

# **Redefining Stalinism**

**Edited by and Harold Shukman**



# **REDEFINING STALINISM**

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*Editor*

Harold Shukman



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# 1

## **Introduction**

HAROLD SHUKMAN

Is there a Western world leader whose reputation has not been reanalysed and reassessed, usually to his or her detriment? How many societies have their histories carved immutably in stone? The strenuous efforts Stalin made to create an appropriate life story for himself, and the histories of the CPSU and the USSR that were written under his direct supervision to serve the aims of the Stalinist Communist Party and State, were all doomed to an ephemeral existence. However great the political persona of a leader or monumental the trappings of his regime, they are both intrinsically subject to interpretation and reinterpretation. Indeed, the greater the dimensions of the exertion involved in achieving greatness of either, the more certain the reassessment. And this applies fully to Stalin and his regime. Valuable writings on different aspects of Soviet life and politics emerged in the West almost as soon as Soviet Russia came into being, but it was the Second World War, the emergence of the USSR as a major international force after it, and above all the Cold War, that boosted Soviet studies in the West from their once marginal status to a more central position in area studies, political science and international history. Whatever differences of interpretation may have divided Sovietologists in the West, their analyses were continuous, dynamic and broadly well informed. Such freedom of intellectual activity had long ago been wrested from Soviet scholars by a state which gave them in exchange a conditional and precarious right to work and survive. An unhindered approach to the study of their own past had to wait until the last years of the old regime and the first of the new.

In the years after 1917 and before Lenin's death, Stalin managed, actively and passively, to acquire positions in the administration that gave him a wider and firmer grasp on authority than any other Bolshevik. His claim to be Lenin's heir, therefore, was already likely to succeed, despite Lenin's own misgivings, as expressed in his famous—and in the end futile



—‘Testament’. But to be accepted by the Party and the population as Lenin’s heir, Stalin felt he must secure an acceptable version of his life story. As a former Caucasian bandit who had taken part in bank robberies to enrich Bolshevik funds; as an underground revolutionary organiser who had escaped from prison and Siberian exile too many times not to arouse the suspicion that he might have been favoured by the secret police for some unknown reason; but above all as a provincial from what today would be termed a disadvantaged background who had parachuted into the upper ranks of the pre-revolutionary Bolshevik milieu thanks only to Lenin’s calculating patronage, and who had felt uncomfortable in the presence of more brilliant writers and speakers, Stalin was especially determined to be accepted as a Marxist-Leninist theorist.

Soon after Lenin’s death Stalin gave a series of lectures on the late leader’s ideas which were published as *Foundations of Leninism*, in practice setting himself up as an authoritative source of Party ideology. From this he would go on to consolidate his position as the Party’s ideologist-in-chief. Inexorably, as the government—itself managed by the Party—wrestled both to administer the vast country and to carry out the fundamental changes that would justify and fructify the seizure of power in 1917, Stalin’s word emerged as paramount.

Cautious by nature, Stalin launched his life story as a revolutionary in the mid-1920s, before his cult took off and with what would soon emerge as unaccustomed modesty. To a gathering of Georgian workers, he described his early role in the movement as an apprentice in Georgia, going on to journeyman status in the cosmopolitan oil city of Baku, then being sent by the Party to the revolutionary engine-room of Petrograd as a master-worker. The imagery was well chosen for an audience of workers, and it was not exaggerated, especially when compared to the fawning accounts by the Party hacks who were already portraying him as a hero second only to Lenin. The account he authorised both for Party members and the wider public appeared, also in the mid-1920s, in the biographical supplement of the *Granat Encyclopedic Dictionary*, entitled ‘Activists of the USSR and the October Revolution’ (in Russian). Beginning with his activities as a local committee organiser in the Caucasus, through the years of his work as an organiser at the centre and, crucially, a writer in the Party press, a major figure in the planning and execution of the seizure of power in October 1917 and the successful conduct of the Civil War, this was an important opportunity to portray Stalin as Lenin’s most diligent lieutenant, and Stalin took it.

Alongside the growth of his power as General Secretary, official doctrine was transformed from Leninism into Leninism-Stalinism; instead of just Lenin, a Siamese-twin figure emerged called LeninStalin; the theoretically separate Party and State would be elided into an entity called Party-State; and the General Secretary of the Party would come into single focus as the Father of the Soviet Peoples. These sleights of hand to a great extent reflected the reality that Stalin created: there would be no Leninism without its Stalinist interpretation, no Lenin-in-history without the attached Stalin, no State without the controlling Party function, and no nation without its omnipotent Leader.

