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## Does Russia Love the Whip?

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Does Russia Love the Whip?  
A Study of State Sponsored Violence and Its Impact on Russian Life

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
Of Bard College

by  
Maeve McQueeny

Annandale-On-Hudson, New York

May 2017

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To my mother and father—

We did it! The final draft! Thank you both (but especially mom) for your countless edits, countless contributions, and good performance under tight deadlines. As your last child to graduate college, this is the end of editing college papers. Congrats. Truly a milestone.

Великий Петр был первый большевик,  
Замысливший Россию перебросить,  
Склонениям и нравам вопреки,  
За сотни лет к ее грядущим далям.  
Он, как и мы, не знал иных путей,  
Опречь указа, казни и застенка,  
К осуществленью правды на земле.  
Не то мясник, а может быть, ваятель -  
Не в мраморе, а в мясе высекал  
Он топором живую Галатею,  
Кромсал ножом и шваркал лоскуты.  
Строителю необходимо сручье:  
Дворянство было первым Р.К.П. -  
Опричниною, гвардией, жандармом,  
И парником для ранних овощей.  
[...] У нас в душе некошеные степи.  
Вся наша непашь буйно заросла  
Разрыв-травой, быльем да своевольем.  
Размахом мысли, дерзостью ума,  
Паденьями и взлетами - Бакунин  
Наш истый лик отобразил вполне.  
В анархии всё творчество России:  
Европа шла культурною огня,  
А мы в себе несем культуру взрыва.  
Огню нужны - машины, города,  
И фабрики, и доменные печи,  
А взрыву, чтоб не распылить себя, -  
Стальной нарез и маточник орудий.  
Отсюда - тяж советских обручей  
И тугоплавкость колб самодержавья.  
Бакунину потребен Николай,  
Как Петр - стрелцу, как Аввакуму -  
Никон.  
Поэтому так непомерна Русь  
И в своеволю, и в самодержавья.  
И нет истории темней, страшней,  
Безумней, чем история России.

-- Maximilian Voloshin, "Russia" (1924)

Great Peter was the first true Bolshevik;  
his project: to project his Russia, against  
all her customs, all her inclinations,  
hundreds of years into some distant vista.  
And like us all, he knew no other way  
save execution, torture and diktat  
to realize truth and justice upon earth.  
If not a butcher, you could call the tsar  
a sculptor — his material not marble  
but flesh, hacking out a Galatea  
and flinging scraps aside. But no man builds  
alone. What else was our nobility  
but our first Communists? Our nobility  
was — all in one — the Party, secret police  
and Ivan the Terrible's Oprichniki,  
a hothouse for the breeding of strange  
cultures.  
[. . .] Bakunin reflects the Russian  
countenance  
in every way — what intellectual boldness,  
what sweep of thought, what soaring flights  
and falls!  
Our creativity lies in anarchy.  
All Europe took the path of fire — but we  
bear in our hearts a culture of explosion.  
Fire needs machines and cities, factories,  
blast furnaces; an explosion, unless it aims  
to pulverise itself, needs the containment  
of steel rifling, the matrix of a heavy gun.  
This is why Soviet hoops all bind so tight,  
why the autocracy's flasks and retorts  
were so refractory. Bakunin needed  
Nicholas — as Peter's streltsy needed Peter,  
as Avvakum needed Nikon. This is why  
Russia is so immeasurable — in anarchy  
and in autocracy alike, and why no history  
is darker, madder, more terrible than hers.

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## Introduction

Russians have a greater tolerance of violence because they have come to accept it as a cost of national security and national pride. Violence is the blood money that bribes away the greater horrors of anarchy, government corruption, societal ills, or foreign occupation.

To Western or Eastern democracies, this brutal acceptance of societal bottom line seems like a callous, crude and unacceptable calculus.

But, to Russians living behind the world's longest and porous borders that were violated for a millennium, from Arctic nomads on horseback to Nazis in tanks, internal violence is a relatively small moral concession if it protects the Russian state and the Russian people from outsiders and traitors within.

In modern times, Russia and its leaders have a reputation for violence and repression directed at dissidents and organizations that might have foreign ties.

A half-century ago, Barry Goldwater, a Republican candidate for President of the United States, said "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice." Cut to 2017, when new President Trump is asked about whether Russian President Vladimir Putin is a killer who orders the secret execution of rivals and journalists, and Trump does not deny but downplays the charge, saying, "You think our country's so innocent?"

Violence by the government directed at the Russian people has long been a part of Russia's national history, from Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great through Joseph Stalin and now to Vladimir Putin. When Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev took off his shoe and banged it on the desk at the United Nations in 1961, it reinforced the notion of Russia as a land of crudeness, cruel and threatening society, and easily explodable violence.

But large swaths of the Russian populace do not see this as a shameful part of the past or present, more like a necessity. A survey from 2006 found that 47 percent of Russians viewed Stalin as a positive figure and only 29 percent as a negative figure. Putin himself has said that the Great Terror was a “scary page” in Russian history, but pointed to the American bombings of Hiroshima and Vietnam as much worse. Clearly, one must note the distinction between these politically and militarily motivated acts of war that took place in Hiroshima and Vietnam, and the large scale state sanctioned operation that resulted in the massacre of millions perpetrated against its own citizens. Putin further assert: "We should never allow others to make us feel guilty," he said. This statement served as a stark reminder, not directed at the Americans, but rather spoken directly to the Russian people, a people embarrassed by the fall of communism, repeatedly disrespected across the world stage for the better part of a century, and scrambling to regain national pride and superpower status.

Putin has been overwhelmingly popular with the Russian people, despite what has been termed “soft repression”: the untraceable murders of opponents of the Kremlin, be they dissidents or journalists. Putin also managed to get himself back into power, although he had reached the consecutive two-term limit set forth under the Russian Constitution.

But, in the early 2000’s Putin’s economic policies and a surge in the price of oil helped to create a large middle-class of urban professionals, able and happy to buy home goods, cars, and even housing with mortgages. However, more lately, Russia’s middle class has been feeling the pinch caused by a drop in global oil prices, economic sanctions, and a weakened ruble. But still they blame the outsiders for their sanctions and love their leader.

This under-siege Russian mentality and widespread pro-Putin cult may well persist because, not in spite of the fact, that:

- It is being economically threatened by Western sanctions;
- It is being militarily challenged and embarrassed by the expansion of NATO around its borders;
- It is declining and aging in population;
- Russia's history is bereft of national restraint.

Russia's historical reactions to similar existential threats have either been to topple their governments (as the Russians did after World War I, with the bloody murder of their monarchs and the even bloodier establishment of their Bolshevik regime) or form defensive alliances (as they did before World War II).

When Russians ponder the actions of their government, they do not think in years and decades, or even back to two catastrophic conflicts in the 20th Century that brought (in the name of security) the worst mass-killer of a national leader—Joseph Stalin. Instead, they think of security, political stability, and yielding certain freedoms to obtain it.

They go back over a millennium. But security at the price of violence is never too much a price to pay. Something Vladimir Putin knows all too well.

Russia—and its leaders—are also at a moment during which they can strut on the world stage by firing long-banned missiles and sending a Russian cruiser in international waters up and down the U.S. East Coast. The US and Russia have long had a love-hate relationships...sometimes allies, other times Cold War ideological opponents. Will a Trump-Putin bromance soften or harden Cold War sentiments and American's perception of Russia's un-democratic or state sponsored violence towards its people?



In all likelihood, the Russians—feeling a surge of national pride and feeling threatened by outsiders from Turkey to NATO to the European Union and the United States—will circle their wagons, no matter how repressive their leaders. A late-2015 poll by the Moscow-based Levada Center found that seventy percent of Russian respondents said they had a negative view of the United States and sixty percent were negative about the European Union.

In this essay, I will explore the role of state-sponsored violence as it has permeated the lives of the Russian people, accepted as the necessary price for national security to combat enemies from without and within.

In my first chapter, I will show the persuasive methods that allow totalitarian conditions to prevail in a society: from distortion of national memory and history to romanticize violence and glorify it as an effective means leadership; pervasive coping mechanisms to survive violence, which breed a mentality of unawareness and denial which allow for the perpetuation of state orchestrated violence; and the effect of transgenerational trauma on future generations which in turn pervades family tradition. I will show the cultural mechanism by which violence can be transformed into virtue across generations.

In my second chapter, I will analyze the cultural tropes commissioned by Stalin through the control of literature. These tropes helped to create a submissive populace that was not only vulnerable, but receptive to new outbreaks of violence perpetrated in the name of national security. I classify these constructed tropes as “the strong family” or the “strong socialist family,” and the “True Russian.” Stalin invoked and reinforced the “strong Soviet family” ideal through legislation that would place the Soviet family totally under the control of the Communist party, its ideology, and its leader — Stalin. He further concocted the trope of the “True Russian” to propagandize subservience, obedience, and loyalty. These tropes proved incredibly dangerous

when combined with a violent state apparatus for it perpetuates an acceptance of violence for generations to come. I will show how they have become entrenched in the fabric of the modern Russian culture through readings of legislation passed within the past decade. I will conclude this chapter by arguing that these tropes are becoming increasingly dangerous as Russia begins to turn once again toward violence and the regulation of individual freedoms as a means of national security.

After committing my first and second chapters the analysis of cultural factors that make Russia prone to violence, my third chapter is a case study of my preceding theoretical claims. I will describe the rise and rule of Vladimir Putin over modern Russia and the violence necessary to grasp and maintain it.

My final chapter shifts attention away from these emic factors in Russia's culture of violence to analyze the influence and possibilities of Western nations. To do this, I will analyze Western perceptions on Russian violence through the lens of its finicky friend, the United States. Within the past decade a large part of Russia's public perception has been bolstered through interaction with the US. From lovable "Uncle Joe" to the evil, sneering communist, the relationship of the United States and Russia has held continued significance over the past century. Even in contemporary times, Putin's Kremlin and the threat of Russian violence challenge American supremacy from under the aegis of digital anonymity. Sometimes allies and sometimes opponents, the United States and Russia epitomize the increasingly global implications of cultural violence.

Is it possible, and if so why — does Russia love the whip?

## Chapter One

### Situating the Moment

In 2015, on the seventieth anniversary of Russia's Great Patriotic War, Russians flooded the streets carrying insignia of Stalin, whom they credited with winning the war. Polls corroborate this outpouring of affection for the mass murderer, showing a gradual improvement in the perceptions of Stalin. On March 1, 2016, a study conducted by the Levada Center, a research organization based in Moscow, found that 40 percent of Russians thought the Stalin era brought "more good than bad"<sup>1</sup> (up from 27 percent in 2012), and an annual survey published in January 2015 found that a majority of Russians (52 percent) said Stalin "probably" or "definitely" played a positive role in the country.<sup>2</sup> Lev Gudkov, who conducts the Levada Center's Stalin polls, theorizes that this gradual increase signifies that "By raising the figure of Stalin, the Putin regime is trying to raise the idea that collective interests are more important than individual lives, and that means the regime has less responsibility to society."<sup>3</sup>

However, this idea is hardly new. The reconstruction and reinterpretation of Russia's long and violent history in order to legitimize politically abrasive measures is a longstanding tradition that seems to have existed long before the Putin iteration. One may observe this unofficial political tradition through the continually revisited and revised legacy of Ivan the Terrible.

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<sup>1</sup> Правители в отечественной истории. Правители в отечественной истории —. Accessed April 27, 2017. <http://www.levada.ru/2016/03/01/praviteli-v-otechestvennoj-istorii/>.

<sup>2</sup> Luhn, Alec. Opinion | Stalin, Russia's New Hero. The New York Times. March 11, 2016. Accessed April 27, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/opinion/sunday/stalinist-nostalgia-in-vladimir-putins-russia.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Distortion on the Grand Historical Scale: the Legacy of Ivan the Terrible

Ivan the Terrible was an intelligent, but brutal, 16<sup>th</sup> century tsar of Russia. His giddy delight for all things bloody and carnal was only surpassed by a religious fervor that sometimes overlapped with passionate displays of repentance in Moscow Square or with numerous reports of sacrilegious masses where he oversaw orgies of sex, rape, and torture. His legacy is largely defined by his conquest and expansion of Russia, transforming Russia from a medieval principality into a monarchic state, and frequent bouts of rage and increased mental instability throughout the later part of his life, ultimately culminating with the murder of his heir and the end of his bloodline to the throne.



Figure 1. Ilya Yefimovich Repin (1844-1930), Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1581, Oil on canvas, 1885. The artist was inspired to recreate this historical episode when reflecting on the bloody episodes from Russian history.

Although Ivan the Terrible's influence is central to the evolution of Russia, including a highly centralized government and Europe-facing vision for Russia, attitudes towards him have changed over time. While the Western view points to his sadism and condemns his use of

violence as a means of governing, others may point to him as a great statesman and conqueror. Both Stalin and Putin have reinterpreted the legacy of Ivan the Terrible for themselves and their visions of Russia.

In 1941, Josef Stalin set about revamping the public perception of Ivan the Terrible to glorify the tyrant. Stalin, who admired Ivan the Terrible, sought to legitimize his use of violence as governance by glorifying the role of the 16<sup>th</sup> century tyrant, praising his aggressive national policy and his cruelty to suppress dissidents.

For this project, he enlisted renown director Sergei Eisenstein to ensure it would become a classic of Soviet cinema, which it did—*Ivan the Terrible* became recognized as one of the finest works in Soviet film. Stalin not only had reverence for artists in Russia, well aware of the potency of the Russian artists and their impact on society, their respect in Russian society, and their inextinguishable impact that lasts generations, if not centuries—but also utilized this impact to cement his own agenda and legacy on Russian society. The film and its message were so important to Stalin that he diverted funds from the war budget during the height of World War II in order to pay for the production of this film.<sup>4</sup>

The film, not-so-subtly, paralleled Soviet Russia, casting Ivan the Terrible as a champion of progress and reform, while combating clergy and internal enemies who fight to keep Russia in an era of superstition and the dark ages. Stalin used this piece as propaganda to battle any perceived enemies to the state, painting all dissenters as opponents to progress in Russia.

The film was such a hit, that immediately a second part of the film was attempted. As Eisenstein set about devising the plot of the second film, it focused on Ivan the Terrible and his

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<sup>4</sup> Seton, Marie. *Sergei M. Eisenstein: A Biography*. (Soviet Studies, October 1953.) pp167-176.

relationship with the Oprichniki (mobsters and thugs hired to protect the tsar and early ancestor to the KGB), and exposed the growing paranoia and insanity of the tsar. Stalin immediately rejected this script, feeling that the depiction of Ivan, the Oprichniki, and his slow decline into full blown paranoia and insanity to be too closely analogous to himself. Not long after, Eisenstein died and the project remained untouched until after Stalin's death, when it was released during the Khrushchev period in 1958.

The next revamp of Ivan the Terrible's persona occurred in 1973, during the milder, calmer time of the Brezhnev years. In *Ivan Vasilievich Changes Profession*, based on a play by Mikhail Bulgakov, an engineer builds a time machine and accidentally sends his superintendent and a burglar into the time of Ivan the Terrible, while transporting Ivan the Terrible into the present. While the engineer tries to fix the error, two of the characters are trapped to deal with the Streltsy while Ivan the Terrible navigates then-contemporary Moscow, all the while inspiring uproarious laughter in its Soviet audiences. The film, which became one of the most attended movies in the Soviet Union at this time and sold more than 60 million tickets, depicts the tsar as a goofy, good-natured dictator. Although initially seeming an odd and unusual recapitulation of the infamous tsar, this, too, represents a type of desecration, its own type of ironical distancing typical of the "humor culture" of resistance in totalitarian regimes.<sup>5</sup> Following a sixty year lull, Ivan the Terrible's legacy has undergone a contemporary revival in Putin's Russia.

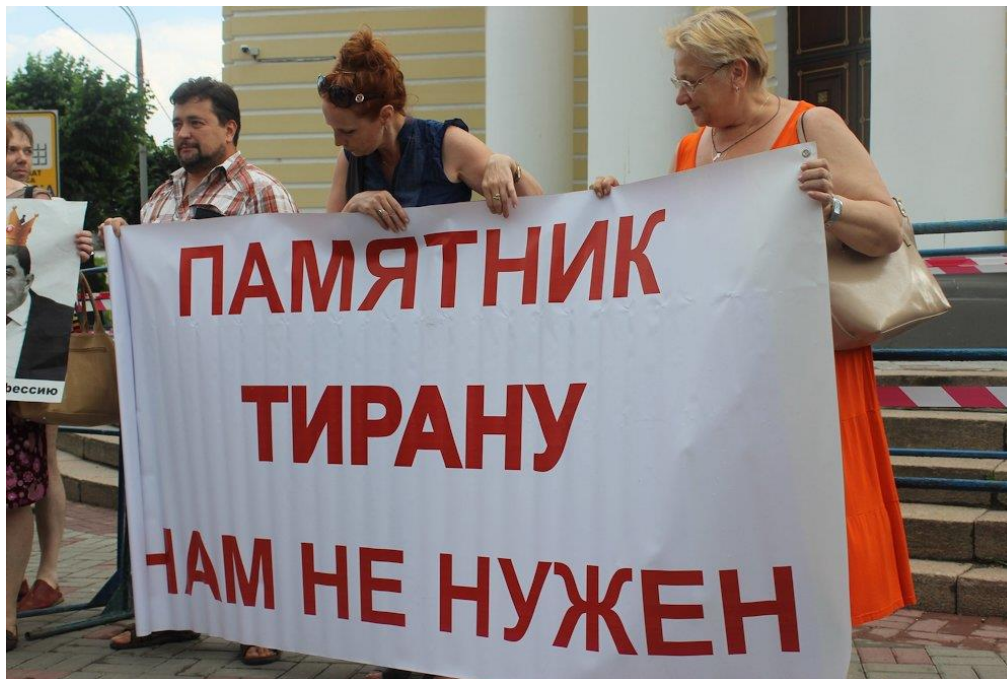
On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in the city of Oryol, Russia unveiled the first ever monument to Ivan the Terrible. The governor of the region, Vadim Potomsky, pioneered this movement with support from other officials, saying during its inauguration that it was necessary to commemorate

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<sup>5</sup> Gamboni, Dario. "The Fall of 'Communist Monuments.' The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution. (Reaktion Books Ltd. London: 1997).

