



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Helda

Introduction : On Soviet Intellectual Culture during the Stalin Era

Viljanen, Elina

2022-11-25

Viljanen, E & Oittinen, V 2022, Introduction : On Soviet Intellectual Culture during the Stalin Era. in V Oittinen & E Viljanen (eds), Stalin era Intellectuals : Culture and Stalinism. Studies in Contemporary Russia, Routledge, London, pp. 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003219835-1>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/565606>
10.4324/9781003219835-1

cc_by_nc_nd
publishedVersion

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.

This is an electronic reprint of the original article.

This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Please cite the original version.

Stalin Era Intellectuals

Culture and Stalinism

Edited by
Vesa Oittinen and Elina Viljanen

First published in 2023

ISBN: 978-1-032-11420-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-11421-7 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-21983-5 (ebk)

Chapter 1

Introduction

On Soviet Intellectual Culture during the
Stalin Era

Elina Viljanen and Vesa Oittinen

CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

DOI: 10.4324/9781003219835-1

The funder for this chapter is University of Helsinki.



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

1 Introduction

On Soviet Intellectual Culture during the Stalin Era

Elina Viljanen and Vesa Oittinen

This book contains analyses of social, intellectual and cultural phenomena in the Soviet Union during what has been called the epoch of ‘Stalinism’, a period that lasted from the late 1920s until the early 1950s. Due to its many abnormalities and excesses, the period when Stalin was in power has always posited specific methodological problems for scholars.¹ During the Cold War (1947–1991), the debate on ‘Stalinism’ was highly politicised. Internationally, the term came to signify all the things that were wrong with the Soviet regime. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political imperative became less pressing (Gill, 1998, p. viii). Despite this, the received picture of Soviet culture in general and of Stalin era culture in particular has yet to be fully disentangled from the political and historical narratives of the Cold War epoch, especially with respect to the persistent traits of totalitarianism theory in defining Stalinism.

Finishing this book within the context of the international crisis prompted by the Russian military invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 (as a continuation of Russia’s efforts to annex Crimea and of the Russo-East Ukrainian War that started in 2014) shows quite strikingly the weighty legacy of the Iron Curtain in current public opinion about Russia and ‘the West’. In fact, it makes one wonder whether the commitment by ‘post–Cold War’ scholars to revisit Soviet history and deconstruct cultural myths by analysing the various political narratives underlying them ever caught the attention of the media and general public. The prominent historian in the field of Stalin era historiography, Sheila Fitzpatrick (2007, p. 79), made a similar comment about the nature of the revisionist ‘triumph’ over the totalitarian school in interpreting Soviet history in the 1980s in the United States: ‘it was a story of changing perspectives within the discipline, almost totally disconnected from the public and media opinions of the topic’.

Amidst the shock of the Russian attack on Ukraine, where we are at the moment, the revival of not only a militaristic and political but also cultural division between Russia and ‘the West’ has been rapid and socially powerful. Scientific cooperation with Russian universities has been put on hold. Russian cultural performances and practices have been reconsidered or cancelled as Western cultural organisers have penalised Russian cultural figures and products for their service as Putin’s soft power tool.² This all hints that the ongoing war in Ukraine will not end in an armistice, and its roots extend much further

into history. As a mental state, as a political and cultural production, wars and their effects tend to last for many generations. Not just Stalinism, but also the Cold War were just such kinds of ‘wars’.

What makes our book on the era of Stalinism topical is not so much the nature and function of the current Russian regime, its so-called ‘Putinism’, a term that scholars nowadays use to describe the populist, kleptocratic and conservative autocracy of Putin, which political scientist Vladimir Gelman has described as ‘personalist authoritarianism’ (Gelman, 2022); we, instead, focus on the intellectual life under difficult political conditions. Putin’s regime has surely been more tolerant of the crimes of Stalinism in its patriotic history politics (Sherlock, 2016, p. 2), and both a cultural historical and contemporary political logic exist behind Russia’s dualistic commemoration of Stalin in general.³ Putin’s strategic cultivation of Stalin as a war leader and the persistent memory politics of increasingly pompous celebrations of Stalin’s triumphs over the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War (the Second World War) have enjoyed much popularity in recent years, which serves Putin’s own political goals (President of Russia, 19.6.2020; Kangaspuro, 2021, pp. 177–188). The conclusion that a kind of ‘Stalinist totalitarianism’ would again be on the rise in Russia is tempting, but in the long run such speculation is not very productive since the whole concept of totalitarianism, whether applied to Stalin or Hitler, is a disputed concept (see *Meduza* 17.3.2022). Actually, surveys do not provide any evidence to back the claim of a rebirth of a Stalinist cult or that a positive perception of Stalin has increased in a statistically significant fashion during Putin’s presidency (see Kangaspuro, 2021, p. 188).

In this introductory chapter, we would like to nevertheless draw one parallel between the regimes of Putin and Stalin. The patriotic methods of Putin’s ‘cultural statecraft’ are reminiscent of Stalin in the way he acknowledges the autonomy of culture to a certain extent while still parasitising it through institutionalised, state-funded patriarchal and patriotic productions, thus creating the impression that the culture and society itself bear his name. ‘Cultural statecraft’ is a relatively new concept; a critical synthesis that draws from Erik Carr’s classic tripartite view of cultural, economic and military aspects of power, David Baldwin’s concept of ‘economic statecraft’ and Joseph Nye’s concept of ‘soft power’ (see Forsberg and Smith 2016; Forsberg and Mäkinen, 2022, p. 3). Cultural statecraft can be defined as a way of coordinating and organising the skills of political agency in the form of a state organ and its actors as seeking to direct national cultural resources and the general theoretical and practical know-how of culture for political gain. As an analytical term, though, it does not account for the role, motivations and meanings of cultural actors outside the political sphere (see Viljanen, 2022, p. 142). Our book focuses in part on the logic, motivation, strategies and content of the intellectual work done by cultural actors, which certainly counted at the time when Stalin gradually negotiated his power over culture and society. Our book addresses not only the politically ‘positive’ dissident intellectual productions that opposed Stalinism and went ‘underground’, but also the more neutral intellectual productions in the field of the humanities, which tried to further the critical ethos of cultural modernisation and yet remained part of a non-persecuted intellectual culture

during the Stalin era. The simple notion of ‘culture of the Stalin era’ informs our argument that the dominant revisionist interpretations of ‘culture and society under Stalinism’ are still coloured too much by an overall totalitarian reading.

That said, our approach to Stalinism stems from the analyses, data and methodological experience of the previous ‘schools’ of thought, but we find the concept of culture far too complex an issue to be subordinated to any of the major previous models of Stalinism as such. When assessing Stalin era culture, it is more fruitful to analyse the methodologies of interaction between the fields of culture (here, cultural actors) and politics (Stalinism) and the results of their complex interplay. In this book, we focus mostly on the humanities.

Thus, the topicality of our book lies much more in our focus on questions that concern how the intellectual society functioned and what it produced given the circumstances of dictatorship, state violence, political propaganda, censorship and ideological blackmail. As our subtitle *Culture and Stalinism* suggests, all chapters are tangential to Stalin’s politics, but neither Stalin nor the history of the richly theorised term ‘Stalinism’ are our main objects as such. The authors of the book focus on Soviet scholars and cultural theoreticians during the Stalin era from a methodological perspective that distinguishes between Stalinism and culture, an outlook that forms one of the common threads of the book. This chapter focuses on the theoretical grounding of this approach.

