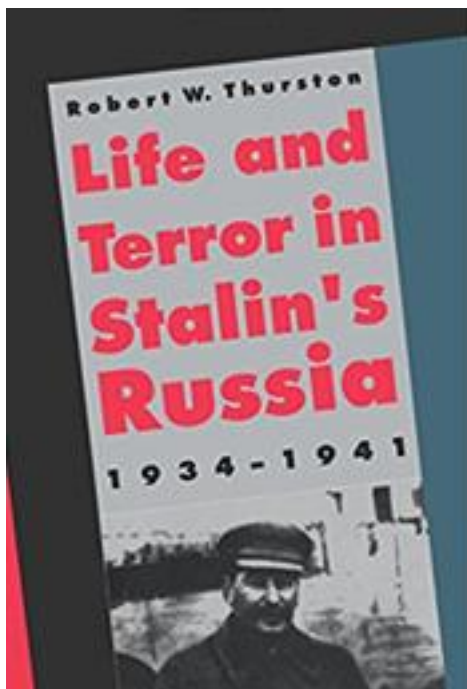


## Review

**Grover Furr**

Robert W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941*. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). \$30.00.



### Using History to Fight Anti-Communism

#### **Anti-Stalinism Hurts Workers, Builds Fascism**

Billions of workers all over the world are exploited, murdered, tortured, oppressed by capitalism. The greatest historical events in the twentieth century -- in fact, in all of human history -- have been the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of societies run by and for the working class in the two great communist revolutions in Russia and China.

The Russian Revolution was the first of them, blazing the trail for all revolutionaries to come. Its history -- its successes and failures -- are the essential textbook for all workers and others who recognize the need to get rid of exploitation and build a better world run by those who toil.

Naturally the world's capitalists do not want this learning process to happen! So the ruling class try to spread anti-Communist lies, the purpose of which is to demoralize potential revolutionaries and make us passive. These wrong ideas -- wrong both in the sense that they are incorrect AND in that they serve the exploiters' interests, not the interest of workers -- include racism, religion, sexism, and anti- communism.

The main form anti-communism has taken for the past several decades has been anti-Stalinism. If workers and others can be convinced that any attempt to build a communist society -- one based upon need, without exploitation, run by and for the working class -- will end up "as bad as or worse than" Nazi Germany, then we will never really make the attempt. This means we will be reduced to struggling only for reforms under capitalism. This reformism is ultimately acceptable to the capitalists since it leaves them in control forever.

A second way the bosses use anti-Stalinism is to justify fascist repression and murder of any workers' attempts to rebel against capitalism. After all, if "Stalinism" is "worse than Nazi Germany", and if any attempt to build communism can lead only to "Stalinism", then any and all repressive measures to suppress revolution are justified, including torture, mass murder, and fascism itself. This anti-communism has been the main justification for imperialist slaughter in the period since World War II, as indeed it had been for the Nazis' aggression and atrocities.

Because it is the main ideological form of anti-communism, fighting anti-Stalinism is therefore a vital, life-and-death issue for the world's workers -- for all of us. This review essay will show how a new (1996) book can be useful in doing just that, and it also outlines some of the limitations of that book.

### **Strengths of Thurston's Work**

Thurston's main points are as follows:

- The mass arrests and executions of 1936-38 in the USSR were not planned, but were panicked reactions to plots against the Soviet government.
- These events were not intended to, and did not in fact, spread "fear and terror" throughout the Soviet population, but rather were carried out against perceived enemies with the support and often the active participation of the Soviet population.
- They occurred at a time when the USSR was under enormous threat from hostile nations. (In addition, communists the world over were being imprisoned, tortured and murdered by capitalist regimes, though Thurston does not refer to these facts.)

-- The numbers imprisoned and executed were far less than the inflated estimates claimed by anti-Communist sources.

-- Rather than being cowed and demoralized by mass arrests and police activity, the growing Soviet industrial working class enjoyed an active voice inside the factories, encouraged by Soviet leaders to speak out about conditions in the plants and outside.

-- The "acid test" of whether the workers and peasants supported Soviet socialism or were alienated from and hostile to it came with the Nazi invasion. Thurston shows that the Soviet people determinedly repulsed this massive onslaught by rushing either to join the Red Army or the factories to increase military production, while the Red Army fought with a dedication, effectiveness and morale utterly unmatched by the best Western capitalist armies.