“a defender of our land, a tsar who expanded its frontiers.” Vadim Potomsky even compared Ivan the Terrible to the leadership of Vladimir Putin, saying 'We have a great, powerful president who has forced the whole world to respect and defer to Russia - just like Ivan the Terrible did in his time.' According to a survey, most locals were in favor of the memorial.

However, some felt the monument to be irreverent, seen as glorifying the 16<sup>th</sup> century tyrant who presided over a reign of terror and state-sponsored massacres, in addition to creating the secret police used like gangsters and thugs. In July of 2016 locals protested the monument holding signs such as “We don’t need a monument to a tyrant.”<sup>6</sup>



“We Don’t Need a Tyrant!”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Volin, Denis. 'Не насиуйте Орёл' В Орле прошла акция протеста против памятника Ивану Грозному. (Орловские новости. July 18, 2016.) [http://newsorel.ru/fn\\_184395.html](http://newsorel.ru/fn_184395.html).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



That same week, an ‘alternative’ monument to Ivan the Terrible was discovered in the Russian city of Kansk, some 4,500 miles away in Siberia, that was more appropriate to the bloodthirsty ruler: a wooden stake dripping with sanguine paint. The artist, Vladislav Gulyaev, wrote on his Facebook that his monument “hints that the days when killing was 'just because' and for fun aren't that distant” and that “The baton of the battle against our people was passed on . . . to the jolly, mustachioed Stalin”<sup>8</sup> and now, possibly, Putin. The artist uses his work not only to symbolize the brutality of Ivan the Terrible, but also uses “its elegant profile, stretching upward, [to show] the commitment of our people to glorious deeds and titanic achievements,” and “the blood on it [to imply] that the price is not a concern.”<sup>9</sup>

One of the authors of the pole, Lev Gudkov wrote that “Vladimir Putin's Russia of 2012 needs symbols of authority and national strength, however controversial they may be, to validate the newly authoritarian political order. . . . Stalin, a despotic leader responsible for mass



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<sup>8</sup> Gulytyaev, Vladislav. (Facebook. October 23, 2016.)  
<https://www.facebook.com/gulytyaev.vladislav/posts/1221099784616832>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



bloodshed but also still identified with wartime victory and national unity, fits this need for symbols that reinforce the current political ideology."

But how can a society seemingly not learn the lessons of its past, and thus repeat them over decades, generations and centuries? The answer to this question is multifold, heavily rooted in its past, its culture of violence, and its identification with and tolerance of aggression.

Trauma on such a large scale elicits and encompasses a wide variety of individual defensive mechanisms. Such a widespread and long-lasting shared cultural history of violence—from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great to the violent murder of the Romanovs to Stalin and now Putin—must demand rationalization, reframing, romanticization, and diminution of the brutality imposed by Russian leaders upon the people. Despite protests, it seems most Russians are not looking for correction of authoritarianism through democracy and core societal freedoms. As a recent *New Yorker* article said, in the post-imperial Yeltsin years, "*Demokrativa* (democracy) was popularly referred to as *dermokratiya* (shit-ocracy)."<sup>10</sup> Russians seem to show contempt for democracy, viewing it as something that adds to their problems. Without help from the government, people are left to find their own solutions to their problems, their trauma, and their historic national violence.

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<sup>10</sup> Osnos, Evan; Remnick, David; Yaffa, Joshua. Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War. (The New Yorker. March 6, 2017.) <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/trump-putin-and-the-new-cold-war>.

Distortion and Denial in Personal Narrative: Lydia Chukovskaya's *Sofia Petrovna*

One mechanism of coping with one's national violence may be, as American historian Walter Laqueur describes, a "denial of knowing"<sup>11</sup>, which goes so far as to accept logical inconsistencies, usually under extreme psychological pressure, representing a disintegration of rationality.<sup>12</sup> Stanley Cohen argues that there are states of denial, both mental and political, in which denial means "not giving the information much thought."<sup>13</sup> He argues that this mechanism can exist for a number of reasons, ranging from an eagerness to fall in line with the governmental authority to an indifference to any events that did not directly affect a person's personal life. Cohen argues that this choice to ignore given information "might be a simple fraud: the information is available and registered, but leads to a conclusion which is knowingly evaded."<sup>14</sup> This concept has become a staple within a number of classic Soviet texts, where characters prostrate themselves before a snarling government, despite all reason and logic.

When Lydia Chukovskaya wrote her semi-autobiographical prose "Sofia Petrovna" in the late 1930s (not published until 1965), which became a classic Soviet era text following its publication for the reason that she unveiled a pervasive mechanism to deceive oneself as an adaptation to the horror of a violence political apparatus. "Sofia Petrovna" not only represents one of few surviving written accounts of the Great Purge era, but it also represents the mindset of Soviet citizens during this time, or as the author put it: "I regarded [*Sofia Petrovna*] not so much as a story as a piece of evidence, which it would be dishonorable to destroy." She asks contemporary audiences to "Let my *Sofia Petrovna* speak today as a voice from the past, the tale

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's Final Solution* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 201

<sup>12</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001). 148.

<sup>13</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001). 148.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001). 148.

of a witness striving conscientiously, against the powerful forces of falsehood, to discern and record the events which occurred before his eyes.”

Within her work, the reader gets to bear witness to what would later be known as the height of the Stalinist purges, as Chukovskaya was writing from 1937-38. In the story, Sofia Petrovna watches those around her taken one by one by the NKVD. Contemporary audiences, cognizant of the history surrounding this period, mentally chastise the story’s heroine as she clings to the method of denial and tries to deceive herself in order to fall back in line with the majority.

Her eagerness to fall in line with the governmental authority, even as it inserts itself into her personal life, runs so deep that she has a nearly unshakable faith in the government, asserting “Nothing can happen to an honest man in our country”<sup>15</sup> and that the arrest of her son by the NKVD was nothing more than a “monstrous misunderstanding.”

She endeavored to create a false consciousness, or a “distorted picture of reality,” so that she could survive an otherwise unbearable way of life, under constant surveillance, impending violence, and collective national paranoia.<sup>16</sup> As this false consciousness comes under scrutiny, her reality seems to collapse as she is asked to consider that the government may falsely imprisons others like her son. But, Sofia Petrovna clings to her denial mechanism: “How can you compare them? After all Kolya [her son] was arrested through a misunderstanding, but the others . . . Don’t you read the newspapers, or what?”

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<sup>15</sup> Chukovskaya, Lyumila. *Sofia Petrovna*. (Northwestern University Press. 1994.) Page 34.

<sup>16</sup> Fromm, Enrich. *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Freud and Marx*. (New York. Continuum. 2001.) Page 125.

Hanging on to belief in the governmental verdicts while also clinging to the belief that her son is innocent, she distinguishes herself from the other mothers and wives who wait outside the prison doors with her every day, saying “She was sorry for them, of course, as human beings, sorry especially for the children; but still an honest person had to remember that all these women were the wives and mothers of poisoners, spies, and murderers.”<sup>17</sup>

As Sofia Petrovna slowly comes to realize the malevolent role of the government in her son’s abduction, her former way of thinking comes back to weave itself into her life like a noose around her neck. Society begins to ostracize Sofia Petrovna for her relation to a criminal; whispers seem to follow her voicing that same insidious strain of thought she once held: “People don’t get locked up for nothing in our country. They haven’t locked me up, have they? And why not? Because I’m an honest women, a real Soviet citizen.”<sup>18</sup>

This classic Soviet work of autobiographical prose represents a very pervasive denial mechanism that allows unprovoked, unchallenged violence to prevail. Through the plot of “Sofia Petrovna” readers may the slow discovery of the protagonist of her complicity with state violence. While it may be tempting for contemporary audiences to chastise the naiveté of the protagonist, such defense mechanisms appear to be more natural to the human condition. It even begs the question, what might we be overlooking?

Why are these various mechanisms important, one might ask? Russian history displays a continuous arc of violence that becomes rewritten to become a treasured past. While it may seem

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<sup>17</sup> Chukovskaya, Lyumila. *Sofia Petrovna*. (Northwestern University Press. 1994.) Page 60.

<sup>18</sup>Chukovskaya, Lyumila. *Sofia Petrovna*. (Northwestern University Press. 1994.) Page 69

ludicrous that contemporary audiences could view Stalin positively, it is indicative of behavior mechanisms in response to trauma that allows for the mutation of violence into valiance.

Distortion through Generations of Family Narratives: Joseph Brodsky's "In A Room and A Half"

Poet and essayist, Joseph Brodsky, born in 1940 in Leningrad (expelled from the Soviet Union in 1972), came of age in the aftermath of the Great Stalinist purges. In his short essay, "In A Room and a Half," he depicts his struggle with transgenerational trauma and contrasting guilt of nostalgia for an upbringing in a realm littered with remnants of Russia's traumatized past; "for all his skill, he'll never be able to reconstruct that primitive, sturdy nest that heard his first cry of life. Nor will he be able to reconstruct those who put him there."<sup>19</sup>

He writes of the generation before him, and how "They took everything as a matter of course: the system, their powerlessness, their poverty, their wayward son." He writes as a child "Of someone who was born free but whose freedom was altered," seeking to understand the idea of "someone born free but dying a slave." He writes, "Would he or she . . . think of it as a solace? Well, perhaps. More likely, they would think of it as the ultimate insult, the ultimate irreversible stealing of their freedom. Which is what their kin or their child would think, and which is what is it. The last theft."<sup>20</sup>

He turns to Russian history to ask "When does it become acceptable . . . to alter one's free state? . . . A revolutionary or a conqueror at least should know the right answer. Genghis

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<sup>19</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. "In a Room and a Half." (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) Page 472.

<sup>20</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. "In a Room and a Half." (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) Page 479.

Khan, for instance, knew it. He just carved up everyone whose head was above a cart wheel's hub."<sup>21</sup>

While the entirety of the piece is written about his parents, his attempt to continue their memories and allow them freedom posthumously through his writing, gives the reader a sense the toll his parent's trauma has had on the author. He writes that "We, their children, were brought up—or rather brought ourselves up—to believe in the complexity of the world" but "Now, having reached the age that equates us to them [their parent's ages when Brodsky was growing up] . . . It took us nearly a lifetime to learn what they seemed to know from the outset: that the world is a very raw place and doesn't deserve better."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, he writes that his genes embody their trauma revolving around being "unfree." He writes that his parents "[failed in] bringing up their child as a slave. They tried the best they could—if only to safeguard me against the social reality" but "the mixture of their genes is worth bragging about, if only because it proved to be state-resistant."<sup>23</sup> He regards himself as the sum of his parents and their experiences, the second generation of trauma.

He alludes to a loss of cultural identity, perhaps which comes obligatorily with the rise and fall of multiple regimes over the span of a century: "To this day, I think that the country would do a hell of a lot better if it had for its national banner not the foul double-headed imperial fowl or the vaguely masonic hammer-and-sickle, but the flag of the Russian Navy."<sup>24</sup> He writes how difficult it is for "Russians to accept the severance of ties [more] than anyone else" and "For us, an apartment is for life, the town is for life, the country is for life. The notions of permanence

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<sup>21</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. "In a Room and a Half." (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) Page 483.

<sup>22</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. "In a Room and a Half." (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) Page 481.

<sup>23</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. "In a Room and a Half." (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) 499

<sup>24</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. "In a Room and a Half." (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) Page 467

are therefore stronger; the sense of loss as well. Yet a nation that has lost in half a century nearly sixty million souls to its carnivorous state . . . surely was capable of upgrading its sense of stability. If only because of those losses were incurred for the sake of the status quo.”<sup>25</sup> Once again, these motifs reappear: ideas of limited freedom, increased security, and strong leadership in order for state stability to dominate the public and government.

He mourns the loss of his own family identity, a result of the trauma surrounding his upbringing and the lives of his parents before him, writing: “[my parents] never told me much about their childhood, about the families they were from” but “This reticence had less to do with amnesia than with the necessity of concealing their class origins during that potent era, in order to survive.”<sup>26</sup>

Another avenue for the continuation of violence within a society can be found in the heroic narratives about violence within a family or societal tradition. As generations may try to come to terms with the violence in their own pasts, they partake in a sociocultural shift that reframes violence as discipline and character. A nation may process its trauma by adopting a “culture of violence,” or the influence of a national culture which is historically more violent.<sup>27</sup> A culture of violence can be categorized by three common patterns that allow for the perpetration of mass murder and similarly violent acts: 1) “the use of aggression as a normative problem-solving skill; 2) a conflict orientation grounded in an assumption of antipathy [to ‘others’] with a perceived threat orientation; and 3) an ideology of supremacy grounded in a

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<sup>25</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. “In a Room and a Half.” (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) Page 477.

<sup>26</sup> Brodsky, Joseph. “In a Room and a Half.” (Farrar Straus Giroux. New York. 1985.) 482

<sup>27</sup> Becirevic, Edina. “Eighth Stage of Genocide: Denial.” *Genocide on the Drina River*. (Yale University Press. 2014).

history of dehumanization including long-term institutionalization of bias and lack of acceptance for cultural diversity.”<sup>28</sup>

Walter Laqueur argues that after the failure of the Soviet Union, “Russia needed a new feeling of mission, a new Russian idea. This is what Putin delivered.”<sup>29</sup> Laqueur argues that above all, a country yearns for “solidarity and above all *gosudarstvenost*, or strong state power” because “at the core of the Russian character is a belief that, without discipline, people would not work and nothing would function, and only government authority can enforce this discipline” in order to “fulfill [Russia’s] historic, God-given mission” to exist as a great power. Furthermore, Laqueur says that Russians will not accept a democratic Russia because it “would not be strong enough to attain great power status. This is at the root of the weakness of every democratic movement in Russia throughout history.” This language harkens back to Soviet-era tropes that were propagated through literature like Brodsky. What Putin offers is an ideology entrenched in “nationalism accompanied by anti-Westernism,” the latter of which allows for the FSB, successor of the KGB, “to justify its existence, budget, and policy . . . For unless Russia is protected against its dangerous and powerful, and devious enemies, the country will be destroyed again.”<sup>30</sup> According to Laqueur, “Russians perceive their country as a besieged fortress surrounded by enemies who want to inflict great harm on her. This fear is shared by a majority of the public and is reinforced by government propaganda, above all on controlled television.”

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<sup>28</sup> Woolf, Linda M.; Hulsizer, Michael R. “Psychological Roots of Genocide: Risk, Prevention, and Intervention,” *Journal of Genocide Research* (March, 2005), 102.

<sup>29</sup> Laqueur Walter. *Why Putinism Will Survive Putin*. Politico. (September, 2015)  
<http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/09/putin-putinism-ukraine-russia-213137>

<sup>30</sup> Laqueur, Walter. *Why Putinism Will Survive Putin*. Politico. (September, 2015)  
<http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/09/putin-putinism-ukraine-russia-213137>



Laqueur's insights, in conjunction with a historical epic riddled with mass murder and violence, corroborates this definition of Russia as a culture steeped in violence. This culture of violence pervades multiple levels of society, and can be viewed through the paradigm of family dynamics that serve to perpetrate, tolerate, or justify violence. Cohen writes:

“Denials draw on shared cultural vocabularies to be credible. They may also be shared in another powerful sense: the commitment between people—whether partners or an entire organization—to back up and collude in each other's denials. Without conscious negotiation, family members know what trouble spots to avoid, which facts are better not noticed. These collusions—mutually reinforcing denials that allow no meta-comment—work best when we are unaware of them. The resulting ‘vital lie’ in the family may become a literal blind spot.”<sup>31</sup>

These family collusions can allow for the reinterpretation of facts through techniques like minimization, euphemism, and jest, passing along these brutal facts in a more acceptable form.<sup>32</sup>

When violence pervades family tradition, it might be “Easier to romanticize the violence . . . to present criminal tradition as heroism” and even courage in romanticized interpretations.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, to make something ‘tradition’ is to give it authority that can be appealed to in political debates.

Violence, in one's past and one's present, permeates life at multiple levels. While a culture of violence can affect future generations, research shows the trauma can actually transcend multiple generations. Professor Judy Atkinson, who has worked on intergenerational and transgenerational transmission of trauma, argues that unresolved trauma can surface in a variety of ways, ranging from alcohol abuse, mental health problems, family violence, or

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<sup>31</sup> Cohen, Stanley. *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001). 64.

<sup>32</sup> Goleman, Daniel. *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) 17.

<sup>33</sup> Becirevic, Edina. “Eighth Stage of Genocide: Denial.” *Genocide on the Drina River*. (Yale University Press. 2014).

criminal behavior.<sup>34</sup> Atkinson argues that “rage turns inwards, but [as it] cascades down the generations, [it grows] more complex over time.”<sup>35</sup> Joseph Brodsky represents a new generation of those born to people robbed of their freedom, exposing the long-lasting, transgenerational nature of trauma.