Stalinist Culture and Culture in the Stalin Era

Sarah Davies and James Harris write in *Stalin: A New History* (2005, p. 1) that ‘[a]lthough Stalin certainly did not single-handedly determine everything about the set of policies, practices, and ideas, we have come to call Stalinism, it is now indisputable that in many respects his influence was decisive’. It is pertinent to ask, what was the cultural methodology of Stalin’s statecraft since it has led historians to keep on repeating rather totalising societal and cultural definitions of his power?

Various generational, intellectual, ideological, cultural–political and linguistic shifts took place at the turn of the so-called ‘Great Break’ (*velikiy perelom*, 1928–1931), a term coined by Stalin at the beginning of a phase that Fitzpatrick in 1978 termed the beginning of ‘Stalin’s Cultural Revolution’. The mainstream understanding among scholars of the cultural originality of Stalinism is based on Fitzpatrick’s concept, which she argues was founded on rapid and comprehensive social reorganisation led from above.⁴ Aiming to build socialism in the shortest possible time, the given period witnessed the end of the NEP era as the whole urban economy, including trade, was taken over by the state and became subject to centralised planning. It was also a time of collectivisation in the agricultural sector and the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan (1928–1932), intended to direct the more wide-ranging industrialisation of the country (Fitzpatrick, 2015, p. 43). The culture of the Great Break became marked by a vigorous call to root out ‘class enemies’ of socialism at home and abroad. The Soviet regime, Party activists and the *Komsomol*⁵ (The Communist Youth League) wanted to ensure

that the conciliatory policies of the NEP would no longer be tolerated (Fitzpatrick, 2015, pp. 43–44). Scholars have argued that a new working class was thus gradually created.⁶

For good reason, some historians believe that the term cultural revolution is problematic when applied to Stalin's 'Great Break' (see David-Fox, 2015, p. 11). Even if many changes took place within the framework of the Five-Year Plan, the Great Break was mostly a political and ideological fabrication by Stalin and his inner circle, a strategy that was meant to direct the multi-voiced culture of revolutionary Russia in a more unilateral direction.

The concept of Stalinism was born in relation to Stalin's assuming greater dictatorial administrative power, with the noun *stalinist* and the adjective *stalinskiy* increasingly being used in Russian to designate crucial societal plans ('Stalin's Five-Year Plan' or 'Stalin's constitution' (*stalinskaya konstitutsiya*) (see Boffa, 1992, pp. 1–2). Associated with his 'cult of personality', the concept contributed to a symbolic elevation of one person above all others. Stalin, as Jan Plamper claims, was surrounded by a 'sacrality', a notion that does justice, in sociologist terms, to both the pre-modern and modern elements of the Stalin cult (2012, pp. xv–xvi). The personality cult was not about Stalin as an authoritarian ruler; it created a much more powerful image of Stalin as an embodiment of a 'linear Marxist force of history'.⁷

According to Dobrenko and Clark's (2007) revisionist view, the Stalinist state was organised as a quasi-theocracy and culture played a major role in how such changes were implemented. Consequently, the Soviet government dedicated itself to implementing the principal tenets of a belief system premised on the sanctity of the state. Culture became an important tool for the government as it sought different arguments to justify its right to rule. The process of legitimation required refined techniques for manipulating mass consciousness, and culture played a crucial role in this process (Clark, et al. 2007, p. xii). Later, Clark continued this analysis by stating that in the 1930s, culture and especially literature became the Soviet secular surrogate for religion and central to the Soviet Union's claim of international dominance: 'Ideology was in theory of paramount importance and often stressed over material progress, but it was not sufficient. Literature, in concert with the new architecture, provided emblems of the new system of value: aesthetic forms embodied ideology' (Clark, 2011, p. 10).

The cult of personality and the notion of 'Soviet culture' were powerful soft power tools in Soviet foreign and domestic policy, with the purpose being to create the image of a genuine democracy in which the leader enjoyed popular support. However, already before the Cold War, this led to diametrically opposed ideas in the West about how to interpret just what constituted a totalitarian society. Totalitarian models of Soviet society then developed in the context of area studies that were very much informed by the political interests of the Cold War, especially in the United States. However, it is often forgotten that the totalitarian model had first taken shape in the 1920s as a result of Benito Mussolini's creation of a fascist state (Ryan and Gran 2020, p. 11), and some leading Bolshevik theoreticians, like Nikolai Bukharin, had participated in developing it considerably

in the 1930s in the Nazi Germany context, as our chapter on Bukharin shows (Chapter 10).

The most well-known ‘schools’ of Soviet historiography – totalitarian (since the 1950s), revisionist (since the 1970s), post-revisionist (since the mid-1990s) and neo-totalitarian (after 2000) – are often presented as if they formed an evolution of thought, whereas this history of scholarship was, in Fitzpatrick’s own words, mostly about ‘Kuhnian paradigmatic’ shifts in the history profession in Anglophone and America-centred scholarship on Soviet history (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 97; see also Edele, 2020, p. 316). The social historical and political science approach of the ‘revisionists’ since the 1970s justifiably criticised the old ‘totalitarian school’ (albeit far from a static school of thought), noting that its central concept of ‘totalitarianism’, which portrayed the Soviet Union as a completely top-down entity, was too abstract and lacked sufficient explanatory power to allow for a better understanding of Stalinism. Its thesis was that ‘the destruction of autonomous associations and the atomization of bonds between people produced a powerless, passive society that was purely an object of regime control and manipulation’ (Fitzpatrick, 2007, p. 80). Moreover, Ronald Suny (1998, p. 466) writes that ‘the total control of totalitarianism was never that total ... What was totalitarian about Stalinism was not the actual achievements of the system but the intentions of the ruler’. Since the ‘archival turn’ in the 1990s, the revisionists, who now controlled the scholarly paradigm, produced a tremendous number of important studies on everyday life under Stalin. By relying on new primary sources, these studies broadened the perspective on how society and institutions functioned under Stalin’s regime, and most importantly, the extensiveness of Stalin’s terror (see Getty and Naumov, 1999). While the political rule of Stalin came to be seen as a shared phenomenon, the whole issue of Stalinism was also increasingly studied as a social and cultural phenomenon.

