

Introduction

Dictators, Their Enemies, and Repression

THIS BOOK TELLS HOW the Stalin regime dealt with its enemies: how it spied on, arrested, sentenced, and deported them, forced them to labor in its Gulag, and executed them. Unlike some short-lived regimes, the Soviet Union existed for three-quarters of a century. It endured for a quarter-century in its most extreme form, coinciding with Stalin's rule from his rise to power until his death in March 1953. With the opening of its state and party archives in the 1990s, the Soviet Union became history's best-documented totalitarian system. There is no better source for the study the interplay of dictatorship and repression. The system of repression was in place well before Stalin's one-man rule, but it was Stalin who applied this system with more force and brutality than his predecessors likely could have anticipated. That repression preceded Stalin is a significant fact that decouples it, to a degree, from the personality of Stalin, but he looms large in this study.

HOW AND WHY?

This book is about the “punitive organs” (*karatel'nye organy*, or simply “organs”) and their state security agents, which, through various names changes, were called (in chronological order): the VChK (Cheka), OGPU, NKVD, MVD, and finally the KGB.¹ During their peak activity

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(1937–1938), these punitive organs employed, according to official definitions and statistics, 270,730 persons.² We tell how these punitive organs were organized, who worked in them from the highest party officials to the lowest concentration camp guard, how their victims were chosen and punished, and what motivated their repressors. In a word, we explain the “working arrangements” of state security, or how these “organs” functioned.

Just as we study the working arrangements of Soviet enterprises, ministries, and state committees to understand the Soviet economy, so we must study the agencies of state security and their subdivisions to understand the role of terror and repression in the Soviet dictatorship. Most prominently, we must focus on how Stalin managed his secret police, how the system itself was organized, and how state security officials operated. But we must consider as well how repressive organs worked under Lenin and the “collective” rule prior to Stalin’s victory in the power struggle, for the key pillars of repression were already in place under Lenin.

A deeper question is why the Soviet dictatorship, from the first days of Bolshevik power to its last days in late 1991, required more extensive and pervasive state security than other political systems. Insofar as the power and activity of state security organs peaked during the Stalin years, we must pay special attention to Stalin’s use of state security—what did he wish to extract from them and was he successful?

In writing about Soviet repression, the highest priority should go to penetrating the shield of secrecy around the “organs” directly tasked with repression—the Cheka, OGPU, NKVD, and MVD. Although other agencies were involved in state security, such as the prosecutor’s office, the courts, the civil police, and the military, they played subsidiary roles. To understand Nazi repression, it is necessary to know the workings of the Gestapo and SS. To comprehend Soviet repression, we must understand its primary “organs” of state security.

There is already a considerable archival literature on the Gulag administration,³ but we still lack a comprehensive document-based account of its superior organization.⁴ Robert Conquest (writing in 1985) noted: “It is a curious fact that, after nearly a half century, no real examination of the role of the NKVD . . . has been written” despite the fact that “the story of the NKVD in its period of maximum impact is of great moment.”⁵ The lack of such a study has been explained by closed

archives. In the 1980s, it was even difficult to determine major personnel changes within the KGB, much less how it worked or how its policies were changing. The most serious scholarly attempts were severely limited,⁶ although relatively comprehensive accounts of the Cheka in the Civil War period of 1918–1921 could be constructed from published sources.⁷ The main state security records were cloistered in the archives of the KGB and after the breakup of the USSR in those of the Federal Security Service (FSB). There are now enough chinks in this armor to write such an account.

STATES AND THEIR POLITICAL ENEMIES

All regimes have political enemies. Modern democracies must deal with domestic and foreign enemies, and this threat is magnified during periods of war or major international crisis. The United States took harsh action against suspected German and Japanese spies during World War II, government officials who had belonged to the Communist Party were removed from office in the 1950s, extensive antiterrorism measures were undertaken in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, and there were even rare cases of small-scale state action against presumed extremist groups (Waco, Ruby Ridge). Postwar Germany had to deal with a small group of radical urban terrorists (the Red Army Faction) in the 1970s, with the threat of infiltration by East German agents throughout the Cold War, and in the present with Neo-Nazi groups. National intelligence services from the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Germany, Pakistan, and some Middle Eastern countries cooperate against international terrorism.

