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## The Impact of the Great Purges on the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs

*We must finally understand that of all precious capital in the world, the most precious capital, the most decisive capital is human beings, cadres. We must understand that in our present condition cadres decide everything. If we have good and plentiful cadres in industry, in agriculture, in transport, in the Army, our country will be invincible. If we have no such cadres we will limp with both legs.*

JOSEPH STALIN

Descartes argued that the initial operation in the solution of any complex problem must be its subdivision into a series of smaller, less intricate, and therefore, hopefully, more tractable problems. Following that strategy, this study will examine one particular aspect of the purges—the destruction of the Soviet diplomatic corps—in an attempt to shed more light on the general nature of the purges and to assess the relationship, if any, between the purges and the evolution of Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s. The central tasks, then, are to describe the impact of the “Great Terror” on the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and its embassies, and to evaluate the significance of these developments for both domestic politics and foreign relations of the USSR.

At its inception in October of 1917, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel) was intended to be little more than an agency for the dissemination of propaganda and the publication of the secret treaties of the Entente. The Bolsheviks had not foreseen the possibility of traditional diplomatic relations with the imperialist states because they confidently expected that the rest of Europe's exploited proletariat would quickly follow their example in throwing off the oppressive yoke of the capitalists. They were soon disappointed. As the prospects of world revolution receded ever further into the future, Lenin and his followers were forced to defend the lone socialist state by any means available, including “bourgeois” diplomacy. Responding to this need, G. V. Chicherin and his assistants built a large and efficient commissariat which closely paralleled the British Foreign Office or the Quai d'Orsay in form and function. The construction of a dedicated and able foreign service, whose repre-

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representatives could hold their own in negotiations with the most experienced European diplomats, must be ranked as one of the greatest early accomplishments of the revolutionary regime.<sup>1</sup>

Commissar Chicherin's work and the continuing efforts of his successor, Maxim Litvinov, were completely undone, however, by the Great Purges of 1937–38 which decimated the Soviet diplomatic corps and completely smashed the Narkomindel organization in Moscow.<sup>2</sup> The diplomatic world was shocked when, one by one, the most able representatives of the USSR began to disappear into the maw of the *eshovshchina*. Between 1925 and 1936 the foreign office had issued an annual personnel register, the *Ezhegodnik NKID/Annuaire diplomatique*. Its publication was discontinued in 1936, obviously to prevent embarrassment, since the list of Stalin's victims read like a who's who of Soviet diplomats. The victims included Deputy Foreign Commissars N. I. Krestinskii and G. Ia. Sokol'nikov, as well as former Deputy Commissar and then Ambassador to Turkey L. M. Karakhan, Ambassador<sup>3</sup> to Finland E. A. Asmus, Ambassador to Hungary A. A. Bekzadian, Ambassador to Latvia S. I. Brodovskii, Ambassador to Poland Ia. Kh. Davtian, Ambassador to Norway I. S. Iakubovich, Ambassador to Germany K. K. Iurenev, Ambassador to Turkey M. A. Karskii, Ambassador to Rumania M. S. Ostrovskii, Ambassador to Spain M. I. Rosenberg, Ambassador to Afghanistan B. E. Skvirskii, Ambassador to Mongolia V. K. Tairov, and Ambassador to Denmark N. S. Tikhmenev; and Narkomindel department heads V. N. Barkov (chief of protocol), E. A. Gnedin (press chief), D. G. Shtern (of the Second Western Division), and V. M. Tsukerman (of the Central Asian Division), to name only a few of the more prominent officials.<sup>4</sup> Some legations, most notably the Soviet mission in republican Spain, were completely decimated, while at the commissariat in Moscow certain departments (for example, the Third Western Division) experienced three or four changes in command within twenty months. Diplomats serving abroad were recalled without warning while those working in the commissariat's Moscow offices often simply vanished.<sup>5</sup> They were arrested and either executed or imprisoned in the in-

1. The establishment and early evolution of the Narkomindel are described in detail in Teddy J. Uldricks, "The Development of the Soviet Diplomatic Corps, 1917–1930" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1972).

2. M. M. Lebedynets, a minor Narkomindel official in the Ukraine, was probably the first Soviet diplomat to fall during the Great Terror. He was sentenced to death on December 13, 1934, as part of the Ukrainian White Guard Terrorist Center, in the wake of Kirov's assassination (Hryhory Kostiuk, *Stalinist Rule in the Ukraine: A Study of the Decade of Mass Terror, 1929–39* [New York, 1960], pp. 98–100).

3. Until 1941 the head of a Soviet mission was officially styled *polpred* or *polnomochnyi predstavitel'* rather than ambassador.

4. This and all subsequent biographical and statistical data about the personnel of the Narkomindel, unless otherwise attributed, have been derived from the author's study of all available biographical data on Soviet diplomats and responsible officials of the commissariat. The origins of the information and the biases of the "sample" are discussed in the appendix.

5. Purged diplomats disappeared not only from their embassies, but from the pages of history as well. None of them were mentioned in the first edition of the *Diplomaticheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1948), but the names of a few (for example, Iurenev, Skvirskii) reappeared in the second edition (Moscow, 1960–64), and a few more (such as Davtian) were named in the third edition (Moscow, 1971). The names of such prominent purge victims as Lev Kamenev, Khristian Rakovskii, and Grigorii Sokol'nikov have also been deleted from their dispatches published in *Dokumenty vnesheinei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1957– ).

famous camps. Most of them disappeared into the anonymity which shrouded the whole purge operation, although a few (such as Krestinskii and Sokol'nikov) were put on display at the show trials. It was even rumored in 1938 that a special trial of diplomats was in preparation which would feature V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko, the Soviet consul general in Barcelona and a great hero of 1917, though such a spectacle never materialized.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the rumors which circulated about the fate of their colleagues, most Soviet diplomats abroad seem to have obeyed their recall orders willingly enough, although a few may well have been kidnapped from their own embassies by the NKVD.<sup>7</sup> Their acquiescence was undoubtedly caused by a variety of motives—for many, their sense of duty; for others, disbelief that such horrors could occur in the homeland of socialism; or alternatively, that the purges would affect them; and, in some cases, the simple lack of viable alternatives.<sup>8</sup> To avoid difficulties the government cunningly lured many of its representatives home. M. S. Ostrovskii, Soviet Ambassador to Rumania, refused his summons until he received assurances of his future safety from Marshal Voroshilov. The marshal's promises notwithstanding, Ostrovskii was arrested at the border.<sup>9</sup> F. F. Raskol'nikov, Soviet Ambassador in Bulgaria, refused to return to Russia, fleeing instead to France, only to die within a few months under suspicious circumstances.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet chargé d'affaires in Athens, Alexander Barmin, was more fortunate than many of his associates. He made good his escape, became an American citizen, and wrote a popular volume of memoirs about his grizzly experiences.<sup>11</sup>

The years of the "great terror" were filled with grim ironies for the diplomats. Not only were Litvinov and his colleagues powerless in the face of the onslaught, but the Foreign Commissariat was even forced to justify the slaughter and to aid in its execution. Soviet representatives who lived in fear of their own recall were obliged to assure foreigners as to the justice of the trials and of the guilt of their condemned comrades.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in 1937 the Consular Division of

6. Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York, 1973), p. 609.