Thurston's introduction outlines what he calls the "standard version" (xiv) or "orthodox view" (xvi) of Stalin and the USSR in the '30s, invoking the name of Robert Conquest -- which he will then prove wrong. (Conquest, a former British Secret Service agent, is the foremost anti- communist liar about the Stalin years.) He also points out also how the present capitalist rulers of Russia have every motive to build anti-Stalinism.

This chapter also demonstrates that the Soviet legal system was evolving along recognizably capitalist lines in terms of its judicial process during the early '30s. On the one hand, this contradicts the view of the Cold Warriors that the USSR was "totalitarian", and this is Thurston's main point: that the USSR was becoming more "liberal", giving citizens protection against arbitrary police action, for example.

It reveals, however, how much the Bolsheviks relied on Western capitalist models, in the judicial system and elsewhere (education, culture, industry), for models of how to build a communist society. Here, the Bolsheviks' view of communism was, as we can see now in hindsight, in many respects a "reformed" version of capitalist relationships. Learning from the Bolsheviks' shortcomings as well as from their own experience, left forces within the Chinese Communist Party later challenged reliance on police and courts with reliance on the working class and poor peasants through political struggle, public trials, and an emphasis on self-criticism and being held accountable to the masses -- a process that eventually reached its high point during the Cultural Revolution before it was finally defeated.

Chapter Two disposes of some ancient anti-Communist lies. Thurston shows there's no evidence Stalin murdered either his second wife in 1932 or Politburo colleague Sergei Kirov in 1934. Both of these fairy-tales have been refuted by other scholars before Thurston but are still accepted without question as true by anti-Stalinists. Concerning the three big "Show Trials" of 1936-38, Thurston highlights the evidence that the basic charges against the defendants were in fact true. This was generally accepted even by keen Western observers at the time, like Joseph Davies, sent by President Roosevelt to

check out the Soviet government (see his book *Mission to Moscow*), and confirmed long ago too by staunch anti-Communist scholars like Robert V. Daniels (see his *Conscience of the Revolution*, 1960).

Thurston shows that there was "wrecking" -- industrial sabotage -- in the economy under Yuri Pyatakov, whose confession to this effect is also shown to have been voluntary, not coerced (46). Even the charges against Nikolai Bukharin, main defendant in the 1938 trial, are shown to have been true in the main, as documents from Bolshevik archives prove (35-42). Thurston also states that some accusations against the defendants were "fabrications", but he never gives any evidence to support this charge. In fact -- though Thurston does not discuss this -- it is quite likely that suspicions of "wrecking" were exaggerated by the recklessness built into the industrialization campaign, caused by the emphasis on "increasing productive forces" by sharpening wage differentials, privileges, and therefore class antagonisms: in short, by socialism, the mixture of communist and capitalist elements which communists since the days of Marxís Critique of the Gotha Program had believed was a necessary interim stage between capitalism and a classless society.

Finally, Chapter Two also reaffirms that the massive arrests did not take place until after the arrests and executions in June 1937 of the military commanders led by Marshal Tukhachevsky. Stalin and the Bolshevik leadership clearly believed there was a real conspiracy, and there's much, though not conclusive, evidence that such a conspiracy indeed existed. Chapter Three demonstrates that the Soviet government reacted in panic to the disclosure of such high-placed treason. There's no evidence at all that Stalin was out to "terrorize the country".

Nikolai Ezhov, the leader of the political police (or NKVD), was the person most directly responsible for the massive arrests and executions. Usually demonized by Cold-War historians, Ezhov was a long-time Communist with an honorable record, a worker since the age of 14, before being entrusted by the Politburo with the task of directly overseeing the repression of what all believed to be a massive counter-revolutionary plot.

Ezhov set high quotas for executions, which the police felt had to be met. There were many examples of police arresting and executing people either to "meet quotas" or from outright corruption. Recent research by Thurston's colleagues suggests that between six and seven hundred thousand persons were executed during 1937-38. (See the article by Getty, Rittersporn, and Zemskov in *American Historical Review*, October 1993).

A few comments are in order here. First, the concept of "quotas" for executions appears to come from Lenin's practice during the Civil War, although Thurston does not say so. After the Bolsheviks revolution privileged and propertied people throughout Russia opposed the Bolsheviks and Red Army, and White (anti-Communist) forces routinely executed Communists, workers who supported them, and all Jews. Under Lenin's urging the Bolsheviks would take hostages from among the upper classes, threatening to execute them if the Whites opposed them.