In 1938, having just liquidated some half-a-million Communist Party functionaries and arrested 44,000 Red Army officers (15,000 of them were shot), got rid of huge swathes of the secret service, and launched a bloody assault on virtually every sector of economic and cultural life, Stalin published his *History of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Short Course*. With almost every one of the 1917 and Civil War generation of leaders liquidated (and impatiently awaiting news—still two years away—that his order for the assassination of Trotsky, his arch-enemy, had been carried out), he felt no need to mention any other individuals as creators of the revolution and builders of socialism, other than Lenin and Stalin: the Orwellian era of ‘unpeopled history’ had arrived. Printed in 43 million copies and broadcast to the whole population, the *Short Course* became an essential teaching aid, written as it was in Stalin’s simple style and easily understood arguments—a precursor of Mao’s *Little Red Book*. Along with the many other rituals promoting and consolidating his personal cult, the catalogue of dogma, typified by the *Short Course*, paradoxically exercised a degree of stabilisation and unification in a country where purge and terror wrought widespread distrust and fragmentation. Hitler, among many others, believed that the USSR had been so weakened by the purges that all that was required to conquer the country was ‘to kick down the front door’. Faith in the Leader, in his omnipotence and infallibility, however, proved to be a serviceable substitute for civil society, let alone socialist democracy, and the country remained in one piece.

It may be argued—and often was by internal and external critics alike—that the country’s economic and social achievements were accomplished *in spite* and not because of the system. Another way of putting this might be to suggest that, while the regime’s central aim was resolutely to pursue the totalitarian principle of state control, all instrumental agencies manifested a degree of autonomous behaviour, usually in the form of evasion or local

initiative, that demonstrated native creativity and in effect the failure of the state's own goals. A graphic example of this phenomenon were the 'fixers' who lubricated the economic machinery of the post-Stalin era by illicit if tacitly acknowledged methods. Of even greater significance, once Khrushchev had undone the Stalin myth, those who had borne responsibility under Stalin, and with it the constant threat of sanction, were able to function as officials and managers with authority uncompromised by fear. The universal application of these new arrangements became the hallmark of the Brezhnev era. The 'great stagnation' might well be seen as the introduction of a kind of Stalin-inspired 'civil society', complete with the rule of law (albeit in distorted form), a high degree of stability, relative plenty, a more or less predictable political environment, and more responsible organs of power/rule. This is at least arguable.

The all-pervasive nature of Stalin's cult and the ideological rigidity of the Stalinist state prohibited any unsanctioned reinterpretations. Before the Second World War the justification for such control was found in the need to prepare the USSR for war with the capitalist powers, usually personified by Hitlerite Germany, imperialist Britain and expansionist Japan. After the Second World War, when the Soviet Union itself emerged as a world power with satellites in Eastern Europe, the ideological and military confrontation that was the Cold War provided more than enough reason for inoculating the Soviet people against any West-inspired notions of intellectual or academic independence, and with it the inevitable corollary of political and economic pluralism. The deepening sclerosis of the closed regime, whose political and social pathology had manifested itself at its inception, seemed like a symptom of Stalin's own advancing mental and physical decrepitude.

And yet Stalin had presided over—and, it should not be forgotten, to a great extent personally inspired—the development of the Soviet Union from a basically peasant society into an industrialised, urbanised society, in which the population enjoyed the benefits—however minimal—of social services that many in the West, during the years of the Great Depression, could envy. That Stalin achieved such progress at an enormous cost in human life, widespread terror, and a police regime of unprecedented scale and scope, is not denied, even by those who still cherish his memory. When he died the entire population—outside the Gulag—wept, feeling that their lives and everything that happened in the country were connected to Stalin, and that the future had now become uncertain. (Journalists in Moscow in March 2003 reported

that on the fiftieth anniversary of his death, old Muscovites loudly proclaimed that Stalin had given them jobs and food and clothing: 'Who cares about the purges? We were never hungry'.) Nor should it be forgotten that the very harshness of a system whose hallmark could be said to boil down to coercion, was seen by wide sections of the Soviet population at the time as both necessary and good. Above all, for all Russian generations during and since the war, Stalin stands virtually alone as the man who defeated armies and won the war for the Allies. And it is Stalin who is credited with turning the USSR into a nuclear superpower strong enough to challenge the United States and keep his country safe throughout the Cold War.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to find a of more extreme reevaluation of a leader and his society's political history than that of Stalin and the Stalinist system. Within a very short time of his death, the 'of personality' was largely dismantled by his successors and his criminal abuse of the Party exposed, though the task of reassessing the system as a whole was left to a later generation. And as the regime lost the will to survive in the late Russian historians, with unprecedented access to State and Party archives, began examining almost every aspect of Soviet history, unblinkered by political correctness and (for the most unhindered by official sanction.

