Summary of Everyday Stalinism by Sheila Fitzpatrick
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Introduction

The book focuses on "forms of behavior and strategies of survival and advancement" that common Soviet citizens undertook under "the extraordinary circumstances of Stalinism" in the 1930s. The government created these "extraordinary circumstances" by a commitment to total "social, cultural, and economic transformation… regardless of the human cost." Because the government created these upheavals, for common citizens life often meant simply dealing with the state—in this case Stalinism. While the term "Stalinism" normally implies an ideology or political system, in this book it means a "complex of institutions, structures, and rituals that made up the habitat of *Homo Sovieticus* in the Stalin era." Stalinism is, in other words, the sum of an environment and the behaviors used to survive in that environment—it is structure and mentalité.

The environment was created artificially and suddenly when at the start of the 1930s the Soviet government abandoned the New Economic Plan and undertook collectivization and the First Five Year Plan. The goal was to industrialize the country by shifting the cost of modernization to the peasantry which would produce the food to sustain the cities. The plan produced a series inconveniences and disasters for the common citizen, most notably food shortages, rationing, housing shortages, and persecution of certain classes. This persecution reached its peak during the Great Purges of 1937-38—a time in which fear was widespread in all urban Soviet society.

This deprivation and fear was generally overcome psychologically through hope, which was inspired largely through propaganda. This propaganda sought to portray present suffering in terms of sacrifice for the utopian future of true socialism. This future would bring abundant consumer goods, increased quality of life for "backwards" peoples, and the inevitable struggle against international imperialism and capitalism. Because the government reminded people constantly of this threat from imperialism and capitalism, war was never far from people's minds; indeed everyone understood that the sacrifices were intended not only to bring prosperity but to prepare for war.

The irony of this hopefulness and sacrifice is that they were intended to bring about a classless society in which goods were freely available to all citizens of a free and well-protected state. In fact, Stalinism only served to create a society that, like the Tsarist state that the Revolution wiped away, relied on privilege and entitlement for the goods and protection promised for free.

Chapter One: The Party is Always Right

Any discussion of life in the Soviet Union in the 1930s must begin with the Communist Party. Members of the party elite began as revolutionaries but soon shifted roles to that of "cultural vanguard"—those who protected and defined the future of the Soviet Union's culture. This meant first that these elites had mastered "Marxist-Leninist ideology", which they used to understand and define the world. It was therefore essential that party members be appropriately educated. This implied not only a thorough understanding of Marxism, but a complete break with religion, which was deemed culturally backwards.

Party members were expected to be devoted and unquestioning: "every Communist was bound to obey unswervingly any decision of the party's highest organs." Failing to do so originally brought rebuke, but in later years any mark of questioning or disobedience might mean exile or death. Members were also expected to be "vigilant", that is, to expose spies who worked to subvert the Soviet Union. The party, of course, could not expect vigilance from all its member; it therefore undertook small local purges that amounted to ritualistic interrogations in which the supposedly errant member was expected to confess to crimes ranging from spousal abuse and drunkenness to ideological support of the Right. At their political peak, these rituals took the form of orchestrated, highly visible show trials in which local Communist Party leaders and high ranking party officials confessed to conspiracy against the state, sabotage, and other invented crimes. These trials were intended to teach citizens that unceasing vigilance and devotion to the party were essential.

Communists throughout the Soviet Union accepted the conspiracy of foreign capitalists as fact; failures in the system and the fact that "the revolution had not turned out as planned" were proof of this conspiracy. And they believed that danger emanated from enemy classes such as kulaks, who rebelled against the state for their loss of social and economic standing. These enemies were supposedly more dangerous than the outsiders because they could infiltrate the system by simply returning to cities, hiding their identities, and pretending to be government supporters.

Perhaps fueled by conspiratorial beliefs, the party itself grew more secretive, hiding committee dealings as much as possible and constantly reinforcing the need

to keep “state secrets” from all except the highest ranking officials. Naturally, the definition of “state secret” broadened and eventually included matters of public concern such as the spread of infectious diseases. This was a marked change from the early 1920s when leaders were “unapologetic” even about state sponsored terror; by the 1930s, newspapers were forbidden to report executions, which would have served as public warnings only a decade before.

