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Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928–1939

“Cadres decide everything,” Stalin proclaimed in 1935.¹ The slogan is familiar, as is the image of Stalin as a politician skilled in the selection and deployment of personnel. But who *were* his cadres? The literature on the prewar Stalin period tells us little even about his closest political associates, let alone those one step down the political hierarchy—Central Committee members, people’s commissars and their deputies, obkom secretaries—or in key industrial posts. Only the Old Bolsheviks and the military leaders seem to emerge as individuals. The rest are relegated to that servile and faceless bureaucracy about which Trotsky wrote from afar.² Their very anonymity (which might also be described as our—and Trotsky’s—ignorance) has become part of a sociological generalization.

The same generalization has often governed discussion of Stalin’s criteria in the selection of cadres. Virtually the only criteria suggested in the literature are unconditional loyalty to Stalin and lack of individual distinction.³ Because these qualities are attributed both to cadres before the Great Purge (except the Old Bolsheviks and the military) and to cadres after it, the unhappy fate of the first group is difficult to explain. Paranoia and permanent purge⁴ are two possibilities, but historians are likely to be somewhat dissatisfied with both types of explanation. The question has been frequently discussed, and the focus of attention has always been on the victims of the purge rather than on its beneficiaries. The assumption has been that Stalin had an overpowering desire to get rid of the old cadres, but no special interest in the new ones.

The thesis of this article is that Stalin *did* have a special interest in the new cadres. He believed them to possess specific qualifications which were essential for Soviet leadership, and he also believed that the old cadres’ lack of such qualifications exposed the regime to manipulation by its present and potential enemies. During the First Five-Year Plan, Stalin initiated a program through which over one hundred thousand workers and Communists from the factories and apparats were mobilized and sent to higher technical schools. As a result of the Great Purge, this group received dramatic promotions into positions of industrial, government, and party leadership. It has remained a core group in the Soviet political leadership up to the present day.

1. I. V. Stalin, “Rech’ na vypuske akademikov Krasnoi Armii” (May 4, 1935), in I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, ed. Robert H. McNeal, 3 vols. (Stanford, 1967), 1(14):61.

2. Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (London, 1937), chapter 5.

3. See, for example, Robert C. Tucker’s discussion of the new “serving class,” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *Stalinism* (New York, 1977), pp. 99–100.

4. On the concept of permanent purge, see Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956).

My starting point, like Stalin's, is the dichotomy between "Red" and "expert" which existed in the Soviet Union on the eve of the First Five-Year Plan industrialization drive. In 1917, the Bolsheviks had little expertise of their own to draw on, and ten years later the situation remained basically unchanged. In 1927, less than 1 percent (8,396) of Communists had completed higher education,⁵ but even this small group was of limited practical use in providing technical expertise. Almost half of its members were working in the spheres of health, education, and welfare (mainly as administrators),⁶ and only 7.8 percent had received their degrees from technical schools.⁷ According to Molotov, a grand total of 138 Communist engineers worked in Soviet industrial enterprises in 1928.⁸ This meant that the overwhelming majority of experts—from plant engineers and chief accountants to consultants and senior officials in government commissariats—were non-Communists and, in Soviet terminology, "bourgeois." Most were subordinate to Communist directors, often former workers with little education and no knowledge of the field they had been sent to administer. This arrangement sometimes produced friction, but it was equally likely to lead to a comfortable working relationship in which the experts made the decisions and the Communists signed the papers and attended the meetings. Vesenkha (the Supreme Council for the National Economy of the USSR) had a nonparty expert on its presidium, and its key metallurgical industry administration was effectively run by another expert who had been director and shareholder in two of the biggest plants before the Revolution.⁹ Experts of this status attended meetings of the highest government bodies—Sovnarkom and STO—and were occasionally even invited to Politburo meetings. But they were employed only in the government sector, not in that of the party. The Central Committee Secretariat, small in the 1920s, had no expertise and did not normally intervene in policy decisions requiring technical expertise.