In democracies, the battle against political enemies is conducted not by the regular police or military but by special police and intelligence agencies, such as the agencies under the U.S. Director of National Intelligence (the FBI, the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and others); the Federal Information Service (BND) and the Federal and State Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV and LfV) in Germany; or the Mossad and Aman Military Intelligence in Israel. Such agencies that protect against political enemies typically are granted wider powers and operate under less restrictive rules than their police counterparts.

Totalitarian regimes also combat political enemies with special polic-

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ing organizations, but their approach to state security differs from that of democracies for a number of reasons.

First, democracies are more inclined to impose judicial or parliamentary oversight, whereas in a totalitarian state, state security is only answerable to the dictator.

Second, totalitarian regimes use broader definitions of what constitutes a political enemy. Accordingly, state security must deal with a larger number of state enemies, committing political “crimes” that would not be regarded as such elsewhere.

Third, whereas in democratic societies, there are administrative layers between state security and the chief executive, in totalitarian regimes, state security is a direct agent of the dictator.

Fourth, the methods applied against political enemies are less restricted in a totalitarian system by legal constraints, such as the need for judicial review, disavowal of torture, or rules of evidence.

Indeed, the archives confirm that these four fundamentals were firmly entrenched by the early 1920s, well before Stalin’s dictatorship. The first Cheka minister, Feliks Dzerzhinsky, referred to the Cheka as the party’s disciplined “warrior.”⁸ Even the highest party inspectorate could not monitor secret Cheka expenditures, and citizen complaints about illegal Chekist actions were turned over to its own presidium.⁹ The Cheka disciplined its own and was directly answerable to the party and to no one else.

The decree of November 15, 1923 that founded the OGPU stated as its goals “the massing of the revolutionary forces of the republic in the battle against political and economic counterrevolution, espionage, and banditry.”¹⁰ Unlike other state security services, the OGPU’s mandate covered both political and economic crimes, including some that appeared quite ordinary (such as banditry).

The Red Terror decree of September 1918 gave Cheka officers extraordinary powers, such as summary execution without a court proceeding. The 1923 OGPU decree “About Extraordinary Measures for the Defense of the Revolution” gave it the power to declare a state of emergency.¹¹ Soviet state security was not to be impeded by legal rules, but could use “simplified procedures” when it felt these to be necessary.

These features, as summarized by the editors of a major documentary series on state security, meant that “the real meaning of a central institution of state security was always broader than the function of a secret

police. It was oriented towards the resolution by extraordinary methods of a whole series of current political or economic tasks.”¹²

Soviet punitive organs, at times, combined interior ministry functions, such as civil policing, border control, and fire services, as well as (the object of this inquiry) state security, such as counterintelligence, codes, foreign intelligence, and protection of state and party leaders. They housed sinister subdivisions, or “main administrations” (*glavks*), which symbolized their excesses, such as Gulag (Main Administration of Camps); GUGB (Main Administration of State Security), later to become an independent ministry; and GUKR (Main Administration of Counterintelligence) or Smersh (“Death to Spies”). During those periods when the state punitive organs combined interior ministry and state security functions, they had more employees than any other state agency, but their core consisted of a much smaller number of party “warriors” who investigated, arrested, and punished enemies of the state under the direct orders of the supreme authority.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF REPRESSION

This book is not a political history. Rather, it is a political-economic analysis of two interrelated issues: the role of state security in a communist, or Stalinist, state, and the manner in which the communist, or Stalinist, state organized and motivated state security to carry out its tasks in an effective manner. We study how and why the party, as represented by Lenin, the Politburo, or Stalin alone, used state security to achieve its objectives. Our political-economic analysis assumes that the dictator’s goals are well defined and that he organizes, utilizes, and motivates state security to achieve these goals.

Following the tradition of past studies of “working arrangements” of Soviet enterprises, we study Soviet state security agencies to understand their inner workings. Industrial ministries and their subordinated enterprises produced steel, grain, and machinery for the dictator. The OGPU, NKVD, and MVD produced another product for the dictator—repression.