By viewing Stalinism this way, it becomes evident that the revisionist scholarship and the ‘post-revisionist’ theory informed cultural and intellectual history that followed it inherited certain rather crucial aspects from the totalitarian top-down model, even though they abandoned its theoretical constructs. Revisionist research, which postulates a bottom-up approach to understanding Stalinism, focused on Soviet society empirically (Kangaspuro and Oittinen, 2015, p. 5), but this analysis nevertheless depicted Soviet culture as more or less a closed entity within the Stalinist ‘cultural semiosphere’, to borrow Yuri Lotman’s term.⁸ A good example of this is Sheila Fitzpatrick’s *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (1992), a work representative of the so-called cultural turn in Soviet scholarship. In this book, Fitzpatrick views socialist realism as a form of cultural consciousness, as a ‘method of representation characteristic of the Stalin period and the Stalinist mentalité’, traces of which could be found not only in literature but also in everything from journalism to bureaucratic records. In contrast, Stephen Cohen had formulated a thesis in the 1970s that was more sympathetic to Marxism, whereby he argued that Bukharin’s political programme may have provided an alternative to Stalinism and criticised previous totalitarian theories for their static essence (Samuelson, 2015, p. 21).⁹ Fitzpatrick,

for her part, viewed the concepts of Stalinist and Soviet as overlapping, but also dynamic, with ‘the former representing both a maximalist version of the latter and its defining moment’ (Fitzpatrick, 1999, p. 4). However, as Fitzpatrick stated, this was not only because of Stalin, but also because Soviet subjects tried to live their everyday lives amidst the ‘extraordinary circumstances’ that began after the 1917 Russian Revolution. Stalinist society was created because the attempt at everydayness under such extraordinary (Soviet Marxist revolutionary) conditions resulted a participatory actor:

Communist Party rule, Marxist–Leninist ideology, rampant bureaucracy, leader cults, state control over production and distribution, social engineering, affirmative action on behalf of workers, stigmatization of ‘class enemies,’ police surveillance, terror, and the various informal, personalistic arrangements whereby people at every level sought to protect themselves and obtain scarce goods, were all part of the Stalinist habitat.

(Fitzpatrick, 1999, p. 2)

The most important representatives of the ‘post-revisionist paradigm’, Stephen Kotkin (1997) and David Hoffman (2003), went even further by attempting to explain the phenomenon of Stalinism as a specific form of culture and civilisation. As Fitzpatrick formulates, ‘Kotkin and those who followed him saw the Stalinist ideology and values (“Stalinist civilization”) as a collective social construction, not something imposed by the regime’ (2007, p. 88). Kotkin’s trailblazing book *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* began with a redefinition: ‘Stalinism was not just a political system, let alone the rule of an individual. It was a set of values, a social identity, a way of life’ (Kotkin, 1997, p. 23).

Fitzpatrick and Kotkin were right in stressing the role of individual agents. Their model, like the revisionist model in general, undoubtedly had a greater explanatory power than the old totalitarian conception of Stalinist culture. The role of society in maintaining Stalinism also explains why the process of de-Stalinisation was so difficult after Stalin’s rule had ended. Indeed, as one of the protagonists in this book, the notable Stalin and post-Stalin era literary figure and writer Konstantin Simonov, pointed out in 1956, ‘literature had to use cupping glasses to draw the bad blood of Stalinism from the Soviet social organism’.

However, especially Kotkin’s revisionist model contains one essential flaw. He tends to put identification marks around the concepts of ‘Stalinism’ and ‘culture/civilization’,¹⁰ while not differentiating between the concepts. Kotkin’s model of Stalinism thus ignores the fact that the accomplishments of individual agents and theoreticians, who often had to work in very difficult conditions, cannot easily be identified with ‘Stalinism’. To paraphrase a well-known expression used by a protagonist in this book, philosopher Mikhail Lifshits, when describing the importance of classical literature for the new socialist society, the cultural accomplishments were created not ‘thanks to’ (*blagodarya*), but ‘in spite of’ (*vopreki*) the existing order of the times. We can express our criticism in yet another way by quoting Joan Neuberger, who aptly points out that while the famous film director

Sergey Eisenstein was a beneficiary of the Stalinist system, he ‘still made Ivan the Terrible a thoroughly anti-Soviet film’ (2019, p. 345).

According to Kotkin, the state determined the parameters of everyday life, and individuals could only react with various ‘tactics’ to this grand strategy (Edele, 2020, pp. 179, 213). While the revisionist view of political subjectivity is counted here, the old view of a state-dominated society offered by totalitarianists remains at the centre of Kotkin’s model. He continually paints a portrait of a Soviet individual as a political subject within the sphere of Stalinism only, without creative intellectual abilities, imagination or cultural power that would extend beyond the power of the state.

In other words, to speak of Stalinism as a specific culture from a post-revisionist starting point seems to us a rather totalitarian conception in itself, which leaves many phenomena from the era in the dark. Instead of speaking of a civilisation or culture, we think that it is more appropriate to return the concept of Stalinism back to its original political meaning. This can be done without undermining its cultural ramifications or the role of society and culture (cultural actors) as participatory agents in Stalin’s politics if we view Stalinism as a specific type of statecraft practised by Stalin, which did incorporate the cultural aspect of power. He produced a dictatorial and repressive order, but he also had to negotiate his power from the beginning to the end. Stalin’s order was effective since it was based on eliminating alternatives and since it gradually legitimised state violence as one of his tools of power. For this legitimisation process, he also used culture. Dobrenko aptly demonstrates in his book *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (2007) that socialist realism served as a mechanism for managing the public and collective interpretation of the violence inherent in the Soviet political and cultural project by displacing it outside Soviet society. But even this kind of ‘soft power’ strategy, which was a typical example of Stalin’s ‘cultural statecraft’ and aimed at serving certain domestic political goals, required negotiating with the cultural actors involved. As our book argues, it was not only rewards and personal safety that cultural actors were after; some also negotiated their partial professional autonomy.

From a similar starting point, we can also be critical of the hermeneutic power of the post-revisionist theory of *Soviet subjectivity*. It is true to some extent, as Jochen Hellbeck argues, that the Soviet era changed Russian traditions of autobiographical writing into a more wide-ranging cultural project led from above. The concern with self-transformation, shared by the Communist regime and Soviet diarists, was rooted in the 1917 Russian Revolution, which promoted new thinking about the self as a political project (Hellbeck, 2006, p. 5). However, in analysing Soviet intellectual figures as political subjects, it can easily be noted that many of them did not use political tropes to illuminate their revolutionary awakening to Stalinist Marxism or communism, but instead to science, culture and new ways of thinking in general, which is what Soviet socialism was also about in many respects. This of course also had a variety of political, cultural and individual consequences during the Stalin era.

It is easy to agree with the general definition of Stalinism offered by post-Soviet ‘revisionist’ scholarship: ‘a set of tenets, policies, and practices instituted by the

Soviet government during the years in which Stalin was in power’ (Hoffmann, 2003, p. 2). Stalinist rule certainly determined the settings in which cultural production took place, but it is nevertheless incorrect to view Stalinism as a specific culture *per se* (not to mention a ‘civilisation’). As will be further argued, the terroristic traits of Stalinism cannot be deduced from an explicitly formulated ideology as such, although Stalin was not a person without an ideology. Indeed, Geoffrey Roberts (2022, p. 16) has provided a fresh portrait of Stalin as both a ‘dedicated idealist and activist intellectual, who valued ideas as much as power’, an argument that supports the point made by Marina Bykova in this book that Stalin was interested in ideology and ideas to the extent that he personally participated in philosophical debates in the late 1940s.

Stalin sought to distance himself from proletarian cultural associations rather soon after the political ‘Great Break’, which favoured the proletarian cultural project, and he instead devised his own Leninist line of adapting all kinds of traditions as part of the new socialist culture. Various pre-revolutionary and revolutionary cultural and artistic utopias regarding the reception and interpretation of Russian tradition in the new era were continued, albeit in a modified form. What Stalin gradually began to support after the Great Break was a patriotic line of culture: he did not want communist literature but Soviet literature (see Roberts, 2022, p. 278). In analysing Stalin’s opinions about socialist realism, we notice that his opinions profoundly lack new theoretical insights into art, which might otherwise have been decisive in terms of the so-called culture of Socialist Realism: ‘even from Bulgakov certain useful things can be taken’, Roberts notes (2022, p. 280). The only clear requirement was party-mindedness since all else was in a fluid state of constructing socialism. The fact that Stalin’s socialist realism did not follow any specific programme – apart from the demand that it should focus on the work of socialist construction – was in accordance with the strategic needs of Stalin’s politics.