Changes in political standing of the highest members of the Communist Party were often communicated in a clandestine fashion, as were communications involving major policy changes for the entire country. For example, “no detailed instructions about how to collectivize were ever issued.” Instead, those in charge at lower levels were left to decipher what Stalin’s “directives” implied.

Stalin may have preferred this method to hide direct statements from the foreign press, but also because it allowed him to blame those at lower levels when things went wrong. A perfect example of this is his famous *Dizzy with Success* letter that chastised local officials for their undiscriminating drive toward collectivization and the harsh measures used to implement it. The same could be said of the government’s policy toward churches, which was publicly mild yet privately harsh and unyielding. Stalin often cultivated this duality, contrasting his personal responses with the intolerance of lower officials.

In the wake of the government’s growth and enormously extended duties (the economy, the police, agriculture, trade, culture, etc.) arose a huge bureaucracy loaded with inexperienced, corrupt, and incompetent officials. But the sheer enormity of the political apparatus augmented the importance of officials who ran it—as we see from cities, towns, streets and industrial complexes being

renamed for party leaders. This inflated importance bled down to local officials who the public sometimes adulated and frequently feared. Their power often led to abuse; local officials frequently bullied workers, enforced rules arbitrarily, and pushed people beyond capacity to meet quotas. But it also led to patronage; local party leaders protected their subordinates, managing their small regimes like fiefdoms. Sometimes, this went to ridiculous ends as leaders sought to control every aspect of life in their sphere of influence from personal hygiene to flower planting; they even created fines for minor infractions such as wearing a hat.

Sitting between government bureaucracy and the populace was a broad, informal group of citizens known as "activists". Mostly composed of the young and enthusiastic, the *activ* took it upon themselves to condemn both the bureaucrats guilty of corruption and favoritism, and the common people insufficiently devoted to the socialist cause. They fought unfair and incompetent factory bosses, party abuses, and the perceived "backwardness" of the peasantry, which ranged from religious worship to illiteracy to the subordination of women.

Chapter Two: Hard Times

"The 1930s was a decade of enormous privation and hardship for the Soviet people, much worse than the 1920s. Famine hit all the major grain-growing regions in 1932-33, and in addition bad harvests caused major disruptions in the food supply in 1936 and 1939. Towns were swamped with new arrivals from the villages, housing was drastically overcrowded, and the rationing system was close to collapse. For the greater part of the urban population, life revolved around the endless struggle to get the basics necessary for survival—food, clothing, shelter."

These shortages were caused by production problems and by distribution problems. When the famine of 1932-33 hit, people fled the countryside for the cities in hope of finding food; the government responded by establishing an internal passport system to stem the flow of starving migrants.

Even when people were able to reach the cities, however, they found goods impossible to acquire. Shoes, clothing, pots, utensils, and even vodka were nowhere to be found; what was available was of such shoddy quality as to be useless. To make matters worse, the government had prohibited craftsmanship; when trades were eventually legalized, artisans could only make what was ordered—a single suit, a pair of shoes—and only if buyers supplied the material. Of course because the shortages resulted from governmental policies, wreckers and saboteurs were blamed.

Housing shortages were just as severe as shortages of food and consumer goods. As people fled to the cities, the government did not build more residences, but opted instead to "consolidate": to place multiple families in quarters designed for one family. Of course forcing strangers to live together only exacerbated the ubiquitous tensions of shortages. People denounced one another to get more living space, complained incessantly to the government, and even resorted to murder to get a private apartment. But those who lived in towns dominated by industrial complexes probably had it worse: almost all lived in barracks with as little as one square meter per person, beds used in rotation, and a lack of running water and electricity. Common municipal services were rare even in fairly large cities: many lacked running water, electricity, sewage services, and public transportation. On top of these inconveniences, gangs of "hooligans" controlled the streets and parks at

night to the point that workers were known to sleep at factories to avoid walking home.

At the base of all of these problems was state ownership: the government had outlawed "private enterprise" and "without prior planning, and at a time of general crisis and upheaval" undertook to provide all goods and services. Not surprisingly, "the scale of the malfunctioning and its impact on the everyday life of everyday citizens were remarkable."