It should be clear that such "quotas for execution" were completely inappropriate in a situation in which the Bolsheviks held state power and could confine anyone suspected of anti-Communist activity until their cases could be investigated. Such executions, whether of the guilty or, as was inevitable, of the innocent as well, serve no mass political function, as would public trials, investigations, and a concept of justice based upon the direct participation of the working class -- an issue noted by Vyshinsky himself.

Anti-Communist "scholars" have repeatedly produced fantastically high figures for Soviet executions and jailings during the "purges". Thurston challenges those inflated numbers with strong archival evidence. On page 137 he explicitly states that the inflated estimates are too high. On page 11 Thurston has a chart showing there were 1,196,439 camp inmates in 1937, a slight decline from the previous year (this included criminals as well as those arrested for political crimes, but does not include prison inmates). For purposes of comparison, we should note that this is much smaller than the US prison population today! While it seems clear to us now that many of those prisoners charged with political crimes (104,826, or 12.8% of the total) were not in fact guilty, that prison population is a long way from the Cold-War anti-Communist "guesstimates" of between 7 and 15 million prisoners -- and some guess much higher still, 20 or 30 million!

Thurston shows there were, in fact, other real anti- Soviet plots in addition to the "Tukhachevsky Affair" (mass arrests and executions of military officers), including some spies within the NKVD itself. He also provides overwhelming evidence to show that the arrests targeted elite sectors -- managers, specialists, intellectuals, party officials, and not "workers or poor peasants, the favored children of the new regime" (76). Naturally communists should not support unjust accusations against anyone, regardless of their class background. What this fact shows is that socialism -- the continuation of capitalist relations of production and a capitalist notion of economic development -- involved the continuation of class antagonisms under somewhat different forms, class antagonisms that found expression in the mass arrests and executions.

Thurston puts these events squarely in the context of the aftermath of the extremely violent years of 1914-21 (the beginning of World War I to the end of the very bloody Civil War) and, more immediately, of the sharpening international situation of the late '30s, when Nazi Germany and all the imperialist countries were unmistakably bent upon surrounding and destroying the USSR.

However, even at that Thurston underplays the danger facing the Communist movement. On pages 34-5, he mentions the German reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936, unchallenged by the French who wanted Hitler to rearm, so as to pit him against the USSR. He mentions the start of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, but not the huge military support given to Franco, leader of the Spanish fascists, by Nazi German and fascist Italy, nor the phony "neutrality" of England, France, and the USA which cut the Spanish Republic off from international aid. He mentions fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in December 1935, unchallenged by the other imperialists, but never the Japanese fascists' seizure of Manchuria in 1931 or the Anti-Comintern Pact between Germany, Japan and Italy (1936-37), or the Japanese invasion of China (1937). Stalin

would later express the Soviet view that the other imperialists were encouraging the Germans to attack and destroy the Soviet union:

"They kept on urging the Germans to go farther and farther east: 'You just start a war against the Bolsheviks, and all will be well'" (quoted in Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, p. 39).

Also left out is the Nazi decimation of the German Communist Party, the largest in Europe, beginning in 1934. In 1936, when the Soviet "purges" began, German Communists were being tortured and murdered by the thousands in German concentration camps, and similar treatment was being meted out to Communists and workers in dozens of other capitalist lands -- as, in fact, it still is. Little wonder that the Soviets weren't prone to treat too kindly those it considered to be German spies and agents!

And Thurston repeats, time and again, what his sources show him: the Soviet government favored workers and poor peasants over all others in the population, while they were being exploited, killed, etc., in every other country in the world! Thurston's own evidence shows that the USSR was a "dictatorship of the working class".

Some police agencies treated evidence as very important, though many did not. Conditions in the labor and punishment camps, the so-called "Gulag", Thurston argues, were bearable both before and after the period 1937 to 1938, but very bad during this period, reflecting the fact that most police, and even prisoners, were convinced those arrested during this time were traitorous conspirators who deserved the worst treatment.