But what is Russia mourning? In the past century alone, Russia has undergone tremendous, violent change. “From a clinical standpoint,” political analyst Andrew C. Kuchins writes, “Russia has been suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder for the past couple of decades. Putin resonates with many Russians because he is seen as the embodiment of the humiliation, status deprivation and grievances that the country has purportedly suffered.”<sup>36</sup>

Alexandr Konkov, a lecturer at Sakhalin State University, likened Russia’s reaction to Ukraine as “post-traumatic syndrome” where “an individual often relives a traumatizing experience he or she once had in their life. Something of the kind can be spotted in the Russian societal consciousness, at least in a considerable part of Russians. [The collapse of the USSR and the rise of a diminished Russian state] looked humiliating for many people and hurt their pride in their country. In the 2000s, when talk of restoring Russia’s lost position in the world and a renewed respect for this country reemerged, the seeds of this rhetoric fell on fertile ground.”<sup>37</sup>

However,

“Ukraine is only the latest in a series of traumas. Over the last two decades, the encroachment of the West on former Soviet territory, the expansion of NATO into the Baltics, and perceived dilution of Russian traditional culture by globalization all reproduced the humiliation of the collapse of the Soviet Union. All of this arouses

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<sup>34</sup> Atkinson, J. *Trauma Trails Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous* (Australia. 2002.)

<sup>35</sup> Atkinson, J. *Trauma Trails Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous* (Australia. 2002.) Page 82.

<sup>36</sup> Kuchins, Andrew. “Does Obama Really Understand Putin?” (CNN. 2013.)  
<http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/28/opinion/kuchins-obama-putin/>

<sup>37</sup> Gullery, Sean. “Is Russia Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?” (New Republic. 2014.)

anxieties in Russian society, which are alleviated through attempts to reconsolidate Russia's national identity: fervent patriotism, the fear of encroaching 'fascism,' calls for vigilance against fifth columnists and traitors, the reassertion of Russian traditional culture against the decadent and corrupt West, and the urgent need for a Russian national idea. All of these reactions are the initial trauma of Soviet collapse displaced on new dangers."<sup>38</sup>

But it doesn't stop there. The BBC cites Moscow-based psychologist, Lyudmila Petranovskaya, charging the Russian state with utilizing this legacy of national trauma through propaganda on Russian state TV: "One can say that over these past months Russian viewers have been subject to mass emotional rape, propaganda carpet-bombing." The result? BBC writes that this propagandizing of the state media resulted "the sharp rise of anti-Western sentiment captured in numerous opinion polls" and points out that "The scale and intensity of the current propaganda campaign is unprecedented in modern Russia. One would probably have to go back to the Stalin era to find anything comparable."<sup>39</sup> A traumatized populace coupled with increased threats and a stream of propagandized information seems ripe for relapse into a violent totalitarian government.

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<sup>38</sup> Gullery, Sean. "Is Russia Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?" (New Republic. 2014.) <https://newrepublic.com/article/117493/russia-suffering-post-traumatic-stress-disorder>.

<sup>39</sup> Ennis, Stephen. "How TV propaganda is affecting Russian society. Monitoring the World Through its Media." (BBC. Aug 2015.) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/monitoring/how-tv-propaganda-is-affecting-russian-society>.

## Chapter Two

### How Stalin Outlived His Regime

With the unholy reputation as one of the most gruesome mass murderers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Joseph Stalin murdered millions, crushed dissension, and transformed Russia from a feudal system to an industrial giant. How does Stalin's bloody legacy connect with the Russia that preceded him and how does it continue to resonate in modern Russia?

Stalin was born Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili on December 18, 1878, in Gori, Georgia. His father was a cobbler and his mother a housemaid. As a child he had several deformities, from notches in his face left over from smallpox, an arm nearly lame after a run in with a horse-drawn carriage, and two adjoined toes on his left foot. Prone to alcoholism and abusive outbursts, his father was banished after a particularly bad drunken rampage in which he assaulted the town's police chief. Although he was a good student, he was expelled from his Russian Orthodox seminary due to financial troubles and missed exams. He used his free time to devote himself more fully to the writings of Marx and joined the local Marxist group from which the Bolsheviks would later emerge.<sup>40</sup>

When Lenin formed the Bolsheviks in 1903, Dzhugashvili immediately joined their ranks, proving himself an eager intellectual as well as channeling his inner criminal to raise funds for the Bolsheviks through bank robberies, kidnappings, extortions, and assassinations. Although he was arrested and sent to Siberia several times, he often escaped. Sometime between 1910 and 1912, Dzhugashvili started using the name Stalin in writings—translated literally to “man of steel.” He rose rapidly through the ranks of the Bolsheviks through equal parts cunning

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<sup>40</sup> Service, Robert. *Stalin :A Biography*. (Harvard University Press. September 25, 2006.)

and charm. In the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Stalin and two others took over Pravda, the official Bolshevik paper, and eventually bolstered support for Lenin's overthrow of the government. When Loyalist troops stormed the offices of Pravda, Stalin helped Lenin to hide and escape capture. In October of 1917, the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in Petrograd resulting in the Bolshevik seizure of the government and the success of the October Revolution. After the Bolsheviks seized Petrograd civil war broke out. During this time, Lenin formed an eight member Politburo, including Stalin. Stalin continued to rise through the ranks and it was not long before Lenin fell unexpectedly ill in 1921, leaving a small circle of eligible leaders to emerge following his death in 1923.

Before his death, Lenin dictated "Lenin's Testament," in which he discussed the personal qualities of his comrades, especially Trotsky and Stalin. In his testament, he strongly recommended that Stalin be removed from the position of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, calling him ill-suited for the position.<sup>41</sup>

During Lenin's semi-retirement after stroke, Stalin began consolidating power by appointing his supporters to prominent positions and cultivating an image for himself as closer to Lenin and therefore, Lenin's rightful successor. As Lenin's health declined, Stalin took more responsibility in the party, and less interest in Lenin himself. With Lenin's health withering and whatever was left of their relationship fraying, Stalin solidified his power. By 1924, Stalin emerged as the General Secretary of the newly formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, beginning an era of violence, bloodshed, and cold, hard industrialization led by the man of steel himself.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

For a man who rose to power through manipulation and playing the party, Stalin was well aware of just how precarious his position was as a leader. Consumed with thoughts of his legacy, Stalin devised a plan. Master at the macabre and insidious, Stalin sculpted his legacy out of flesh and blood. With national pride and security calibrated upon a body count, death camps and quotas, Stalin led Russia into a fearful, but glorious, time in history.

Until 1945, the Soviet Union was riding high on its win in the Great Patriotic War in its defeat of the Germans. To this day, many Russians attribute this great feat to Stalin, without whom they believe it could not have been achieved. The victory brought home a sense of national pride, international respect, and the solidification of the momentous climb of the formerly feudal state into a competing world power.

True, many leaders would shudder at the human body count needed to overcome the Germans, “and the USSR, depending on which historian you believe, would lose at least 11,000,000 soldiers (killed and missing) as well as somewhere between 7,000,000 and 20,000,000 million of its civilian population during the Great Patriotic War,”<sup>42</sup> but for Stalin this was a necessary cost for progress.<sup>43</sup>

Stalin’s purges arose from his unsettling quest for greater power and control, often obtained through the arrest and murder of political threats, perceived or imagined. Wielding the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) as a weapon, Stalin was able to fabricate allegations, force confessions, and crush dissenters, eventually creating an enforced “cult of Stalin-worship” by dislocating opponents to the Gulag<sup>44</sup>, labor camps often coupled with unsustainable living

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<sup>42</sup>For comparison, the United States suffered at least 400,000 deaths; Dykman, JT. “WWII Soviet Experience.” (The Eisenhower Institute.) [http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/about/living\\_history/wwii\\_soviet\\_experience.dot](http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/about/living_history/wwii_soviet_experience.dot).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> The term “Gulag” stands for the Russian G.U.L.A.G. or Главное управление лагерей, Glavnoye Upravleniye LAGerej, which translates to “Main Camp Administration.” These Administrations of Correction Labor Camps

conditions. The Gulag was not only an opportunity to manufacture his own homogenous cult of approval, but it also enabled him, as he saw it, to industrialize the Soviet Union in a short time frame in order to catch up with the Western world industrially.

On March 5, 1953, Stalin died at the age of 74, suffering from a stroke. Radio announcer Yuri Levitan delivered the news to the nation, slowly and in a voice brimming with emotion, that “The Central Committee of the Communist party, the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR announce with deep grief to the party and all workers that on 5 March, at 9:50 p.m., Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, has died after a serious illness. The heart of the collaborator and follower of the genius of Lenin’s work, the wise leader and teacher of the Communist party and of the Soviet people, has stopped beating.” On March 9, a funeral was held in the Red Square to commemorate the leader, yielding a crowd of over 1.5 million—so large that some were crushed to death in their eagerness. Stalin’s body was embalmed and put on display with Lenin’s corpse at the Lenin-Stalin mausoleum.

It was not until 1956 that Khrushchev would deliver his famous 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress speech that would bring to light Stalin’s war crimes, condemn his use of violence, and attempt to break up his cult of personality. In the immediate years following Khrushchev’s speech, there was a short-lived burst of discussion and public debate inspired by the event, largely involving the secrecy and dissatisfaction surrounding the Soviet style of government. This initial bump in public opinion, however, was met by tighter controls on the expression of public opinion and dissent. As a result, the criminalization of Stalin and condemnation of his cult was not wholly

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became commonly used to reference any forced-labor camp in the Soviet Union. The Gulag was utilized as a major instrument of political repression in the USSR.

effective at rooting out popular opinion for the ruler. It seems that over the past couple of decades the remnants of his cult, left to fester, have grown significantly.

During his lifetime, Stalin embarked on a careful campaign of cementing his legacy, one that still permeates society today. Monuments of Lenin and Stalin are littered across Eastern Europe and Russia. Public perception highlights the contributions Stalin made to society, rather than showing outright condemnation of the violence he used to achieve them.

Since authors maintained a unique, pre-existing authority in Russian culture, Stalin injected himself into an already influential canon. That canon went on to shape the cultural tropes that are still in Russia today. By cementing the political course that most shapes Russian culture, Stalin preserved his personality and ideology, constructing a new type of monument that is nearly impossible to topple. The tropes developed in Soviet rhetoric – that of the “real Russian citizen” and the “strong Soviet family”— undergird contemporary laws that appeal to an entrenched value of collective security over individual liberty.<sup>45</sup>

Stalin boasts shockingly high approval ratings in the country he fertilized in blood. Public sentiment remembers him fondly, even showing rampant nostalgia for his Soviet era policies.

Joseph Stalin’s body lies in the Kremlin’s Necropolis, but his likeness litters the ruins of his empire—his image not merely lurking around corners, but standing proudly in broad daylight and public squares, on the lips of the people and in the spirit of the laws. Meanwhile, his legacy plays a more active role in modern affairs, being more firmly rooted in the new laws and culture of today.

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<sup>45</sup> I propose the terms “true Russian” and “strong Soviet family” as entrenched Russian cultural tropes that Stalin exploited.



How exactly did Stalin outlive his regime?

The Statistics and the Role of the West

Soviet historian Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko attributed the following quote to Stalin in his book *Portrait of a Tyrant*, a quote that seems to have stuck with his legacy: “When one man dies, it’s a tragedy. When thousands die, it’s a statistic.”<sup>46</sup>

Stalin’s first purges date back to 1930-33, aimed at those who opposed industrialization and the kulaks — rich peasantry, often comparatively wealthy farmers and entrepreneurs, who opposed collectivization.<sup>47</sup> Stalin broadened his spectrum of terror with the Great Purges, which took place between 1934 and 1939. After the 1934 death of Sergey Kirov, a political rival of Stalin, (widely suspected to be arranged by Stalin), Stalin used this event as cause to arrest thousands under the guise that they were connected to the Kirov plot.<sup>48</sup> From 1934 to 1939 the military was largely targeted, including the Commander-In-Chief of the Red Army (the Bolshevik-led Army that fought against the White Army, looking to overthrow the Bolsheviks, during the Russian Civil War of 1917-1921), seven leading generals of the Red Army, and all the admirals and half the Army’s officers.<sup>49</sup> Thousands of religious leaders were imprisoned and churches were closed.<sup>50</sup> In order to fill quotas, ordinary people were implicated in outrageous plots of treason resulting in their imprisonment in the Gulag. In addition to forced confessions in the interrogations conducted by the NKVD, people were often forced through threat or personal gain— including lighter sentences— to implicate others. Although the Gulag is not an execution

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<sup>46</sup> Antonov-Ovseyenko, Anton. “The Time of Stalin: Portrait of Tyranny.” (Harper & Row. 1981.)

<sup>47</sup> Gracheva, Ekaterina. “Of Russian Origin: Stalin’s Purges.” (Russiapedia.). <http://russiapedaia.rt.com/of-russian-origin/stalins-purges/>.

<sup>48</sup> Gracheva, Ekaterina. “Of Russian Origin: Stalin’s Purges.” (Russiapedia.). <http://russiapedaia.rt.com/of-russian-origin/stalins-purges/>.

<sup>49</sup> Gracheva, Ekaterina. “Of Russian Origin: Stalin’s Purges.” (Russiapedia.). <http://russiapedaia.rt.com/of-russian-origin/stalins-purges/>.

<sup>50</sup> Gracheva, Ekaterina. “Of Russian Origin: Stalin’s Purges.” (Russiapedia.). <http://russiapedaia.rt.com/of-russian-origin/stalins-purges/>.

order, the Gulag system was often associated with unsustainable living conditions and a lethal neglect that caused the premature end of a large degree of its occupants—arguably a death sentence in itself. One example of Stalin’s atrocities can be observed in the infamous Katyn massacre (‘Катынский расстрел’ ‘Katyn shooting’), which was a series of mass executions of Polish nationals who had been taken prisoner when the Soviet Union invaded Poland in September of 1939.<sup>51</sup> In 1989 Gorbachev admitted to the Katyn Massacre in the Katyn Forest, in which Stalin ordered the NKVD “to execute by shooting some 25,700 Poles.”<sup>52</sup>

How did the orchestrated murder of millions of people go unnoticed by the international community? Could this international blindness contribute to the Soviet-era nostalgia that seems to be taking hold of contemporary Russia?

In the 1930s, the USSR saw increased cooperation with the West. The Soviet Union took part in world disarmament agreements, established new trade deals, joined the United Nations, and began to be taken seriously by the world as a legitimate government.

After World War II, the world was riding high on the defeat of Hitler’s Germany, the fall of tyranny and the restoration of human rights to the Western half of Europe. Ironically, Soviet Russia took part in these celebrations. Few would care to look closely at the mass suffering and violence committed within the borders of the nearby Soviet Union, and exactly what “Uncle Joe” might be hiding.

As journalist Anne Applebaum points out “No one wants to be told that there was another, darker side to the Allied victory, or that the camps of Stalin, our ally, expanded just as

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<sup>51</sup> “Katyn Forest Massacre.” (Katyn.) <http://www.katyn.org.au/>.

<sup>52</sup> Katyn Forest Massacre.” (Katyn.) <http://www.katyn.org.au/>.

the camps of Hitler, our enemy, were liberated. To admit that by sending thousands of Russians to their deaths by forcibly repatriating them after the war, or by consigning millions of people to Soviet rule at Yalta, the Western Allies might have helped others commit crimes against humanity that would undermine the moral clarity of our memories of that era. No one wants to think that we defeated one mass murderer with the help of another. No one wants to remember how well that mass murderer got on with Western statesmen. ‘I have a real liking for Stalin,’ the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, told a friend. ‘He has never broken his word.’ There are many photographs of Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt all together, all smiling.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1944, the American vice-president, Henry Wallace, actually went to Kolyma, one of the most notorious camps.<sup>54</sup> Although Wallace was denied the opportunity to meet the prisoners, he highlighted the “vast expanses,” “virgin forests, wide rivers and large lakes, all kinds of climate—from tropical to polar—her [Russia’s] inexhaustible wealth.”<sup>55</sup>

Although debates over which mass murderer was the worst mass murderer might be consuming and interesting to study, perhaps some cross-cultural comparisons could be useful for discerning how one nation separates itself from its past mass-murdering dictator while the other celebrates it, even finding nostalgia for it. How can it be that a symmetry of evil not presume symmetry of memory?<sup>56</sup>

An important distinction between the two countries and their legacies of violence can be observed in the role of western intervention. Postwar Germany saw a complete overhaul of its

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<sup>53</sup> Applebaum, Anne. *Gulag: A History*. (Doubleday. 2003.)

<sup>54</sup> Applebaum, Anne. *Gulag: An Introduction*. (Victims of Communism.) <http://victimsofcommunism.org/gulag-an-introduction/>.

<sup>55</sup> Applebaum, Anne. *Gulag: A History*. (Doubleday. 2003.)

<sup>56</sup> Etkind, Alexander. *Hard and Soft Memory: Political Mourning in Russia and Germany*. (The MIT Press. Summer 2004.) Page 36.

government following the invasion of foreign forces. International pressure was immediately placed on the nation to impose a forced transition away from its totalitarianism. The Soviet Union, however, saw no forced transition. The USSR would not collapse until decades later, and largely under its own implosion in the 90s.

Stephen Cohen, Russian studies professor at Princeton, offers several reasons why the international community might not intervene, including: “National self-interest;” “direct involvement and collusion (arms, training, equipment); reluctance to infringe the doctrine of national sovereignty;” and “the popular sentiment that these are indeed other people’s problems.”<sup>57</sup> He also describes justifications for noninvolvement politics, for fear that intervention could take the form as either too “right-wing,” which offers a fatalistic “us” and them” dividing line or a “liberal version;” a hands-off approach in the name of respect for the autonomy of other cultures.<sup>58</sup>

Left to its own devices and with little-to-no intervention from the democratic West, the world witnessed the fall of one dictator and the continued rise of another. Perhaps when trying to understand Stalin’s contemporary popularity, one should account for the disparity between the two brutal leaders in perceptions on the world stage and the disparity in penalties for their state orchestrated violence.