7. For an account of a foiled kidnap attempt see Alexander Barmine, *One Who Survived: The Life Story of a Russian under the Soviets* (New York, 1945), pp. 12–16.

8. Cf. Alexander Orlov, *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (New York, 1953), pp. 222–32. Orlov, an intelligence agent who defected, felt that a combination of fear of reprisals against family members in Russia and the perverse belief that an otherwise unjust system would treat *them* fairly accounts for the return to their doom of numerous NKVD field operatives serving abroad.

9. Barmine, *One Who Survived*, p. 21.

10. *Ibid.*; and R. A. Medvedev, *K sudu istorii* (New York, 1974), p. 795, n. 87. Il'ia Ehrenburg claims that Raskol'nikov "had a nervous breakdown and died" (Ilya Ehrenburg, *Memoirs: 1921–1941* [Cleveland and New York, 1963], p. 469; see also V. S. Zaitsev, "Geroi oktiabria i grazhdanskoi voiny," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1963, no. 12, pp. 90–94).

11. See note 7 above.

12. Ivan Maiskii has noted that the purges made it difficult for him to deal with even those sections of Western public opinion usually sympathetic to the USSR. See *B. Shou i drugie: Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 82–83. Joseph E. Davies, the American ambassador in Moscow, was taken in by the public trials. See Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow* (New York, 1941), p. 43. His more sagacious staff members—such as Loy Henderson and the young George Kennan—were able to discern the falsity of the charges. See, for example, Kennan's "Memorandum: The Trial of Radek and Others," February 13, 1937, U.S. Department of State, decimal file no. 861.00/11675.

the NKID issued a certificate to the effect that Kjeller Airdrome near Oslo could and did receive civilian flights even during the winter. This certificate was used by the state in the trial of Piatakov in support of his confession that he had flown to Norway in December of 1935 for a secret meeting with Trotsky. Critics of the trial had pointed out that the airfield in question was not serviceable in the winter.<sup>13</sup>

The extreme secrecy which surrounded most of the purges—the fact that many victims became “unpersons”—makes it difficult to assess their impact on the Soviet diplomatic service with a great degree of precision. A few tentative judgments will be advanced, however. Considering all “responsible” officials who comprised the commissariat’s staff throughout the 1920s (that is, every employee at both Narkomindel headquarters and the foreign missions, from commissars down to third secretaries and attachés, excluding only technical personnel such as typists and translators), there is reliable evidence that at least 20 percent of this group was purged. (In this context the term purge implies arrest followed by execution, imprisonment, or exile, but not the transfers and minor demotions that are common to the organizational politics of any large bureaucratic entity.) For an additional 14 percent of these employees it is possible to obtain detailed career information from some point in the 1920s, but it abruptly terminates in 1937 or 1938. It seems reasonably safe to assume that they, too, were purge victims. Adding these two categories together, it appears that at least 34 percent of the Narkomindel’s entire staff was purged. The available data further indicate that 7 percent of the total group under consideration were definitely not purged (that is, they are known to have survived, escaped arrest, and maintained positions in government or party service). Fourteen percent of the group either died or defected to the West before the Great Purges began. Unfortunately, this analysis leaves fully 45 percent of the group unaccounted for. In the main, these were lower grade diplomats and departmental staff employees within the commissariat who were visible in the relatively open 1920s, but for whom adequate career data are lacking for the 1930s. Some of this group undoubtedly suffered in the purges, but it is impossible to determine what proportion.

The picture becomes much clearer, however, if the sample taken for analysis includes only the elite of the foreign service (that is, commissars, deputy commissars, collegium members, and ambassadors—over one hundred people for the 1920s). Within this group, 44 percent definitely are known to have been purged, while another 18 percent are likely victims since they disappeared at the height of the terror. Thus, on one hand, a minimum of 62 percent of these top level diplomats and commissariat officials fell in the *ezhovshchina*. On the other hand, only 16 percent of this sample remained at their posts unscathed (though not necessarily without some loss in influence or rank), and another 14 percent avoided destruction either by defecting or by dying before the purges occurred. This leaves only 8 percent in the “insufficient information” category.

The general impression among contemporary foreign observers of the Great Terror was that the Narkomindel, together with the Soviet military officer corps, was hit harder by this political holocaust than any other branch of the govern-

13. See *Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Center* (Moscow, 1937), p. 443.

ment or the party apparatus. Severyn Bialer speculates that, "in the prevailing paranoiac atmosphere of spy-hunting," diplomats were inevitable targets because of their constant contact with foreigners, many of whom were presumed to have been foreign intelligence agents.<sup>14</sup> But Roy Medvedev's recent study of the purge era demonstrates that the damage was extensive in every commissariat.<sup>15</sup> The foreign service and the Red Army may only have appeared especially ill-favored to the outside world because of the high visibility of diplomats and generals.

In order to effect a thorough purging, the Narkomindel was infiltrated at the highest levels by the NKVD. Actually, Stalin and the secret police had long maintained a network of informers in the diplomatic ranks. For example, Konstantin Umanskii, of the NKID Press Department, was surreptitiously referred to as "*Chekistik*" (the little Chekist) by his colleagues because he was widely suspected to have been not only an informer, but a *provocateur* as well.<sup>16</sup> Yet when the terror began in earnest, mere spies were no longer sufficient. In 1937 Vasilii Korzhenko, a political police official, was placed in charge of the commissariat's Personnel Department. Korzhenko's daughter relates that he "was not concerned with diplomacy but had absolute power over Foreign Office employees from cipher clerks to ambassadors . . . not only in Moscow but throughout the world. . . . Father's job was to see that everyone kept the party line. If they made one slip, he put through an order for their immediate recall and banishment."<sup>17</sup> Subsequently Korzhenko, himself, was purged and replaced by an even more powerful veteran Chekist, V. G. Dekanozov, who became deputy commissar of foreign affairs in 1939.<sup>18</sup> Most Soviet diplomats in the field were purged during the *ezhovshchina*, from mid-1936 through 1938, while the Narkomindel's central staff was effectively destroyed by Dekanozov in 1939.<sup>19</sup> In that year the American embassy in Moscow reported to Washington that "with only few exceptions, almost the entire staff of the Commissariat has changed since Molotov assumed the functions of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

14. Severyn Bialer, "Andrei Andreevich Gromyko," in *Soviet Leaders*, ed. George Simmonds (New York, 1967), p. 166.

15. Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York, 1971), chapter 6. The combination of pervasive terror and the loss of skilled cadres had a profoundly negative effect not just on diplomacy, but on all areas of Soviet life—in the party, the Red Army, the economy, and so forth. See, for example, N. S. Khrushchev, "Secret Speech," in *The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism* (New York, 1956), especially pp. 22–24; Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 235–38, 255–56, 269; K. E. Bailes, "Technology and Legitimacy: Soviet Aviation and Stalinism in the 1930s," *Technology and Culture*, 17, no. 1 (January 1976): 71–72; and John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command, 1918–1941* (London, 1962), especially chapters 14 and 15.