There was little reason in 1927 to expect a basic change in the dichotomy between Reds and experts. The low educational level of Communist Party members reflected the working-class and peasant origins of the majority of party members (in 1927, 56 percent of Communists had been workers by occupation when they entered the party¹⁰). But the leadership showed no intention of changing the recruitment pattern established with the "Lenin levy" of workers in 1924 and, indeed, continued to place more and more emphasis on the working-class nature of the party. The cadres—that is, Communists in responsible administrative positions—did not differ substantially in class origin and education from the party as a whole. About twenty thousand Communists left the factory bench each year for white-collar and administrative positions, further education, and

5. *Sotsial'nyi i natsional'nyi sostav VKP(b): Itogi vsesoiuznoi partiinoi perepisi 1927 g.* (Moscow, 1928), p. 41.

6. Data for thirty-two gubernii of the RSFSR can be found in *Kommunisty v sostave apparata gosuchrezhdenii i obshchestvennykh organizatsii: Itogi vsesoiuznoi partiinoi perepisi 1927 g.* (Moscow, 1929), p. 15.

7. *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1977, no. 21, p. 30.

8. V. Molotov, "Podgotovka novykh spetsialistov," *Krasnoe studenchestvo*, 1928–29, no. 1 (October 1, 1928), p. 21.

9. The nonparty expert on the presidium was A. N. Dolgov, the dominant expert in the metallurgical administration was S. A. Khrennikov.

10. *Sotsial'nyi i natsional'nyi sostav VKP(b)*, p. 41.

the army,¹¹ and in 1927, 44 percent of cadres were former workers.¹² The cadres as a whole averaged four–five years of schooling,¹³ or not much more than primary education.

Under prevailing recruitment rules, bourgeois experts had little chance of joining the Communist Party even if they wanted to. In institutes of higher education—the training ground for future experts—working-class and Communist students remained a minority, despite admissions discrimination in their favor.¹⁴ Only ten thousand Communists graduated from higher educational institutes during the first decade of Soviet power, and almost all of them came from white-collar and professional families,¹⁵ a fact that made them somewhat suspect in the eyes of the majority of party members who came from lower-class backgrounds. The indications were that the next generation of experts would be as “bourgeois” as the present one, although the impending industrialization drive was likely to increase Soviet reliance on their expertise.

The party leadership as a whole seemed unperturbed by the situation (in fact, Lenin had said that it was unavoidable for the foreseeable future), and the government commissariats had clearly accepted it completely and could imagine no other way of functioning. During NEP, the institution which had shown the most uneasiness over the Red/expert dichotomy was the Central Committee Secretariat, and this concern must have increased when its statistical department (one of the few functioning centers of Communist expertise) analyzed the results of the 1927 party census and saw how little expertise and education party members possessed. Of the party leaders, Stalin and Molotov were the most closely associated with the Secretariat and cadres.

A radical change of policy toward the bourgeois experts was signaled by the state prosecutor’s announcement early in 1928 that a large group of mining engineers from the Shakhty region of the Donbass was to be tried in Moscow for sabotage and conspiracy with foreign powers.¹⁶ The announcement was quickly followed by public discussion of the broader implications of the trial, indicating that the bourgeois intelligentsia as a group was now under suspicion. But senior government and industrial spokesmen were simultaneously trying to reassure the experts (and perhaps also themselves). Reading the news during a business trip in Europe, two experts in high positions in the Donbass coal administration of Vesenkha concluded that the storm would not touch them and returned to Moscow,¹⁷ whereupon they were arrested as members of a “Moscow

11. I. N. Iudin, *Sotsial'naiia baza rosta KPSS* (Moscow, 1973), p. 129.

12. *Kommunisty v sostave apparata*, p. 25. The figure relates to Communists “on leading work” in thirty-two gubernii of the RSFSR.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

14. In 1927–28, 26.5 percent of students in Soviet higher schools (excluding party and military schools) were classified as working-class, while 17.1 percent were full or candidate members of the Communist Party (see *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 1st ed., vol. 16 [Moscow, 1929], p. 34).