Repression in Soviet parlance connoted punishment of persons who commit acts against the “worker and peasant” state. It was not a term applied to ordinary murderers, rapists, or armed robbers.¹³ The most severe repression was reserved for those who “threaten the Soviet or-

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der.” *Terror* denoted extreme repression in terms of numbers of victims and brutality, applied to specific groups, such as Polish or German nationals or kulaks.

Principals and Agents

To apply a political economy approach to this subject, we must divide state security actors into principals (the ones issuing orders) and agents (the ones fulfilling orders). The underlying assumption is that “rational” actors on both sides make cost-benefit calculations based on self-interest. The actors in our state security drama are the “dictator” and his state security agents. The dictator’s enemies close the circle.

Dictator. The dictator is in theory the “dictatorship of the proletariat” as represented by the Communist Party. Insofar as the party, as represented by its Politburo or, more broadly, the Central Committee (both under Stalin’s control after 1930), automatically represented the working class, its enemy was an enemy of the people by definition. As Lenin declared: “Dictatorship of the proletariat is not possible other than through the Communist Party,” and: “There is dictatorship of one party. We stand on this and cannot move from this foundation.” Old Bolshevik Grigory Zinoviev expressed the same principle: “We should not be ashamed of what does not need to be concealed. Dictatorship of the party is that instrument we cannot refuse.” And Stalin even more succinctly: “The party is the class.”¹⁴

The party was the direct representative of workers and peasants; by definition, therefore, any enemy of the party, especially of its supreme leader, was an enemy of the worker-peasant state. As stated by Stalin in a letter to a trusted deputy (V. M. Molotov): the party, “occupied with the magnificent creation of socialism, . . . leads the proletariat into new battles, fighting against class enemies.”¹⁵ No one was allowed to ask whether Stalin was leading in the right direction.

“Dictator” hence refers to the person (Lenin, Stalin) or group of persons (the Politburo or the Central Committee) that made the key policy and personnel decisions of the country. Lenin, until his incapacitation, was the key decision maker for the party, although he appeared to accept input and debate from other top party leaders. In 1920, Lenin’s Politburo consisted of five full members and three candidate members. The Central Committee had nineteen full members (including all Polit-

buro members) and twelve candidate members. After Lenin's departure from the political scene, party decisions were dominated by troikas or majorities of Politburo members, whose most important decisions were, on occasion, ratified by the Central Committee. In 1926, the Politburo had nine full members and five candidate members, while the Central Committee had expanded to fifty-two full members and thirty-four candidate members.¹⁶ After Stalin's consolidation of power, the 1934 Politburo had ten full members and five candidate members, while the Central Committee burgeoned to seventy-one full members and sixty-eight candidate members.¹⁷ Insofar as the power of the Politburo had been largely emasculated, the "dictatorship" of these years would have been Stalin and his inner circle.

Agents. The agents were *Chekists* or *Chekist-operational workers*—the "warriors" who carried out the battle "against distortions of the party line" on behalf of the dictator.¹⁸ Chekists were distinguished from the military or police by their application of brutal force and their use of summary justice. Their broad mandate extended from suppression of foreign and domestic enemies to matters of economics. One party directive would call for a purge of Mensheviks in Azerbaijan,¹⁹ while another would order the protection of state supplies of precious metals "by experienced Chekist-operational workers."²⁰ When the party needed a special task carried out, be it political or economic, it turned to its Chekists.

In a multilayer organization, agents of the highest principal are principals to their agents, who are principals for their subordinates, and so on down the administrative chain. The Minister of State Security would be the direct agent of the dictator, his department heads would be his agents, and their section heads would be agents of department heads. The sequence of links between the top and the bottom is called the agency chain.

Enemies. The dictator's enemies are those who the dictator determines pose in some way a threat to political and economic stability. The early Bolsheviks first focused on enemies from the old regime, such as landlords, clergy, members of banned parties, and specialists. As time passed, Stalin's list expanded to party members who did not support his policies "in their hearts," the unemployed and homeless, minor criminals, slackers, gossips, and other "marginal elements" who did not meet the standards of the "new socialist man." During the Great Terror

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Stalin's enemies became the Communist elite who failed to meet his standards and needed to be replaced.