16. William Reswick, *I Dreamt Revolution* (Chicago, 1952), pp. 153–54.

17. Nora Murry, *I Spied for Stalin* (New York, 1951), p. 83.

18. The displacement of Korzhenko by Dekanozov was part of the 1938 purge of the NKVD which saw the destruction of Ezhov and his henchmen and their replacement by Lavrentii Beria and his protégés. See Boris I. Nicolaevsky, *Power and the Soviet Elite* (Ann Arbor, 1975), pp. 121 and 124. For an example of Dekanozov's handiwork in the Narkomindel see M. Loginov, "Kul't lichnosti chuzhd nashemu stroiu," *Molodoi kommunist*, 1962, no. 1, pp. 53–54.

19. Gustav Hilger and Alfred G. Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies: A Memoir-History of German-Soviet Relations, 1918–1941* (New York, 1953), p. 292.

. . . Among the minor officials of the Foreign Office at least 90% have been replaced since the appointment of Molotov."<sup>20</sup>

This radical displacement of personnel combined with the atmosphere of terror must have brought the normal functioning of Soviet diplomacy almost to a complete halt. Reflecting on the period just before his own defection in 1937, Barmin comments: "I was uneasy, for I was conscious of a mysterious process developing in my own country. The Commissariat of Foreign Affairs seemed to be suffering from a strange torpor. For some months I had been left without instructions or information. Krestinskii, deputy to Foreign Commissar Litvinov, had just been relieved of his post. The signature of Stern, director of the German and Balkan Department, had suddenly ceased to appear on official documents. My dispatches remained unanswered."<sup>21</sup> American diplomats reported that the *ezhovshchina* had so paralyzed the Narkomindel that Russia's representatives could no longer be relied upon either to explain Soviet policies adequately or to convey foreign views to the Kremlin with any precision. Loy Henderson, the American chargé in Moscow, commented that "some of the officials of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs are so patently in abject terror that one must pity them. They fear to talk on almost any subject and apparently dread meeting foreign visitors, particularly those from the local diplomatic corps."<sup>22</sup> Pierrepont Moffat of the State Department's Division of European Affairs was equally critical in his assessment of Dmitrii S. Chuvakhin, the first secretary who then headed the Soviet embassy in Washington: "I have talked with Henderson about the Soviet Chargé. His name is Chuvakhin. Henderson confirms my impression that he is thoroughly scared and not the sort of man who would either trust his own judgment or assume any responsibility. I asked Henderson if he could get a message straight; Henderson replied definitely in the negative."<sup>23</sup>

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, an extremely delicate affair handled with great skill by the Russians, constitutes the one major exception to this general picture of disorganization and immobilizing fear. It should be noted, however, that at the crucial stages these negotiations were handled by Stalin and his protégé Molotov. The only experienced Soviet diplomat to play a significant role in these *pourparlers* was G. A. Astakhov, the embassy counselor in Berlin, and he was involved principally in the preliminaries.<sup>24</sup> In the main, the devastated Commissariat of Foreign Affairs was hard pressed to carry out even the most elementary diplomatic tasks.<sup>25</sup>

20. *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Soviet Union, 1933-1939* (Washington, D.C., 1952), p. 772.

21. Barmin, *One Who Survived*, p. 3.

22. Henderson to secretary of state, June 10, 1937, decimal file no. 861.00/11705.

23. Moffat to Sumner Wells, August 3, 1939, decimal file no. 701.6111/954.

24. For a thorough discussion of these negotiations see Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany and the Soviet Union, 1939-1941* (Leiden, 1954), pp. 4-52; and D. C. Watt, "The Initiation of the Negotiations Leading to the Nazi-Soviet Pact: A Historical Problem," in *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr*, ed. Chimen Abramsky (Hamden, Conn., 1974), pp. 152-70.

25. It is hard to disagree with Adam Ulam's assessment: "With most Soviet diplomats and intelligence operatives unmasked as traitors, it is difficult to see how Soviet foreign policy could operate at all. . . . But the problem that confronted Soviet policymakers who had somehow escaped the net was how to secure the data on which any policy must be based.

Amidst this general chaos and carnage, only a few prominent Soviet diplomats managed, inexplicably, to survive: Commissar Maxim Litvinov and his deputy, Vladimir Potemkin, as well as Soviet Ambassador to Sweden Alexandra Kollontai, Ambassador to Great Britain Ivan Maiskii, Ambassador to France Iakov Surits, Ambassador to Italy Boris Shtein, Ambassador to the United States Alexander Troianovskii, and Counselor at the Embassy in Washington Konstantin Umanskii. Certainly this tiny nucleus did provide a bare minimum of continuity between the pre- and post-purge diplomatic corps, and they also served to train the new generation of Soviet diplomats. It is impossible, though, to tell why these particular individuals escaped the Great Purges. There seems to have been little correlation between a diplomat's chances for survival and his past political associations. While one surviving diplomat, S. I. Kavtaradze, was widely known as a crony of Stalin, Maiskii and Potemkin were former Mensheviks and Troianovskii had maintained connections with Bukharin. Even Il'ia Ehrenburg, a close friend of Litvinov, was baffled as to why the foreign commissar was spared while his whole organization was destroyed. "Why, having put to death almost all of Litvinov's assistants, did he [Stalin] not have the obstreperous Maxim himself shot? It is extremely puzzling, certainly Litvinov expected a different ending. From 1937 until his last illness he kept a revolver on his bedside table because, if there were to be a ring at the door in the night, he was not going to wait for what came after."<sup>26</sup>

Even those diplomats who managed to avoid the ravages of the *eshovshchina* now found their role and influence in Soviet diplomacy totally eclipsed by new men. Litvinov lost all touch with the foreign policy-making process after his forced retirement as commissar in 1939. Although he continued to serve as the nominal chief of the party Central Committee's Foreign Affairs Information Bureau and as a deputy on the Supreme Soviet, he was rarely seen in public and was clearly out of favor at the Kremlin.<sup>27</sup> Litvinov was also dropped from the Central Committee in February of 1941 for "inability to discharge obligations." The former commissar was rescued from anonymity and given the crucial Washington embassy later that same year, however, when the fortunes of war brought Russia into alliance with the Western powers. Nonetheless, Litvinov's influence remained quite limited. He complained to the American undersecretary of state, Sumner Wells, "that he was unable to communicate with Stalin, whose isolation

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How did one appraise a diplomatic dispatch filed by a man whose superior had just been shot as a foreign agent?" (Adam Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* [New York, 1973], p. 473).