The government tried to solve the problem of distribution through rationing and "closed distribution"—distribution of goods "at the workplace through closed stores." These solutions were "improvisations in the face of economic crisis, not policies adopted for ideological reasons." Yet while rationing was crisis management, it took on an ideological component since it was "explicitly socially discriminatory" with "proletarians" usually given highest priority and certain socially alien elements such as priests being barred altogether from receiving ration books. This social discrimination was enhanced through closed distribution: "Special closed distributors were established for various elite categories of officials and professionals, supplying them with much higher quality goods" than were commonly available. Even when closed distributors were outlawed, however, they continued to crop up—especially in rationing times—to provide the elite with continued privileges.

Two other markets cropped up in response to continual shortages: kolkhoz markets and Torgsin stores. Kolkhoz markets, which were technically legal, provided peasants with a place to sell their homemade goods and home grown foods. Even though prices in the kolkhoz were significantly higher than anywhere

else, they filled an important market need in times of scarcity. Torgsin stores sold the same goods as other stores, but only traded in foreign currency, precious metals, and rare goods.

Because it was so "extraordinarily difficult to obtain goods… via the state's formal bureaucratic distribution channels," a "second economy" cropped up that traded mostly in state produced goods. People who participated in this economy were labeled "speculators" and punished with significant jail terms. That did not stop it from functioning. People bought goods legally from cities and sold them in rural areas, gained access through store managers, or simply stole them. Given the extreme shortage of goods, it is not surprising that anyone with connections to legal trade was assumed to be involved in illegal trade.

But one commodity was more important than any other in Russian society in 1930s: *blat*. Blat is roughly equivalent to the English words "pull" or "influence". It describes the necessary connections to get what one needs, from a ticket on a railroad to an apartment to a repairman. *Blat* was usually described in terms of friendship—in terms of what help one person might lend another—and only rarely in financial terms. However, there were "professional *blatniks*" who traded in influence via bribes. But professional or not, no Soviet citizen could make progress without blat on some level.

Chapter Three: Palaces on Monday

Soviet citizens in the 1930s believed in a bright future that would be "transformed through industrialization and modern technology." Youth in particular accepted the utopian vision that everything would be remade: "the streets, the

houses, the cities, the social order, human souls." Industrial achievements such as the Moscow Metro, 1200 room hotels, and hydroelectric dams were widely publicized as proof of the unstoppable march of socialism. This progress was typified by Soviet heroes—everyone from polar explorers to workers who greatly surpassed production goals. The latter were known as Stakhanovites, named after a "record-breaking Donbass coalminer, Aleksei Stakhanov." Through small acts of "heroism"—surpassing some socially useful goal from coal mining to enhancing literacy—these people became celebrities and representatives of the reality of the utopian Socialist vision.

Work was the key to this transformation, not only of cities and society, but of individuals: "the idea of human remaking was part of the whole notion of transformation at the heart of the Soviet project. As Bukharin put it, 'plasticity of the organism [is] the silent theoretical premise of our course of action,' for without it, why would anyone bother to make a revolution?" Especially important was the reformation of "criminals and juvenile delinquents through labor…" Stories of people who underwent this change were often presented as conversions in which work for the goal of socialism finally gives meaning to their errant lives: numerous criminals gave themselves up in the 1930s and were given honest work as part of a campaign to reshape the lives of undesirables.

Soviet citizens were expected not only to transform their attitude toward work, but to become more cultured—to move toward becoming an ideal Soviet citizen. Because there was so much "backwardness" in the Soviet Union, this culturalization sometimes involved little more than learning the basics of personal hygiene. Others higher up the cultural ladder were expected to keep up "with the

news and the contemporary cultural scene," go to the theater, and even read classic Russian literature.

Working and becoming more cultured went hand in hand with personal education, work, and political promotions. A large percentage of Soviet citizens wanted to study, advance their careers, and contribute to the advance of Soviet society. The Soviet Union's affirmative action program[1] gave opportunities to millions of citizens to improve their education, work at white collar jobs, and raise the general state of Soviet society and culture.