Stalin's list of enemies constituted a disparate group, but the majority of them were treated as political enemies, even if their offenses appeared divorced from politics. If Stalin had limited himself to those actively seeking to remove him from office or to undermine socialism, his enemies would have been few in number. As it was, of the 4.8 million arrested by the OGPU or NKVD between 1921 and 1938, 3.3 million were charged with counterrevolutionary crimes.²¹ The overwhelming majority of these were charged under Article 58 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code "On Counterrevolution."

We must be perfectly clear about the meaning of "enemies." An enemy is anyone who falls under the dictator's definition of enemy, whether or not outside observers would agree that that person in some way poses a threat. With this semantic approach, persons are "innocent" if they do not meet the dictator's definition of enemy. Therefore, it is conceptually possible to divide Stalin's victims into "guilty" or "innocent." An innocent victim would be one repressed by state security who failed to meet any of the dictator's criteria of enemy. Accordingly, a former Menshevik, even one trying his best to support the Soviet regime, was an enemy, A common worker caught up in a sweep to meet repression quotas would have been innocent.

The principal-agent problem. A "rational" dictator would wish to organize state security so as to avoid principal-agent problems; that is, instances where his agents act contrary to his interests. Principal-agent problems arise when agents have different goals or objectives from the principal and possess more information than the principal, which allows them to conceal from him their opportunistic behavior. Simple theory, therefore, suggests that the Soviet dictator could minimize principal-agent problems by choosing agents who shared his goals, by rewarding agents who carrying out his orders faithfully, and by monitoring agents closely to detect opportunism.

The dictator must also settle on an organizational structure for state security that limits opportunistic behavior. Organizing state security should be less complicated than organizing production. State security produces one basic product—arrests and convictions of state enemies, while an economy produces hundreds of thousands or millions of products and requires a more complicated structure. Simple logic suggests

that the dictator would opt for a state security administration with as few links as possible—a “short” agency chain. In the economy, the administrative distance between Stalin and an enterprise manager was great, with a planning commission, a minister, and a branch administration standing in between. In this case, Stalin’s ability to exercise tight control over plant managers was weak. Presumably, in the crucial matter of defending against hostile forces, Stalin would have wanted to minimize the administrative distance between himself and the actual executors of repression.

Rationality

Rational choice theory rests upon three assertions: that people are not driven but choose; that their choices are in conformity with their preferences; and that “when a person chooses to incur a cost that could otherwise be avoided, there must be some expected benefit . . . that is equal to or greater than the cost.”²² Soviet enterprise managers were “rational” when they hoarded inputs, distorted output mixes, or reduced quality; they were simply responding to the incentives and punishments of the planned system. The rationality assumption, as applied to repression and state security, claims that the actors—the dictator, Chekists, and enemies of the state—made cost-benefit calculations in conformity with their preferences. Their behavior was the outcome of weighing costs and benefits of alternative actions.

Stalin’s state security agents may have been perfectly rational in arresting innocent parties, fabricating confessions, hiring flawed associates, or competing with each other for increases in execution “limits.” They, like their economic counterparts, were simply weighing costs and benefits of their actions in the framework of prevailing incentives and punishments.

Stalin’s execution, imprisonment, and deportation of millions of Soviet citizens have been interpreted in different ways. Some attribute his actions to paranoia or even worse forms of mental illness.²³ Others argue that, for Stalin, whose formative years were spent in the violent Caucasus, terror was “business as usual.”²⁴ Stalin chose repression because he knew of no other options. Yet others interpret Stalin’s repressions as the logical acts of a rational totalitarian dictator, designed to maximize political power and economic achievements.²⁵

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The assumption of rationality places logical priority on motivations that are general, such as “Stalin killed a million people in 1937 because he believed this would ensure his regime” over those that are idiosyncratic (“Stalin killed a million people in 1937 because of a quirk in his personality”).²⁶ Although both interpretations may be true in some sense, the possibility of generalization offered by rational choice allows us to apply one historical experience to a broad range of applications. Most importantly, rational choice allows us to “test” the hypothesis that Stalin and his repression agents were rational by examining whether his repression policies and the actions taken by his loyalists in executing them were consistent with the behavior of a dictator who has well defined goals (such as remaining in power or economic growth) and of agents who wish to keep their jobs, be rewarded, and avoid repression themselves.