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<sup>57</sup> Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001). Page 148.

<sup>58</sup> Becirevic, Edina. “Eighth Stage of Genocide: Denial.” *Genocide on the Drina River*. (Yale University Press. 2014).

### Manipulating Minds and Social Structure for Subservience and Obedience

The Bolsheviks' first act upon seizing the government was to nationalize the publishing industry.<sup>59</sup> Stalin's fascination with the printed word characterizes his reign. While Stalin generally remained distant and aloof from the public, he utilized the printed word as his main method of communication with the public (despite the availability of the radio, television, and newsreel).

American radical John Reed foresaw a time when "capitalist owners of printing presses and of paper cannot be the all-powerful and exclusive manufacturers of public opinion." This was the overriding sentiment of Article 14 in the July 10, 1918 Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federative Republic: "To guarantee working people real freedom to express their opinions, the Russian Socialist Federation of the Soviet Republic terminates the press's dependence on capital and puts all technical and material means for publishing newspapers, brochures, books, and other printed material in the hands of the working class and poor peasantry and ensures their free distribution throughout the whole country."<sup>60</sup>

To seize the means of production and to control public opinion underscored the Bolsheviks' active attempts to curtail pluralism in society.

Towards the second half of the 1920s, Stalin began to oversee the central press personally, dictating every piece of information that would be put into print. His fixation on this form of media never waned in intensity over the years.

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<sup>59</sup> Brooks, Jeffrey. "Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War." (Princeton, 2001.)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Stalin's control of the newspapers became formulaic. The layout of the newspapers came to produce three discrete spheres of reportage: an "interpretive sphere" which included stories that carried overt ideological messages; an "interactive sphere" allowing for the mildest opinions of the readers; and an "informational sphere" recounting limited, sanctioned events inside and outside the country. The result was "the ability to answer the question 'Who is a good Party member?' according to ideology in an editorial, in terms of an event in a wire service reports, and based on character traits such as sobriety and diligence in a reader's letter."<sup>61</sup> The overall effect was an indoctrination of the Soviet citizen, a contamination of the main vein of information telling audiences what—and how—to think.

When *Working Moscow* reported a mass murder in 1923, the editors chose not to report the crime, sentencing, and execution in favor of a single moralizing statement in which "the murderess was described as a glutton and the murderer as a wife and child beater and friend of priests."<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps it was due to the strict eradication of religion from the country, maybe it was due to the fact that the former peasants were simply accustomed to a patriarchal authority, but Stalin took on the role of a quasi-religious leader indoctrinating the public into what he saw fit as the Soviet way of life.

In the mid-1930s, his newest doctrine came in the form of the "Great Retreat," which was "the gradual and surreptitious abandonment of revolutionary social and cultural practices in favor

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

of traditional, prerevolutionary values,” focusing on the two important archetypes actively being developed in Soviet society—the notion of the strong family and the true Russian.<sup>63</sup>

### Perpetuating Violence Through The Strong Socialist Family

Before Stalin’s Great Retreat, during the period immediately following the Revolution (1917-1921), policy regarding the family was dictated by Lenin and the early Bolsheviks. Family and industrialization seemed conflicting concepts, evident as early as the end of the nineteenth century in cities and industrialized regions of the country who saw birthrates decreasing, growing marriage instability, family ties weakening, and children increasingly born outside of marriage. According to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, under Communism, the “bourgeois” family would have to “disappear,” just as “the capital” would. These ideas were adopted and further radically developed into early post-revolutionary Russian ideology.<sup>64</sup> In 1917, early Soviet legislation reflected this attempt to liberalize family relationships, such as the decrees “On Civil Marriage, Children, and Registries”—which largely granted spouses unconditional freedom to divorce—and “On Dissolution of Marriages”—which simultaneously limited marriage to civil courts (as opposed to religious marriage) and abolished all distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate children. The 1918 Family Code granted spouses the right to separate property, thus abolishing shared, family property. The Soviets were the first government to allow complete freedom of abortion.

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<sup>63</sup> Thackeray, Frank W. “The Stalin Era, 1928-1953.” Events that Changed Russia Since 1855.” (Greenwood Publishing Group. London. 2007.)

<sup>64</sup> Parfentiev, Pavel A. “A Brief History of Family Policy in Russia, 1917-2013.” (The Family in America: A Journal of Public Policy. Summer 2013.) [http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG\\_yvIV](http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG_yvIV).



These actions were intended to undermine the influence and legitimacy of the Church as well as liberating women, whom they believed were oppressed through the confines of family roles. In 1919, Lenin argued that “true liberation of women, true Communism comes about only when and where the masses rise up . . . against . . . small-scale households.”<sup>65</sup>

In Socialist ideology, “An individual does not belong to itself, but to society—humankind.”<sup>66</sup> For this reason, the family was a hindrance to the ultimate goal of socialist reality, as it oppressed women and commoditized families and children as property.

Lenin corroborated this statement, writing in 1920, “We are serious in delivering in our manifesto commitment to transfer the economic and educational functions of the individual household to the society.”

This antifamily policy led to skyrocketing divorce rates, a rapid disintegration of the family, serial polygamy, and rampant prostitution. In 1920 Petrograd (now St Petersburg), 41% of marriages lasted only three to six months, 22% less than two months, and 11% less than one month. Open prostitution was rampant.<sup>67</sup>

This period, so-called the policy of “War Communism,” was following by the “New Economic Policy” period between 1921 and 1928, which was aimed at restoring the economy left in shambles following the Civil War. The need to revive the economy took precedence, putting these social changes largely aimed at disintegrating the family on hold. In order to revive

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<sup>65</sup> Parfentiev, Pavel A. “A Brief History of Family Policy in Russia, 1917-2013.” (The Family in America: A Journal of Public Policy. Summer 2013.) [http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG\\_yvIV](http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG_yvIV).

<sup>66</sup> Bukharin, Nikolai; Preobrazhensky, Evgeni. “The ABC of Communism” (1920.)

<sup>67</sup> Parfentiev, Pavel A. “A Brief History of Family Policy in Russia, 1917-2013.” (The Family in America: A Journal of Public Policy. Summer 2013.) [http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG\\_yvIV](http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG_yvIV).

the economy, the state granted some freedom of private property and enterprise, which proved to be closely linked to family policy. Although the social policies curtailing the rights of the family were slowed down, there was still legislation passed underscoring the Socialist vision of the disintegration of the family, such as Article 46 of the 1926 Code, which allowed the state to remove children from the custody of their parent in cases of abuse, and Article 37 of the 1926 Code, which nullified the parents' right to determine their children's religious affiliation under the age of 14. Furthermore, following the policies of the revolutionary phase, high divorce rates and low birthrates were endemic, as the mid-1920s were witness to the so-called paternity epidemic, as huge waves of law suits for child support were issued with little-to-no evidence of paternity besides the woman's statement.

The "New Economic Policy" period was followed by the Stalin Period "Plans", from 1929 to the mid-1950s. Stalin drastically changed the trajectory from the vision of the Socialist utopian ideal involving the disintegration of the family, to promote a return to conservatism in family policy.

Stalin had several reasons to shape the archetype of the strong Socialist family. First of all, Russia's continually low birth rates lagged behind replacement levels, so achieving a steadily increasing population through the protection and promotion of the family would help to overcome this deficit. This low birth rate was exacerbated by war and various purges, threatening national instability if left unchecked. Furthermore, collectivization and industrialization placed a heavy workload onto Soviet citizens, so it would benefit production and economic advancement to encourage the production of more workers.

Stalin focused his efforts and policy-making from the 1930s onward to reflect a strengthening of family dynamics through the creation of an ideological doctrine. In 1936 the

USSR issued a decree “On Prohibiting Abortions, Increasing Material Assistance to Women in Childbirth, Establishing State Assistance to Large Families, Extending the Network of Maternity Hospitals, Day Nurseries, and Kindergartens, Intensifying Sanctions for Child Support Payment Avoidance, and Various Amendments to Laws on Divorce.” The state further incentivized the creation of a family through state-sponsored social security payments for large families. In 1944, the USSR passed “On Increasing State Assistance for Pregnant Women, Mothers of Many Children, and Single Mothers, Strengthening the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood, Establishing the ‘Heroine Mother’ Honorary Title, the ‘Glory of Motherhood’ Order, and the ‘Medal for Motherhood’ Medal.” In addition, divorce was significantly limited and made more difficult, while cohabitation (previously equalized with official marriage in 1926) was losing legal recognition. As a result, in 1946 Leningrad (St. Petersburg) there were eight times fewer divorces compared to the period 1938-1939.<sup>68</sup>

Trotsky sharply criticized this legislation passed during the Stalin period, writing in his 1937 *Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* that “the Revolution made a heroic attempt at destroying the so-called ‘hearth and home,’ the primitive, stagnant, backward institution where the working-class woman was sentenced to hard labour from her childhood to her death.” But Stalin’s state, he argued, had betrayed this policy by “solemnly exculpating the family.”<sup>69</sup>

However, under the mission to strengthen the Socialist family, Soviet family life was placed almost totally under the control of the Communist Party and the state. These prohibitions

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<sup>68</sup> Parfentiev, Pavel A. “A Brief History of Family Policy in Russia, 1917-2013.” (The Family in America: A Journal of Public Policy. Summer 2013.) [http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG\\_yvIV](http://familyinamerica.org/journals/summer-2013/brief-history-family-policy-russia-1917-2013/#.WOq-TG_yvIV).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

or declarations largely deprived the family unit of its ability as an autonomous entity, reducing it to a tool for transmitting state ideology and as the ideological instrument of state policy.<sup>70</sup>

### Perpetuating Violence Through The True Russian

Stalin and his apparatus began to shape roles that would linger long after his regime. He sought to strengthen Soviet family life by outlawing abortions and making divorces more difficult to obtain. In these reforms he began a much longer campaign of carving out the identity of the ‘true Russian.’ An aspect of the Great Retreat was “the rehabilitation of the Russian nation, which Lenin had derided for its arrogance toward the country’s other nationalities.” Whereas before 1933, the Soviet Union embraced the idea of unity through diversity. However, in the mid-1930s Stalin began a campaign of promoting the status and unifying role of Russian culture. The Russian people became the “First among equals” and the “Elder brother” to other nations and nationalities within the Soviet Union. Stalin’s post-war toast highlighted the elevated role of the Russian people among the Soviet peoples.

Stalin created a campaign centered upon the Russification of the Soviet Union. He passed legislation that prioritized ethnic Russians over other ethnicities, replacing local officials in the provinces with Russians in order to dissuade autonomy and promote cooperation on a national level with his policies,

The 1930s saw the deportation and elimination of various nationalities that were not ‘true Russian,’ including the ethnic cleansing of various nationalities living in the Soviet Union—such

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

as the Germans, Poles, Finns, Balts, Koreans, Chinese, Estonians, Latvians, Kurds, and Iranians. In addition to these ethnic cleansings, deportation was an effective means of removing different ethnicities as well as ideological dissidents. This lack of diversity, both in thought and culture, created a homogenous public that was more receptive to Stalin's policies. Furthermore, the lack of those able to organize around these ideals of ideological criticism or cultural criticism, due to deportation or jail, creates a positive feed loop between the government's indoctrination and the public normalizing the actions of the government, exerting its own type of social and political pressure to conform to the prevailing political ideologies. By weeding out dissidents, both culturally and ideologically different, Stalin was able to forcibly create the trope of the "true Russian," or one who is obedient and "loyal" to the government, which the public in turn reaffirmed. The "true Russian" began as a campaign to reaffirm and promote the supremacy of a state-sanctioned cultural identity, but continued on to indoctrinate the indifferent and make indifferent the indoctrinated and promote attributes that furthered the agenda of the state, including complete subservience, obedience, and loyalty. These traits of the "true Russian" become a toxic, yet subtle, idea that has infiltrated society to the degree that it still persists and can be observed nearly seventy years after the death of Stalin.

Stalin attempted a great Russification campaign in order to create a trope of the "true" Russian. This idea was crucial in that his manufactured sense of a Soviet identity through embracing national unity and undermining ethnic diversity. Stalin manufactured—by threat, deportation, and legislation—a Soviet identity that urged conformity, loyalty, and singularity in nationality. This ideological indoctrination resulted in trope of the "true Russian," one that justified totalitarianism and the normalization of violence in the Soviet regime, a legacy that continued long after the death of Stalin and the fall of the Soviet Union.

Joseph Stalin was perhaps the most influential person in the formation of contemporary Russia. His reign saw the Soviet Union through thirty of the most formative years of its most recent past. The Stalin period saw the height of the Gulag system, the mass oppression of millions, the victory in the Great Patriotic Wars, and the transformation from an outdated feudal system to a leading world power. Most amazingly, a leader who died in 1953 is still part of the Russian political and cultural conversation in 2017. His atrocities seemed to have faded, and he is credited by contemporary Russians with bringing Russia into the modern world and defeating her enemies in World War II. Putin paints those enemies as still sniffing at Russia's borders, and you can hear the echo of Stalin's worldview and Stalin's brutal safeguarding of the state.

Monuments can be toppled, but Stalin shows that an idea well-placed, through culture and legislation, has the ability to root itself into the fabric of a society, and be not so easily removed, or even perceptible. Aware of the power of the printed word, Stalin made his impact invisible yet pernicious. Perhaps Stalin's most long lasting and insidious legacy lies in the tropes he created through his manipulation of literary tradition in Russia—that of the strong family and the true Russian to play the part of ideological tools and patsies.

Manipulating the unique role of the writer in Russian society, Stalin infiltrated the canon. He shaped what shapes Russian society, imparting an 'ends justifies the means' mentality to reinvent himself from tyrant to savior and knead the populace into a more accommodating and submissive entity.

Contemporaries ask how such a man could be celebrated in the streets of the country he nearly decimated decades earlier, and the answer is complex as well as sinister. By contaminating the literary culture and injecting himself and his violence into this authoritative

vein within Russian society, he imparted a legacy that reverberates into the present, one of terrorism disguised as heroism.

Furthermore, to look into the roles Stalin injected into this sacred, authoritative vein grows worrisome. Themes often returned to from literature of this era and the Soviet period in general are notions of the “real Russian citizen”—the docile, submissive, loyal Soviet citizen, the “Sofia Petrovnas”— and the “strong family”—a concept with which Joseph Brodsky struggled. A society steeped in this cultural message for the large part of the past century, sixty years at least since the death of Stalin, might begin to show an internalization of this theme.

It is through this perverse manipulation of Russian truth, speech, association, and poetry, that Stalin has outlived his reign, to be revered in the present and to impact contemporary society through tropes that justify subservience to the state and crack down on dissension. Examples of these tropes can be observed in the wording and sentiment behind recent legislation in Putin’s Russia.

In 2013, the State Duma passed with 436-0 unanimous vote—reminiscent of the Stalin era sycophancy that eliminated pluralism in legislation, politics, and opinions under the guise of stability—legislation “for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values,” which became more popularly recognized as the anti-gay law. Igor Kochetkov, the head of the LGBT Network in St. Petersburg, says the bill not only affects homosexuals, but also represents a return to an oppressive regime: “The government is using these instincts – homophobia, xenophobia – to justify its policies against an independent

civil society. They are making enemies out of us – not just LGBT society, but any group in society that doesn't agree with their current politics.”<sup>71</sup>

This clamp-down on personal freedoms took another step with the nearly unanimous (380-3) vote to decriminalize domestic violence. Olga Mizulina, who helped to author and push through the bill, said in a TV appearance that she thinks women “don't take offense when a man beats his wife” and that “a man beating his wife is less offensive than when a woman humiliates a man.” Yulia Gorbovna, a Moscow-based researcher for Human Rights, said “They argue this law will help protect Russian families, it will make families stronger.”<sup>72</sup>

Absolute unanimity in political representation was an important feature of Soviet Russia. Soviet leadership urged this idea of unanimity and consequent lack of pluralism in decisions in order to restore stability and protect the country from political chaos. Tropes such as the subservient, obedient Russian as the true Russian began to take root.

This message seems to resonate in Putin's Russia, as Parliament tries to legalize Soviet-style subservience and obedience and to curtail pluralism in opinion and political engagement through a series of legislative actions.

In 2012, freedom of assembly was challenged as the government increased penalties for unauthorized public gatherings, including up to 15 years prison terms for “mass rioting” (used to

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<sup>71</sup> Elder, Miriam. “Russia Passes Law Banning Gay Propaganda.” (The Guardian. June 11, 2013.) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/11/russia-law-banning-gay-propaganda>.

<sup>72</sup> Kozłowska, Hanna. “Female Law Makers in Russia helped push Through a Bill That Will Decriminalize Violence.” (Quartz.com. January 28, 2017.) <https://qz.com/946816/millennials-are-more-likely-than-their-parents-to-think-womens-place-is-in-the-home/>.



prosecute the protesters at Putin's 2012 inauguration) and up to 10 years for "mass riots training."<sup>73</sup>

"The Russian authorities want to criminalize public criticism," said Hugh Williamson, Europe and Central Asia director for Human Rights Watch. "They're threatening peaceful demonstrators with prison time."<sup>74</sup>

As if to make intentions absolutely clear, in 2012 the Russian parliament voted to re-criminalize libel in a series of laws passed from June through mid-July, issuing restrictions on "the rights to free expression, assembly, and association, and laying the groundwork to reinforce authoritarianism in Russia."<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch call these bills "regressive and out of step with international human rights law." Human Rights Watch senior Russia researcher Tanya Lokshina says "Freedom to criticize officials and expose their alleged wrongdoing is crucially important to fostering public debate and to holding officials accountable. The threat of criminal sanction to restrict speech strikes at the very core of Russia's vibrant community of rights activists and independent journalists."