26. Ilya Ehrenburg, *The Post-War Years, 1945-1954* (London, 1966), p. 277. Litvinov may have carried a pistol even before the purges (see Richard K. Debo, "Dutch-Soviet Relations: 1917-1924," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 4, no. 2 [Summer 1970]: 209, n. 31). N. S. Khrushchev alleges that the NKVD actually planned to murder Litvinov, disguising the crime as a traffic accident. Khrushchev does not explain why these plans were never carried out (*Khrushchev Remembers* [Boston, 1970], p. 278).

27. Louis Fischer notes that "Litvinov retired to a bungalow in the woods outside Moscow. He played much bridge, learned to type, read poetry and fiction, and took long walks. He was completely isolated from Soviet politics" (see Louis Fischer, *The Life and Death of Stalin* [New York, 1952], p. 56). This picture is confirmed by Ehrenburg, *Post-War Years*, pp. 276-78.

bred a distorted view of the West. . . .”<sup>28</sup> He was recalled in 1943 and replaced by the young Andrei Gromyko. Litvinov continued to hold the title of deputy foreign minister but, according to Ehrenburg, he was left to languish in bureaucratic backwaters and soon was pensioned off.<sup>29</sup> At about the same time Ivan Maiskii lost his post in London to another novice diplomat, F. T. Gusev. Maiskii was “promoted” to deputy commissar and assigned to relatively minor tasks in connection with the reparations problem—much to his surprise and against his will.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, other Narkomindel veterans (for example, Shtein, Surits, Troianovskii), each of whom had held prestigious ambassadorial appointments, now found themselves relegated to minor functions deep within the bowels of the commissariat. Thus, by the end of 1943, the Chicherin-Litvinov generation of Soviet diplomats had almost entirely passed from the scene.<sup>31</sup>

This mass exodus of the older generation opened the Narkomindel to the entrance of a new one. Between 1937 and 1944 a new, Stalinist Narkomindel was created. In these years the commissariat, soon to be renamed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was flooded with inexperienced but eager recruits who quickly assumed responsible positions and who, even today, still dominate the Soviet *corps diplomatique*. From among this group Andrei Gromyko has become the Soviet foreign minister, while Valerian Zorin, Nikolai Fedorenko, Iakov Malik, Arkadii Sobolev, and Fedor Gusev have headed Russian embassies in major capitals around the world. This batch of inexperienced young men was leavened with a sprinkling of high ranking Stalinists and seasoned journalists in order to provide a crucial minimum of leadership and knowledge of the outside world. For example, the prosecutor in the Great Purge trials, Andrei Vyshinskii, and the general secretary of the Profintern, S. A. Lozovskii, both became deputy commissars under Molotov, while a veteran foreign correspondent, N. G. Pal'gunov, took over the NKID Press Department.

28. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C., 1963), pp. 522–24.

29. Ehrenburg, *Post-War Years*, p. 279.

30. Ivan Maisky, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador, The War: 1939–1943* (New York, 1967), pp. 365–81. Maiskii left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1946 when he was elected a member of the prestigious Academy of Sciences. He was subsequently arrested in February of 1953 in what may have been the advent of a new Great Purge. Stalin died just two weeks later, but Maiskii remained in custody until his trial in the summer of 1955. Although charged with treason and espionage, he was found guilty only of certain “errors” in the performance of his former diplomatic duties and was sentenced to six years in prison. Maiskii was immediately pardoned by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, reinstated in the party, and permitted to resume his academic work (see Alexander Nekrich, “The Arrest and Trial of I. M. Maisky,” *Survey*, 22, no. 3/4 [Summer/Autumn 1976]: 313–20).

31. Historians differ in their estimates as to why Stalin chose to remove the last remnant of Narkomindel veterans from major responsibilities in 1943. Adam Ulam argues that Stalin’s post-Teheran confidence in his ability to deal with the Western leaders made him feel less dependent on the old-line, professional diplomats (see Ulam, *Stalin*, p. 292). Ehrenburg believes that the withdrawal of such pro-Western ambassadors as Litvinov and Maiskii was intended as a sign of Stalin’s displeasure over the continued postponement of a second front in France (Ilya Ehrenburg, *The War: 1941–1945* [Cleveland and New York, 1964], p. 119). Vojtech Mastny has gone so far as to suggest that the dismissal of these two living symbols of inter-Allied cooperation may have been intended by Stalin as a signal to Hitler of Russia’s willingness to consider a separate peace (Vojtech Mastny, “The Cassandra in the Foreign Commissariat: Maxim Litvinov and the Cold War,” *Foreign Affairs*, 54, no. 2 [January 1976]: 368).



The profile of this second generation of Soviet diplomats differs markedly in several important respects from that of the old diplomatic corps of the Chicherin and Litvinov years. First of all, these recent recruits constituted a new generation in the most literal sense. The average age in 1938 of high ranking NKID officials who were purge victims was fifty-five years, while their replacements had an average age upon entering the foreign service of thirty-three years and a modal age of thirty-one years. In its early days the Narkomindel had drawn most of its personnel from the middle classes (about 70 percent), but with a significant admixture of nobles (17 percent). Workers and peasants made up only a tiny fraction (5 percent and 8 percent respectively) of the corps at that time.<sup>32</sup> Because of the insufficiency and unreliability of data on social class in the Stalinist period it is impossible to give exact percentages on the social origins of those diplomats recruited during or soon after the purges. It can be said with reasonable assurance, however, that the sons of peasants and workers far outnumbered all others combined in this group. The two generations also differ in educational background. In the 1920s the NKID could boast that fully a third of its members had studied in graduate or professional schools and that another third had received a college education. Degrees, not only from Russian schools, but also from leading European and American universities, in medicine, law, and the liberal arts were quite common. In contrast, many members of the new generation had no postsecondary education and those who did have advanced training typically attended various kinds of technical institutes.<sup>33</sup> Few of them had studied the liberal arts and almost none had attended foreign universities. The two generations of diplomats differ greatly in nationality terms as well. Only a minority (43 percent) of the veteran foreign service officers had been of Great Russian extraction, and the commissariat had included representatives from all the important ethnic groups of the old tsarist empire (for example, Jews 17 percent, Ukrainians 10 percent). In contrast, Great Russians comprised fully 80 percent of the new recruits in the NKID.

Perhaps a more important contrast, though, was the radically different formative experiences that each group had undergone. During the Chicherin and Litvinov era most of the important diplomatic posts had gone to men of the revolutionary intelligentsia from tsarist days. Their common experiences included the underground struggle against the autocracy, long periods of exile (often abroad), the thrilling victories of the February and October revolutions in 1917, and the grim years of the Russian civil war. These men were genuine intellectuals who were familiar with conditions abroad and who spoke numerous foreign languages. Fully a quarter of them came from the ranks of the Old Bolsheviks and another 30 percent had joined the party in the early years of the

32. These and subsequent figures on the Narkomindel from 1917 to 1930 are taken from chapter 8 of my dissertation, cited in note 1 above, and from my article, "The Soviet Diplomatic Corps in the Čičerin Era," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 23, no. 2 (1975): 213-24.