By January 1938, Thurston shows, complaints of unjustified repression were flooding the Central Committee, and the Plenum began to demand that expulsions from the Party be reviewed for unfairness. The next month Andrei Vyshinsky, formerly the head prosecutor at the "Show Trials", complained about conditions in the labor camps and demanded punishment of camp officials who permitted bad conditions. He also insisted that those who fabricated evidence be arrested. In fact a number of trials of such fabricators did take place this year and the next, often with great publicity.

The need to pay greater attention to physical evidence, as opposed to confession, was re-emphasized. By the middle of 1938 the great period of panic, mass arrests, and executions was over. Police procedures were regularized; conditions in the camps improved; many of those falsely arrested were released and exonerated. Trials of NKVD men who had tortured and framed people were held, and the NKVD purged of such people.

Certainly the Soviet state was justified in acting to arrest preemptively, in times of crisis, anyone suspected of treason. But there was no reason for executing people on the same flimsy basis; they could certainly have been imprisoned pending a serious review of their cases. Had this been done, many or most executions would not have taken place. What is more, well-publicized trials of those who were guilty, with evidence publicly

given, would have raised political consciousness, as did the Chinese Communist Party's public trials of landlords in the period after their seizure of power, in which peasants openly accused those who had exploited and murdered them.

Chapter Six, "Life in the Factories", shows that the Stakhanovite movement was, in fact, a mass movement which gave all workers the opportunity to gain recognition for improving production and technique, rather than a cynical way of "speeding-up" the workers, as it has been described by anti-Communists. Thurston argues that, in fact, Stakhanovism gave workers more power. Workers' views and criticisms were respected; supervisors and foremen ignored them at their peril.

But here too we see that "socialist" relations of production were basically a reformed version of capitalist relations of production. While acknowledging the communist, collective aspects of the Stakhanov movement, we can see in retrospect how it inevitably became associated with speed-up, given the retention of a wage system. Thurston's book neglects this aspect of the movement.

Thurston quotes some American workers who had also worked in the USSR as saying that conditions of work, and the atmosphere in the factories, were better for Soviet workers in the 1930s than for workers in the US (192). But he then undercuts their view - far more informed than his own -- in the next sentence, where he writes that "Soviet workers were hardly better off or freer than their American counterparts".

Ironically, he has already cited evidence on page 170 that at least some Soviet workers had shorter working hours than US workers. At the time, many people thought Soviet workers were, in fact, better off than were American workers. One of them was Walter Reuther, later the anti-Communist president of the United Auto Workers, who worked in a Soviet auto factory in the 1930s. In a passage not cited by Thurston, Reuther wrote home:

Here are no bosses to drive fear into the workers. No one to drive them in mad speed-ups. Here the workers are in control. Even the shop superintendent had no more right in these meetings than any other worker. I have witnessed many times already when the superintendent spoke too long. The workers in the hall decided he had already consumed enough time and the floor was given to a lathe hand to who told of his problems and offered suggestions. Imagine this at Ford or Briggs. This is what the outside world calls the "ruthless dictatorship in Russia". I tell you ... in all countries we have thus far been in we have never found such genuine proletarian democracy... (quoted from Phillip Bonosky, *Brother Bill McKie: Building the Union at Ford* [New York: International Publishers, 1953]).

Thurston says nothing about free medical care, cited in many studies of and novels about the Soviet Union in the 1930s. And much of his chapter shows how Soviet workers had a tremendous amount of input and right to criticize. Thurston also doesn't mention

that millions of US workers were unemployed in the '30s, while the Soviets had a labor shortage. He omits the fact that US workers trying to unionize for better conditions were being violently attacked, and often killed, by the police, the military, and employer-hired goons. Conditions for the working class in Europe generally were even worse, with fascist or virtually fascist regimes, all viciously anti-working class, in most countries.

The final chapter deals with the response of the Soviet population to World War II. Here too Thurston concludes that the Soviet regime retained much loyalty and enthusiasm among the population. Soviet soldiers fought against the Japanese in Mongolia with high morale in 1938, where their military leadership was excellent, and against Finland and then the German Wehrmacht in 1940 and 1941, where both political and military leadership was initially poor and led to larger casualties than necessary. In the opening days of WWII, the Red Army fought well, counterattacking against far superior Axis forces, often fighting to the last man, rarely surrendering unless surrounded or demoralized by huge casualties and a hopeless situation. German officers uniformly remarked that the Soviets fought far better than any Western army (215).