In 2014, Russian leaders went after the media. In January of 2014, TV Rain, one of very few independent television stations, "[lost] access to cable and satellite television after it posted a viewers' poll about whether the USSR should have surrendered Leningrad during World War II to save lives."<sup>76</sup> By March, the state agency for media blocked "three independent websites and

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<sup>73</sup> Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2015: Russia." (Human Rights Watch. 2015.) <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/russia>.

<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2014: Russia." (Human Rights Watch. 2014.) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/01/russia-new-attack-freedom-assembly>

<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Russia: Criminal Libel Law a Blow to Free Expression." (Human Rights Watch. July 16, 2012.) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/16/russia-criminal-libel-law-blow-free-expression>.

<sup>76</sup> Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2015: Russia." (Human Rights Watch. 2015.) <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/russia>.

an opposition leader's blog under a new law authorizing the prosecutor general to request that the agency block websites without a court order."<sup>77</sup> In April, the founder and CEO of VKontakt announced he had left Russia because of "persistent demands by the Federal Security Service to block opposition users and communities." By September, ownership of Vkontakt was taken control of by an Internet company controlled by an oligarch close to the Kremlin. In May, Putin signed a law requiring bloggers with more than 3,000 daily visitors to register as mass media. In July a new law was passed banning commercial advertising on cable and satellite television channels, precluding hundreds of privately owned channels of income.

In addition to these moves towards singularity in politics, opinions, and media, some argue that Putin's Russia has returned to Stalin's Soviet-era practice of "Russianization." In 2014, up to 5,000 ethnic Russians were displaced from eastern Ukraine following the brutal fighting surrounding the Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists. These Russians were settled in Bashkostan, a Turkish speaking Muslim republic in the Middle Volga, instead of in more predominantly Russian regions. This raises criticism that Moscow intends to maneuver within the former Soviet satellites by placing ethnic Russians in these regions, similar to the Russianization policies during the Stalinist period.<sup>78</sup>

Remnants of Stalin's legacy pervade politics in contemporary Russia. While psychological factors may perpetuate fondness for a more violent — albeit internationally and militaristically successful — period in Russia's recent history and social tropes create a populace vulnerable to totalitarianism. These tropes include the "true Russian," "true Soviet," and the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Tunakan, Begum. "Stalin's Soviet-era practice return to Putin's Russia: 'Russianization.'" (Daily Sabah.) <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2014/08/15/stalins-soviet-union-practice-return-to-putins-russia-russianization/>.

“strong family.” Perhaps the ultimate answer to the veracity of these assertions lie in the assumption underlying contemporary policy in Putin’s Russia.

## Chapter Three

### A Case Study in Violence

#### Vladimir Putin: The Bloody Fist in a Velvet Glove

*Jan 10, 2017, Senate confirmation hearing for President Trump's Secretary of State*

*Senator Marco Rubio: "Is Vladimir Putin a war criminal?"*

*Nominee Rex Tillerson: "I would not use that term."*

Vladimir Putin is a modern world leader—one who understands the power of a strong photo broadcast across worldwide media, who does an annual year-end press conference with international and local journalists, and who routinely polls the populace to keep in touch with the pulse of his people. He has been a fixture in the Russian political landscape for 18 years, and managed to circumvent the term limits set forth in the Russian Constitution by completing his two consecutive terms as President, stepping down to become Prime Minister, and then returning as President in 2012.

If his regime is violent, it does violence in a modern way: A bloody hand in a velvet glove. Violence is targeted and untraceable. Putin's style is to engage in deft psychological intimidation that entices the Russian populace to identify with its strong man in exchange for a strong sense of national pride and national security, and to rationalize and look away from the deaths of critics.

Putin, the former head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), a successor to the KGB, was propelled to power in the wake of September 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow, Buinaksk, and Volgodonsk that killed 300 people and was initially seen as the work of Chechens. This mass murder terrified the Russian people, and was known as Russia's 9/11.

Putin, who was prime minister at the time, was put in charge of the invasion of Chechnya and became known as "defender of the nation," leading to his March 2000 election as president.

But a fifth unexploded bomb discovered in Ryazan was linked, not to Chechens, but to three FSB agents. As David Sattar notes, "According to a cable on the Ryazan incident from the U.S. embassy in Moscow, on March 24, 2000, a former member of the Russian intelligence services told an embassy political officer that the real story of the Ryazan incident would never be known because 'the truth would destroy the country.' He said that the FSB 'does indeed have a specially trained team of men whose mission is to carry out this type of urban warfare.'"<sup>79</sup> While not everyone may agree with Sattar's interpretation, it is quite compelling.

Putin has populated not only the Kremlin, but also almost every branch of government with former FSB and KGB men, the "siloviki." And in September of 2016, the KGB itself was resurrected. According to the Russian daily Kommersant, a major new realignment of Russia's security agencies was to unite the FSB with Russia's foreign intelligence service into a new super-agency called the Ministry of State Security. That is the same name as Stalin's secret

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<sup>79</sup> Sattar, David. "The Mystery of Russia's 1999 Apartment Bombing's Lingers—the CIA Could Clear It Up." (National Review. February 2, 2017.) <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/444493/russia-apartment-bombings-september-1999-vladimir-putin-fsb-cia->.

police in the Forties and Fifties, a ministry responsible for the arrest and punishment of 750,000 Soviet citizens “on suspicion of espionage.”<sup>80</sup>

Liberal politician and Putin critic Gennady Gudkov said of Putin’s restructuring of foreign and domestic intelligence into one monolithic agency, “It is entirely clear that the country has gone from authoritarian to totalitarian.”<sup>81</sup>

Andrew C. Kuchins, an expert on Russia and a Kremlinologist, touched upon the special mindset of KGB men when he wrote in March of 2014: “Putin resonates with many Russians because he is seen as the embodiment of the humiliation, status deprivation and grievances that the country has purportedly suffered [since the collapse of the Soviet Union.]

“Making matters worse, he was an intelligence operative virtually abandoned by what he and his brethren view as incompetent Soviet leadership. The ethos of the Russian intelligence officer going back to the foundation of the secret police in the early 19th century centers on their special, almost messianic obligation to save Russia from itself -- a task only they were adequately trained for.”

In September of 2007, the U.S. economist Richard Rahn contrasted the Putin regime with past leaders, saying :” Unlike the communists with their mass repression, killings, and Gulags, the Putinistas have been accused of selective murders and have imprisoned their media, business, and political critics, both inside and, in several instances, outside Russia. Putin apologists claim

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<sup>80</sup> Mathews, Owen. “Vladimir Putin Resurrects the KGB.” (Politico. September 28, 2016.) <http://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-resurrects-the-kgb-moscow-security/>.

<sup>81</sup> Kaylan, Melik. “Putin Brings Back the KGB As Russia Moves From Authoritarian To Totalitarian.” (Politico. September 20, 2016.) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/melikkaylan/2016/09/20/putin-brings-back-the-kgb-as-russia-moves-from-authoritarian-to-totalitarian/#3c1dfab8398a>.

the murders are solely due to rogue elements, much like the prisoner abuse by a few American soldiers in Abu-Ghraib.”<sup>82</sup>

During Putin’s first two presidential terms, he signed into law liberal economic reforms that cut Russia’s poverty rate and put a solid block of Russians into the middle class. Said Rahn: "Putinism depended on the Russian economy growing rapidly enough that most people had rising standards of living and, in exchange, were willing to put up with the existing soft repression."<sup>83</sup>

American Presidential candidate Donald Trump gave Putin a heightened profile in the West when he praised Putin as a strong leader and invited the Russians to hack his opponent Hillary Clinton’s emails. And President Trump had to fire his national security adviser Michael Flynn two weeks into his administration after it was determined that Flynn had discussed U.S. sanctions with Russian Ambassador to the US Sergey Kislyak before Trump’s inauguration and had misled the Vice-President about that contact. Now the question is whether Trump has been re-tweeting fake news created by Russia’s state-involved cyber warriors.

Putin has become something of American pop cultural figure who is routinely satirized on the TV show Saturday Night Live, appearing buff and stripped to the waist as he has been portrayed in his well-managed publicity shots.

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<sup>82</sup> Rahn, Richard W. “From Communism to Putinism.” (The Brussels Journal. September 19, 2007.)

<sup>83</sup> Rahn, Richard W. “From Communism to Putinism.” (The Brussels Journal. September 19, 2007.)



So does Putin embody the Russian legacy of state-sponsored violence? And if so, how?

It was a question Fox News Anchor Bill O'Reilly raised in an interview with President Trump on Superbowl Sunday in 2017.

O'Reilly asked Trump: "Do you respect Putin?"

"I do respect him," Trump responded.

"Do you?" O'Reilly said, interjecting. "Why?"

"Well, I respect a lot of people, but that doesn't mean I'm going to get along with him," Trump responded. "He's a leader of his country. I say it's better to get along with Russia than not. And if Russia helps us in the fight against ISIS, which is a major fight, and Islamic terrorism all over the world, major fight — that's a good thing. Will I get along with him? I have no idea."



“He’s a killer though,” O’Reilly said. “Putin’s a killer.”

“There are a lot of killers,” Trump replied. “We’ve got a lot of killers. What, you think our country’s so innocent?”

Leonid Bershidsky, a Bloomberg View columnist and founding editor of the Russian business daily Vedomosti, in a column entitled “How Fair Is It to Call Putin a Killer?”, wrote: “Putin is not a bloodthirsty, Stalin-like dictator. He has stubbornly resisted calls for the reinstatement of the death penalty in Russia, put on hold during the country's brief romance with Europe.”<sup>84</sup>

However, said Bershidsky, the deaths of at least three opponents have been linked to Putin: politician Boris Nemtsov in 2015, journalist Anna Politkovskaya in 2006, and former intelligence officer Alexander Litvinenko, also in 2006. An official inquiry in Britain determined it was likely that Putin was behind the assassination of Litvinenko, who was poisoned with the radioactive substance polonium-210.

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<sup>84</sup> Bershidsky, Leonid. “How Fair Is It To Call Putin a Killer?” (Bloomberg. February 7, 2017.) <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-02-07/how-fair-is-it-to-call-putin-a-killer-as-o-reilly-did>.



Journalist and human rights activist Anna Politkovskaya was found murdered in an elevator in her apartment block in Moscow on October 7 of 2006, which happened to be Putin's birthday. She had become a high-profile critic of Putin and a voice of opposition to the Chechen conflict.

Before her death, she had received death and rape threats, been poisoned a couple of times, and even had been subjected to a fake execution. She wrote, "'We are hurtling back into a Soviet abyss, into an information vacuum that spells death from our own ignorance. All we have left is the internet, where information is still freely available. For the rest, if you want to go on working as a journalist, it's total servility to Putin. Otherwise, it can be death, the bullet, poison, or trial—whatever our special services, Putin's guard dogs, see fit.'"<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Politkovskaya, Anna. "Poisoned by Putin." (The Guardian. September 9, 2004.)  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/09/russia.media>.

Even Litvinenko's death may have been linked to Politkovskaya. Litvinenko accused Putin of sanctioning the murder just a week after the journalist's death. Two weeks after that, Litvinenko was poisoned. (This is another trend in these suspicious murders: Putin critics investigating suspicious deaths who then themselves die under suspicious circumstances.)

But Putin minimized Politkovskaya's impact, when he was asked about her murder on a trip to Germany, saying she was more important to the West than to Russians.

"Yes, this journalist was indeed a sharp critic of the present Russian authorities," Putin said. "But I think journalists should know -- in any case, experts understand it perfectly well -- that the degree of her influence over political life in Russia was extremely insignificant. She was well-known in journalistic circles, among human rights activists, in the West. I repeat, her influence over political life in Russia was minimal."<sup>86</sup>

Russia's Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika placed the blame for the murder on foreign forces intent on hurting Russian government. He said, "Our investigation has led us to conclude that only people living abroad could be interested in killing Politkovskaya...Forces interested in de-stabilizing the country, in stoking crisis...in discrediting the national leadership, provoking external pressure on the country, could be interested in this crime."<sup>87</sup>

In June of 2014 five men were sentenced in the murder of Politkovskaya, but the courts failed to determine who ordered the contract killing.

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<sup>86</sup> "Chechnya: Politkovskaya Mourned as 'Last Hope.'" (Radio Free Europe. October 11, 2006.) <http://www.rferl.org/a/1071958.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Gardham, Duncan. "Russia hints exile linked to murder." (The Sydney Morning Herald. August 29, 2007.) <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/russia-hints-exile-linked-to-murder/2007/08/28/1188067111580.html>.

The Nemtsov case is fresh and still shocking to Russians. On February 27, 2015, the charismatic Russian opposition leader Nemtsov was walking home across a bridge over the Moscow River near the Kremlin when he was shot multiple times in the back and head as his girlfriend watched in horror. This happened the night before Nemtsov was to lead a rally protesting Russia's war in the Ukraine.

Nemtsov had been a deputy prime minister under Boris Yeltsin and Putin's boss when Putin was head of the F.S.B. Officially, Putin called for an investigation, and sent condolences to Nemtsov's mother. But Russian chess grandmaster and political activist Garry Kasparov said, "Opposition leaders are always watched closely by Russia's security services before public rallies—Boris had been planning a protest against the Ukraine war on Sunday—so how could these trained bloodhounds not notice that someone else was following him?"<sup>88</sup>

Again, investigators seemed to collar the trigger men, but not those who placed the order for murder (although suspicions lingered on Chechnya strongman and Putin ally Ramzan Kadyrov).

And this time, the victim was portrayed as a danger to the state. According to a piece in the *New Yorker* magazine, one suspect, Anzor Gubashey, who was said to be the getaway driver, told investigators he came to believe that Nemtsov was an agent of the CIA and Obama who was "carrying out a policy against our state, supporting the West and defaming our government."

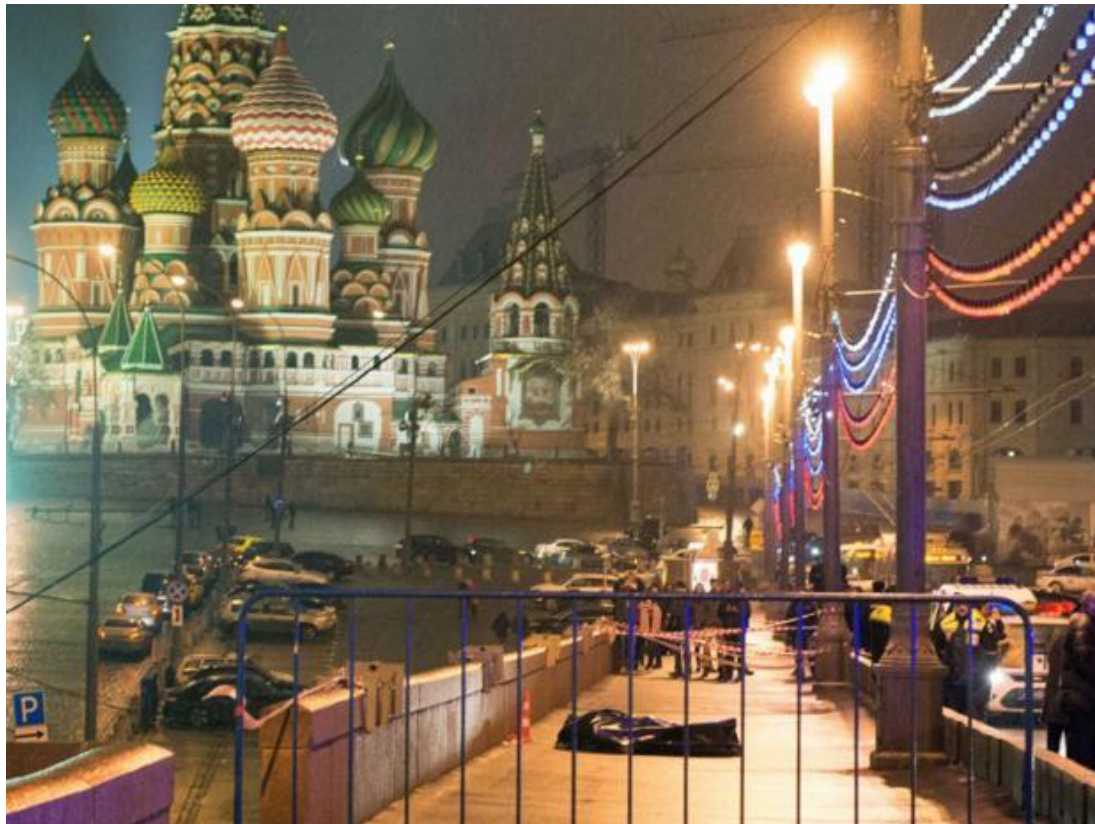
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<sup>88</sup> Kasparov, Garry. "Putin's Culture of Fear and Death." (The Wall Street Journal. March 1, 2015.) <https://www.wsj.com/articles/garry-kasparov-putins-culture-of-fear-and-death-1425249677>.

Said Gubashev: “We don’t feel the least bit sorry that we took him out, because from the very beginning he was a Western prostitute, and was causing all sorts of chaos.”<sup>89</sup>

It was a sentiment voiced by many pro-Putin elements in Russia. A vice-dean at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology published a statement, saying: "The Americans themselves created this sleazeball, themselves financed him, themselves killed him. It is the fate of all prostitutes. Yesterday evening there became one sleazeball less.”<sup>90</sup>

Photo of Nemtsov’s body



In other words, the violence against Nemtsov, whether state-sponsored, state-encouraged, or state-condoned, was acceptable and essential because Nemtsov’s high-profile opposition

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<sup>89</sup> Yaffa, Joshua. “The Unaccountable Death of Boris Nemtsov.” (The New Yorker. February 26, 2016.) <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-unaccountable-death-of-boris-nemtsov>.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

endangered the state, and the Russian people have been led to believe that opposition elements like Nemtsov represent Western and/or American intrusion into the Putin regime.