33. Anatoly Dobrynin, for example, graduated with a degree in engineering from the Aviation Institute. His subsequent assignment to the Narkomindel came as a complete and apparently not altogether pleasing surprise. Iakov Malik graduated from the Kharkov Institute of National Economy, while Arkadii Sobolev received his diploma from the Leningrad Electrical Engineering Institute.

Soviet regime. The "Gromyko cohort" presents a sharp contrast to all of this. The typical member of this second generation was only twelve years old when the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd. These men spent the formative years of their adolescence in the NEP period of Soviet history when Stalin was besting his rivals for Lenin's mantle. Few of them were proficient in foreign languages and even fewer had traveled outside of Russia.<sup>34</sup> Their diverse former careers included work in industry, education, the military, other branches of government bureaucracy, and the party apparatus. (Gromyko had been a senior research associate in agricultural economics at the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences; N. I. Charonov, the new ambassador to Greece and Albania, had directed the chartering of foreign steamers for Soviet use; V. K. Derevianskii, the new ambassador to Finland, had been the manager of an electrode factory in Moscow.) Significantly, a large proportion of the new diplomats had joined the party quite recently, some as late as 1938. This, no doubt, is why they survived the Great Purges which had destroyed much of the party elite. In all these respects the second generation diplomats shared the same social, political, and educational profile as other members of the post-purge generation who were flooding into the sorely depleted ranks of the government and the party.<sup>35</sup>

Numerous historians have hypothesized that Stalin found widespread support for the purges and so readily replaced his victims precisely because the first generation to mature under Soviet rule was ready and anxious to displace their elders.<sup>36</sup> As Robert Conquest has put it: "The earlier leaders had wished to preserve all political rights for the limited leading membership of the old Party. Stalin, in destroying that Party, in a sense threw the positions of power open. He instituted the *carrière ouverte aux talents* in place of the old system. . . . But at least any man, whatever his origins and however recently he had joined

34. Charles E. Bohlen, who served in the American embassy in Moscow during the purges, comments: "Most of the new officials seem to have been selected because of their non-experience or non-connection with foreign affairs. Among the new officials mentioned in an Embassy dispatch was Andrei Gromyko. This was the first time, I think, that anyone had heard the name Gromyko in the foreign service of the Soviet Union. During this period, he came to lunch at Spaso House, and I think it was the first time he had ever had a meal with foreigners. It was quite apparent that Gromyko, a professor of Economics, had virtually no knowledge of foreign affairs. He was ill at ease and obviously fearful of making some social blunder during the luncheon" (Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* [New York, 1973], p. 65). Also see David Kelly, *The Ruling Few: Or the Human Background to Diplomacy* (London, 1952), p. 374.

35. New recruits into the party apparatus, for example, showed many of these same career characteristics. Cf. Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1971), pp. 440-44.

36. Two survivors of the purges note that "the zeal with which young people and subordinates strove to 'unmask' and accuse their seniors was particularly noteworthy. Students 'unmasked' their professors, humble party members denounced those in official positions, junior officials accused those above them. This general revolt of the subordinate, particularly inside the party, provided an outlet for the ambitious and a quick and easy road to promotion. This was one of the deepest roots of the events of the Yezhov period" (F. Beck [pseud.] and W. Godin, *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession* [London, 1951], p. 30). There is no evidence, however, that the purge of the Narkomindel was either caused or greatly expanded by such ruthless careerism. For the most part the new generation of diplomats was brought into the commissariat from outside in order to replace veterans who had already been purged or were foredoomed if still in place.

the Party, could be sure of a good post if he exhibited adequate servility and ruthlessness."<sup>37</sup> The transition from the Chicherin-Litvinov generation to the Gromyko generation in the Soviet diplomatic service provides a good example of this phenomenon. Actually, this development had begun even before the Great Terror. A trickle of men who fit the second generation profile had entered the Narkomindel between 1931 and 1936 (for example, N. I. Generalov, E. V. Rubinin, I. V. Samylovskii). From 1937 on the trickle became a deluge. Apparently the Stalinist party secretariat, which was ultimately responsible for allocating party talent, had already decided to refashion the Foreign Commissariat more to its liking.<sup>38</sup> Although the *ezhovshchina* did not initiate the process, it radically accelerated the infusion of new cadres into the Narkomindel and, thereby, drastically heightened their impact on the diplomatic service. Certainly this new "Soviet" generation would have eventually dominated the NKID even without the purge, but it would have done so only gradually (as was the case before 1937), and it would have remained a minority within the commissariat for several more years. Moreover, the new men would have begun in lesser positions and received valuable in-service training under the tutelage of veteran diplomats.<sup>39</sup>

The changes in personnel inevitably led to an alteration in the style of the Narkomindel's operation. Pressed into responsible positions with no experience and little training, the novice diplomats, on occasion, did flounder, adopting a hypercautious approach to diplomacy that often led their foreign colleagues to exasperation. A drastic restriction in freedom of maneuver was one of the hallmarks of the new NKID. Even in the Stalinist 1930s, Commissar Litvinov seems to have enjoyed a reasonable degree of autonomy as the spokesman for Soviet foreign policy at Geneva. As one knowledgeable observer noted:

Litvinov was never a member of the all-powerful Politburo in Moscow. It was often asserted by well-informed persons that he had no real influence and was merely a mouthpiece of the inner cabinet. No one who witnessed his activities in Geneva could readily believe this. It is not hard to see when a delegate is merely acting on instructions. Litvinov rarely asked for time to consult his government; he seemed always ready to decide on the spot

37. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 639. Also see T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917-1967* (Princeton, 1968), chapter 6, for a discussion of the "new elite" coming to dominate the party. Also see Beck and Godin, *Russian Purge*, pp. 210-26; and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p. 89.

38. It should be noted, however, that while the purge greatly altered the character of the commissariat, its scope was not limited to experienced diplomatic cadres alone. Its victims also included numerous officials who joined the NKID between 1931 and 1936 and even some of the most recent recruits who had entered during the terror.