Civilian morale was generally high in June 1941, even in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland. The Polish fascist state had been racist towards Jews and Ukrainians in Eastern Poland, and therefore many of the Ukrainian population were supportive when the Soviets marched in, especially since the Soviets mainly repressed the enemies of the workers and peasants -- landowners, Polish officers, and police -- and did not collectivize the peasantry. But Ukrainian nationalists in Poland had already basically turned towards the Nazis, so many "Western" Ukrainians welcomed the Nazi invasion. German officers recognized that the Ukrainians in Soviet territory were very different, much more loyal to the USSR and often very hostile to the pro-Nazi West Ukrainians, as Thurston shows.

### **Shortcomings**

The research reported in this book because it will help to combat anti-communism and lies against Stalin and the USSR generally during his time. However, Thurston's work also suffers from serious shortcomings. First, while he combats many anti-Communist lies with good evidence, Thurston also makes many statements critical of the Bolsheviks without any evidence. There are many instances of this.

Even more serious are Thurston's historiographical shortcomings. Not a Marxist of any kind, Thurston frames his analysis entirely in bourgeois historical terms. Therefore, Thurston's book is valuable when, and only when, he bases his conclusions on primary source evidence. Even when he does, this evidence must be put into an historical materialist, scientific framework in order for important lessons to emerge clearly.

Like all the other works of the anti-Cold War researchers -- called "revisionists" or "Young Turks" -- who have helped to refute anti-Stalin and anti-Communist lies, this is a work of bourgeois history. These works of research take capitalism for granted, and so have a capitalist bias from the outset. Though they come up with important evidence, and often use it well, they do so from an academic perspective. They may refute egregious



Cold-War lies, but they never reject anti-communism, the fundamental premise of capitalist scholarship.

Most important for our purposes, the "revisionists" do not ask the questions which Marxists, and all those convinced that capitalism must be overthrown, need answers to: namely, What can we learn, positively and negatively, from the history of the USSR? What were the Bolsheviks' successes? Why did these dedicated communists fail?

Although it can't provide answers to the questions revolutionaries need to ask, Thurston's work, like those of other more objective, though bourgeois, researchers, can help us if we use them according to historical materialism, the scientific method of Marxism or communism.

After all, to learn the correct lessons, both positive and negative, from the Bolsheviks' experience, the history of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and why it eventually turned into its opposite, we need something in addition to the Marxist method of understanding history, or dialectical and historical materialism. We also need an accurate account of what, in fact, happened, not a farrago of anti-Communist lies and horror stories.

It is here, in refuting anti-Communist lies, as well as in discovering what did happen in reality, that Thurston's work, and that of other honest bourgeois historians, can be very helpful. Let me give two brief examples.

#### 1. Capitalist Relations and Class Antagonisms within the USSR:

Thurston shows time and again that those most likely to have been arrested and executed during the panic of 1937-38 were officials, leaders, managers, officers, and "higher-ups" in general. This fact shows that there was a considerable divorce between "leaders" and ordinary workers and other citizens. How could this be?

Marx recognized that "all history is the history of class struggle". The Bolsheviks believed that everything must be subordinated to the fight for industrialization and production. After the early '30s they used "material incentives" to reward workers and managers, developing large wage differentials and, therefore, differences in living standards among workers and between workers and managers, Party leaders and rank-and-file members, and in every other aspect of society. Believing too that productive technique was "class-neutral", they kept capitalist production relationships in the factories and capitalist relationships of hierarchy and inequality generally in society. Women still did all the housework as well as their jobs, putting real limits on the extent -- real, also -- to which sexism could be fought.

In short, social relationships in the USSR were "reformed" capitalist relationships more than they were truly communist egalitarian relationships. This had to give rise to new class antagonisms and create resistance to the disappearance of old ones.

Thurston's research can help us see that the mass arrests and executions of 1937-38, which were "concentrated among the country's elite" (232), reflected these class antagonisms at the same time Stalin and the Soviet leadership believed they had abolished class struggle. Without these capitalist relations the "panic" of the late '30s and, in fact, the future evolution of the Soviet Union towards, first, state capitalism and, as now, "free-market" capitalism, would not have been possible.