Sovietology in the West has long been characterised by a dichotomy between those, on the one hand, who interpret the Stalinist system in terms of totalitarianism, meaning the ambition of the Party/State to control every aspect of human endeavour, and, on the other, 'revisionists' who point instead to the many signs of autonomous or unsupervised behaviour—throughout all of Soviet history—as evidence that the totalitarian model is inaccurate and inappropriate. With the opening of Soviet archives to an unprecedented degree since the demise of the USSR, the totalitarian argument has been strengthened by the research of Russian historians. But at the same time, the 'revisionists' can now display with growing authority widespread examples of the autonomy and resistance that belie the idea of total control. The dichotomy therefore can now be seen as both valid and an exaggeration.

## **Stalinism and the Soviet State Order**

ROBERT SERVICE

Stalinism is a vague term. When not being employed as a pejorative description of all things Soviet, it is used as a shorthand way of designating official ideas, policies and practices in the Soviet Union in the long period of Joseph Stalin's rule. This usage conventionally emphasises the peculiarities of those years. Countless books have appeared on the malignant personality of Stalin; indeed some authors have suggested that the peculiarities of governance between the late 1920s and 1953 can be traced predominantly to the paranoid, vengeful and conspiratorial mentality of the Party General Secretary. This has not been the opinion of all writers. Yet most works on the 1930s and 1940s concur in stressing that the Soviet state order under Stalin was importantly different from the forms it took both before and after his despotism. Examples abound. Under Stalin it was normal procedure to arrest, torture and kill millions of persons who had not broken the law or spoken against the state order. Under Stalin, too, central political life lacked broad consultation. Under Stalin, institutions were locked in perpetual rivalry with each other and his individual will shaped the outcome of most supreme affairs of state.

According to such an analysis, these phenomena contrasted with what came before and what came afterwards. Vladimir Lenin was never a personal despot; he led the Politburo and the Central Committee by persuasion and even by bad-tempered cajoling, but not by fear. Moreover, he placed the Party unequivocally at the apex of the political process. There was no ambiguity about which institution headed the Soviet state order. State terror was practised in Lenin's time—and not only in the years of the Civil War. In any case, the rampant barbarities of the Great Terror of 1937–38 were not constant while Lenin was yet alive. Similarly, the Communist leadership lost its features of personal despotism after Stalin's death in 1953. The winner of the succession struggle, Nikita Khrushchev, certainly came to dominate the politics of the

USSR; but he and his associates continued to debate the great affairs of state. The Party was re-installed at the apex of political life even though from the late 1950s he lessened the Party's tutelage over governmental institutions. Khrushchev also significantly reduced the number of Gulag inmates.

And yet there always existed interpretations which tended in the opposite direction. Several authors argued that the continuities of the Soviet state order were more important than the discontinuities. From the early years of the October Revolution, several constant features were already evident. A one-party dictatorship was a reality within months of the Communist seizure of power. Freedom of expression was being severely restricted even before the establishment of the preventive censorship authority Glavlit in 1922. Arbitrary application of legal norms was openly professed from October 1917. Nor did the Communists hide the fact that they regarded society as a human mass to be indoctrinated, mobilised and, if circumstances appeared appropriate, sacrificed for the good of the cause. Among such interpretations there were many disputes. Some writers resorted to 'totalitarianism' as a model or ideal type which best described the Soviet state order. Other designations included communist autocracy, bureaucratic socialism, state socialism and a deformed workers' state. Still other historians confined themselves to describing the phenomena without feeling constrained to opt for a specific term. But common to many exponents of each terminology was the idea that the history of the USSR displayed basic continuities.<sup>1</sup>

