirmative action program is inconceivable without the state mechanisms for bringing it into being. The same could be said of the socialist offensive, with its deeply disruptive transformations of industry and agriculture, or of the

reorganisation and universalisation of education, or of the five year plans (which remain the preserve of socialist states today and universities), or indeed of any aspect in involved in the recreation of society. This is not to say that other forms of the state cannot also be strong, but it challenges the ingrained (neo-)liberal assumption that the state is inefficient, bureaucratic and sclerotic. To be sure, the Soviet Union made many mistakes along the way, but only the state had the expertise, organisation, and ability to bring about its policies. As a comparison, I find that in China, with its 1.3 billion people, it is much easier and more efficient to get something done than in a country like Australia, with a population of only 25 million. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to multiply the bureaucracy in Australia by 46 (to bring the population up to the same level as China): the bureaucracy would simply collapse under its own weight.

In these final observations, I have trod somewhat lightly on the theological emphases of five of the six chapters. This is not so much because theological language is an outer garment that may be cast off when one has another garment that may be worn, but more an indication of the direction of my thought as this book has unfolded. As should be clear by now, my interest has moved to understanding socialism in power, in the Soviet Union and more recently in a Chinese context. In an entirely unexpected way, the immersion in Stalin's thought has enabled me to begin thinking about some of the core issues involved in such an analysis. Lest anyone should jump to the conclusion that China is a 'Stalinist' state, let me clarify: the exercise of socialism in power is the key, for Stalin found himself trying to think through some of the issues related to the time after October. He may often have done so in piecemeal fashion, requiring theoretical legwork by anyone who wishes to put these pieces together in a larger whole, but the fact that he did so is in itself significant. Further, my immersion in a Chinese situation, where the Chinese Communist Party continues in power, has forced me to question and dismantle many of my assumed categories of analysis, developed as they were in a European and Russian context, and to begin building again from the ground up. Obviously, the long history of theological thought and the need for Marxism initially to engage in depth with this history and the reality of the categories bequeathed to it does not apply in China. This experience has been both unsettling and energising, but Stalin's thought has provided—unexpectedly—a means for doing so.

Between Veneration and Demonization

I close on a slightly different note, with the extraordinary demonization of Stalin in many quarters. Is not Stalin, after all, the epitome of the paranoid dictator ruling by his personal whim and destroying millions of lives in the process? Is he not the mirror-image of Hitler and thereby a travesty of the Marxist tradition, as so many would have us believe? In the introduction, I dealt with the different ways many try to account for Stalin's theoretical developments, ranging over sophistry, hypocrisy,

dogmatism and vulgar Marxism. So here I briefly address the way Stalin became, as Losurdo (2008) puts it, a 'black legend'. What follows picks up some points from Losurdo's study, especially since it has not yet been translated into English. He begins by asking why Stalin, who was admired globally for the indispensable and central role in defeating Hitler, became the epitome of the evil dictator, rivalling Hitler himself for the role. Key historical moments in this process include, first, the infamous 'secret speech' (entitled 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences') by Khrushchev in 1956, in which he depicted Stalin as a 'capricious and degenerate human monster' and created the myths of Stalin's abject reactions to Hitler's attack, his anti-Semitism, the cultivation of his own personality cult and much more (Furr 2011). Second, Hannah Arendt's work (1976) bears much of the blame, with its suggestions concerning totalitarianism, in which the connection with Hitler was developed, and whose somewhat left-wing credentials enabled a significant section of the international left to decry and distance themselves from Stalin. Third, the complicity between international conservatives, liberals and socialists was enhanced by the highly dubious work of Robert Conquest, the conservative anti-communist operative who worked for the Information Research Department (and who derived much of his 'data' from the time with this anti-communist propaganda unit). Conquest (1986, 1992, 2015) relied on émigréword-of-mouth to construct accounts of 'ethnic cleansing' and the Ukrainian 'holocaust' (or Holodomor), apart from co-writing a curious work called *What to Do When the Russians Come: A Survivors Handbook* (Conquest and White 1984).

All of this leads to what Losurdo calls the *reductio ad Hitlerum*. Time and again one comes across efforts to connect Hitler and Stalin, as two sides of the same coin.[4] It may be the Soviet Gulags and Nazi 'Concentration Camps', neglecting how the former sought to produce restored citizens, however many mistakes were made, while the latter simply sought to destroy 'sub-humans' since—the Nazis believed—the world would be a better place without them. It may be the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, which since Trotsky has become the hallmark of the likeness between Hitler and Stalin, forgetting that the Soviet Union sought many non-aggression pacts at the time in a desperate effort to avoid conflict (Roberts 2006, 30–35), let alone seeking to neutralise a deliberate policy from Western Europe to direct Hitler's energies against the Soviet Union after the breakdown of negotiations for an anti-Hitler pact with the British and the French. It may be the suggestion that both Hitler and Stalin engaged in acts of genocide, Hitler with Jews, gypsies, homosexuals (and mostly communists), and Stalin with the Ukraine in the 'Holodomor'. Or it may be Stalin's anti-Semitism, which would obviously connect him with Hitler, neglecting the repeated statements from Stalin condemning anti-Semitism (which I have noted earlier), let alone the large number of Jews in the Soviet government and the strong penalties under the affirmative action program for even racist remarks. The list could go on, but I add one more:

[4]These efforts are not restricted to Stalin, for Mao Zedong, and indeed other communist leaders, continue to be attacked in such a vein (Dikotter 2013, 2010, 2016).

the effort by the current 'united' German government to connect, via 'museum' displays near parts of the Berlin Wall, the Nazis and East Germans, especially in terms of their police operations. Nearby, however, the remarkable war memorial in Treptower Park to the victory of the Red Army over the Wehrmacht and thereby of fascism is conveniently forgotten. Any visitor to the memorial cannot escape the fact, through imagery, statues and engraved quotations from Stalin in Russian and German, that it was understood as a defeat of fascism and all for which it stood.