How then should we describe the relationship between Stalinism and culture? Stalin’s ideas about culture were not very original, and what scholars have defined as ‘Stalinist practices’ or ‘Stalinist culture’ had a political and even a cultural prehistory. For this reason, Stalinism should not be promoted as the key factor in explaining the content and intellectual traditions of Soviet humanities. Instead, we would like to argue that Stalinism, much like Stalin’s ‘cultural statecraft’, was *parasitic* in deploying culture to advance political objectives that redirected Russian cultural traditions to a certain extent.

Violence, Parasitism and Patriotism as Stalin’s Cultural Statecraft

Violence, as extreme as it was, can be counted as one of the most prominent aspects of Stalin’s cultural statecraft. The development of what only later became known as ‘Stalinist’ administration was as gradual a process as was Stalin’s rise in power.¹¹ Baberowski defines Stalinism as an administrative practice in which the violent and terroristic means of the Civil War period were continually put to

use (2012, p. 11).¹² Geoffrey Roberts (2022, p. 19) points out that while Stalin had been using political violence already many years prior to 1917, the Civil War period was decisive in marking ‘his transition from romantic revolutionary to ruthless practitioner of *realpolitik*’. As Le Blanc further notes (2006, p. 117), even though the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921 ended the repressive and destructive practices exacted on the peasant majority and took a step back from over-centralisation of the economy, Lenin was blind to the dangers that had given rise to ‘a subculture of brutality, an authoritarian dismissal of democracy and human rights, and a rise of bureaucracy that rapidly overwhelmed the Soviet republic’.

Violence was an extreme measure of ruling, but it was not and could not be productive from the standpoint of promoting a vibrant intellectual culture. In that sense, Stalin’s power was not capable of, and perhaps did not even attempt, an all-encompassing control over culture and society. As a strategy, violence served other goals as well. Stalin did try to build a wall of protection based on his own security forces and eliminate rivals to his power, as Khlevniuk (2015, pp. 1–9; 33–41) writes in describing the sources and bulwarks of his power. However, Stalin’s administration was never able to completely eliminate the influences of forbidden intellectual currents, although it executed people espousing such lines of thought. For example, the phenomenologist Gustav Shpet, a philosopher and further protagonist in this book, became one of the most well-known victims of Stalin’s purges in 1937. However, his pupils continued their careers in the Soviet Union (although not directly as phenomenologists). By the time of his death, Shpet had already formulated his theory and was an important philosophical figure of early Soviet culture who transmitted his thoughts to a circle of intellectuals.

Thus, we critically borrow from the thesis proposed by the Soviet/Russian historians Bordyugov and Kozlov (1992), according to which Stalinism can be characterised as a practice that was ‘parasitic’ in relation to its actual tasks of building a socialist society. This thesis is in many ways further backed up by Eric van Ree’s (2002; 2005) and Geoffrey Roberts’s (2022) analyses. Roberts’s research on Stalin’s library found that Stalin was quite loyal to Marx and Marxist ideas as well as a pupil of older socialist revolutionary traditions from the period of the French Revolution. His study also indicates that Stalin studied the texts of his Marxist rivals quite closely. It would be wrong to claim, as Van Ree argues, that Stalin invented such ideas as ‘building socialism in one country’, even though it became the politics he pursued. Western revolutionary history contains so many violent episodes and terrorist ideas that Stalin was able to freely draw from it to plot his own dogma in a ‘pure’ revolutionary and socialist spirit (see Van Ree, 2005). A similar logic applies to Stalin’s relationship to culture in general and what has traditionally been defined as ‘high culture’ in particular, including sciences and the humanities.

But Stalin did not take an active role in cultural affairs before the ‘Great Break’.¹³ His interest in cultural matters in the 1930s followed the early Soviet line, which recognised culture as an important revolutionary tool. The adoption of socialist realism¹⁴ as an officially sanctioned theory and artistic method ushered

in a period of experimentation. Modernist aesthetics, especially the rather thorny ironic, melancholic and sarcastic neo-realist socialist avant-garde represented by the young Dmitri Shostakovich in the 1930s, poorly served Stalin's patriotic needs. Within two years, Stalin interfered with Shostakovich's work and the direction in which socialist realism was heading, as Viljanen discusses in Chapter 6. Although Stalin's aesthetic views were more conservative than those of Shostakovich, there is no reason to explain his intervention as being dictated by his personal cultural taste. His motives were primarily political.

Thus, Stalinism was above all a political system imposed on Soviet culture rather than a culture per se. This has indeed been well demonstrated by, among others, Marina Frolova-Walker when analysing Soviet music through the lens of the Stalin Prize awards. As she writes, the award process allows us to contemplate the multi-tiered structure of professional, state and Communist Party bodies that controlled and managed this broad field and examine the power relationships within this structure (Frolova-Walker, 2016, p. 5).

To summarise our view: the point of departure from the still dominant 'revisionist' model of Soviet historiography involves the proposition that Stalin's brand of totalitarianism was a collective cultural product. Our book revises this thesis by claiming that Stalin rarely sought to control culture in a totalitarian manner. He was aware of the limits of control over culture. Meanwhile, society in general and notable cultural actors in particular need to be contextualised and theorised as political subjects from various points of view. Stalin's dictatorial form of cultural statecraft was hierarchical (top-down), but it was also about interaction and negotiating a path between the politics of culture (as differentiated from cultural politics) and state politics. Stalin sought to harness culture for his own political purposes, even if by 'positive means'.¹⁵ These positive means were nevertheless a double-edged sword. On the one hand, his administrative system (also called a control system) provided prizes for cultural actors to begin collaborating with the state. On the other hand, this would not have worked if the system did *not* allow a certain measure of autonomy to its objects. Likewise, Stalin era intellectuals can be viewed as cultural actors who adopted different 'patriotic' strategies from the political arena to gain some level of autonomy that enabled them to function in their fields. These strategies ensured that certain theoretical ideas were able to persist despite major political campaigns.

Our approach emerges from a series of revisionist and post-revisionist concerns, which question whether a valuable intellectual culture could even exist within the official frames defined by Stalin's government. Further, the people living during those years were sincerely devoted to the ideas of socialism and a new, more humane culture, and it is just this fact that makes the matter so complicated. Stalinism was a phenomenon that was organically embedded in the culture of the era – thus the metaphor of a 'parasite' seems to describe this relationship the best.

Stalin Era Intellectual Culture and Humanities

The problem for us in understanding Stalinism is accentuated in a different way than for the 'post-revisionists', and thus one of our questions in writing this

volume has been the following: *What techniques did the protagonists of the culture of Stalin era employ to address the demands of Stalinist politics? What were the concrete results of such techniques?*

When planning this volume, our leading idea was that we still lack a more systematic multidisciplinary analysis of the major intellectual currents and concepts that in one way or another prevailed during the Stalin era. How were they born and what were the results? Thus, we posed various questions for the authors: If during the Stalin era we can identify intellectuals who not only sought to maintain in their intellectual output the seeds of critical humanism, international theoretical connections and personal cultural utopias, and if certain intellectual achievements took place despite Stalinism, how do we best recognise and describe such achievements? What kinds of ethical questions are involved? What strategies did cultural actors use to bypass political ideology and be able to develop their fields independently? Finally, what kinds of nuances did political ideology add to intellectual theories?