Nemtsov himself foresaw his assassination.

Speaking to Russia's Sobesednik news website on February 10, Nemtsov had said he feared for his life.

"I'm afraid Putin will kill me," he added. "I believe that he was the one who unleashed the war in the Ukraine. I couldn't dislike him more."<sup>91</sup>

Other deaths of Putin critics in and outside of Russia that have come under suspicion as possible Putin-directed murders include those of Politkovskaya's colleague from Novaya Gazeta Yuri Shchekochikhin (2003); Russian Duma members Galina Starovoitova (1998) and Sergei Yushenkov (2003); journalists Artyom Borovik, who died in a plane crash (2000) , Anastasia Baburova (2009) and Natalya Estemirova (2009) ; lawyers Stanislav Markelov (2009) and Sergei Magnitsky (2009), and Russian tycoon Boris Berezovsky, who was found dead in 2013 inside a locked bathroom at his home in the United Kingdom, a noose around his neck, in what was at first seen as a suicide.

And in March, 2017, Denis Voronenkov, a Russian lawmaker who had defected to Ukraine, was shot twice in the head in broad daylight outside a Kiev hotel bar.

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<sup>91</sup> Dearden, Lizzie. "Boris Nemtsov: 'I'm afraid Putin will kill me,' politician said weeks before being shot dead." (Independent. February 28, 2015.) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/boris-nemtsov-im-afraid-putin-will-kill-me-politician-said-weeks-before-being-shot-dead-10077000.html>.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, just hours later, called the attack an “act of state terrorism by Russia.” Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, called the accusation a “fabrication.”<sup>92</sup>

And recently, six Russian diplomats died under suspicious circumstances.

Russia’s UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin died of what was termed a heart attack at the Russian consulate in New York City on February 19, 2017. Conspiracy theorists on Twitter raised the possibility that a younger woman seen in his company was not a mistress but an intelligence agent.

Other Russian ambassadors who have recently died include:

-- Russia's Ambassador to India, Alexander Kadakin, who died after a "brief illness January 27

--Russian ambassador to Turkey Andrei Karlov, assassinated by an off-duty Turkish policeman, while speaking at an art gallery exhibition in Ankara, on December 19, 2016.

--Petr Polshikov, 56, said to be a high-ranking Russian diplomat in the Latin American department. He was found dead from multiple bullet wounds on December 18, 2016 in Moscow. His murder remains unsolved.<sup>93</sup>

--Andrey Malanin, 54 a high-ranking Russian diplomat was found dead in his apartment in Athens, Greece on January 9, 2017 with no signs of a break in and no apparent cause.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Roth, Andrew; Gryvnyak, Natalie. “Days before his death, Putin critic said in interview he knew he was in danger.” (The Washington Post. March 23, 2017.) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gunman-in-ukraine-kills-putin-foe-in-attack-denounced-as-state-terrorism/2017/03/23/72ddd20e-0fc7-11e7-ab07-07d9f521f6b5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.54a3073a68fe](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gunman-in-ukraine-kills-putin-foe-in-attack-denounced-as-state-terrorism/2017/03/23/72ddd20e-0fc7-11e7-ab07-07d9f521f6b5_story.html?utm_term=.54a3073a68fe).

<sup>93</sup> Fruen, Lauren. “Diplomat Death: Who was Petr Polshikov? Russian diplomat ‘shot dead in Moscow’—here’s what we know.” (The Sun. December 20, 2016.) <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2445028/petr-polshikov-russian-diplomat-shot-dead/>.

<sup>94</sup> Raven, David. “Top Russian Diplomat Found Dead in Athens Apartment With ‘No Evidence of a Break-In.’” (Mirror. January 9, 2017.) <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/top-russian-diplomat-found-dead-9593229>.

-- Sergei Krivov, another Russian diplomat in the US, who died under suspicious circumstances the day after the US election. Like Churkin, he died at the Russian Consulate in New York City, and was said to have suffered a heart attack there. But this did not explain blunt force trauma to Krivov's head.<sup>95</sup>

Also, Oleg Erovinin, an FSB officer linked to the notorious and prurient Trump dossier that made the rounds in Washington DC after Trump's win, was found dead in his car in Moscow on December 26, 2016. No cause of death has been announced.

And on December 16 in Belgium NATO Auditor General Yves Chandelon was found shot in the head and dead in his car. Initially thought to be a suicide, suspicions were raised by the fact that the gun used in the shooting was not registered to Chandelon and it was found in the glovebox.<sup>96</sup>

The deaths of the Russian diplomats raised another firestorm on Twitter, and speculation as to whether the deaths were aimed at tidying up loose ends in the Trump-Putin connection. "As investigation in to Trump Russian ties build up suddenly Vitaly Churkin dies. What a coincidence. #Russiagate, #kremlingate #flynn" tweeted one. "Vitaly Churkin dies suddenly! Putin is possibly erasing all links to Donald Trump and Russia's connection to him," said another.

Russian expert Kuchins, a senior fellow with Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies, wrote in November 2007:

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<sup>95</sup> Watkins, Ali. "The Strange Case of the Russian Who Got His Head Smashed In On Election Day." (Buzzfeed. February 15, 2017.) [https://www.buzzfeed.com/alimwatkins/the-strange-case-of-the-russian-diplomat-who-got-his-head-sm?utm\\_term=.vrqNQK17El#.fu3pabj9dj](https://www.buzzfeed.com/alimwatkins/the-strange-case-of-the-russian-diplomat-who-got-his-head-sm?utm_term=.vrqNQK17El#.fu3pabj9dj).

<sup>96</sup> McFadyen, Siobhan. "Auditor General is Found Shot Dead in Suspicious Circumstances." (Express. December 27, 2016.) <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/747259/NATO-Auditor-General-is-found-shot-dead-in-suspicious-circumstances>.



"From being a weakly institutionalized, fragile, and in many ways distorted proto-democracy in the 1990s, Russia under Vladimir Putin has moved back in the direction of a highly centralized authoritarianism, which has characterized the state for most of its 1,000-year history. But it is an authoritarian state where the consent of the governed is essential. Given the experience of the 1990s and the Kremlin's propaganda emphasizing this period as one of chaos, economic collapse, and international humiliation, the Russian people have no great enthusiasm for democracy and remain politically apathetic in light of the extraordinary economic recovery and improvement in lifestyles for so many over the last eight years. The emergent, highly centralized government, combined with a weak and submissive society, is the hallmark of traditional Russian paternalism."<sup>97</sup>

This balancing act of Putin's is an extremely important one: "highly centralized authoritarianism," that nonetheless requires "the consent of the governed."<sup>98</sup>

It is governing by Stockholm Syndrome, getting large majorities of Russians to approve of their authoritarian leader. And they consistently give Putin approval ratings of 80 percent or more.

The Kremlin manages this the modern way. Official Russian poll-takers go out every week to test the mood of the people. As Michael Birnbaum wrote in the Washington Post in February of 2016, "Two years after Putin's ratings skyrocketed at the start of a geopolitical conflict with the West, they have stayed there, week after week, month after month."<sup>99</sup>

"The pollsters say that the Kremlin is keenly interested in the results they turn up every week — and that it quickly reacts when it sees problems that could pose a threat to Putin's

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<sup>97</sup> Kuchins, Andrew C. "Alternative Futures for Russia to 2017." (Center for Strategic and International Studies. December 13, 2007.) <https://www.csis.org/analysis/alternative-futures-russia-2017>.

<sup>98</sup> Birnbaum, Michael. "How to Understand Putin's jaw-droppingly high approval ratings." (The Washington Post. March 6, 2016.) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.93c2416e7f10](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231_story.html?utm_term=.93c2416e7f10).

<sup>99</sup> Birnbaum, Michael. "How to Understand Putin's jaw-droppingly high approval ratings." (The Washington Post. March 6, 2016.) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.93c2416e7f10](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231_story.html?utm_term=.93c2416e7f10).

ratings. Even as pocketbook problems have mounted, Putin has launched popular military campaigns in Ukraine and now in Syria.”<sup>100</sup>

Adds Birnbaum: “The Kremlin is so ratings-conscious that it frequently commissions polls on the same topics from several firms simultaneously, pollsters said. It also has an in-house polling agency that does not release numbers publicly and is run by the Federal Guards Service, the Russian equivalent of the Secret Service.”

The polling numbers may result in the shifting of extra resources to struggling areas. And because Putin and the Kremlin control most media in the country, they can target their message to bolster weaknesses as perceived by the surveyed populace.

Wrote Birnbaum: “In a nation in which the Kremlin controls the airwaves, opinions can also be easily swayed, because few contrary opinions can be found in the mainstream. In September [2015], weeks before Putin announced Russia’s surprise entrance into the [Syrian] conflict, few Russians saw the Islamic State as a direct threat. Within weeks — and after constant coverage on TV — the number shot up to a solid majority.”<sup>101</sup>

Putin leads his nation in cult-like fashion and commands high popularity ratings by hammering home the message that Russia is an “encircled, perpetually menaced state”<sup>102</sup> that needs to protect itself from the pro-Western forces that would trash-talk, invade and weaken it ,

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<sup>100</sup> Birnbaum, Michael. “How to Understand Putin’s jaw-droppingly high approval ratings.” (The Washington Post. March 6, 2016.) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.93c2416e7f10](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231_story.html?utm_term=.93c2416e7f10).

<sup>101</sup> Birnbaum, Michael. “How to Understand Putin’s jaw-droppingly high approval ratings.” (The Washington Post. March 6, 2016.) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.93c2416e7f10](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/how-to-understand-putins-jaw-droppingly-high-approval-ratings/2016/03/05/17f5d8f2-d5ba-11e5-a65b-587e721fb231_story.html?utm_term=.93c2416e7f10).

<sup>102</sup> Osnos, Evan; Remnick, David; Yaffa, Joshua. *Trump Putin and the New Cold War*. (The New Yorker. March 6, 2017.) <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/trump-putin-and-the-new-cold-war>.

even if (and especially if) those forces are Western-funded groups within Russia or treacherous dissidents.

Walter Laqueur argues that Russians accept the harsh hand of government as the price of a glorious national identity. Laqueur writes, “Contrary to the beliefs of those who subscribe to the idea of an ‘End of History’ in which liberal democracy becomes the common form of government throughout the world, Russians feel the need for strong state power more than many other countries. At the core of the Russian character is a belief that, without discipline, people would not work and nothing would function, and only government authority can enforce this discipline. . . Beyond that Russians tend to believe that Russia can exist only as a great power to fulfill its historic, God-given mission, and a democratic Russia would not be strong enough to attain great power status.”<sup>103</sup>

Putin maintains his power by reminding Russians they are a beleaguered people denigrated by the West who can nonetheless regain their superpower status with his regime’s overt aggression (as in the Ukraine and Syria) and possibly covert elimination of enemies of the people.

Writes Laqueur: “Putin is a man whose mindset comes out of the KGB. For unless Russia is protected against its dangerous, powerful, and devious enemies, the country will be destroyed again. Hence the need to maintain this enormous and costly security apparatus headed by the new nobility of the country.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Laqueur, Walter. *Will Putinism Survive Putinism?* (Politico. September 13, 2015.)

<sup>104</sup> Laqueur, Walter. “Why Putinism Will Survive Putin.” (Politico. September 13, 2015.)  
<http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/09/putin-putinism-ukraine-russia-213137>.

Chess grandmaster/political activist Garry Kasparov paints a picture of the Putin regime shifting into full-tilt brutality and violence over the course of Putin's tenure.

"The early themes in Mr. Putin's reign—restoring the national pride and structure that were lost with the fall of the Soviet Union—have been replaced with a toxic mix of nationalism, belligerence and hatred. By 2014 the increasingly depleted opposition movement, long treated with contempt and ridicule, had been rebranded in the Kremlin-dominated media as dangerous fifth columnists, or 'national traitors,' in the vile language lifted directly from Nazi propaganda.

"Mr. Putin openly shifted his support to the most repressive, reactionary and bloodthirsty elements in the regime. ....In this environment, blood becomes the coin of the realm, the way to show loyalty to the regime. This is what President Putin has wrought to keep his grip on power, a culture of death and fear that spans all 11 Russian time zones and is now being exported to eastern Ukraine."<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, various Russian analysts have urged American leaders not to demonize Putin, because that only feeds the narrative of Putin as protector against Western detractors, a narrative that maintains his power and his popularity.

"Putin is a problem of the Russian people," said Russian opposition politician Ilya Yashin "We are not sitting here waiting for the U.S. to change the regime, no. We should do it ourselves. Don't make him stronger than he already is."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Kasparov, Garry. "Putin's Culture of Fear and Death." (Human Rights Foundation. March 1, 2015.) <https://www.hrf.org/single-post/2015/03/01/Putin%E2%80%99s-Culture-of-Fear-and-Death>.

<sup>106</sup> Hanna, Andrew. "Putin Opponent to Trump: Don't Abandon Ukraine." (Politico. January 13, 2017.) <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/trump-putin-ukraine-syria-ilya-yashin-233623>.

The question is whether Putin will run again for President in 2018, a question he deflected at his last press conference in December of 2016. One new political element may leave Putin scrambling to regain full control. On March 26, 2017, tens of thousands of Russians in 99 cities protested government corruption.

Dinissa Duvanova, associate professor of international relations at Lehigh University wrote in the Washington Post: “Sunday’s protests did not emerge out of nowhere. Instead, on March 2, the Anti-Corruption Foundation — headed by the well-known blogger and opposition politician Alexey Navalny — released a sensational documentary exposing top-level corruption schemes. The report documented the illicit enrichment, flamboyant lifestyle and the luxurious real estate possessions of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.”<sup>107</sup>

When Navalny was asked by the BBC last year about Putin’s role in government corruption, Navalny said, “He is the tsar of corruption. He is the basement of corruption. He is personally involved in corruption and he is encouraging official corruption.”<sup>108</sup>

Probably most alarming to the Putin regime was that Navalny’s documentary (titled “He is Not Dimon To You”), which never would have aired on state-run media, was seen by more than 17 million people on Youtube in the first month after its initial publication in March of 2017. No high-ranking Russian official responded to Navalny’s charges and Medvedev reportedly blocked Navalny on Instagram on March 10.

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<sup>107</sup> Duvanova, Dinissia. “Russians are protesting! Part 5: Now the opposition is setting the agenda.” (The Washington Post. March 31, 2017.) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/31/russians-are-protesting-why-part-5-now-the-opposition-is-setting-the-agenda/?utm\\_term=.8b94e3065f35](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/31/russians-are-protesting-why-part-5-now-the-opposition-is-setting-the-agenda/?utm_term=.8b94e3065f35).

<sup>108</sup> Navalny, Alexei. “Putin is the Tsar of Corruption.” (Youtube. January, 22, 2016.) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU2AVcyUgGU&ab\\_channel=BBCNewsnight](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU2AVcyUgGU&ab_channel=BBCNewsnight).

Tomila Lankina, professor in international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, also writing in the Washington Post, noted that many of these protesters were young and got the message through social media.

Lankina wrote: “Indeed, a key shift in the dynamics of popular mobilization in Russia is the demographic aspect of participation: Many commentators witnessing the rallies noted the youthfulness of the protesters. Many were school-age children, who lampooned the regime’s attempts to brainwash the next generation with the help of regime-compliant teachers and textbooks presenting a particular version of Russian history that facilitates the reproduction of the current regime in power.

“The protest events also highlight the limits of the technologies that the Kremlin employs to manipulate public opinion. The younger protesters are avid users of social media and apps that facilitate construction of groups of the like-minded. They should be distinguished from the core of regime supporters who tend to obtain news from Kremlin-controlled television channels. The demographic shift in the protester base warrants scrutiny of the notion of a brainwashed ‘lost generation’ applied to those raised and born in Putin’s Russia.”<sup>109</sup>

So perhaps the Putin regime needs to mobilize the likes of Cozy Bear to infiltrate Russian domestic social media.

A week after the massive protests, a bomb exploded on a Metro train between stations in St. Petersburg, close to the stop for the college Tekhnologichesky Institut, killing 14 and wounding dozens more. A suicide bomber from Kyrgyzstan was blamed. Prime Minister

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<sup>109</sup> Lankina, Tomila. “Russians are protesting! Part 8: Young Russians are joining in, against expectations.” (The Washington Post. March 31, 2017.) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/31/russians-are-protesting-part-8-young-russians-arent-a-brainwashed-lost-generation-after-all/?utm\\_term=.83d577b44ffe](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/31/russians-are-protesting-part-8-young-russians-arent-a-brainwashed-lost-generation-after-all/?utm_term=.83d577b44ffe).

Medvedev called it a terrorist act, and Putin laid flowers at a makeshift memorial for the victims.

Were FSB/KGB-trained “urban warriors” sending a message?<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Lister, Tim; McKirdy, Euan; Dewan, Angela. “St. Petersburg bombing carried out by ‘suicide attacked.’” (CNN. April 4, 2017.) <http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/04/europe/st-petersburg-russia-explosion/>.