## 2. Elitist Relations within the Party:

In 1938 and thereafter specific cases of police corruption, neglect of evidence, frame-ups, and other negligence were publicized and those guilty punished. Many cases of rehabilitation, both of the living and of those unjustly executed, took place. Nevertheless the Bolshevik leadership under Stalin never really underwent a thorough, public self-critical review of how any injustice could have happened, in order to get to the bottom of it.

There is also the question of why people like Zinoviev, Bukharin and others were in important positions of power to begin with. They had demonstrated rotten politics for years. Zinoviev had quit the party in fear rather than take part in the October Revolution. Bukharin had lied many times -- Thurston documents this -- and had even plotted with the Socialist Revolutionaries against Lenin during the Civil War. (The S-R's then plotted to overthrow Lenin, and very likely tried to kill him.) They had been expelled from the Party.

What was the point of handing them major leadership posts? The Bolsheviks should have trained other members to do their jobs and not relied on these particular intellectuals. Perhaps the concept of a party of "professional revolutionaries", a "cadre" party -- Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and others had worked for the Party all their lives -- had not yet been entirely abandoned for the better concept of a mass party of the working class.

## **Conclusion: Fight Capitalist Lies**

Thurston's work is useful in debunking anti-Communist lies. And his work is only one of a growing body of what has been called "revisionist" research on the history of the USSR. These works use the same kind of bourgeois historical methodology, rules of evidence, logic, and documentation, commonly used in less contentious fields of history, but hardly ever in the study of the communist movement.

For the first time, an outline of the major events in the USSR during the Stalin years is beginning to emerge, although the anti-Communist "Cold Warriors" -- often joined by enthusiasts for Leon Trotsky -- are still actively spreading their lies and contesting every bit of research which contradicts their preconceived ideas, what is virtually a "Cold-War Party Line". This is exciting, and heady, material!

But it is for revolutionaries and workers of today to use research like Thurston's towards this end. Neither this work nor any others like it can provide the historical materialist framework without which human history will not reveal its truths.

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### **Revisionists' Research on Soviet History: A Brief Bibliographical Note**

(Note: It is a daunting task to keep abreast of the exciting research into the history of the Soviet Union during Stalin's leadership. The "revisionists", of which Thurston is a leading representative, have split the field of bourgeois Soviet history, and there is much animosity on both sides. In addition, it's very helpful to be able to read Russian, both in order to look at original sources, and to follow the research now being published in Russia that Getty is publishing there, for example. What follows is only a brief introduction.)

There are a number of strands in the "new" history of the Soviet Union during the Stalin years. The work of the late E. H. Carr, and of his successors at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Russian and East European Studies, led by R. W. Davies, and represented heavily in the journal *Soviet Studies* (since volume 45, 1993 retitled *Europe-Asia Studies*); the research of Jerry Hough, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Roberta Manning, the inspiration and, in some cases, the teachers of the younger "revisionists"; and the younger cohort themselves. I will concentrate on this third group.

The book under review is an excellent place to begin. But, to my mind, the first and groundbreaking work of this school is John Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge University Press, 1985). A much revised version of his Ph.D. dissertation at Boston College, 1979, under Roberta Manning, this work is fundamental. One has to read it to get a feel for how completely the "accepted" version (Conquest-Solzhenitsyn, et al. -- what Thurston calls the "standard version" or "orthodox view") of this period must be rejected, how completely dishonest their "scholarship", how poor their use of evidence. After Thurston, begin with Getty, and a careful reading of his footnotes.

The year after Getty's book was published, the revisionists achieved recognition as a distinct school within Soviet history with Sheila Fitzpatrick's article "New Perspectives on Stalinism", *The Russian Review* 45, 4 (October 1986), 357-373, which the editors published together with four criticisms by established Cold-War historians, and a reply by Fitzpatrick, "Afterword: Revisionism Revisited". A year later the same journal published *eleven* responses to Fitzpatrick's article, including five by the leading younger scholars (William Chase, J. Arch Getty, Hiroaki Kuromiya, Gábor Rittersporn, and Lynne Viola), two supportive articles (by Jerry Hough and Roberta Manning), and an explicit attack by Conquest.

Robert Conquest's voluminous work is the target, acknowledged or not, of much of the research on this period of Soviet history. Getty leads off his book with a brief exposé of Conquest's irresponsible methods (*Origins*, p. 5 and note 12, p.222). The work of Steven G. Wheatcroft on the size of Soviet forced labor camps and number of deaths has developed as a refutation of Conquest and those whose research resembles his, like Steven Rosefielde. This debate continues today, and was launched by Wheatcroft's article "On Assessing the Size of Forced Concentration Camp Labour in the Soviet Union, 1929-1956", *Soviet Studies* 33 (April, 1981), 265-95. Conquest's typically weak reply, with argument "from authority", is in *Soviet Studies* 34 (July 1982), 434-39.