As a result, by focusing on a selection of early Soviet cultural theoreticians – Shpet, Lifshits, Asafiev, Debordin, Megrelidze, Yanovskaya and Bukharin – who had more or less important, but hitherto not well analysed, formative or analytical roles in the culture of the 1930s and 1940s, our book also offers novel perspectives on thinkers like Gorky, an important formulator of Stalinist cultural politics, or Marr, the notorious creator of the ‘Japhetic’ theory. By offering new insights on Soviet philosophy of science and humanities, linguistics, philosophy, musicology, literature and mathematics from the point of view of general cultural theory, our book challenges the image of Stalin era humanities as mere propaganda, showing instead the hermeneutic challenges that the Stalinist politics of culture produced for later generations seeking to penetrate and comprehend the individual world-views of thinkers during that time.

As various studies show, it is not possible to understand culture of the Stalin era and the cultural and intellectual influence of Stalinist politics without first accounting for Russian intellectual traditions, institutions and Soviet cultural and political history prior to the ‘Great Break’. Thus, the book contains chapters of the intellectual traditions, conceptions and thinkers prior to Stalin’s regime but that nonetheless still strongly influenced Stalin era intellectual culture. An analysis of culture in relation to Stalin’s socialist realism doctrine is not possible without a re-evaluation of the problems that the power elite encountered with avant-gardism throughout the 1920s. The power elite never succeeded in suppressing of avant-gardism. On the contrary, the early modernist avant-gardism of the Russian ‘Silver Age’ branched off in novel directions under the principles of the ‘healthy’ revolutionarism movement of the 1920s, continuing its chameleonic existence also in the 1930s. As a result, the legacies of the 1920s, both its continuities and discontinuities in the later Stalin era, have not been sufficiently considered.

Chapter 2 focuses on Gustav Shpet (1879–1937) and his cultural philosophical legacy from the perspective of socialist realism. Liisa Bourgeot suggests that the ‘official’ acceptance of Shpet’s philosophy, particularly by GAKhN (State Academy of Artistic Sciences), was emblematic of the internal complexity of the

cultural regime in the 1920s. She discusses Shpet's phenomenological theory of language and culture as a part of early Soviet culture and shows that Shpet positioned his theory of 'new realism' and the 'inner form of the word' against the revolutionary dreams of avant-garde art, arguing that they remained anchored in a romantic fantasy that had no place in the new reality. Shpet's pre-revolutionary phenomenology was praised for its modernising potential, whereas his later anti-avant-garde artistic theory was criticised for being old-fashioned and unscientific. Interestingly, both were welcomed by Marxist thinkers and the Bolshevik regime. His aesthetics were deemed useful until the end of the 1920s, when he was finally charged with 'idealism' and 'anti-communism'. Although Shpet's work was repressed during the 1930s and he was ultimately shot in 1937, Bourgeot argues that Shpet's neo-classical cultural conception can be considered part of a broad 'conservative' turn, eventually leading to the introduction of socialist realism. In general, Shpet's involvement in Soviet culture from 1917 to 1929 can be seen as a reflection of its gradually changing needs.

The turbulent events of Stalin's 'Great Break' have often been seen as a turning point and the beginning of a Stalinist politics *sensu stricto*. A sharp philosophical debate occurred at this turning point. In Chapter 4, Vesa Oittinen discusses how this shift occurred in Soviet Marxist philosophical circles. He analyses the concept of 'Menshevising Idealism', an idea coined (maybe by Stalin himself) during the philosophical campaign around the year 1930. It targeted mainly the Deborin school of early Soviet philosophy from the 1920s. Deborin and his supporters were accused of 'Hegelianising' Marxism and of not understanding the significance of the new, Leninist stage of Marxist theory. The concept of Menshevising Idealism has later near unanimously been viewed by scholars as a Stalinist label without any real content. While it is true that Stalin and his circle utilised the campaign against the Deborinites for their own purposes, there nevertheless were some real weaknesses in the philosophy of the Deborin school. One sign of this weakness is that such thinkers as Georg Lukács, Mikhail Lifshits and, later, Evald Ilyenkov all criticised the ideas of the Deborin school even though they did not accept the Stalinist methods of its suppression.

In Chapter 5, Maria Chehonadskih explores the term 'factography', which was coined in the late 1920s to designate a certain aesthetic practice preoccupied with the production of facts. Its intention was to oppose the fiction or fabrication of facts in the emerging doctrine of socialist realism. The debates about fact and truth, about the traps and falsities of Leninist reflection theory, of the illusionism and theatricality of realism and fiction, were quite topical in contemporary avant-garde discussions. According to factographers of the time, a fact is not something that one can passively excavate by means of observation, but rather a process of production that has its own specific artistic means. Chehonadskih considers Platonov's 1920s texts on literary method and his 1930s essays on collectivisation in her article. Platonov's position can be identified a mediatory point between the radical critique of the novel form in Sergey Tretyakov and Viktor Shklovsky's theory and the defence of realism and the classical novel developed by Mikhail Lifshits and Georg Lukács in the journal *Literaturnyy Kritik*.

Platonov's contribution to the discussion on the representation of facts in literature clarified political views on collectivisation among the left-wing writers, thus illuminating Platonov's efforts to sabotage Stalinism through his philosophical critique of fact and representation.

Stalin's political takeover of the cultural theoretical pattern of Bolshevik *novyy byt* ('new public life') created a powerful myth of the total repression of 'bourgeois' philosophy in the early 1930s. However, since the 1920s, the spirit of *novyy byt* had also resulted in directives governing the formation of new theories of ideologically correct 'spiritual *kul'turnost*' (culturality, being civilised) on the basis of 'the best achievements of bourgeois traditions'. Classical music represented one such achievement. In Chapter 6, Elina Viljanen sheds light on the idealist philosophical sides of the Soviet conception of *kul'turnost*'. Looking at the musicologist Boris Asafiev (1884–1949) as an intellectual whose theoretical strategies shaped Soviet culture during the Stalin era, she shows that the Soviet conception of classical music as a symbol of *kul'turnost* developed from the late 'Silver Age' philosophy of 'internal' spiritual life. Shaped by the NEP era Bolshevik discourse on *novyy byt* and Pan-European cultural and musical theories, the conception emerged during the Stalinist *kul'turnost* campaigns. On the one hand, Asafiev updated his cultural theoretical setting (theory of intonation) from the 1920s to better suit Stalinist ideological notions of a proper 'socialist approach' to the arts. On the other hand, she argues, Asafiev's theory was part of an evolving set of ideas that managed to fall within the parameters of Stalinist ideology in a way that produced interesting scholarly results. Asafiev's apology of classical music is part of an interesting intellectual history of the Russian appreciation of classical music as a proper type of Russian *kul'turnost* and helps explain the Soviet understanding of popular music.