## Chapter Four

The Evolution (and Antagonism) of Russian-American Relations: Poking the Bear

*“There are at the present time two great nations in the world, which started from different points, but seem to tend towards the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. Both of them have grown up unnoticed; and whilst the attention of mankind was directed elsewhere, they have suddenly placed themselves in the front rank among the nations, and the world learned their existence and their greatness at almost the same time.*

*All other nations seem to have nearly reached their natural limits, and they have only to maintain their power; but these are still in the act of growth. All the others have stopped, or continue to advance with extreme difficulty; these alone are proceeding with ease and celerity along a path to which no limit can be perceived. The American struggles against the obstacles which nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its arms. The conquests of the American are therefore gained with the ploughshare; those of the Russian by the sword. The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends, and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centres all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting-point is different, and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.”*

Alexis deTocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835)

As deTocqueville prophetically pointed out in 1835, Russia and the U.S. are both vast, populous countries who see their destinies as limitless. However, their interactions have often played out on the world stage, casting the US as one of Russia’s greatest antagonists. How has United States interaction effected – and possibly even fostered -- Russia’s great capacity for violence? Furthermore, if the focus of this project is to analyze Russian violence as it pertains to national security, it would seem incomplete to ignore one of Russia’s most influential and threatening ideological opponents as it contributes to Russia’s legendary violence. Since this project examines the history of violence in Russia and its relationship the country’s national identity, outlook and collective psyche, let us observe America’s evolving perception of and interaction with Russia over the past century.



### Catherine the Great and the American Revolution

While Russia officially remained neutral during the American Revolution (1775-83) and the colonies were banned from trading with any nation other than Britain, Catherine the Great valued the American colonies as a trade partner. She believed "that the separation of the colonies from the mother country did not conflict with the interests of Russia and might even be advantageous to her."<sup>111</sup> At several points during the war, Catherine refused Great Britain's requests to join the British fight against the rebelling colonists. Catherine sent a Russian mediator to peace talks in Vienna, but those talks ultimately broke down.

### Russian America, Seward's Folly

Russian America (Русская Америка, *Russkaya Amerika*) was the name of the Russian colonial possessions in North America from 1733 to 1867. Settlements included parts of what are now the U.S. states of California, Alaska and two ports in Hawaii.

Grigorij Shelikhov (1747-1795) was known as the "Russian Columbus" and founder of Russian America. A seafarer and businessman, he organized in 1775 trade with the populations of the Aleut and Kurile islands. In 1783-1786, accompanied by his wife Natalia, he conducted an expedition to Alaska. In 1784 he established the first Russian settlement on Kodiak Island. In 1797 Shelikhov obtained by Imperial decree a monopoly to operate a Russian-American Company and to engage in fur trade. The Russians did not really penetrate the interior of the area, preferring to locate on the islands and the coast of the mainland.

Russia initially tried to interest the US in buying Alaska in 1859, by which time overhunting had seriously reduced the fur-bearing population, and the Russians were facing

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<sup>111</sup> Bolkhovitinov, Nikolai. "The Declaration of Independence: A View from Russia," (The Journal of American History. 1999.)

competition from Americans and the British. The sale of Alaska was ultimately ratified by the US in 1867, and referred to as Seward's Folly, after Secretary of State William H. Seward, who promoted the purchase. The price was \$7.2 million, about two cents an acre. It was not a popular purchase. Many Americans thought the Russians suckered us.

As [alaskaweb.org](http://alaskaweb.org) notes: "The New York Tribune editorialized, 'Ninety-nine hundredths of Russian America are absolutely useless. To Russia, it was an encumbrance; to us, it would be an embarrassment.' The New York World summed up its position more pithily, 'Russia has sold us a sucked orange.'"<sup>112</sup>

Still, we cannot ignore the fact that Mother Russia colonized and owned part of the U.S. before it was part of the U.S. Former Alaskan Governor and vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin alluded to Russia's proximity when she said, "They're our next-door neighbors. And you can actually see Russia, from land, here in Alaska, from an island in Alaska."

And Russia offered support to the U.S. during the American Civil War. The Tsar's fleets came to Union Ports during the war. "The most dramatic gestures of cooperation between the Russian Empire and the United States came in the autumn of 1863... On September 24, the Russian Baltic fleet began to arrive in New York harbor. On October 12, the Russian Far East fleet began to arrive in San Francisco. The Russians, judging that they were on the verge of war with Britain and France over the British-fomented Polish insurrection of 1863, had taken this measure to prevent their ships from being bottled up in their home ports by the superior British fleet."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> "Seward's Folly." (AlaskaWeb.org. 2015.) <https://alaskaweb.org/history/hist4.html>.

<sup>113</sup> Tarpley, Webster G. "U.S. Civil War: The US-Russian Alliance that Saved the Union." (Voltaire.net.) <http://www.voltairenet.org/article169488.html>.

In addition, the historian and Lincoln biographer Benjamin Platt Thomas pointed out that “in the first two years of the war, when its outcome was still highly uncertain, the attitude of Russia was a potent factor in preventing Great Britain and France from adopting a policy of aggressive intervention.”<sup>114</sup>

In 1861, Russia let the Lincoln government know that Napoleon III was plotting to promote a joint Britain-France-Russia effort in favor of the Confederacy.<sup>115</sup>

#### Teddy Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905

The war between the Empire of Russia and the Empire of Japan was the result of the two empire’s designs on Manchuria and Korea. The war was unpopular with the Russian people, and it was a severe strain on the Japanese economy. Recognizing that a long-term war was not to Japan's advantage, as early as July 1904 the Japanese government had begun looking for intermediaries to arrange a peace.

The intermediary approached by the Japanese was the United States President Theodore Roosevelt, who had publicly expressed a pro-Japanese stance at the war’s start. However as the war dragged on, Roosevelt began to worry about Japan’s growing military might. In February 1905, Roosevelt reached out to the Russian government via the US ambassador to St Petersburg. Tsar Nicholas II was initially opposed to negotiating, feeling that Russia ultimately was going to win. The Japanese government was also unwilling to sit down at the table, because Japanese armies were enjoying a string of victories.

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<sup>114</sup> Thomas, Benjamin Platt. *Russo-American Relations 1815-1867*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1930.)

<sup>115</sup> Foster, John Watson. *A Century of American Diplomacy, 1776-1876* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1900), p. 372.

The Japanese finally agreed to sit down early in March. The Russians did not agree to sit down until June. A total of twelve sessions were held between August 9 and August 30 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The peace treaty was signed September 5. Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his efforts before and during the peace negotiations, even though he never actually went to Portsmouth.

Theodore Roosevelt had some decided views on the barbarianism of Russians as far back as 1897, when he said, “Sometimes I do feel inclined to believe that the Russian is the one man with enough barbarous blood in him to be the hope of a world that is growing effete.”<sup>116</sup> After his mediation efforts, Roosevelt said of the Russians, “They are utterly insincere and treacherous; they have no conception of truth, no willingness to look facts in the face, no regard for others of any sort or kind, no knowledge of their own strength or weakness; and they are helplessly unable to meet emergencies.”

But in a letter to George Trevelyan dated September 12, 1905, Roosevelt offered both praise and disdain: “I frankly admire the Russian people and I wish them well. Moreover, I have never been able to make myself afraid of them, because it has always seemed to me that a despotism resting upon a corrupt and to a large extent an incapable bureaucracy in the long run could not be dangerous to a virile free people. The average man who speaks English can outwork, outadminister, outthink, and outfight the average Russian, and this will be true until the average Russian grows to have more liberty, more self-respect and more intelligence than at present.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Wagenknecht, Edward. “The Seven Worlds of Theodore Roosevelt.” (P285. New York. 1959.)

<sup>117</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore. “1905 Letters of Theodore Roosevelt.” (Harvard University Press. 1951. Volumes 1-8. )

### World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution

In 1917, the United States and Russia became military allies for the first time in a world war. President Woodrow Wilson was buoyed by the fact that Russia was in the midst of a revolution. He compared the Russian Revolution to the American Revolution, and felt this made the Russians a better ally in a world war waged for democracy. The Bolsheviks, however, took over Petrograd and made peace with Germany. They were too involved in domestic strife to expend military energy on an international war.

President Wilson was shocked. Wilson was pressured by those around him to get involved in quashing the Revolution, although at the outset he felt it was not the US's duty to involve itself. He made several poor attempts at intervention. In 1918, the United States government dispatched approximately 5,500 troops to Northern Russia at the same time it sent 8,500 troops to Siberia. The Northern Russian intervention was under the control of our British ally, initially authorized by the Bolsheviks, and clearly directed at Germany. The Siberian intervention has become the stuff of legend for Russian schoolchildren, in which the little Red Army outfoxes the big bad American military.<sup>118</sup>

John Lukacs wrote in the February/March 1992 issue of *American Heritage* about the US intervention in the Russian civil war: "It was short-lived and marginal; there was practically no fighting between American soldiers and the Red Army; it was marked by the temporary presence of a handful of American troops in a few ports on the Arctic and the Far Eastern rim of the great Russian Empire. By late 1920 this odd episode was over. What was not over was the powerful popular attraction of anticommunism: the tendency to attribute most of the evils of the world, all

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<sup>118</sup> Richard, Carl J. "When the United States Invaded Russia: Woodrow Wilson's Siberian Disaster." (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, Lanham, MD, 2013.)

of the dangers to democracy and to American national interests, to a world conspiracy organized in and emanating from Moscow.”<sup>119</sup>

This Russian communist conspiracy theory would find its full flowering in McCarthyism in America in the 1950s.

### American John Reed and the October Revolution

John Reed was a young man from Portland, Oregon who graduated from Harvard and became enmeshed in the lively radicalism of Greenwich Village in New York City. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, Reed set out to cover it. He ended up in Russia and in a Russian jail. But he liked the Russians a great deal. He returned to the US in 1916, but in 1917 he got an assignment to go back to Russia and cover the October Revolution.

As Bertram D. Wolfe wrote in the February 1960 issue of American Heritage: “He made his way into the Smolny, where the Bolsheviks had their headquarters; into the City Duma, stronghold of liberal democracy; into the soviets of workers and soldiers and into the soviets of peasants; into barracks, factory meetings, street processions, halls, courts; into the Constituent Assembly, which the Bolsheviks dispersed; into the Winter Palace when it was being defended by student officers and a women’s battalion, and again when it was being overrun and looted. All Russia was meeting, and John Reed was meeting with it.”<sup>120</sup>

Reed’s experiences ended up as the book, “Ten Days That Shook the World,” which coupled his portrayal of the Revolution as a sacred enterprise with reproductions of documents,

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<sup>119</sup> Lukacs, John. “American and Russia, Americans and Russians.” (American Heritage. February/March 1992. Volume 43, Issue 1.) <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/america-and-russia-americans-and-russians?page=show>.

<sup>120</sup> Wolfe, Bertram D. “The Harvard Man in the Kremlin Wall.” (American Heritage. February 1960.) <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/harvard-man-kremlin-wall?page=show>.

bulletins and flyers. It is far from unbiased (Reed was an unabashed supporter of the Revolution and communism) but in 1999 New York University listed “Ten Days That Shook the World” as number 7 on its list of “Top 100 Works of Journalism.”

The Russians Reed depicts are waking from the coma of servitude, hungry for information and feisty.

“All around them great Russia was in travail, bearing a new world. The servants one used to treat like animals and pay next to nothing, were getting independent. A pair of shoes cost more than a hundred rubles, and as wages averaged about thirty-five rubles a month the servants refused to stand in *queue* and wear out their shoes. But more than that. In the new Russia every man and woman could vote; there were working-class newspapers, saying new and startling things; there were the Soviets; and there were the Unions. The *izvoshtchiki* (cab-drivers) had a Union; they were also represented in the Petrograd Soviet. The waiters and hotel servants were organised, and refused tips. On the walls of restaurants they put up signs which read, ‘No tips taken here—’ or, ‘Just because a man has to make his living waiting on table is no reason to insult him by offering him a tip!’

“At the Front the soldiers fought out their fight with the officers, and learned self-government through their committees. In the factories those unique Russian organisations, the Factory-Shop Committees gained experience and strength and a realisation of their historical mission by combat with the old order. All Russia was learning to read, and *reading*—politics, economics, history—because the people wanted to *know*—. In every city, in most towns, along the Front, each political faction had its newspaper—sometimes several. Hundreds of thousands of pamphlets were distributed by thousands of organisations, and poured into the armies, the villages, the factories, the streets. The thirst for education, so long thwarted, burst with the Revolution into a frenzy of expression. From Smolny Institute alone, the first six months, went out every day tons, car-loads, train-loads of literature, saturating the land. Russia absorbed reading matter like hot sand drinks water, insatiable. And it was not fables, falsified history, diluted religion, and the cheap fiction that corrupts—but social and economic theories, philosophy, the works of Tolstoy, Gogol, and Gorky...”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Reed, John. *Ten Days that Shook the World*. (New York. Boni & Liveright. 1922.)  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/reed/1919/10days/10days/ch1.htm>.

Vladimir Lenin liked Reed's portrayal of his role in the Revolution so much that Lenin wrote the book's introduction. When Joseph Stalin came to power, he apparently didn't like how few times he was mentioned, and how big a role Leon Trotsky was given, and so Stalin suppressed the book. When Stalin died, Reed's book re-appeared in Russia. Reed, who died of typhus in Moscow in 1920, was given a state funeral in Russia and his ashes were buried in the Kremlin Wall.

### Shifting Alliances and Uncle Joe

Germany and Russia were military allies in 1939. By the end of 1941, after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, Stalin turned to America for help, and participated in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Lend-Lease program, receiving some \$11 billion in war material from the US. Historians say the Third Reich might have won the war were it not for the long and punishing diversion of German military forces to Russia. As historian John Lukacs wrote in the February/March 1992 issue of *American Heritage*: "The fact remains that on D-day there were four German divisions struggling against the Russians in the east for each one facing the Allies in France. There was even more to that. By early 1945—at the time of the often debated Yalta Conference—the entire American military and naval establishment, including later vocal anticommunists such as General MacArthur, was praising the Red Army to the skies."

With very little distance from the Great Terror, wartime US propaganda was promoting Stalin as a benign leader. *Life Magazine* was saying Russians look, dress, and think just like Americans.

US diplomat Charles G. Stefan wrote in the January 1998 issue of *American Diplomacy*: "It seems clear that prior to the Nazi invasion of the USSR in mid-1941, FDR had no illusions



about the nature of Stalin's régime in that vast country. In a speech in February 1940 to representatives of the American Youth Congress, he asserted: ‘The Soviet Union, as everybody who has the courage to face the facts knows, is run by a dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world. It has allied itself with another dictatorship [i.e., with Hitler's Germany], and it has invaded a neighbor . . . infinitesimally small [Finland].’<sup>122</sup>

“However, once Stalin had been forced into conflict with Hitler, following the latter's invasion of the USSR, Roosevelt followed Prime Minister Winston Churchill in recognizing the vital role of the USSR in the truly herculean task of defeating Nazi Germany, which by then had access to the resources of Europe.”

FDR and Stalin (and Churchill) met twice, in Tehran in 1943 and in Yalta in 1945. Roosevelt felt it was important to establish a personal relationship with Stalin, and they apparently did so. FDR told Churchill in a message on March 18, 1942: “I know you will not mind my being brutally frank when I tell you I think I can personally handle Stalin better than your Foreign Office or my State Department. Stalin hates the guts of all your top people. He thinks he likes me better, and I hope he will continue to do so.”<sup>123</sup>

FDR told his son, James, that “Uncle Joe is smarter and tougher than I thought he was.” But James Roosevelt has also written that FDR “never gave up the conviction he could convince old Joe to go our way.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Stefan, Charles G. “A U.S. Diplomat with Long Experience in Soviet Affairs Takes a Look Back at Two Occasions During World War II When the Exercise of Diplomacy Proved All Important.” (American Diplomacy, January 1998.) [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/AD\\_Issues/amdipl\\_6/stefan.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/AD_Issues/amdipl_6/stefan.html).

<sup>123</sup> Warren F. Kimball, ed., Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence. Vol I, (Princeton University Press, 1984)

<sup>124</sup> Roosevelt, James; Libby, Bill. *My Parents: A Differing View* (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1976), p.203 and p. 167

The American-Soviet relationship was beginning to unravel around the time of the Yalta conference, which took place early in February of 1945. Stalin continued to push to move the boundary with Poland, so the Soviets could take Polish territory. FDR didn't want to get involved with that; he said he didn't want to offend Polish-American voters. Stalin also agreed to permitting free elections in Poland, something he almost immediately disavowed. Another issue was dismembering Germany, breaking it into pieces. The three Allies decided to put off that issue onto a committee, and a few months later Stalin declared that the USSR was not going either to dismember or destroy Germany.

FDR died at Warm Springs, Georgia on April 12 of 1945. Could he have gotten old Joe to go along with the US had he lived? The man who succeeded him, Harry Truman, couldn't stand either the Germans or the Russians.

### The Cold War

By 1949, the alliances had shifted, and the United States was in league with the Federal Republic of Germany in NATO, countering the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the piece of Germany known as the German Democratic Republic.

The Cold War was the uneasy balancing and dividing of Europe between the capitalist West and the U.S. on one side, and the Soviets and their Eastern European communist bloc on the other.

A long answer to a quick question about what makes Russians tick: George Kennan's Long Telegram February 22, 1946

George Kennan, the American charge d'affaires in Moscow, had been among the diplomats who established the first American embassy in the Soviet Union in 1933. In 1946, the embassy received a request from the Treasury Department to explain Soviet behavior involving the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This prompted Kennan to dash off 5,500 words on Soviet tendencies. This long telegram was widely disseminated in Washington circles and reprinted as a magazine article titled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," in the July 1947 issue of Foreign Affairs.

He described the Soviets as neurotic, insecure, illogical, responsive to the whip and to force, and so accustomed to lies that they had no idea of the truth.