15. The total figure for graduations is taken from Iudin, *Sotsial'naiia baza rosta KPSS*, p. 181. Of the 8,396 Communists with higher education in January 1927, 91 percent had entered the party as white-collar workers (see *Sotsial'nyi i natsional'nyi sostav VKP[b]*, p. 41).

16. *Pravda*, March 10, 1928, p. 1.

17. The officials were S. P. Bratanovskii and N. I. Skorutto (see Bratanovskii's confession, quoted in *Ekonomicheskaiia kontrrevoliutsiia v Donbasse [Itogi Shakhtinskogo dela]* [Moscow, 1928], pp. 268–69).

center" of the conspiracy. At the trial, held in Moscow in May and June 1928, testimony on Vesenkha and its coal administration was heard in closed session.¹⁸ The new policy, it appeared, threatened not only bourgeois experts but also the Communist administrators who had worked with them.

Stalin is reported to have taken the initiative in staging the Shakhty trial, possibly without prior consultation with other members of the leadership.¹⁹ He certainly took the initiative in explaining the political significance of the Shakhty affair, and unlike other leadership spokesmen, he did not limit his discussion to the bourgeois experts. In Stalin's account, the incompetence of Communist administrators was scarcely less disturbing than the experts' treachery. The threat from the experts was grave, Stalin said. By virtue of their class position, they were potential pawns in the unremitting struggle of the capitalist powers to overthrow the Soviet regime. Hitherto the capitalists had put their faith in military intervention. With the inauguration of the First Five-Year Plan, however, their efforts would be concentrated on sabotaging the Soviet industrialization drive. But, according to Stalin, the experts had been able to commit acts of sabotage because they, not the Communist administrators, were effectively in charge. Lacking education and technical expertise, the Communists had allowed themselves to be dominated and hoodwinked by their nominal subordinates. Thus, there was only one solution: Communists must acquire technical expertise, and the old dichotomy between Red and expert must be abolished.²⁰

Obviously, it was no simple matter for Communist cadres—men perhaps in their late thirties, ill-educated, and burdened with administrative responsibilities—to acquire technical expertise. Stalin expressed his confidence that they could do so:

People say that it is impossible for Communists, especially for working-class Communist industrial administrators [*khoziaistvenniki*], to master chemical formulas and technical knowledge in general. That is not true, comrades. There are no fortresses in the world which the toilers, the Bolsheviks, cannot storm.²¹

But his exhortations were often combined with reproaches for past failings or implicit threats of demotion for those who refused to educate themselves:

Bolsheviks must master technology. It is time for Bolsheviks themselves to become specialists. In the reconstruction period, technology decides everything: And the industrial administrator who does not want to study technology, who does not want to master technology, is a joke and not an administrator.²²

To the younger generation of Communists, Komsomols, and workers, Stalin presented the mastery of technology as a challenge. In 1928 he told the Eighth Komsomol Congress:

18. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

19. See the account in A. Avtorkhanov, *Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party* (London, 1959), p. 29.

20. I. Stalin, "O rabotakh aprel'skogo ob'edinennogo plenuma TsK i TsKK" (April 13, 1928), in I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1949–51), 11:53–54, 57–59.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

22. Stalin, "O zadachakh khoziaistvennikov" (February 4, 1931), *Sochineniia*, 13:41.

In order to build you need knowledge, you need to master science. And to get that knowledge, you need to study. To study patiently and stubbornly. To learn from everybody—from enemies and friends, especially from enemies. To learn with clenched teeth, not fearing that our enemies will laugh at us, at our ignorance and backwardness.²³

But for those who met the challenge, Stalin seemed to promise great rewards and future leadership. Educated youth could become “a builder of the new life, . . . a real replacement of the old guard.”²⁴