Chapter Four: The Magic Tablecloth

In the 1930s, one idea "was particularly dear to Soviet citizens:" that "socialism would bring abundance." By 1935, Soviet propaganda was "celebrating the end of privation and the coming of plenty," signaled by announcements of extravagant foreign foods now made in the Soviet Union, champagne for the masses, cologne for housewives, and fine clothing for everyone. People were encouraged to dance, participate in sports, go to the theater, movies, and restaurants, and even attend carnivals.

The newness of this attitude and the continued scarcity of goods implied that only some had access to the most touted items. This "privileged group" included "administrators working in central government, party, industrial, trade-union, planning, and publishing agencies, as well as economists, engineers, and other experts working for state agencies" as well as Stakhanovites. Naturally, the hierarchy was multi-level and extensive; even in factories, dining rooms could be

[1] See: Terry Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939, Cornell University Press, 2001.

separated by management and worker level. Indeed, privileged provisioning was so widespread that one pharmacy advertised anti-malarial medicine for officials.

Privileges naturally extended to housing as well. All classes of ranking officials, many writers, "scientists, composers, artists" and other members of the intelligentsia received relatively good housing; the government even planned huge tracts of quality apartments especially for engineers. This privilege occasionally extended to luxurious residences and dachas. "Writers were particularly favored" in this regard; Moscow even built a "dacha settlement" for the most "distinguished writers and their families." The elites often enjoyed other amenities such as servants and chauffeurs, although this was relatively rare.

Privilege in a Communist state, of course, had an ideological flip side: those who formed this new class rationalized their privilege by pointing to the work they did for the state, or by claiming that all their possessions were state owned and therefore without the bourgeois trappings. They even claimed that privilege was merely "the product of scarcity" and as such, was on its way to being eliminated. Even had that been true, however, complaints were widespread that people from party officials to Stakhanovites were enjoying favors at the expense of the working class. This caused resentment, of course, and in time even the Politburo officially decried the abuses of privilege that its members enjoyed.

Still, there was something special about status. While ranking among civil and military servants had been abolished in the 1920s, it came back in the 1930s. Military personnel had insignias restored, civil servants began to wear uniforms, and the NKVD "acquired a hierarchy of ranks with new military-sounding titles…"

Even artists, writers, and academicians enjoyed new titles of rank, such as the "Distinguished Artist of the Russian Republic."

This hierarchy created patronage—a phenomenon that was "ubiquitous in Soviet society." Whether one wanted materials to fix a house, a paper published, or access to important party members, one needed a patron. These patrons might provide access to goods, "intervene in professional disputes," offer protection from a libelous attack, or support a controversial idea. Most importantly, patrons could sometimes offer protection against accusations. This, in turn had its down side since any patron falling out of favor with the government could do harm to his clients; in a world controlled by patronage, guilt by association was common and potentially ruinous.

Chapter Five: Insulted and Injured

From the outset of the revolution, class shaped Soviet society. Disenfranchised people were known as "alien elements" or "social aliens"—labels that could be extended to include virtually anyone. Indeed, class-based persecution was part of the fabric of Soviet society as "even the courts were supposed to follow principles of 'class justice' by punishing 'social aliens' harshly and showing leniency to proletarians." This legal form of persecution was of course extended to informal settings as the "lower ranks of the party" targeted broader sections of society than the law allowed. Clerics, for example, were often "dekulakized" for no reason—other than a hidden desire to confiscate their property—and honorable members of society were persecuted only because they worked for the Tsarist government years before. Sometimes, local authorities even violated explicit commands

“forbidding social purging” on the grounds that the local populace favored broader oppression of certain classes.

Perhaps in an attempt to formalize and control the process of social persecution, the government began issuing—and denying—passports in 1933 in Moscow and Leningrad. Even this, however, did not control the abuses as local authorities began denying passports to anyone with a connection to a non-proletarian heritage. As was the case with acquiring goods, however, even this problem could be circumvented with powerful enough patronage.