In Chapter 7, Sascha Freyberg analyses the work of the Soviet Marxist philosopher and aesthetician Mikhail Lifshits and his attempt to develop a Marxist–Leninist cultural critique and philosophy of culture. Lifshits engaged with problems common to modernity in the context of Stalin era culture and the cultural debates about fascism in the 1930s. His statements concerning his overall project at the time and body of work, in which he sought to develop a dialectical theory of culture as an uneven process, can be confirmed on the philosophical basis and the problem of cultural heritage he engaged with. Despite writing under oppressive circumstances, Lifshits tried to have influence through his writings and to inscribe these ideas into the very history and philosophy of Marxism. Freyberg discusses the axiological, political and aesthetic consequences of his writing to demonstrate what this particular case of intellectual engagement has in common with similar attempts of the time.

If Lifshits was a figure that even today is still worthy of 'positive' intellectual curiosity, Jutta Scherrer's Chapter 8 discusses the role of Maxim Gorky as a spokesman of Stalinist culture and propaganda. 'Proletarian humanism' became a key concept in the official Soviet discourse of the 1930s and retained its ideological impact into the 1980s. Scherrer's chapter shows how the origins of the concept date back mainly to Gorky. She traces the evolution of Gorky's pre-revolutionary

understanding of man and ‘man-collectivist’ to his emphasis on the ‘new man’, whose realisation was effected by means of re-education (*perekovka*) in corrective labour camps and educational communes in the 1920s and early 1930s. Finally, Scherrer analyses Gorky’s conceptualisation of ‘proletarian humanism’. He helped propagate this concept through numerous articles, which were published with Stalin’s approval in mass journals such as *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, and in 1935 the concept was also internationally referred to by the Parisian Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture as the prerogative of the Soviet state.

In one illuminating story about Stalin’s endeavour to control all fields of intellectual thought at the beginning of the 1930s, an applied mathematician asked Sofia Yanovskaya (1896–1966), a professor of mathematics at Lomonosov Moscow State University, ‘What are you going to do now?’, to which she answered, ‘mathematical logic’. Confused, the mathematician then asked, but ‘how can you study mathematical logic at this period of time?’ Tatiana Levina in Chapter 9 focuses on Yanovskaya’s intellectual strategies at developing an analytical philosophy and philosophy of mathematics during the Stalin era when Marxist–Leninist ideology ruled the field. Educated as a ‘Red Professor’, Yanovskaya began with a critique of bourgeois thought, especially all forms of idealism, and then obtruded Marxist–Leninist ideology in the field of mathematics. However, suddenly she reversed her strategy. From the 1940s onwards, Yanovskaya continued to develop mathematical logic, organising a seminar on mathematical logic (1943) and on the history of mathematics (1944) at the Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics. She published Russian translations of Hilbert and Ackermann, Tarski, Pólya, Carnap and Turing and helped with publications by Kleene, Church and others. She dedicated the later period of her life to defending mathematical logic and the philosophy of mathematics from criticism by the advocates of dialectical materialism. Yanovskaya used various Soviet intellectual strategies, including a dialectical strategy, to defend abstract objects and other conceptions of mathematical Platonism. In several articles written later in life, she discusses the theories of Russell, Carnap and Gödel, among others. Levina argues that Yanovskaya was able to form the basis for a non-Marxist philosophy of mathematics during the Stalin era, which helped her to develop later, during the post-Stalin years, a critical philosophy of mathematics.

Nikolai Bukharin’s anti-fascist activity in the mid-1930s and his status as a cultural theoretician have been a neglected topic thus far. After losing his position as General Secretary of the Comintern’s Executive Committee and being expelled from the Politburo in 1929, Bukharin still found a platform as the chief editor of *Izvestiya*, in which he published several analyses of fascist ideology until his arrest in 1937. As a response, and in order to surpass the achievements of German high culture, which had fallen under the spell of bourgeois fascism, Bukharin relied on his own theory of Marxist philosophy, which he had sketched already in the 1920s but tried to ‘dialecticise’ in the 1930s after being criticised for his overly mechanistic views. The apex of these aspirations are his works *Philosophical Arabesques* and *Socialism and Its Culture*, written in 1937 while in prison. Both are in many respects rather enigmatic works. In them, Bukharin

defended socialist humanism as the only real alternative to fascism. At the same time, he was not only silent about the crimes of Stalin, but he also considered the violent and dictatorial features that became branded as Stalinism abroad as a necessary ‘destructive’ force in the dialectical process of history of building communism (Bukharin, 2006, pp. 217–218). Vesa Oittinen and Elina Viljanen in Chapter 10 analyse the premises of Bukharin’s philosophy of culture and explain its repercussions.

Elene Ladaria in Chapter 11 suggests that during the Stalin era, a particular Soviet alternative to philosophy, social sciences and linguistics was conceived under the auspices of Nikolay Marr’s theory of language. It was framed by Konstantin Megrelidze (1900–1944) as the historical science of thought. Due to the non-trivial nature of his research project, Megrelidze, not yet a well-known Soviet-Georgian thinker of the 1930s, can hardly be labelled a philosopher, psychologist, sociologist or anthropologist. In fact, although he tackles problems belonging to these fields, he does so in a reframed disciplinary context. In her chapter, Ladaria clarifies the modalities of this disciplinary realignment, which began with Marr’s formulation of the new methodological and practical requirements he believed the sciences must meet under socialism and the peculiar understanding of language that ensues from such a formulation. Linked with Megrelidze’s conception of consciousness and bridged by the Gestalt psychology to which Megrelidze resorted in his writing, the convergence between Marr and Megrelidze led to the synthesis of a socio-historical complex constitution of language, thought and labour. In analysing Megrelidze’s theoretical pursuits, which make revealing complements to Marr’s theory of language, Ladaria explains how the historical science of thought – being socialist in character and supplanting bourgeois philosophy, social science and linguistics altogether – was self-legitimised by the historical moment, the importance and meaning of which it itself helped conceptualise.

As to a global view on Stalin era intellectual life, Craig Brandist’s Chapter 12 discusses the development of Soviet Indology during the Stalin period with particular reference to the work of Aleksei Barannikov (1890–1952). Not having immediate political implications, the field retained relative autonomy in relation to the political and doctrinal vagaries of Stalinism, and the course of its development was determined by a number of intersecting factors that are discussed in the chapter. This intersection was both institutional and ideological, but it did not prevent the emergence of new paradigms that anticipated, in important ways, the rise of postcolonial studies and of Dalit studies in India today. Brandist gives close attention to Barannikov’s work on the history of colonial Indology and its relationship to Brahmanism, the caste dimensions of Indian literature and culture under the Moghul Empire, and the rise of modern literary Hindi. Brandist shows that Barannikov’s discussion of the relationship between literatures in Sanskrit, the sacred language of Brahmanism, and various middle and modern Indian languages are worthy of further study in the light of recent developments in the field. Although certainly not free of the limitations imposed by Stalinist orthodoxy, these works need to be evaluated according to current

scholarship in the field rather than limited by some of the narrowly nostalgic attitudes towards pre-revolutionary Indology that have predominated since the 1950s.

The decades associated with the reign of Stalin, known as the period of greatest ideological pressure, was a time of a decisive change in the ways in which Marx and Marxism were received and appropriated in the Soviet Union. Marina Bykova in Chapter 3 discusses the role that Stalin played in determining the direction of the philosophical evolution and kind of Marxism that developed in the USSR. She examines Stalin's own engagement with philosophy to show how it contributed to a dogmatic type of Marxism, which served as official Soviet ideology for nearly 70 years. In addition to providing a detailed analysis of the infamous 1938 essay, 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism', widely viewed as Stalin's major contribution to philosophy, Bykova's chapter also looks at his two later and less known philosophical works: Stalin's pamphlet on linguistics (1950) and his article 'The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR' (1952). The author argues that Stalin's interest in philosophy served his dictatorial ambitions and personal goals, it was motivated solely by political gain, rather than being a quest for truth or a genuine attempt to seek answers to any substantive questions.