Stalin’s statements certainly contain a hint of the possibility of premature retirement for the old cadres, but we should be careful not to exaggerate its significance. Mastery of technology was only one of the characteristics that Stalin demanded of cadres. An even more important characteristic, judging both by Stalin’s statements and the actual policies of the First Five-Year Plan period, was working-class background. And the old cadres in key administrative spheres could hardly be criticized on this criterion. Almost two-thirds of the cadres in industry and just under half of those working in the party apparatus in 1927 were former workers.²⁵ Moreover, the Communist in the top position was more likely to be a former worker than the Communists immediately subordinate to him.²⁶

In emphasizing the criterion of working-class background, Stalin was following a Bolshevik practice established during the first years of Soviet power. The practice had never been given a real theoretical justification, probably because it simply seemed obvious that the proletarian dictatorship should draw cadres from the proletariat. But the Bolsheviks also had some inhibitions about discussing cadres in terms of general principle, because their principles did not really admit the possibility of a permanent and professional Soviet administrative élite. The cadres, of course, already constituted such an élite in the 1920s, but the Bolsheviks had not yet found an acceptable way of admitting it.

Stalin made two changes in the established practice of recruiting cadres from the working class. In the first place, he dramatized it by calling on the proletariat to repel the counterrevolutionary threat from the bourgeois specialists. In the second place, he greatly increased the rate of recruitment. But perhaps the most interesting change was in the realm of theory. By using the word “intelligentsia” for the administrative and specialist élite, Stalin was able to articulate a principle which had long guided Bolshevik practice—that the Soviet regime, like any other, needed its own élite, and that this élite should be recruited primarily from the working class:

Not a single ruling class has managed without its own intelligentsia. . . . We do not need just any kind of commanding and engineering-technical cadres. We need commanding and engineering-technical cadres capable of understanding the policies of the working class of our country, capable of mastering those policies and prepared to carry them out conscientiously. What does that mean? It means that our country has entered the phase of development when *the working class must create its own productive-tech-*

23. Stalin, “Rech’ na VIII s’ezde VLKSM” (May 16, 1928), *Sochineniia*, 11:76–77.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Kommunisty v sostave apparata*, p. 25.

26. This is inferred from the educational levels shown in *ibid.*, p. 12.

nical intelligentsia, capable of standing up for its own interests in production, as the interests of the working class.²⁷

The outlines of a new cadres policy began to emerge at the Central Committee plenums of April and July 1928, though in a rather confused form that reflected disagreements within the leadership. First, the bourgeois specialists as a group were under suspicion and would be subject to harassment. Second, Communist administrators working with bourgeois specialists had shown insufficient vigilance and competence. They needed technical training, which would be supplied either by part-time courses or study in the new industrial academies,²⁸ created for the specific purpose of retraining cadres who had already held responsible jobs. Third, the administrative apparatus had to be purged of unreliable "bourgeois elements" and strengthened by the promotion of workers from the bench.²⁹ Fourth, it was imperative to begin training a new generation of cadres who would be both Red and expert. The normal higher education system, especially the engineering schools, would provide the training. This meant curriculum changes and a new admissions policy which would discriminate strongly in favor of working-class and Communist applicants, even if their educational preparation was poor. To ensure an adequate supply of working-class and Communist students, party and trade-union organizations would have the responsibility of selecting candidates from among their members.³⁰

Despite the fact that Stalin was the chief advocate of the new policy, it provoked sharp controversy within the leadership. This in fact may have been Stalin's intention, since it would certainly have been possible to have avoided controversy over the new training programs had they not been explicitly linked with the Shakhty trial. But Stalin was already in conflict with the emerging Right Opposition in the Politburo over the handling of the grain procurements crisis, and more trouble was brewing in regard to the targets of the First Five-Year Plan's industrialization drive. His new cadres policy—essentially anti-intelligentsia and proworker—was likely to be popular with the Communist rank and file. Politically, he could only profit from putting his opponents in the position of being proexpert—that is, soft on the bourgeoisie.