Wheatcroft and Conquest continue to criticize each other's studies vigorously. For Wheatcroft's research, begin with what appears in *Europe-Asia Studies*. For example, in "The Scale and Nature of German and Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930-1945", *EAS* 48 (December 1996), 1319-1353, Wheatcroft attacks the facile, anti-Communist comparison of Stalin with Hitler. The abstract reads:

Repression and mass killings carried out by German and Soviet leaderships during the period 1930-45 differed in several respects. It appears that the German leader Adolf Hitler put to death at least five million innocent people mainly because of his antipathy towards Jews and communists. In contrast, Soviet leader Josef Stalin ordered the murder of some one million people because he apparently believed them to be guilty of crimes against the state. He was careful about documenting these executions whereas Hitler did not bother about making any pretence at legality.

A few other works which base themselves on recently-published Soviet archival documents and give the lie to Conquest-type horror-stories include: Nicolas Werth, "Goulag: Les Vrais Chiffres," *L'Histoire* no. 169 (Septembre, 1993), 38-51; J. Arch Getty, Gábor T. Rittersporn, and Viktor N. Zemskov, "Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-war Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence", *American Historical Review* 98 (December, 1993), 1017-49; R.W. Davies, "Forced Labour Under Stalin: The Archive Revelations", *New Left Review*, 214 (November-December 1995), 62-80.

Other works explicitly critical of Conquest include: Jeff Coplon, "In Search of a Soviet Holocaust: A 55-Year-Old Famine Feeds the Right", *Village Voice*, Jan. 12, 1988 (on the web at <http://chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/vv.html>). Coplon interviewed many of the foremost historians of the USSR, including many "Cold Warriors" as well as some "revisionists"; all rejected Conquest's phony research on the Ukrainian famine, *Harvest of Sorrow* (Oxford, 1986), incidentally showing how Conquest was paid by Ukrainian nationalist groups which had collaborated with the Nazis.

Thurston was, I think, the first and (to date) the only historian of the Soviet Union to dare to attack Conquest in an academic journal: see Thurston, "On Desk-Bound

Parochialism, Commonsense Perspectives, and Lousy Evidence: A Reply to Robert Conquest", *Slavic Review* 45 (Summer 1986), 238-244.

A six-part series exposing the Nazi origins of the Ukrainian famine myth while remaining critical of Soviet actions from a communist viewpoint, can be found at the Progressive Labor Party website at [http://www.plp.org/cd\\_sup/ukfam1.html](http://www.plp.org/cd_sup/ukfam1.html); read its notes for scholarly references to that time. Another PLP series, this time in four parts, of *Stalin*, the PBS television series, and the accompanying book *Stalin: A Time for Judgment*, by Jonathan Lewis and Phillip Whitehead (New York: Pantheon, 1990), begins at [http://www.plp.org/cd\\_sup/pbsstall.html](http://www.plp.org/cd_sup/pbsstall.html). These articles contain yet more references to "revisionist" scholarship, and end with a brief bibliography of suggested further readings, at <http://www.plp.org/books/biblio.html>. An appreciative but critical review of Getty's Ph.D. dissertation, the basis of his 1985 book, is at [http://www.plp.org/pl\\_magazine/purges.html](http://www.plp.org/pl_magazine/purges.html).

This should be enough for anyone interested in studying the latest critiques of the Cold-War lies about Stalin and Bolshevik history, the wars within the field of Soviet history, and the best results of bourgeois historiography, to sink their teeth into.

Finally: there is an important theoretical issue which I deal with briefly towards the end of my review, and which is not apparent in any of the social-historical and empirical research of the past twenty years or so. That question is: How can the method of dialectical and historical materialism be brought to bear on the "facts" as we are coming to know them, in order to draw valid conclusions from the Bolsheviks' successes and errors, so that future communists may build upon the past without repeating its mistakes?

These works can help us learn something about what *did* happen, and help us refute anti-Communist lies. But the task of learning from the past to build towards a communist future is up to us.