There is really no need to choose definitively between the notion that Stalin's rule had its peculiarities and the notion that the entire Soviet period displayed basic continuities. Stalin's rule had peculiarities and the Soviet period had continuities. What is more, some of the peculiarities were not only an expression of Stalin's unique personality and inclinations, but also a reaction to problems inherent in the basic continuities which pre-dated his rule. This becomes clear when a searchlight is shone on the extraordinary difficulties encountered by successive rulers, from Lenin to Gorbachev, in their efforts at political and economic reform in the USSR. Soviet history, from the origins of the state in the October 1917 Revolution to the collapse at the end of 1991, abounds in such efforts. The word 'reform' was seldom used. Yet although it was anathematised in the Communist lexicon as a phenomenon characteristic of a bourgeois-democratic order, the introduction of reforming measures was a frequent phenomenon in the USSR. This recurrence invites explanation. The obligation

arises to account not only for the motives for successive reforms, but also for the failure of each reform to satisfy the ascendant party leadership. Why were reforms undertaken and why were they undertaken so frequently?

The answers tell us much about the motivations and nature of Stalinism and demand that we should start with an analysis of the early Soviet order. The fundamentals of this order were cemented into position in the first year-and-a-half after the October Revolution. By March 1919, when the Party held its 8th Congress, the Communists ruled a one-party state. Their Party was organised on centralist principles with a commitment to hierarchy and discipline; it was essentially the supreme agency of state and relayed its directives and appointed its personnel to the government and all other public institutions.<sup>2</sup> Control over the mass media was tight and the beginnings of a one-ideology state were being realised. At the same time the Party, while issuing decrees, was negligent about the rule of law. The Communist dictatorship's survival took precedence over judicial procedure. Policestate methods were inaugurated; a legal nihilism prevailed. Meanwhile the state acted on the premise that it had the political right and ideological duty to command, indoctrinate and mobilise society for the ends prescribed by the ascendant Party leadership. The Soviet order was the basic form of state and society for the next seven decades. Invented under Lenin, it lasted until the final couple of years of Mikhail Gorbachev's general secretaryship.

This is not to say that absolutely every brick in the fundamentals had been laid by 1919. Rival parties continued to exist, however frailly and fitfully, in open politics. The Mensheviks contested some elections to the Soviets in the Civil War, and the show-trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries did not occur until 1922. The Soviet state was not strictly a one-party state until these parties had been eliminated. Similarly it took until 1922 for a comprehensive censorship, Glavlit, to be established.<sup>3</sup> Until then, the Communist authorities had relied on sporadic intervention by the Cheka and on the vetting of authors by government-owned publishing houses which discouraged approaches from writers overtly hostile to the October Revolution.<sup>4</sup> Not even all judicial institutions were immediately subverted by Communist rule. And the administrative framework of Communist power in the Civil War was shaky in the extreme. The Kremlin leadership concentrated its resources on the conscription and deployment of Red Army soldiers and the extraction of food supplies from the countryside; the mobilisation of society for more complex tasks of 'socialist construction' were to a large extent postponed until peacetime—

and even in the 1920s this was an ambition fraught with technical and social difficulties.

All this notwithstanding, the months from 1917 to March 1919 are reasonably designated as the period when the fundamentals of the Soviet order were introduced and consolidated. Stalin did not need to invent that order from the late 1920s. As a member of Lenin's Politburo, he took part in building the order without being its main political figure; and he observed the recurrent difficulties which arose in the Civil War. But it was years after Lenin's death before he decisively moulded most official policies in the USSR.<sup>5</sup>

Thus Stalin was not the initiator of the reform decided by the Politburo in February 1921 and approved by the 10th Party Congress in March. This was Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP). Its main feature involved concessions to private enterprise and tightening of political control inside and outside the Party. The NEP lasted less than seven years and was subject to internal revision for its entire duration. Despite facilitating economic recovery, it failed to convince many Communist leaders about its long-term prospects of ensuring rapid economic development, solving political and national problems and achieving a socialist society. In January 1928 Stalin pounced while investigating food-supply deficits in the Urals and western Siberia. A second great reform was imposed by him, and the resultant trauma was immense. Forced-rate industrialisation; forcible agricultural collectivisation; political terror in town and village; the extension of Party and governmental dominance over virtually the entire economy: such were the features of Stalin's rejection of the NEP. They are not usually mentioned as a project of reform. But if the analysis is accepted that the features were formulated within the framework of the existing state order, the description is apt. While emasculating much of 'Lenin's legacy', Stalin was trying in his own way to conserve and strengthen it.