Kennan wrote: "At bottom of Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity. Originally, this was insecurity of a peaceful agricultural people trying to live on vast exposed plain in neighborhood of fierce nomadic peoples. To this was added, as Russia came into contact with economically advanced West, fear of more competent, more powerful, more highly organized societies in that area. But this latter type of insecurity was one which afflicted rather Russian rulers than Russian people; for Russian rulers have invariably sensed that their rule was relatively archaic in form fragile and artificial in its psychological foundation, unable to stand comparison or contact with political systems of Western countries. For this reason they have always feared foreign penetration, feared direct contact between Western world and their own, and feared what would happen if Russians learned truth about world without or if foreigners learned truth about world within. And they have learned to seek security only in patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power, never in compacts and compromises with it."

Kennan said Soviet leaders promote a view of the outside world as “evil, hostile and menacing” coupled with an internal Russian landscape “bearing within itself the germs of creeping disease.”

“In this dogma, with its basic altruism of purpose, they found justification for their instinctive fear of outside world, for the dictatorship without which they did not know how to rule, for cruelties they did not dare not to inflict, for sacrifice they felt bound to demand. In the name of Marxism they sacrificed every single ethical value in their methods and tactics. Today they cannot dispense with it. It is fig leaf of their moral and intellectual respectability.”

Kennan argues that this is what makes the secret police acceptable, and state-sponsored brutality tolerable. “The Soviet regime is a police regime par excellence, reared in the dim half world of Tsarist police intrigue, accustomed to think primarily in terms of police power. This should never be lost sight of in gauging Soviet motives.”

He added: “Finally we have the unsolved mystery as to who, if anyone, in this great land actually receives accurate and unbiased information about outside world. In atmosphere of oriental secretiveness and conspiracy which pervades this Government, possibilities for distorting or poisoning sources and currents of information are infinite. The very disrespect of Russians for objective truth--indeed, their disbelief in its existence--leads them to view all stated facts as instruments for furtherance of one ulterior purpose or another. There is good reason to suspect that this Government is actually a conspiracy within a conspiracy; and I for one am reluctant to believe that Stalin himself receives anything like an objective picture of outside world.”

Kennan argued that we had to contain Russia's expansionism and that Russia was "impervious to the logic of reason and sensitive to the logic of force."<sup>125</sup>

### The Cold War

By 1949, the alliances of World War II had shifted, and the United States was in league with the Federal Republic of Germany in NATO, countering the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the piece of Germany known as the German Democratic Republic. President Truman adopted Kennan's perspective in the Long Telegram that the United States' only course was the 'long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.' The Cold War (a term first used by author George Orwell in the 1945 essay "You and the Atomic Bomb") was indeed long-term, lasting 45 years. The US and the USSR did not directly fight each other, but used other, smaller nations as pawns in what was seen by Americans as a fight between the good guys (the capitalists) and the bad guys (the communists.) Of course, the Soviets saw this in reverse.

The Truman Doctrine, first announced to Congress on March 12, 1947, promised American support to nations threatened by Soviet communism. Said President Truman, "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation . . . by outside pressures." This "savior to the world" stance was new for the US and was accompanied by the demonization of communists both in the Soviet Union and in the United States.

Beginning in 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee began hearings on communists in the movie business. More than 500 writers, directors and actors lost their jobs.

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<sup>125</sup> Kennan, George. "The Charge in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State." (NSA Archive.) <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.

Colleagues testified against one another. The hearings extended to ferreting out communists in the US State Department. Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin ) broadened the probe to all federal employees, thousands of whom were investigated, fired, even prosecuted. Only when McCarthy started to investigate communist infiltration of the Army in 1953 and those hearings were televised, were governmental forces and journalists able to stop McCarthy. He lost his committee chairmanship position and was censured in December of 1954.

The arms race upped the ante considerably in this long-term bloodless but ferocious battle. The United States engaged in an unprecedented arms buildup, based on a 1950 National Security Council report that called for a four-fold increase in defense spending.

And embedded in this heightened defense spending was the development of atomic weapons like the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that had ended World War II. In 1949, the Soviets tested an atom bomb of their own. President Truman said the United States would build an even more destructive atomic weapon: the hydrogen bomb. Stalin followed suit.

All of this instilled a paranoia in World War II veterans and their families trying to return to domestic normalcy through the G.I. bill. Americans built bomb shelters in their backyards and stocked them with essentials in case of nuclear annihilation aboveground. Schoolchildren had practice drills and dove under their desks to prepare for attacks.

The space race was another cause for alarm. On October 4, 1957, a Soviet R-7 intercontinental ballistic missile launched Sputnik (Russian for “traveler”), the world’s first artificial satellite and the first man-made object to be put into the Earth’s orbit. Americans were shocked. We were the pioneers. The Soviet outer-space challenge launched much hand-wringing about science and education in the US. In 1958, the US launched its own satellite, Explorer 1.

That year, President Eisenhower signed legislation creating the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA.

Still, the Soviets put the first man into outer space in April of 1961. The first American in space, Alan Shepard, followed in May. The first man to set foot on the moon was Neil Armstrong, an American, on July 20, 1969. Experimental flight Soyuz-Apollo was the first joint U.S.-Soviet space flight, conducted in July of 1975 as a symbol of the *détente* that Russia and the US were pursuing.

The Korean War, the Cuban missile crisis, the Vietnam War, and the building of the Berlin Wall all were linked to the Cold War.

The late British historian Tony Judt argued in the March 23, 2006 issue of the New York Review of Books that the Soviets were focusing on other continents in their pursuit of the Cold War.

Judt wrote: “Seen from Moscow, the cold war was in very substantial measure *about* the non-European world. While President Kennedy and his advisers worried in October 1962 that Nikita Khrushchev’s Cuban missiles were a diversionary prelude to an attack on Berlin, the Soviet leadership (who were irritated by their East German clients and really didn’t care much about Berlin except as a diplomatic pawn) dreamed of a revolutionary front in Latin America. In pursuit of local influence on the African continent, Moscow fueled a huge arms boom there from the early Seventies through the onset of perestroika.”<sup>126</sup>

Even as President Reagan was fighting communism in Central America, the Soviet Union was falling apart. USSR Premier Mikhail Gorbachev declared both “glasnost” (openness) and “perestroika” (economic reform) to cope with economic collapse and political uprising. In 1989,

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<sup>126</sup> Judt, Tony. “A Story Still to Be Told.” (The New York Review. March 23, 2006.)  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2006/03/23/a-story-still-to-be-told/>.

every other communist state in the region replaced its government with a non-communist one. In November of 1989, the Berlin Wall was torn down, ending the separation of East and West Berlin.

By 1991, the Soviet Union was defunct and the Cold War was over.

### Cold War 2.0

On March 6, 2017, New Yorker magazine published a piece entitled “Trump, Putin and the New Cold War,” which discussed “active measures” taken by intelligence agencies—not to collect foreign secrets—but to influence events, to undermine “a rival power with forgeries, front groups, and countless other techniques honed during the Cold War.”

The article talked about a declassified report issue by national intelligence director James Clapper two weeks before Trump’s inauguration that says Russian President Vladimir Putin had ordered “active measures” to hurt Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, bolster Republican candidate Donald Trump and “undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process.”

Authors Evan Osnos, David Remnick and Joshua Yaffa wrote, “Yevgenia Albats, the author of ‘The State Within a State,’ a book about the K.G.B., said that Putin probably didn’t believe he could alter the results of the election, but, because of his antipathy toward Obama and Clinton, he did what he could to boost Trump’s cause and undermine America’s confidence in its political system. Putin was not interested in keeping the operation covert, Albats said. ‘He wanted to make it as public as possible. He wanted his presence to be known,’ and to ‘show that, no matter what, we can enter your house and do what we want.’”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Osnos, Evan; Remnick, David; Yaffa, Joshua. “Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War.” The New Yorker. March 6, 2017. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/trump-putin-and-the-new-cold-war>.



Today, Russia seems far away, its culture appears alien and unhip in American eyes, and it has little impact on our economy. But at least for the past century, the U.S. and Russia have been like two first-borns, each in control of half the world and battling for full domination. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the U.S. bought part of our country (Russia America, or Alaska) from Russia. We have been allies twice in world wars, the second time offering up American war propaganda that painted Russia's premier mass murderer Joseph Stalin as the benign and jolly "Uncle Joe." The Cold War meant that the Soviet Union had a hand in such monumental American historical moments as the Korean War, the arms race, the space race, the Cuban missile crisis, the Vietnam War, even the prospect of worldwide nuclear annihilation.

American leaders and the American people can't help but view Russia through the prism of our own democratic experiment. We tend to see Russia as a backward, frozen nation late to the party of industrialization and agricultural efficiency, a state that took a left turn towards communism and totalitarianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when Americans were exporting democracy worldwide. The whole genre of American spy movies tends to paint Russians as the (sadistic and ruthless) enemy, an artistic relic of the Cold War. For at least half a century, we have been opponent superpowers, until the breakup of the Soviet Union, which the West viewed as an opportunity for reform in Russia, but many Russians saw as a time of chaos, economic insecurity, and national humiliation. Most recently in 2014, Obama portrayed Russia as a "regional player acting not out of strength but out of weakness," a dismissive remark that certainly turned up the heat on Russian efforts to counter the US.

Today, given the growing evidence that the Russian government was involved in cyber war to throw the 2016 Presidential election, the US should not lose sight of Russia's ability to insert its state-trained hackers into our affairs. "There shouldn't be any doubt in anybody's

mind,” Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency and commander of United States Cyber Command, said at a postelection conference in November of 2016. “This was not something that was done casually, this was not something that was done by chance, this was not a target that was selected purely arbitrarily. This was a conscious effort by a nation-state to attempt to achieve a specific effect.”<sup>128</sup>

Today, Russia can create injury and chaos in a thousand clicks.

During the 2016 campaign, candidate Trump spoke glowingly about the Russian president as a “strong leader” and Putin returned the compliment. Polls late in 2016 found that Putin had a favorable rating of 35 percent among Trump voters, while President Obama had only a 9 percent favorable rating among Republicans.<sup>129</sup>

Both the Putin regime and Donald Trump have backed off rave reviews of the other, as congressional investigations of Russian digital malevolence gear up and further reports come to light of Trump campaign folks meeting with, talking to or being compensated by Russians over the years. There was speculation earlier in the year that Putin is looking to Trump to end economic sanctions imposed by President Obama.

More recently, Trump won praise for ordering a missile strike on a Syrian military base in response to an alleged chemical attack by Syria’s government against its own citizens. Putin denounced the US strike as an “act of aggression” and said it violated international law. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met with Putin in Moscow on April 12.

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<sup>128</sup> Lipton, Eric; Sanger, David E.; Shane, Scott. “The Perfect Weapon: How Russian Cyberpower Invaded the U.S.” (The New York Times. December 2016.) [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/us/politics/russia-hack-election-dnc.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/us/politics/russia-hack-election-dnc.html?_r=1).

<sup>129</sup> Blake, Aaron. “Vladimir Putin Polls Better with Republicans than Obama Does. That’s Not Unprecedented.” The Washington Post. January 4, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/01/04/vladimir-putin-polls-better-with-republicans-than-obama-does-thats-not-unprecedented/?utm\\_term=.b1875fb43a93](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/01/04/vladimir-putin-polls-better-with-republicans-than-obama-does-thats-not-unprecedented/?utm_term=.b1875fb43a93).

“Putin is backing a person that's truly an evil person [Syrian President Bashar al-Assad]. I think it's very bad for Russia,” Trump said in an interview with Fox Business on April 12.

Meanwhile Putin said in an interview that U.S.-Russian relations have actually gotten worse since Trump took office.

"One could say that the level of trust on a working level, especially on the military level, has not improved, but rather has deteriorated," Putin said in an interview released on the Kremlin website.

### Conclusion: Does Russia Love The Whip?

Russians seem to have bowed to brutality since the days of Ivan the Terrible. Of course, Ivan was from a different point in human history. But the first statue honoring Ivan the Terrible was unveiled in the Oryol region of Russia, in mid-October of 2016, and Russian leaders were quick to explain why.

An article in the Washington Post noted, “According to Russian Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky, [Ivan the Terrible is] a complex figure who has been judged unfairly by history. Yes, he was responsible for the *oprichnina*, a reign of terror that consolidated power under his secret police and left thousands of 16th century Russians, many of them of the nobility, dead. But he was a reformer, a conqueror, a founder of the Russian state.”

Ivan was no Mother Theresa or Mahatma Gandhi, Medinsky said, but his purges were no different from those of his contemporaries in France and England, and fewer deaths than under Peter the Great.

Vadim Potomsky, governor of the Oryol region, was not shy about comparing Ivan to current President Vladimir Putin: “We have a great and most powerful president, who has forced the whole world to respect Russia and to reckon with us, as did Ivan the Terrible in his own time. God is with us!”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Roth, Andrew. “Russia Just Gave Ivan the Terrible His First Statue Ever.” The Washington Post. October 4, 2016. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/10/14/ivan-the-terrible-a-bloodthirsty-conquerer-gets-his-first-statue-in-russia/?utm\\_term=.cc27bb93802a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/10/14/ivan-the-terrible-a-bloodthirsty-conquerer-gets-his-first-statue-in-russia/?utm_term=.cc27bb93802a).

Ivan's statue is represents a way to reinforce the Russian brand and the brutal Russian cost equation: A proud national identity and sure national security come at a price, and the price is death of opponents to the state.

This explains why, while Adolf Hitler is a figure of shame for Germans, Joseph Stalin is viewed positively by 21<sup>st</sup> Century Russians.

This is why Russians adjusted their mindset and behavior from the Bolshevik ideal of a diverse marriage-free society to one in which the traditional family was celebrated and the true Russian was exalted. Stalin needed a growing population to fill the factories and to replace the citizens he was exterminating.

At the same time, loyalty to the family was superseded by loyalty to the state. An estimated one in ten Russians was acting as an informer to the state. Young people in the "Pioneer" Russian youth movement ratted out their families. Family members, neighbors, and co-workers were shipped off to the Gulag camps for bewildering crimes. The death rate in Russian camps was 25 percent in 1942.<sup>131</sup>

To cope with this horror—the arrests, potential deaths, the possibility that you or your loved ones could be sent away like Sofia Petrovna's son—you did what the fictional Sofia did. You practiced denial and said the government couldn't possibly be wrong, until it was your son who was arrested.

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<sup>131</sup> Figs, Orlando. "Traitors in the Family: Stalin's Informers." *The Whispers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*. (Alley Lane. September 22, 2007.) <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/columnists/article-483230/Traitors-family-Stalins-informers.html>.

Writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote: "The mildest and at the same time the most widespread form of betrayal was not to do anything directly, but just not to notice the doomed person next to one. They had arrested a neighbor, your comrade at work, or even your close friend. You kept silence. You acted as if you had not noticed."<sup>132</sup>

This horror, the Great Terror, occurred only about 80 years ago. One would think these wounds would still be raw, especially as Russia's Stalin archives were opened starting in the 1990s.

But today, abetted by the quiet rehabilitation of Stalin's place in history since Putin took power, Russians generally give Stalin good marks.

A survey released on March 1, 2016 by the Levada Center, a research organization based in Moscow, found that 40 percent of Russians thought the Stalin era brought "more good than bad," up from 27 percent in 2012. In an annual Levada survey published in January 2015, a majority of Russians (52 percent) said Stalin "probably" or "definitely" played a positive role in the country.

Stalin won the war (World War II, the Great Patriotic War) and made the Soviet Union a superpower in terms of the Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc and communist reach in places like Korea and China; its military might and nuclear capability, and its early lead in the space race (first man in space only a few years after Stalin's death.)

Why should Russians obsess on the fact that millions died during Stalin's regime?

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<sup>132</sup> Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. *The Gulag Archipelago*. (Éditions du Seuil. 1973.) 637.  
psych.utoronto.ca/~peterson/psy430s2001/Solzhenitsyn2.pdf

Eleventh-grade Russian student Zhenya Viktorov told a New York Times reporter in 2016 how he felt about Stalin: “He was a great man, unique in history.” When asked about the millions of Soviets shot or sent to the Gulags, Zhenya echoed Sofia Petrovna when he said, “No one was repressed for no reason. [The purges weren’t as] big or inhumane as the media likes to say.”<sup>133</sup>

In addition to denial, our Russian teenager Zhenya is romanticizing the past and discrediting the media’s facts.

Then we have Vladimir Putin, a modern leader who takes the pulse of his people but manipulates them through state-controlled media; a leader who lay flowers and sends condolences for the critics, journalists, and inconvenient truth-holders whose murders he probably ordered; a leader who romanticizes the images of and invites comparison to Ivan the Terrible and Joseph Stalin. It remains to be seen what he will do about the nationwide protests of March 2017 that involved a young generation of Russians who mobilized through social media. Will he bring the youth around to the collective belief of older generations that national pride and national security trump individual freedoms?

Finally we have the United States. Since President Wilson, Americans have a history of astonishment that Russia has not embraced democracy. “Don’t they get it?” Americans ask naively. “Why would they love the whip? Why would they accept suppression, the fear of arrest or injury or murder for voicing an alternate opinion? Why do they call democracy ‘shit-ocracy?’”

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<sup>133</sup> Luhn, Alec. “Stalin, Russia’s New Hero.” (The New York Times. March 11, 2016.)  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/opinion/sunday/stalinist-nostalgia-in-vladimir-putins-russia.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/opinion/sunday/stalinist-nostalgia-in-vladimir-putins-russia.html?_r=0).

Today, the United State has a president, who, though he was born at the start of the Cold War, has a hard time accepting that Russia may mean the U.S. harm and may have rigged the last American presidential election. He fails to understand that it is a matter of Russian national pride and Russian national security that state-trained Russian hackers can infiltrate probably wherever they want to go. We have been invaded digitally by our former superpower foe, who has no use for democracy or freedoms and who has the overwhelming support of its people nonetheless. We have been invaded and we don't realize it.



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