This material brings Losurdo to a point he needs to keep making, since it is so often glossed over: the remarkable collusion between Western liberal powers and fascism. Churchill was an avowed racist and white supremacist, with Roosevelt not far behind. While Eastern European countries, East Germany included, actively undertook a program of denazification, the other zones of Germany, while they were still occupied, employed 'former' Nazis, since they were effective anti-communists. In what became West Germany, the Adenauer regime propagated the infamous article 131, with widespread support from churches and other elements of West German society, which sought to provide amnesty to 'former' fascists. The ones pardoned included those responsible for dragging people off to prison, for shootings, executions, causing bodily injury and so on. Indeed, to compensate for the way they were 'damaged' by the Third Reich, they were given favoured treatment for government, educational, medical and many other positions (Frei 2002).

Obviously, the demonization of Stalin in this material presents a distorted one-sidedness in assessments. Losurdo sets about redressing the balance, with analyses of socialist democracy and the Red Terror, the war on bureaucracy and the 'furious faith' of the new socialist order, the planned economy and the extraordinary flexibility of worker initiatives (so much so that the workers would have been regarded as unruly and undisciplined in capitalist industries), and the role of a 'developmental dictatorship' in contrast to totalitarianism. I am not interested here in rehabilitating Stalin, but in trying to understand how such a distorted picture could emerge at a theoretical level. Losurdo is excellent in showing how it happened historically, but let me pick up what he calls the 'dialectic of Saturn'. By this he means the pattern of conflict and struggle in which the way the Bolsheviks came to power continued to influence their dealings in power: 'the history of Bolshevism turns itself against soviet power'. This revolutionary struggle continued, in relation to external and especially internal opponents. And so the means for resolving such a struggle became—internally—both plots to overthrow the Communist Party and purges, if not red terror, to thwart such plots. Related to this dialectic is the problematic nature of the communist universal. Bred out of the particularities of the Russian revolution and its situation, it developed a utopian or 'ideal socialism' that is still to come and for which one strives. This position enables one to stay in a perpetual position before October, dismissing any actual socialist revolution as a betrayal of the ideal. In the Soviet Union, it produced a perpetual state of exception. For Losurdo, Stalin may have at times been subject to this universal ideal, but less so than others like Trotsky and Kautsky, who criticised Stalin for not living up to the ideal. Instead, Stalin's various strategies, such as continuing the New Economic

Policy for a while, the collectivisation project, the restoration of the soviets, and the efforts to foster socialist democracy indicate a significant practical concern.

I would like to add a further feature, which derives from an aspect of Stalin's own theoretical work: the intensification of the dialectic. I do not mean that Stalin is responsible in some way for the extremes of responses to him, ranging from the demonization I have outlined through to intense veneration as the architect of a superpower and victor in the Second World War (even to the point of religious observances in his native Georgia).[5] Rather, the intensification of the opposition of revolution and counter-revolution (this he shared with Lenin), the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the two camps of socialism and capitalism, class opposition as one draws nearer to communism, if not the heightened tensions between good and evil in human nature itself—all of these were born in the hectic period of the 1930s when tensions abounded and were intensified in way that is difficult to imagine. But they also provided a theoretical framework for the intensity of the assessments of Stalin in either direction. Part of the responsibility lies with a distinctly European approach to dialectical thought and practice, which tends so often to see contradictions in terms of either-or. To be sure, the dialectic moves through each opposition to a higher level, through the negation of the negation, but this sets up yet another dimension of antagonism. Stalin was obviously an heir of this form of the dialectic. Rather than buying into this framework, I am drawn to Chinese Marxist recalibrations of the relations between contradictions. Part of this is due to the long history of Chinese philosophy, and part is due to the particular situation of the Chinese revolution, but it can be summed up in a proverb quoted by Mao Zedong: '*xiangfan xiangcheng*', 'Things that oppose each other also complement each other' (Mao 1965, 343). Much more could be said on this topic, but I wish to draw out the implications for a Chinese approach to assessing Stalin. As with Mao, one needs to appreciate the significant achievements made and criticise the mistakes. It is as simple as that, but it has far-reaching consequences. Like Mao, Stalin and the Bolsheviks made momentous breakthroughs and achievements, but they also made egregious mistakes of which they were only sometimes conscious. If I may quote the current Chairman of the People's Republic, Xi Jinping (2013): 'Revolutionary leaders are not gods, but human beings. We cannot worship them like gods or refuse to allow people to point out and correct their errors just because they are great; neither can we totally repudiate them and erase their historical feats just because they made mistakes'.

Finally, it has become increasingly clear as this project has grown that we do not know what socialism, let alone communism, actually is. To be sure, they are a few abstract ideas, which seem to be repeated from time to time, but those who do so would be at a complete loss (like the Mensheviks) if presented with the opportunity for a socialist revolution, let alone quailing at the exercise of power and the complex process of trying to construct socialism (Plamenatz 1947; Badiou 2010;

[5]A sample of recent works in Russia gives a sense of such veneration (Kremliov 2008; Oshkalov 2013; Polikarpov 2007; Zhura 2012; Ziuganov 2009).

Douzinas and Žižek 2010). Far easier, then, to produce an abstract image and then criticise those who have exercised and do exercise socialism in power. Or, to put in other terms, it is far more comfortable to take up a position before October rather than afterwards. Everything changes when one has power. The difficulties are immense and complex, hostility (both covert and overt) abounds, compromises, backtracks, zigzags are the order of the day. But only through actual experience can one come to know what socialism in practice might be.

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