39. A statistical profile of the Narkomindel staff in 1933, published by the government, showed that the personnel characteristics of the commissariat had changed only gradually since Chicherin's retirement. The foreign office was still a bourgeois stronghold, although the percentage of responsible officials from working-class backgrounds had risen from 5 percent to 19 percent. The educational level of the NKID also remained high, with nearly 60 percent of its officials having graduated from one or another sort of higher educational institution. See *Sostav rukovodiashchikh rabotnikov i spetsialistov Soiuza SSR* (Moscow, 1936), pp. 296-303.

when to press his argument, to propose a compromise, or to resign himself to accepting the majority view. It was clear that he had at least as free a hand as was generally given to the Foreign Ministers of the democratic powers.<sup>40</sup>

Soviet diplomats never again exercised this kind of latitude.<sup>41</sup> This was true even of Commissar Molotov, who appears to have been one of Stalin's most trusted lieutenants at that time. In the judgment of Gustav Hilger, a veteran German diplomat who participated along with the Soviet foreign commissar in the negotiation of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, "Molotov is a highly efficient administrator, a capable executive of policies that are handed down to him, and an experienced bureaucrat. In contrast to his predecessor in the Foreign Commissariat, however, he has no creative mind. In negotiations which I witnessed or in which I took part, he never showed any personal initiative, but seemed to keep strictly to the rules laid down by Stalin. When problems came up, he would regularly say that he had to consult his 'government.'"<sup>42</sup>

Yet another important change related to the Great Purges saw the NKID drawn deeply into espionage work. Between 1924 and approximately 1937, Soviet career diplomats remained relatively free of compromising entanglements with either revolutionary movements or covert intelligence operations.<sup>43</sup> With the onset of the purges, however, the NKVD moved into the Foreign Commissariat in force (Korzhenko, Dekanozov, and so forth), and apparently began to involve foreign service personnel directly in their clandestine activities.<sup>44</sup>

The new breed of Soviet diplomats differed from their predecessors in two other important ways. They were farther removed from the decision-making process in foreign affairs, and Stalin may have perceived them to have been more reliable instruments for the execution of his policy. Even in the 1920s the Narkomindel had not made Soviet foreign policy; that was the prerogative of the Politburo. But Chicherin and his commissariat had played an important role in policy formulation and, more important, a number of NKID members—

40. F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, vol. 1 (London, 1952), pp. 358–59.

41. Philip E. Mosely, who served with many of the new generation Soviet diplomats on various inter-Allied commissions at the close of the Second World War, described them as men with no initiative or latitude in negotiations who were hamstrung by their instructions from Moscow. He noted, too, that they lacked knowledge or understanding of foreign nations and that they were uncomfortable—even "wooden"—in negotiating. They also seemed nearly paralyzed by the fear of failure (see Philip E. Mosely, *The Kremlin and World Politics* [New York, 1960], pp. 3–41). Litvinov was also highly critical of the men who had replaced him at the top of the Narkomindel apparatus. He told an American journalist that the Foreign "Commissariat is run by three men [Molotov, Vyshinskii, and Dekanozov] and none of them understand America or Britain" (quoted in Mastny, "Cassandra," p. 371).

42. Hilger and Meyer, *Incompatible Allies*, p. 290.

43. Uldricks, "Soviet Diplomatic Corps, 1917–1930," pp. 255–57. Also see Alexandre Barmine, "A Russian View of the Moscow Trials," *International Conciliation: Documents for the Year 1938*, no. 337, pp. 48–49.

44. Iakov Malik is a good example of the new generation of Soviet diplomats who were willing to carry out, and even supervise, covert espionage operations (see Jack Anderson and Les Whitten, "Soviet U.N. Envoy Linked to Spying," *Washington Post*, February 11, 1975).

Kamenev, Karakhan, Krestinskii, Rakovskii, Trotsky, and so forth—were counted among the Soviet foreign policy-making elite (not because of their diplomatic service, but because of their party status).<sup>45</sup> The purges changed all this. After 1939 the only politically influential officials in the Narkomindel were Stalin's personal representatives, Molotov and Vyshinskii. In addition, the new generation of diplomats carried out Stalin's instructions fully and precisely (within the limits set by their abilities and lack of experience) without question or challenge.<sup>46</sup> Certainly the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs under Chicherin and Litvinov had been efficient and reliable in the execution of official policy. Nevertheless, the pathologically suspicious dictator undoubtedly preferred totally dependent servitors to knowledgeable men capable of independent judgment.<sup>47</sup>

Thus it can be seen that the Great Terror accomplished the near total destruction of that talented and urbane corps of diplomats organized under Commissars Chicherin and Litvinov. The new Ministry of Foreign Affairs which emerged from the purges differed radically from its predecessor in the nature of its personnel, in the style of its diplomacy, and in its relationship to the political leadership of the state.

Having described the impact of the Great Purges on one particular segment of the Soviet establishment, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, the next task is to evaluate the significance of these developments for the purge process in general. Of course, it is not possible to "explain" the purges completely in terms of their effects on the Narkomindel. However, this detailed evidence concerning victims, their replacements, and the survivors in the diplomatic corps can provide valuable parameters for testing the validity of certain general theories which purport to explain why the *ezhovshchina* occurred and to determine its overall significance in the history of the USSR. Conversely, general

45. On the role of the Narkomindel in the making of foreign policy see Uldricks, "Soviet Diplomatic Corps, 1917-1930," pp. 166-80; Jon D. Glassman, "Soviet Foreign Policy Decision Making," *Columbia Essays in International Affairs: The Dean's Papers, 1967*, ed. Andrew W. Cordier (New York, 1968), 3:373-402; Vernon V. Aspaturian, *Process and Power in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Boston, 1971), pp. 555-88; and Robert M. Slusser, "The Role of the Foreign Ministry," *Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Ivo J. Lederer (New Haven, 1962), pp. 211-39.

46. The American chargé in Moscow reported: "Since as indicated above the new incumbents without exception appear to be persons with no formal experience in matters relating to foreign affairs, the opinion may be offered that the Kremlin desires to have in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs Soviet citizens who have had no contact with foreigners or foreign thought and who consequently in their dealings with foreign representatives here will, knowing no other, reflect only the orthodox Soviet point of view unencumbered by any knowledge or experience of life abroad" (Stuart E. Grummon to secretary of state, July 6, 1939, decimal file no. 861.621/41).

47. Citing Gromyko, Malik, G. N. Zarubin, Zorin, and Pavlov as examples in the diplomatic service, Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov argues that "the new generation, free from past 'errors' and deviations, lacking in self-will, efficient and devoted, ready to act and not to reason and, most important, having grown up under the eyes of Stalin himself and passed their lives as part of a 'collective,' was capable of everything except independent thought" (Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, *Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party* [New York, 1959], pp. 164-65).

interpretations of the purges must also account for the specific evolution of the NKID from 1936 through 1939.