Both the formal and the arbitrary nature of the social oppression of this time can be seen in the war against the kulaks. Starting in 1929 when Stalin called for the “liquidation of kulaks as a class”, extensive efforts were made to rid areas of kulaks. And while the definition of a kulak was problematic, local activists generally interpreted the term to mean anyone hostile to the Soviet government. Unfortunately, in practice the definition was malleable enough that the local peasantry could even use it to settle old scores or persecute an entire ethnic group, such as Ukrainians. Practically, this persecution meant deportation to “special settlements” in the interior of the Soviet Union.[2]

The regime did not isolate its persecution to kulaks; in fact, in the 1930s it practiced “social cleansing, involving the removal of marginal urban residents.” These “socially dangerous elements” might include thieves, prostitutes, beggars, “habitual criminals”, gypsies, or people merely returning from exile. The practice began in Moscow and Leningrad with the advent of the passport program, but was quickly copied “in the provinces”. Originally, these people were deported to labor

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[2] See: Lynne Viola, The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin’s Special Settlements, Oxford University Press, 2007.

camps or resettlements, but the government at one time ordered their execution "immediately and without trial" with a quota of 70,000 persons attached to the order.

People often tried to overcome the stigmatization of "class enemy" by renouncing their past. This might involve divorcing a kulak husband or, as a cleric, renouncing the Church. They usually followed the renunciation with a petition to the government for a reinstatement of rights that was occasionally successful. They also tried legal appeals, claiming, for example, that they should not be held to blame for a spouse's errors, or for being the child of a socially alien element. These appeals gained legitimate support after Stalin declared publicly that "a son does not answer for his father," although such a statement could not be translated into action immediately. In 1937, the government formalized the statement, requiring that all actions "depriving citizens of the USSR of voting rights on the grounds of social origin" should end. Despite the governmental policy, however, persecution continued to be justified as payment for alien social origins.

Under these conditions, people naturally tried to hide their pasts—a practice known as "masking." This involved creating a new identity, which usually included fleeing to another region, acquiring false documents, or simply using a new name. These tactics often failed. Neighbors, workmates, or even journalists actively "unmasked" enemies, reporting false identities to the police. Because political leaders "assumed that a person stigmatized is automatically an enemy," they insisted on constant vigilance to expose and punish those who "masked" their past. This tactic naturally created a culture of fear among even those who had nothing to hide.

Chapter Six: Family Problems

Despite the fact that the "early 1930s were a period of great" social upheaval "in Soviet society," and the fact that numerous stigmatized families faced considerable problems, the Russian family demonstrated remarkable "resilience" and unity.[3] The rapid changes in traditional family structure imposed by the state forced the family to be very flexible, often with large numbers of people living in confined quarters, or maintaining communication across the country and in spite of difficult circumstances such as imprisonment or exile. And while families reacted differently to the pressures of Communism—some children renouncing their accused parents and others refusing to believe in their guilt—as the 1930s progressed, the government's increasingly positive portrayal of the family helped it return to "normalcy".

The normalcy was often tested, however, by "absconding" husbands who ranged from serial husbands to wife beaters. The state received voluminous complaints from women about men who left them pregnant, with babies, for other women, and who refused to pay child support. Both parents, however, could be guilty of neglect; a number of famous cases and even show trials underscored the fact that the state took parental responsibility seriously. But these problems paled in comparison with those of homeless children—a problem that began during the civil war and returned with "collectivization, dekulakization, and famine." While the "authorities dealing with juvenile crime" tried to focus on solutions for this widespread problem, it eventually became so bad that the Politburo enacted "On

[3] See: Orlando Figes, The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia, Metropolitan Books, 2007.

measures of struggle with crime among minors", which punished juveniles down to twelve years old as if they were adults.

Despite the problems with homeless youth and juvenile crime, the Soviet government passed a law in 1936 that made abortions illegal, made getting a divorce more difficult, and more rigidly enforced child support payments. The aim, evidently, was to increase the Soviet Union's population and stabilize its family structure. The government also supported the Wives' Movement, aimed at providing housewives (mostly of upper class families) with fulfilling activities. This movement did little to alleviate the burdens of lower class women—especially working women with children; but it does show that the Soviet Union was interested in increasing opportunities for nearly everyone except enemies of the people.