Rationality versus Reason and Morality

In political economy, “rational” does not denote “having reason or understanding.” Rather it means taking actions that optimize stated objectives or goals, moral or immoral. Altruists are rational when they organize their resources effectively to distribute goods to the poor. They are irrational if they foolhardily use expensive intermediaries who divert excessive amounts of donated funds to their own pockets. Bank robbers are rational when they design and execute clever plans that allow them to steal large amounts of cash with a low probability of being caught. They are irrational if they enter a bank with no plan of escape. The suicide bombers of the World Trade Center will have been rational if their actions raise the chances of spreading radical Muslim ideology. In these instances, rationality is judged in terms of goals, in one case laudable, in the second case, criminal, and in the third case barbaric. A dictator whose goal is the accumulation of total power in his own hands may be rational in executing rivals or imprisoning huge numbers of his citizens; he is irrational if these policies increase the likelihood of overthrow. The rationality of behavior is judged simply by whether it is designed *ex ante* to promote goals in an effective and efficient manner. The goals themselves, no matter how extreme or unpalatable, are not the subject of assessment. Nor does rational choice claim the dictator’s actions will always lead to the desired result *ex post*. Dictators, like others, can make mistakes.

Rationality is by no means to be confused with morality. Stalin's arrests of the wives and relatives of his closest associates—often taken as a proof of his extreme paranoia and savagery—were morally repugnant and sadistic. However, for a dictator who must be assured of the absolute loyalty of his closest subordinates, their continuing loyal service after the arrests of those closest to them was the ultimate test.

Among others, Stalin arrested the wives of his loyal deputy, V. M. Molotov, of his personal secretary, A. N. Poskrebyshev, and of his titular head of state, Mikhail Kalinin. The impending arrest of Nikolai Yezhov's wife was thwarted by her suicide in November 1938 using poisons supplied by Yezhov himself, who in his own confession declared: "I was afraid that after her arrest she would tell all."²⁷ Stalin arrested the brother of his industrial czar, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, and the impending arrest of Lazar Kaganovich's brother was also thwarted by his suicide.

All, except the fiery Ordzhonikidze, passed the test by agreeing to the repression.²⁸ Molotov at first refused to vote for his wife's arrest, but belatedly gave in: "I acknowledge my heavy sense of remorse for not having prevented Zhemchuzhina [Molotov's wife], a person dear to me, from making mistakes and from forming ties with anti-Soviet Jewish nationalists . . ."²⁹ Kaganovich did not take one step to defend his brother, stating that it was a "matter for competent authorities."³⁰ Both Molotov and Kaganovich lived to an advanced age and remained staunch supporters of Stalin until they died. Stalin's bizarre loyalty test may have made some sense after all.

THE MODEL

If a dictator's actions are "rational" in the above sense, his behavior can be modeled. Modeling means that we can formulate theories or propositions about how any dictator in such circumstances will behave, such as creating rules that promote excessive zeal or adopting distinctive recruiting practices to ensure loyalty. Models of dictators offer a powerful tool to generalize about dictatorial behavior, as they can be applied to different times and places.

It is extremely important for the reader to understand that we do not believe that such modeling will capture all or even most of reality. The model may explain 20 to 40 percent; the rest is explained by chance, initial conditions, or historical accidents. What we are testing is whether the model explains a portion of reality in a systematic and consistent

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fashion that can be applied in other settings, which are themselves affected by different factors of chance and preconditions. In the language of statistics, we are not testing whether our model produces a good fit; that would be a difficult task. Rather we are testing whether the variables in our model are statistically significant.