Professor Vernon Aspaturian has advanced the theory that the purging of the Soviet foreign office must have been part of Stalin's ongoing campaign to crush his opponents. He claims that "the diplomatic service was a veritable nest of anti-Stalinist sentiment, if not intrigue, and many indiscreetly voiced their sentiments to their younger subordinates and to foreigners. Stalin had his network of spies in the Foreign Commissariat and he kept abreast of all rumors, real and fabricated, that circulated among Soviet diplomats. It was inevitable that the diplomatic service would be caught in the mechanisms of the great purge, since it was vulnerable on a number of counts."<sup>48</sup> Aspaturian also refers to the Chicherin generation of Soviet diplomats as an "aggregation of brilliant but ideologically errant talent," with the implication that ideological deviation was the prime motivation for the destruction of the existing Narkomindel cadres.<sup>49</sup> This view must be rejected on two grounds. First, it fails to harmonize with the general nature of the purges. Several recent studies have shown that the destruction of genuinely oppositionist factions was a minor theme of the purges (even though most victims were *accused* of left or right deviationism), since these groups had already been destroyed or paralyzed much earlier. The main thrust of the Great Terror of 1937–38 was directed against the Stalinists themselves and against those who generally accepted Stalin's leadership.<sup>50</sup> Second, Aspaturian's characterization of the NKID is simply inaccurate. A detailed analysis of politics and political opinion within Chicherin's commissariat reveals a group in which almost all elements of the Soviet political spectrum are represented and which can in no way be labeled anti-Stalinist in the aggregate. In fact, as diplomats charged with the responsibility of maintaining good relations with Russia's neighbors, they had a certain professional interest in the triumph of Stalin's "socialism in one country" over Trotsky's "permanent revolution."<sup>51</sup>

A more widely accepted theory, advanced by Professor Robert C. Tucker in an article written several years ago, identifies foreign policy considerations as a primary motive behind the Great Purges. According to this interpretation, collective security, the policy of attempting to strengthen the resolve of the League of Nations and to secure bilateral pacts (especially with Britain and France) against the menace of Nazi aggression, was never Stalin's policy. Rather, Stalin is alleged to have contemplated the Nazi-Soviet Pact as early as 1934! Such a pact, it is argued, would not have been merely a defensive agreement. It would have been an active partnership of the two "totalitarian" powers for massive territorial aggrandizement.<sup>52</sup> But Stalin's path to Hitler was blocked, in this

48. Aspaturian, *Process and Power*, p. 628. This view of the Narkomindel is shared by David J. Dallin, *From Purge to Coexistence* (Chicago, 1964), p. 212.

49. Aspaturian, *Process and Power*, p. 630.

50. Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (New York, 1973), p. 346; and Ulam, *Stalin*, p. 393.

51. Uldricks, "Soviet Diplomatic Corps, 1917–1930," pp. 180–90; and Uldricks, "Soviet Diplomatic Corps in the Čičerin Era," pp. 219–23.

52. Robert C. Tucker, "Stalin, Bukharin, and History as Conspiracy," in Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen, eds., *The Great Purge Trial* (New York, 1965), p. xxxvi. Also see Slusser, "Role of the Foreign Ministry," pp. 214–30; and George F. Kennan,

view, by a moderate faction on the Politburo which apparently enforced the collective security campaign against his will.<sup>53</sup> Hence the Great Terror. By destroying the veteran Bolshevik cadres whose ideological scruples are said to have blocked an agreement with Nazi Germany, Stalin is supposed to have freed himself for a sinister deal with Hitler in 1939. The show trials then served as a signal to Hitler that Stalin was ready for an alliance.<sup>54</sup>

Convincing evidence to support this thesis is lacking. The nature of the purges, far from demonstrating the validity of Tucker's thesis, points in the opposite direction. First, the fact that the *ezhovshchina* was dysfunctional (that is, it significantly diminished the national power and prestige of the USSR) seems to indicate that it was not motivated by foreign policy considerations. The destruction of the officer corps and much of the technical intelligentsia substantially weakened the bargaining position of the Russians in seeking an alliance with either the Western powers or Hitler.<sup>55</sup> Second, if the Great Terror is construed as a prerequisite to the Nazi-Soviet Pact, then its impact on the Narkomindel is inexplicable. Certainly Litvinov and some of his associates were closely identified with a strongly anti-German interpretation of collective security.<sup>56</sup> They were, in a sense, pro-British.<sup>57</sup> But there was also the pro-German Chicherin faction of the NKID which, although its dean had retired from the diplomatic service, could have been restored to its former leading role in the commissariat. The purge of the diplomatic corps, however, did just the opposite. The pro-Rapallo wing of the Narkomindel (Krestinskii,<sup>58</sup> Karakhan, and others) was

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*Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (New York, 1961), pp. 288–91, 296. For earlier expressions of this interpretation of the purges see Boris Nikolaevskii, "Stalin i ubiistvo Kirova," *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, 1956, no. 10, p. 186 and no. 12, pp. 239–40; Franz Borkenau, *European Communism* (New York, 1953), pp. 117, 132–35, 234–35; W. G. Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent* (London, 1939), pp. 18–34, 37–40; and Erich Wollenberg, *The Red Army: A Study of the Growth of Soviet Imperialism* (London, 1940), p. 237. Cf. Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York, 1969), p. 382. Daniels moots the opposite possibility—that "fear of criticism of his [Stalin's] impending alliance with democratic forces abroad, contributed to his decision to liquidate the oppositionists."

53. Cohen, *Bukharin*, p. 360.

54. Tucker, "Stalin, Bukharin, and History as Conspiracy," pp. xxxvi–xxxix; and Slusser, "Role of the Foreign Ministry," p. 231.

55. On the dysfunctional nature of the purges see Barrington Moore, Jr., *Terror and Progress—USSR: Some Sources of Change and Stability in the Soviet Dictatorship* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), pp. 175–76; and Roger Pethybridge, *The Social Prelude to Stalinism* (London, 1974), p. 315.

56. For discussions of Litvinov's political orientation and his role in Soviet diplomacy see Raoul Girardet, "Litvinov et ses énigmes," *Les Relations Germano-Soviétiques de 1933 à 1939*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Duroselle (Paris, 1954), pp. 103–35; and Henry L. Roberts, "Maxim Litvinov," *The Diplomats, 1919–1939*, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York, 1963), pp. 344–77.

57. The terms pro-British, pro-German, and so forth are used here not in the sense of any emotional attachment or political commitment to these nationalities or states, but only to indicate the general foreign policy orientation which various Narkomindel figures considered optimal for the USSR.

58. Krestinskii is an especially good example of a pro-German diplomat who fell victim to the purges. The staff of the German embassy in Moscow considered him an important

completely destroyed, while Anglophiles like Litvinov and Maiskii and Germanophobes like Kollontai survived. The arrest of Karl Radek is significant in this context as well. Radek, though not formally a diplomat, had been instrumental previously in bringing Moscow and Berlin together and he had even participated in an earlier ill-starred campaign for Fascist-Communist cooperation.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the contention that a purge of the Bolshevik elite was necessary before any agreement with Hitler could be negotiated is insupportable.<sup>60</sup> The Peace of Brest-Litovsk had created considerable controversy in party circles, but, as a necessity for the physical security of the regime, it had been signed nonetheless. In Marxist terms the Nazi dictatorship of the 1930s was neither more nor less suitable as a treaty partner for a “workers’ state” than Imperial Germany had been in 1918. Bukharin and his faction would certainly have noisily opposed any deal with Nazism, but would they have been any more effective than they had been in decrying the collectivization of agriculture (which had led to a full-scale civil war in the countryside and which had been attacked by both “left” and “right” oppositionists)? The purges, either in general or in the diplomatic corps specifically, simply make no sense in terms of *any* foreign policy objectives.