Chapter Seven: Conversations and Listeners

"The Soviet Union had two ways of finding out about popular opinion: secret police reports and politicians' mail." The NKVD was responsible for the former, for which they submitted detailed reports; and the populace was surprisingly forthcoming in their correspondence about matters such as abuse by public officials. And judging from the detailed reports of the NKVD, opinions expressed by "writers, composers, scientists, and professors"—the intelligentsia—were of particular import to the state. This is evident from the fact that the Politburo monitored cultural activities ranging from the plays presented at the Bolshoi Theater to birthday parties of famous writers.

The NKVD was not the only group to file official reports: party leaders, "the Komsomol, and the Army's political administration" all did so, focusing on talk about government decisions, the state of the economy, or current crises. These comments might express understandable concerns, such as the lack of bread, or incredible political naïveté: "'I hope that comrade Stalin recognizes his error and returns to the correct path.'" After Kirov's murder, some grew even bolder, claiming that Stalin deserved the same fate. And when Hitler rose to power just as hunger was striking the Soviet Union, some claimed that Nazism was preferable.

Surprisingly, the government monitored suicides carefully. In fact, the government assumed that "the person who killed him- or herself was likely to be sending a message to the state." Everyday life was so deeply enmeshed with the government that people often left messages to the state as part of their suicide notes. For example, one man claimed that his suicide was "to call the attention of the center" to some irresponsible behavior. The state took these messages seriously enough that in 1936 Stalin spoke forcefully of the cowardice of suicide as a last opportunity to "betray the party."

If suicide provided an indirect yet final message, letters gave direct input to the regime. Soviet citizens even "shared the authorities' belief that letter-writing was a democratic practice that brought citizens closer to the government." This feeling evidently gave some citizens confidence as they dared to complain in the following way: "'Is it known to you, comrade Kirov, that among the overwhelming majority of workers, and not bad workers, there exist great discontent and lack of confidence in the decisions that the party is taking?'" While some particularly critical letters might bring interrogation or reprisals, the government generally saw most

complaints as helpful and indicative of the populace's belief that people were united with the government in the quest for Socialism.

Perhaps the letters did not provide the government with enough information, because in 1936 it tried an experiment that sought public opinion in open forums. The two subjects for discussion were the "abortion law and the new Constitution." It appears that some people believed that the Constitution implied legitimate rights for citizens, but the majority of people understood that such rights were mirages: "'It's all lies what they write in the draft of the new constitution, that each citizen can write in the press and speak out. Of course it isn't so, you try speaking up, tell how many people died of hunger in the USSR and you'll get 10 years.'" Perhaps this cynicism spilled over into the single party elections as well, although some people expressed sincere delight at the opportunity to vote and political discussions here and there occasionally expressed genuinely oppositionist views.

Most opposition, however, was not truly political—it was casual. While Soviet authorities labeled casual criticism of the regime "hostile", it really had no subversive intent. People cracked jokes about Stalin, speculated about Kirov's murder, jibed sarcastically at Soviet slogans, replaced the words of state acronyms (USSR→CCCP→Smert' Stalina Spaset Rossiiu→ Stalin's Death will Save Russia), created jokes with Soviet words (Kirov spelled backwards "means petty thief"), and even joked about terror and imprisonment. And when the pressures of personal life were too great, they sometimes let fly invective against Stalin or the state in a public setting.

Just as the state was suspicious of its citizens, the citizens were suspicious of the state. People commonly expressed doubt regarding Soviet claims of "economic

achievements" or foreign intrigue. In fact, Soviet citizens became quite adept at reading the truths behind the lies: many a citizen "assumed that the regime was often trying to deceive him" while knowing that "there was a possibility of reading through the deception and getting at some kind of truth." At a time when truth was seldom apparent, people speculated and reasoned about various national issues ranging from the purpose of the census ("military conscription was imminent") to the forces behind Kirov's murder.

Chapter Eight: A Time of Troubles

In February of 1937, "Stalin, Molotov, and Ezhov" delivered speeches that let members of the Communist party know that the USSR's new class of enemies could be found in their ranks: "wreckers were flourishing everywhere in the industrial and transport apparats, overlooked by complacent Communists who had forgotten about vigilance." These people had abused their powers as leaders, cultivating "cults of personality" and luxurious lifestyles. What had been common modes of behavior by government employees became suspect and dangerous. Suddenly, words that would have gotten common citizens imprisoned were found in the pages of *Pravda*.