There is a young but rich literature on the theory of dictatorship produced by economists and political scientists.³¹ We use a series of models found in this literature to capture the specific phenomenon observed, such as the recruitment of Chekists, the organization of state security, and motivation and rewards. We begin with one model, Wintrobe's political exchange analysis of authoritarian dictatorship. Wintrobe defines such dictatorships as involving "massive government intervention into the economic and social lives of the citizenry, motivated by utopian goals of one kind or another and exemplified by communist dictatorships, Nazi Germany, and possibly contemporary Iran."³² It is a model of political exchange because the dictator offers the citizenry goods, such as roads, hospitals, schools, food, cars, vacations, and privileges to specific persons or groups, typically in the form of rents. By "rents" we mean offering something at less than its market value and perhaps even at no charge. Such transactions constitute political exchange because the dictator expects political benefits in return.

Political exchanges are costly to the dictator; providing goods to citizens consumes the dictator's limited resources and rents could have gone to other purposes. The dictator uses political exchange to achieve benefits, which, as a first approximation, we assume to be political power. Such power ensures the dictator's authority and protects him from rivals. The dictator produces "power" by combining loyalty and repression. The more loyalty or repression, the greater his power.³³

The dictator may wish to accumulate enough power to just stay in office, or he may want to maximize power—for him there can never be too much. But a dictator cannot produce infinite power, for four reasons.

First, insofar as resources must be expended in political exchanges to purchase loyalty and to pay for repression, the dictator will be limited by his budget constraint—his tax base, broadly defined.

Second, the dictator may have other goals besides political power. He may wish a luxurious lifestyle for himself and his immediate circle, or he may need a surplus for investment. An economy without investment will not grow, which limits the future resources of the dictator.

Third, the amount of loyalty “supplied” by the population may have an upper limit, which is dictated by the interaction with repression. At low levels of repression, citizens and special groups satisfied with the dictator’s provision of goods or rents are content to offer their support and loyalty. However, as repression increases and applies to broader segments of the population, some former loyalists will fear that they themselves could be repressed, especially given that the dictator may have trouble distinguishing loyalists from enemies. At high levels of repression, loyalty is maximized, and the dictator cannot expand power beyond that point.

Fourth, the dictator may not be able to expand repression beyond some limit over the short run. It takes time to recruit and train Chekists. If he orders an immediate doubling or tripling of repression, it may take time to expand state security’s capacity. Until that happens, he is limited in the amount of repression he can apply.

The Power-Maximizing Dictator

We begin with a model of authoritarian dictatorship that ignores the first, second and fourth constraints (which are considered in later chapters). In this variant, the dictator wishes to maximize power subject only to an upper limit on loyalty. In this variant, the dictator can expand repression at will. We illustrate with a diagram in Appendix 1 that can be skipped (by those who dislike such tools) without loss of continuity. The text adequately describes how the model works.

In this case, the dictator increases his power by expanding both repression and loyalty. At first, loyalty continues to expand with repression, but then expands at a diminishing rate as citizens worry about being repressed themselves or conclude that widening repression is unfair. Eventually, at high rates of repression, loyalty reaches a peak. If repression is expanded further, loyalty will actually decline. The power-maximizing dictator chooses that combination of loyalty and repression which yields the greatest amount of power. If the dictator expands repression beyond that point, the ensuing loss of loyalty will cause his power to decline.

Predictions about dictatorial behavior can be extracted even from this simplest model of dictatorial behavior: It suggests that the dictator may try to relax the constraint on power through policies that exogenously increase loyalty, such as propaganda, a successful economic program,

or the allocation of more goods to the citizenry. Also the power-maximizing dictator might try to expand power by improvements in the “efficiency” of power generation; that is, by finding ways to generate more power from the same combinations of repression and loyalty.

The most important prediction of the basic model is that the dictator must perform a fine balancing act to maximize power. Maximum power is achieved at those values of loyalty and repression where loyalty has actually begun to erode. If from this point the dictator allows the repression to get out of control—in a frenzy of agent enthusiasm—he risks a significant loss of power that can threaten his regime.

The ability of the model to generate predictions about dictatorial behavior expands as it is made richer by adding new considerations. Each addition to the model, however, adds complications, which will be dealt with in future chapters.