After the death of Stalin, the Soviet cultural intelligentsia started trying to make sense of what had taken place in society and culture in recent years. The early thaw, 1953–1957, laid the foundations for all subsequent 'de-Stalinisation' efforts in Soviet literature and culture. Chapter 13 by Susan Ikonen, which is based on previously untapped archival material, contributes to scholarly discussions on the early de-Stalinisation period and the role of literary actor and writer Konstantin Simonov (1915–1979) within the Soviet literary establishment at that time, and it questions the representation of reality in Soviet art in general and of the Great Patriotic War in particular. Ikonen shows that Simonov had a much more pronounced role in de-Stalinisation efforts in 1956 than has been previously known. Simonov already then showed how the representation of the Great Patriotic War was tightly intertwined with the personality cult of Stalin and how this entanglement had caused literature and art either to portray Soviet reality in a distorted manner or to keep silent about social difficulties. By criticising key authoritative documents of the early post-war years, Simonov revealed how Stalin's desire to forge the image of the Great Patriotic War resulted in the widespread tendency to embellish reality in Soviet literature and art. Ikonen also tracks how the Party rebuked Simonov's claims without mentioning him as the initiator of such ideas. The chapter thus testifies to some of the problems of 'de-Stalinisation' and how some of its key issues could not be openly discussed in the Soviet Union until the late 1980s. What Simonov highlighted was, in today's terms, Stalin's aggressive forging of the past. The Simonov case testifies to how Stalin – in this case, via criticism against works of art – forged the image of the war into something that had not existed in reality.

It is not only a 'forging of the present' that is part of the Kremlin's current politics, but also a recycling of the methodology of the forged past. State law now forbids Russians from using the name war to describe the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Instead, the patriotic dictatorship of Putin specifies that it should be

called a special military operation targeting neo-fascists who threaten the existence of Russia's Ukrainian brothers.

Epilogue

It is pertinent to ask to what extent certain cultural phenomena and intellectual currents from the Stalin era really were such unique features that can be branded as Stalinist and to which extent they contain features that are shared with other post-revolutionary societies (e.g. China, North Korea). Such a comparison would most likely show that many 'Stalinist' traits actually derive from the general imperatives and problems of development in a post-revolutionary society in the 20th century and do not belong to a specific culture/civilisation. Finally, the international tone of humanities during the Stalin era has only slightly been touched upon in previous research. It can hardly be reduced to Clark's claim (2010, p. 5) of 'Soviet cosmopolitanism', although this term portrays quite well the patriotic internationalism of official Stalin era discourse. We must ask how best to study Stalinism as statecraft and Stalin era culture in a new manner and from a global perspective. The phenomenon of Stalinism exerted a negative influence on many spheres of the Left and anti-colonial movements, but these problems cannot be duly analysed if we adhere too dogmatically to the idea of Stalinism as a 'culture' unto itself.

Notes

- 1 For the history, historiography and analysis of the term, see e.g. Gill (1992, pp. 1–16); Boffa (1998); Hoffmann (2003); Fitzpatrick (2007); Fitzpatrick and Geyer (2009, pp. 1–40); Samuelson (2015, pp. 11–41); Edele (2020); Ryan and Grant (2020).
- 2 For more on soft-power and classical music, see Viljanen (2022).
- 3 While many in Russia perceive Stalin as a hero within the framework of state and war, they label him a criminal within the framework of the private sphere (Kangaspuro, 2021, p. 174).
- 4 See Fitzpatrick (1978); see also Fitzpatrick (1999, chapter 1 'The Party Is Always Right,' p. 21).
- 5 *Vsesoyuznyy Leninskiy kommunisticheskiy soyuz molodiozhi*.
- 6 For a general account of industrialisation during this period, see Barber and Davies (1994, p. 95); for a general overview of the First Five-Year Plan, its goals and execution, see Stites and Evtuhov (2004, pp. 357–359).
- 7 Markku Kivinen has talked about Bolshevik 'sacred' aims in a more general sense. Through this discussion, he has attempted to identify a basic cultural code (a social fact in a Durkheimian sense) that functioned as a constraining force on individuals in Stalinist times (Kivinen, 2002, p. 179).
- 8 Lotman introduced the term semiosphere in his work *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (1990) to refer to 'the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages'. He saw it as analogous to V.I. Vernadski's notion of *biosphere*: 'the totality and the organic whole of living matter and also the condition for the continuation of life'. According to Lotman, neither communication nor language can exist outside the semiosphere, which serves as the 'space of culture' (Lotman, 1990, pp. 123–125).
- 9 More recently, David Priestland (2007, p. 5) has criticised what he calls 'an underlying intentionalist interpretation', which exaggerates the coherence of Marxist and Stalinist political ideas.

- 10 The theoretical originality of Kotkin's claim that Stalinism was 'held together by participatory totalitarianism' and 'competing modernity' has been questioned before, and its explanatory power has been criticised by others as well (see Hedin, 2004, pp. 166–167; Edele, 2020).
- 11 Edele (2011, p. 7) describes Stalin as a skilful strategist who came to power not through popular election, but through institutional politics 'reminiscent of the rise of a corporate CEO or a machine politician': 'the institutional base from which he built his power throughout the 1920s was the position of General Secretary of the Party, a post he had gained in 1922'.
- 12 Oleg Khlevniuk notes that although Stalin did share his rule with the formal Communist Party, state structures or even his small inner circle, he did acknowledge an informal group of chosen people with supreme power, as the whole 'patrimonial political enterprise rested on terror' created by the Soviet state security system, which he controlled like a dictator (Khlevniuk, 2015, p. 1).
- 13 In the book *Soviet Culture and Power. A History in Documents, 1917–1953* (2007), based on archival documents originally collected by Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov in 1999, the editors Clark and Dobrenko argue that most cultural issues were decided at the highest levels, not even principally on the level of the Central Committee but at the yet higher level of the Politburo.
- 14 The answer to who coined the term 'socialist realism' remains unknown. According to the Secretary of the Organizational Committee (*Orgkom*) of the All Union Communist Party Bolsheviks (VKP[b]), Ivan Gronsky, the term was invented by him when summoned to Stalin's office in 1932 to talk about a new aesthetic line. In the meeting, Gronsky, Lazar Kaganovich, Pavel Postyshev, the Manager of Culture and Leninist Propaganda Section of the Central Committee Aleksandr Stetsky, and Stalin went through the pleas made by those that opposed the new aesthetic line of RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) leaders. According to Gronsky, Stalin formulated the content of socialist realism in 1932. However, the archival documents reveal that Gorky and the official representative of the politbureau, Andrei Zhdanov, designed the content together with the aforementioned political henchmen, who were in Stalin's close inner circle at the time (see Clark, 2000, p. 9; Dobrenko, 2001, pp. 363–364).
- 15 As Oleg Khlevniuk points out (2015, p. 7), 'Stalin was equally capable of rewarding his underlings with his amiability and menacing them with threats. For almost two decades he used both the carrot and the stick ... to keep not only his close associates in hand, but also the many millions who lived in the USSR and, later, the entire socialist camp'.