Common citizens, however, were not the primary targets of the Great Purge. "Communist administrators" were commonly selected, but others might be included: people with a tainted social history, friends and family of the accused, work associates, or even drinking buddies. The process usually began at an institutional meeting in which workers, bosses, administrators, and leaders practiced "criticism and self-criticism"—a process that was intended to find a

scapegoat for the institution's problems. Others were exposed through "elections" in which the government did not "nominate" a candidate (as was the norm), instead relying on local discussion to name former leaders (who had fallen out of favor) as wreckers and saboteurs. These "discussions" often turned into attacks in which scapegoats were quickly identified.

Naturally, people tried to protect their own through a variety of ruses ranging from paying for legal defense to transferring accused parties to distant places. But the Communist Party soon got wise to this subterfuge and declared such "protectionism" to be "counterrevolutionary".

In time, the Purge spread to others who had been previously suspect: former kulaks, children of exiled kulaks, "escaped deportees, religious sectarians, habitual criminals," "marginal" people, exiles from Leningrad (by virtue of possible association with Kirov's murder), former Oppositionists—or associates of Oppositionists—or anyone who may have misspoken politically, no matter how far in the past the conversation occurred. It might also strike those people who were merely associated with the "guilty", such as co-workers, family members, or research associates. Indeed, mere suspicion of illicit associations could be enough to cause arrest. In time, purging enemies became a cultural phenomenon as "unmasking" spies and enemies became common news and children even played at "catching spies." Denunciations became "epidemic" at this time to the point that even newspaper cartoons poked fun at them. But it was no laughing matter: people were executed for offhand remarks, or sent to prison over petty jealousy. As one contemporary said, "Even a minor incident may be fatal."

Naturally, coping after the arrests was difficult. Many people were taken unprepared, children were left alone, and spouses were left wondering where their partners were. Many coped by believing that an arrest was a mistake and that the authorities would right the wrongs quickly. Others believed in their family member's guilt, wondering how a spy could have lived in their midst.[4] In the worst cases, some renounced their parents, convinced that Soviet authority could not have erred. The latter ones expressed complete faith in Communist leaders and even enjoyed the thought of enemies of the people being punished for their "crimes".

Conclusion

From a psychological standpoint, Soviet citizens of the 1930s suffered greatly because of the arbitrary nature of the regime's punishments and rewards. Consequently, people never really felt "normal". Their lives were often controlled by the state, removing a sense of personal investment in daily living, family, work, and the things that most people consider "normal". All one could do under such circumstances was display "passive conformity and outward obedience." Given the arbitrary and disheartening nature of life at this time, it is little wonder that people often became hopeless, seeing themselves as powerless.

But people complained most about their economic situation. Because "the Stalinist regime did little to improve the life of its people in the 1930," people naturally blamed the government for letting "the people go hungry." Even this, however, did not stop people from supporting the regime. In fact, "the young, the

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[4] See The Whisperers, Orlando Figes, 2007, p. 307-315. Figes cites the diary of Julia Piatnitskaia: Writing of her husband who was recently arrested, she said, "Who is he? If he is a professional revolutionary, as he claimed to be, this man I knew for seventeen years, then he was unfortunate: he was surrounded by spies and enemies, who sabotaged his work, and that of many others, and he just didn't see it…. But evidently Piatnitsky never was a professional revolutionary, but a professional scoundrel and spy…. Evidently, he was not the man we thought he was…. And all of us—I, his wife, the children—had no real significance for him."

privileged, office-holders and party members" and other "favored groups" backed the government; others did so merely out of passivity, or perhaps from a desire to avoid punishment. Moreover, as the "repository of national sentiment and patriotism," the state inspired allegiance from a large portion of the population. But the state also inspired confidence in presenting itself as the leaders of progress—as the means to overcome "backwardness" and help people become more cultured. And we should not forget that the state controlled access to all goods from food to apartments; this alone made Soviet citizens cultivate dependence. But whether being persecuted by the government, fighting for food, or denouncing fictitious enemies, *Homo Sovieticus* was "a survivor".