More generally, Stalin was striving to energise and stabilise the whole Soviet order. Things did not work out as intended, and—after various attempts to rectify problems as he understood them—Stalin geared up the machinery of state terror. Among his developing purposes was the reduction of the Party's capacity to impede his despotic power and, more generally, to rid politics of the informal methods of obstruction.<sup>6</sup> The bloody mass purges of 1937–38 were the result. Stalin's despotism was confirmed, but the informal methods proved hard to eradicate; and Stalin subsequently limited himself to occasional attacks on particular groups in public and social life.<sup>7</sup> Whether he was planning a second Great Terror in 1953 is still unclear. Probably a terror of



some kind was in the offing, but he went to his death keeping his precise plans, if such they were, close to his chest. Be that as it may, it is evident that the reform of the late 1930s had failed to eliminate some of the underlying problems Stalin had identified. In the last years of his rule, he opted for a conservative consolidation of his institutional re-arrangements; he felt compelled to accept that the Soviet order imposed restriction on even him as a despot to transform state and society.

In subsequent years, the Communist Party leadership undertook measures to gouge out the cement of such arrangements in various sectors. The Party was re-elevated to the apex of the Soviet state. Arbitrary state violence was abandoned (although there was no effort to install genuine constitutionalism and the rule of law). Greater attention was paid to the needs of Soviet consumers. The boundaries of public discussion were widened. Eventually, at Khrushchev's behest, several institutional re-modellings were undertaken. Regional Economic Councils (*Sovnarkhozy*) were established. The Party was bifurcated. Turnover of Party and governmental personnel was deep and frequent.<sup>8</sup>

This process of reforms was accomplished within the framework of the Soviet order inaugurated in 1917–19. But Khrushchev was dismissed in 1964, and his successor, Leonid Brezhnev, tried to sedate Party and government by means of a policy of 'stability of cadres'. Tighter controls over political and cultural criticism were introduced. Partial reforms for the economy were announced by Alexei Kosygin, but then dropped because they derogated from the Party's authority. Brezhnev's measures led to the quietening of politics; but although a reversion to Stalinism was not seriously contemplated, the project of making the post-1953 regime operate merely by removing the Khrushchevite idiosyncrasies was unsuccessful: a large number of profound political, social, economic and national difficulties accumulated.

Finally in 1985 a reform programme was initiated which went still further than Khrushchev. Gorbachev, elaborating his policies as he went along, introduced ever-wider freedom of expression. He installed electoral competition in the Party and, in 1989, reorganised the state through the Congress of People's Deputies. A year earlier, there had been reforms in the economy permitting a degree of private enterprise. This reform was so drastic that it shattered the linkages of the entire Soviet order. The USSR, placed under recurrent strain, collapsed more with a whimper than with a bang in December 1991.

Campaigns for large-scale reform recurred across the existence of the Soviet Union, and the question arises why they were undertaken so frequently. One possible answer lies in the importance of the supreme leaders. Lenin in 1921 argued, plausibly, that the regime would fall without the inception of a NEP. But for Lenin, it is doubtful that the reform would have been accepted at that time by the Party.<sup>9</sup> Likewise there can be little doubt but that the Great Terror of 1937–38 was largely the product of the personal choice and determination of Stalin. It was he who started it and he who brought it to an end. With Khrushchev the case is a strong one that several reforms after 1953 were affected by his preferences. And it would be difficult to deny Gorbachev his essential importance in the introduction of reformcommunist measures in the 1980s. Rival politicians would never have ruled the state in those periods in exactly the same way if they had been in power.

This kind of explanation has much merit. But it would be foolish to overlook the significant pressure exerted by contemporary circumstances. In 1921 a peasant revolt in Tambov, paralleled in an increasing number of regions, lit up reality for the Politburo. Refusal to abandon forcible grain expropriations would have the likely consequence of the collapse of Communist power.<sup>10</sup>

In 1928 there was also an enormously difficult environment for the regime. War scares; the moderate pace of industrial growth; the rise in social and nationalist hostility: all these factors had an impact on policy-makers. And in 1937 the regime was confronted by a wave of resentment at its policies over the previous few years; there was also the widespread sense that the country needed to prepare itself for the outbreak of a European war.<sup>11</sup> After Stalin's death, moreover, there was a growing crisis in the Communist leadership's desire to 'normalise' political life, raise economic output and avoid a further deterioration in relations with the US. Always the policy-makers acted against the background of immense problems. After Gorbachev acceded to power, he talked of 'pre-crisis' phenomena in state and society. The Party had lost all verve. The economy was in the doldrums. Regional and national embitterment had grown. The rivalry between the USSR and the US remained dangerous.