THE STYLIZED FACTS OF SOVIET/STALINIST REPRESSION

With relatively few historical examples, it is difficult to “prove” any model of repression; rather we can only show it to be consistent with the most important historical facts, often called “stylized facts.” As an example, we show immediately below that one stylized fact of repression from Lenin to Stalin was its cyclicity—that it came in ebbs and flows. The task therefore is to determine whether our political economy model of repression predicts or explains this cyclicity or whether a more likely explanation lies outside the model. If the model fails to explain the most important stylized facts of repression, it must be discarded. We could only “prove” the model if we had a large enough number of historical examples to employ formal statistical testing. As it stands, we can only operate at a much lower level of “proof”; namely, consistency with the observed stylized facts.

We use modeling to explain a number of stylized outcomes—among others, the huge numbers of victims of political repression, many apparently posing no real threat, its cyclicity, the equation of economic crimes to political crimes, and the harsh treatment of political crimes, including widespread use of capital punishment. We use modeling also to explain the dictator’s interactions with state security subordinates, such as patterns of hiring and firing, recruitment, and rewards and punishments, and the behavior of Chekists as they responded to the dicta-

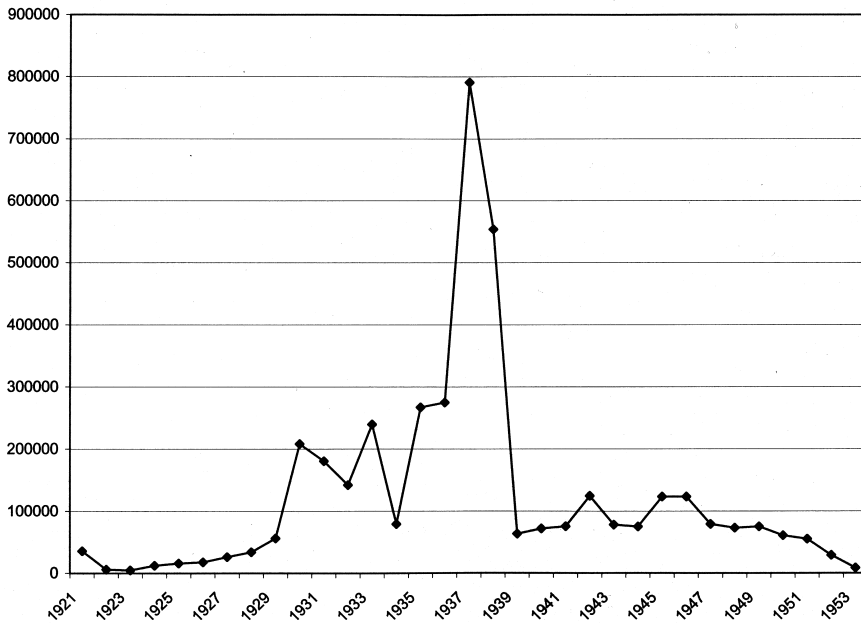


Figure I.1. Total Number of Persons Convicted by OGPU, NKVD, MVD Extrajudicial Tribunals, 1921–1953. Source: These figures were compiled in 1953 by the head of the First Special Department (Colonel Pavlov of the MVD) in a report entitled “Report of the Special Department of the MVD USSR about the Numbers Arrested and Convicted by the VChK-OGPU-NKVD-MGB SSSR, 1930–1953.” A portion of Pavlov’s figures is cited in N. Vert and S. V. Mironenko, eds., *Massovye Repressii v SSSR, Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga*, ed. V. P. Kozlov (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), pp. 608–609. The figures for the period 1921 to 1929 are from Pavlov, “Report about the Numbers of Those Sentenced According to Cases of Organs of the NKVD,” December 11, 1953; GARF, Fond 9401, op. 1, del. 4157, l. 205.

tor’s rules of the game. We also consider the rational behavior of victims. What actions could they take to avoid repression?

Stylized Fact No. 1: Cyclicality of Repression

Figure I.1 gives the total number of *extrajudicial* convictions, executions, Gulag sentences, and deportations for *counterrevolutionary offenses* levied by *OGPU-NKVD-MVD tribunals* between 1921 and Stalin’s death in 1953. These figures were prepared by the MVD itself shortly after Stalin’s death and use the dictator’s own definition of polit-