There is an alternative explanation of the Great Purges which does seem to fit what is known of their impact on the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. In an apparent departure from his earlier emphasis on foreign policy motives, Robert Tucker has, in his admirable recent biography of Stalin’s early years, laid the groundwork for an interpretation of the purges as primarily a psychological phenomenon—a bloody trauma necessary to bring Russia’s external view of Stalin and his own internal image of himself into alignment. In Tucker’s words: “In the terror of the thirties, untold thousands of loyal party members and other Soviet citizens would have to be condemned as covert enemies of the

advocate of Russo-German cooperation (see Herbert von Dirksen, *Moscow, Tokyo, London: Twenty Years of German Foreign Policy* [London, 1957], p. 91). It was Krestinskii who, as deputy commissar of foreign affairs, had tried to prevent the rapid deterioration of relations between the USSR and Hitler’s Germany in October of 1933. The *Führer*, however, had no interest in a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Krestinskii’s aborted mission to Berlin is discussed in Gerhard L. Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler’s Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933–36* (Chicago, 1970), p. 81. At his trial Krestinskii was, of course, accused of striving “to hamper, hinder and prevent the normalization of relations between the Soviet Union and Germany along normal diplomatic lines” (Tucker and Cohen, eds., *The Great Purge Trial*, p. 51). This seems to have been precisely the reverse of the truth.

59. Radek’s role in Russo-German relations and his dealings with various right-wing circles in Germany is described in Warren Lerner, *Karl Radek: The Last Internationalist* (Stanford, 1970).

60. Even Litvinov, that undisputed champion of collective security, had hinted at the possibility of a rapprochement with Germany when he said: “We certainly have our own opinion about the German regime. We certainly are sympathetic toward the suffering of our comrades [that is, the KPD]; but you can reproach us Marxists least of all for permitting our sympathies to rule our policy. All the world knows that we can and do maintain good relations with capitalist governments of any regime including Fascist. We do not interfere in the internal affairs of Germany or of any other countries, and our relations with her are determined not by her domestic but by her foreign policy” (M. M. Litvinov, *Vneshniaia politika SSSR* [Moscow, 1935], p. 70).



people so that Djugashvili could prove to himself and Russia that he was really Stalin."<sup>61</sup> The purges may well have been a bloody exercise in biographical revision—an attempt to eliminate from public life those who knew (and could not repress the knowledge) how small Stalin's role had been in 1917, or how badly he had bungled some of his responsibilities during the civil war, or how little weight his opinions on foreign affairs had carried in the early 1920s. Fortunately for Stalin, his decision to deal with that generation of Old Bolsheviks (who had often wounded his ego and who could never accept his self-image as reality) coincided with the emergence of the first generation to mature under Soviet rule.<sup>62</sup> These young men absorbed the "cult of personality" with their school assignments. After graduation they learned quickly that the Stalinist course was also the route to their own advancement. In that the Narkomindel of Chicherin and Litvinov was dominated by the old revolutionary intelligentsia—a cosmopolitan, polyglot, and cultured assemblage—its destruction helped Stalin to remodel the party in his own image and it made possible the rise to prominence of a new generation of Stalinist party members who differed so greatly from their elders.

61. Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879–1929* (New York, 1973), p. 493. Cf. Joel Carmichael, *Stalin's Masterpiece: The Show Trials and Purges of the Thirties—the Consolidation of the Bolshevik Dictatorship* (London, 1976), pp. 208 ff.

62. Stalin's letter of 1925 to Arkadi Maslow, leader of the German Communist Party, gives early evidence both of his low regard for the intelligentsia and of his plans for remolding Soviet elites. "We in Russia have also had a dying away of a number of old leaders from among the *littérateurs* and the old 'chiefs'. . . . This is a necessary process for a renewal of the leading cadres of a living and developing party" (I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7 [Moscow, 1947], p. 43; see also Stalin, *Sochineniia*, ed. Robert H. McNeal, vol. 1 [14] [Stanford, 1967], p. 245).

APPENDIX: *Sources of Biographical Information*

The sections dealing with the personnel composition of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs are based on the author's compilation of biographical data on Soviet diplomats and Narkomindel functionaries. Since the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the personnel files of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union remain closed to Western investigators, it has been necessary to rely on European and North American archives, in addition to published autobiographies, biographies, documents, press clippings, and biographical dictionaries, for information on the composition of the foreign service and the career patterns of its members. The richest collections of relevant personnel data are found in the special biographical files compiled by the library of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University and similar files prepared by the former Institute for the Study of the USSR in Munich. These sources are supplemented by the records of the Auswärtiges Amt in Bonn and the State Department's Decimal File housed in the United States National Archives. The press clippings files of the Institut für Auswärtige Politik in Hamburg, the Institut für Weltwirtschaft an der Universität, Kiel, and the Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung in Hamburg also proved valuable.

The most important published works include the *Ezhegodnik narodnogo komissariata po inostrannym delam* (Moscow, 1925– ); three editions of the *Diplomaticheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1948–50, 1960–64, and 1971); and the *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' russkogo bibliograficheskogo instituta Granat*, vol. 41 (Moscow, 1929), parts 1–3. Additional data has been gleaned from the memoirs of Narkomindel members and from memoirs of the foreign diplomats and journalists who dealt with them, such as N. G. Pal'gunov, *Tridtsat' let (vospominaniia zhurnalista i diplomata)* (Moscow, 1964); V. M. Berezhkov, *Gody diplomaticheskoi sluzhby* (Moscow, 1972); and K. V. Kiselev, *Zapiski sovetskogo diplomata* (Moscow, 1974). *The Soviet Diplomatic Corps, 1917–1976* (Metuchen, N.J., 1970), ed. Edward L. Crowley; *Who Was Who in the USSR* (Metuchen, N.J., 1972), ed. Heinrich E. Schultz et al.; and N. Zhukovskii, *Na diplomaticheskoi postu* (Moscow, 1973) have also been very useful. The archives and publications cited above constitute only some of the more important sources of biographical data on Soviet diplomats. For a fuller list of sources consulted see my 1972 Indiana University doctoral dissertation, "The Development of the Soviet Diplomatic Corps, 1917–1930."

It has been possible to compile the biographies of about six hundred high and middle level foreign service officials. This sample is obviously biased in favor of several groups: the highest ranking diplomats; diplomats who served in America, Britain, or Germany, where the archives are open; prominent opponents of Stalin and purge victims; and well-known radicals—in short, those groups receiving the most publicity. It is not likely, however, that this bias in the sample has seriously distorted the study. The data available on diplomats who are not included in the groups mentioned above fail to highlight any marked tendencies not evidenced by the group as a whole.