Thus successive reforms were not provoked exclusively by the whim of rulers. In fact, the rulers were usually responding to a specific internal and external environment and were developing measures to tackle it. The historiography of reform has attracted many works based on the premise that each period can be understood separately. For some scholars, for example, the Lenin

of 1917 was entirely different from the Lenin of 1921—and different again from the Lenin of 1922.<sup>12</sup> Equally popular has been the insistence that Leninism and Stalinism are completely dissimilar modes and theories of revolutionary practice. Khrushchev's attack on Stalin has been widely interpreted as a comprehensive programme of 'de-Stalinisation'. In short, several outstanding works of Sovietology have taken it as axiomatic that a particular period is best studied as a discrete entity.

This is indeed a productive mode of investigation. The history of the Soviet Union offers a remarkably compressed sequence of important stages, each of which contrasts in various ways with the others. Without sensitivity to each period's uniqueness there can be no convincing evaluation. Reforms make sense only when the inherited problems they were meant to solve are put under investigation.

Yet often the pre-occupation with a given period has excessively reduced attention to the chronic problems. From beginning to end, in fact, the Soviet order was put under strain by them. The problems existed quite independently of period, environment or leader. From Lenin to Gorbachev, the Politburo had difficulties in obtaining the approval of most citizens. Marxism-Leninism was constantly a minority taste.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the Politburo was always aware that the administrative stratum in all public institutions—and Soviet communism was essentially an administrative form of politics and economics—was corrupt and untrustworthy. Central and indeed local rulers could never rely on the information coming to them from below. Disobedience of directives, even if it took a passive form, was permanent. The Politburo could not even be sure of the reliability and talent of the administrators it directly appointed, and such uncertainty pervaded the whole administrative system.

These were internal problems. But the USSR also existed in a hostile world from which, as its rulers always recognised, it needed to attract technology and political support as well as to borrow ideas. The problem existed of how to do this while insulating administrators and society in general from the corrosive effects of contact with the blandishments of capitalism, religion and rival political creeds to communism.

It is through this prism, too, that the successive reforms of the Soviet order need to be examined. The methods used by the rulers were remarkably similar across the decades. The basic problems were permanent and, because of the constraints of the one-party dictatorship, the attempted solutions were akin to each other. Purges did not start with Stalin. They began with the expulsion of

undesirables from the Party in 1918.<sup>14</sup> The process continued through the 1920s, and the criteria for purges included political as well as social and moral qualities. The difference in the late 1930s was that an individual's expulsion from Party or government involved denunciation as an enemy of the people and either execution or dispatch to the Gulag. Purges became peaceful again after 1953—and they were designated differently: exchange of Party cards was the favourite term. But purging by whatever name it was known remained a recurrent practice of the Soviet order.

Another method was ideological invocation. Lenin called for 'European Socialist Revolution', Stalin for 'Socialism in One Country', Khrushchev for a 'Return to Lenin'. In each case, the summons was sounded for people to aid the state in building the new economy and society within a framework of political consensus maintained by the one-party dictatorship. Not material self-interest but political commitment and ideological belief were proclaimed as the reason for rallying behind the Communist leadership. Even in the lethargic years of Brezhnev the regime laid claim to an ideology superior to anything provided abroad. Under Gorbachev the people of the Soviet Union were—at least initially—told that Marxism-Leninism constituted an indispensable key to the door of a better state and society.

Then there were all the experiments with industrial forms. Exasperated by an unreliable state administration, Lenin introduced the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (*Rabkrin*), and his Testament stipulated the desirability of re-jigging the inter-relationships of higher Party bodies. Later, in the 1930s, Stalin reduced the powers of the Party in favour of governmental agencies.<sup>15</sup> But he never quite settled the relations between Party and government—and several further reorganisations took place before 1953. Yet the master of institutional tinkering was Khrushchev. His establishment of *sovnarkhozy* and his bifurcation of the Party were examples. So, too, was his fiddling with the rules for holding Central Committee plenums. Even Brezhnev was not averse to rearranging the institutional forms of governmental oversight of the economy. And scarcely a month passed in the late 1980s without some initiative from Gorbachev for changes in the structure of state power.

Two further methods deserve consideration. One is the tendency of the Soviet state to effect change by the launching of 'campaigns'. Typically this was done by announcing a particular policy as the current official priority. From the Civil War through to the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* this enabled the Kremlin to identify matters that lower administrators were obliged to