Bibliography

- Baberowski, Jörn (2012) *Verbrannte Erde. Stalins Herrschaft der Gewalt*. München: C.H. Beck.
- Barber, J.D. and Davies, Robert William (1994) 'Employment and Industrial Labor'. In Davies, Robert William, Harrison, Mark and Wheatcroft, Stephen George (eds.), *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 81–105.
- Boffa, Giuseppe (1992) *The Stalin Phenomenon*. Fersen, Nicholas (trans.). Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.
- Bordiugov, G.A. and Kozlov, V.A. (1992) *Istoriya i konyunktura. Subektivnie zametki ob istoriy sovetskogo obshchestva*. Moscow: Politizdat.
- Bukharin, Nikolai (2006) *The Prison Manuscripts. Socialism and Its Culture*. London and New York: Seagull Books.

- Carr, Edward Hallet ([1939], 2001) *Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Clark, Katerina (2000) *The Soviet Novel. History as Ritual*. 3rd ed. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: University Press.
- Clark, Katerina (2011) *Moscow the Fourth Rome. Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism and the Evolution of Soviet Culture 1931–1941*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clark, Katerina, Dobrenko, Evgeny, Artizov, Andrei and Naumov, Oleg, eds. (2007) *Soviet Culture and Power. A History in Documents, 1917–1953*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Clark, Katerina and Dobrenko, Evgeny, eds. (2007) *Soviet Culture and Power. A History in Documents, 1917–1953*. Compiled by Andrei Artizov and Oleg V. Naumov. Translated by Marian Schwartz. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- David-Fox, Michael (2015) *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Davies, Sarah and Harris, James (2005) *Stalin. A New History*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Dobrenko, Evgeni (2001) *The Making of State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Dobrenko, Evgeni (2007) *The Political Economy of Socialist Realism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Edele, Mark (2011) *Stalinist Society: 1928–1953*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated.
- Edele, Mark (2020) *Debates on Stalinism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Evtuhov, Catherine and Stites, Richard (2004) *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events Forces since 1800*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila, ed. (1978) *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (1992) *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (1998) 'Intelligentsia and Power. Client-Patron Relations in Stalin's Russia'. In von Hildermeier, Manfred and Müller-Luckner, Elisabeth (eds.), *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Neue Wege der Forschung*. Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien 43. München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, pp. 35–53.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (1999) *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. Cary, NC: Oxford University Press.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (2007) 'Revisionism in Soviet History'. *History and Theory. Studies in Philosophy of History*, 46(4), pp. 77–91.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (2015) *On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Forsberg, Tuomas and Mäkinen, Sirke (2022) 'Introduction. Russia's Cultural Statecraft'. In Forsberg, Tuomas and Mäkinen, Sirke (eds.), *Russia's Cultural Statecraft*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1–25.
- Forsberg, Tuomas and Smith, Hanna (2016) 'Russian Cultural Statecraft in the Eurasian Space'. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 63(3), pp. 129–134.
- Frolova-Walker, Marina (2016) *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics*. Illustrated edition. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Gelman, Vladimir (2022) *The Politics of Bad Governance in Contemporary Russia*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Getty, J. Arch and Naumov, Oleg V. (1999) *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932–1939*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Geyer, Michael and Fitzpatrick Sheila (2009) *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, Graeme (1998) *Stalinism*. Studies in European History. London: Macmillan Press LTD.
- Gutkin, Irina (1999) *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic 1890–1934*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Hedin, Astrid (2004) ‘Stalinism as a Civilization: New Perspectives on Communist Regimes’. *Political Studies Review*, 2, pp. 166–184.
- Hellbeck, Jochen (2006) *Revolution on My Mind. Writing a Diary under Stalin*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hellbeck, Jochen (2011) ‘Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts’. *Russian Review*, 60, pp. 340–359.
- Hoffmann, David, ed. (2003) *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Kangaspuro, Markku (2021) ‘Dilemma over Stalin: Confronting the Great Patriotic War and the Reputation of Russia’. In Miklossy, Katalin and Kangaspuro, Markku (eds.), *Conservatism and Memory Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge, pp. 174–192.
- Kangaspuro, Markku and Oittinen, Vesa, eds. (2015) *Discussing Stalinism. Problems and Approaches*. Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki. Tampere: Juvenes Print, Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy, pp. 11–41.
- Kivinen, Markku (2002) *Progress and Chaos. Russia as a Challenge for Sociological Imagination*. Helsinki: Kikimora Publications.
- Khlevniuk, Oleg V. (2015) *Stalin. New Biography of a Dictator*. Translated by Nora Seligman Favorov. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Kotkin, Stephen (1997) *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lotman, Yuri (1990) *The Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.
- Meduza (2022) ‘Rech Putin pro ‘ochishchenie obshchestva’ ot predately vyglyadit tak, budto v Rossii nachalsya totalitariz Politolog Vladimir Gelman ob’’yasnyaet, pochemu vse ne tak prosto (iotseniyaet umestnost’ sravneniya Putina s Gitlerom)’. 17 March 2022. Available at: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/03/17/rech-putina-pro-ochishchenie-obshchestva-ot-predately-vyglyadit-tak-budto-v-rossii-nachalsya-totalitarizm> (Accessed: 18 March 2022).
- Neuberger, Joan (2019) *This Thing of Darkness: Eisenstein’s Ivan the Terrible in Stalin’s Russia*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.
- President of Russia (2020) ‘75th Anniversary of the Great Victory: Shared Responsibility to History and Our Future’. 19 June 2020. Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63527> (Accessed: 13 April 2022).
- Priestland, David (2007) *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization. Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-War Russia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ree, Erik van (2002) *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin: A Study in Twentieth-Century Revolutionary Patriotism*. London: Routledge Curzon.
- Ree, Erik van (2005) ‘Stalin as Marxist: The Western Roots of Stalin’s Russification of Marxism’. In Sarah Davies and James Harris (eds.), *Stalin: A New History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 159–180.
- Roberts, Geoffrey (2006) *Stalin’s Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953*. New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press.

- Roberts, Geoffrey (2022) *Stalin's Library: A Dictator and His Books*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Ryan, James and Grant, Susan, eds. (2020) *Revisioning Stalin and Stalinism. Complexities, Contradictions and Controversies*. New York: Bloomsbury Academics.
- Samuelson, Lennart (2015) 'Interpretations of Stalinism: Historiographical Patterns since the 1930s and the Role of the "Archival Revolution" in the 1990s'. In Kangaspuro, Markku and Oittinen, Vesa (eds.), *Discussing Stalinism. Problems and Approaches*. Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki. Tampere: Juvenes Print, Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy, pp. 11–41.
- Sherlock, Thomas (2016) 'Russian Politics and the Soviet Past: Reassessing Stalin and Stalinism under Vladimir Putin'. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 49(1), pp. 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2016.01.001>.
- Suny, Ronald (1998) *The Soviet Experiment. Russia and the USSR and the Successor States*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Viljanen, Elina (2022) 'Soviet Legacies and Global Contexts: Classical Music and Russia's Cultural Statecraft'. In Forsberg, Tuomas and Sirke Mäkinen (eds.), *Russia's Cultural Statecraft*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 141–161.