The Right attempted to circumvent this danger by basing its argument on Leninist principles. At the April 1928 plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission, Rykov quoted Lenin's statements that the party had no alternative to cooperation with bourgeois experts, since, for the foreseeable future, it could not replace them, and therefore should avoid harassing

27. Stalin, "Novaia obstanovka—novye zadachi khoziaistvennogo stroitel'stva" (June 23, 1931), *Sochineniia*, 13:66–67.

28. On the industrial academies, see P. M. Mikhailov, "Iz istorii deiatel'nosti Kommunisticheskoi partii po podgotovke rukovodiashchikh kadrov promyshlennosti v period sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii narodnogo khoziaistva," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1976, no. 10, pp. 79–86.

29. See Central Committee resolution of November 1928, "O verbovke rabochikh i regulirovanii rosta partii," in *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1970), p. 143. A weaker statement is contained in the Central Committee and Central Control Commission resolution of April 1928, "Shakhtinskoe delo i prakticheskie zadachi v dele bor'by s nedostatkami khoziaistvennogo stroitel'stva," in *ibid.*, p. 91.

30. Central Committee resolution of July 1928, "Ob uluchshenii podgotovki novykh spetsialistov," in *ibid.*, pp. 111–18. The April plenum's resolution contained a weaker and somewhat contradictory recommendation (see "Shakhtinskoe delo," pp. 88–90).

them or showing “Communist conceit.” He also produced documentation to demonstrate that the experts were still irreplaceable and that the industrialization drive would fail without their support,³¹ and he suggested that “the class issue” (increased recruitment of workers and Communists) be kept out of the discussion of the training of specialists.³² The last two arguments brought Rykov onto delicate ground as far as the public debate was concerned,³³ though many leaders not linked with the Right may have silently agreed with him. Any Communist who had run a large bureaucracy was likely to feel that a good expert was worth his weight in gold, that young Communist graduates were generally inexperienced, cocky, and quarrelsome, and that workers promoted from the bench to apparat jobs were simply a nuisance. Stalin’s new policy was obviously bound to cause trouble for industry (which stood to lose engineers to the GPU and skilled workers to the engineering schools and apparat work), and it could destroy the educational system. On top of that, it would cost money when the budget was already strained to capacity by the industrialization drive.

But the political atmosphere of 1928 made it extremely difficult to oppose a proworker and antiexpert policy on practical grounds, let alone on the “bureaucratic” grounds of administrative and financial rationality. Uglanov, a future Rightist, discovered this as early as January 1928, when his remarks to the Moscow party committee on orderly administrative procedures were interrupted by a shout from the floor—“What about *vydvizhenchestvo* [worker promotion into the apparat]?” Having briefly characterized worker promotion as a way of swelling the bureaucracy and probably “holding back the tempo of our construction effort by 30 percent,” Uglanov recommended the promotion of persons with real qualifications, such as college graduates. This provoked another interjection: “But of the graduates we ought to take those who are from the factory, from the worker’s bench!”³⁴

By July, when the crucial decision on training of Red experts was made at the Central Committee plenum, the Right had evidently come to the conclusion that it was useless to fight on the central issue of large-scale recruitment of workers and Communists into higher education. But it was not an outright victory for Stalin and Molotov. The Right fought on a relatively peripheral issue (whether the educational or industrial authorities should control the higher technical schools) and forced a compromise resolution.³⁵ This means that even Stalin’s supporters may have been lukewarm about the cadres policy, and the impression is reinforced by the absence of enthusiastic advocacy of any part of the policy by any leader other than Stalin, Molotov, and Kaganovich.³⁶

31. Reported by Ordzhonikidze in *XVI s'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii: Stenograficheskii otchet*, part 1 (Moscow, 1931), p. 568.

32. Quoted in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1966, no. 2, p. 33.

33. The entire controversy was kept out of the press, but it was known to all Communists because of the practice (apparently discontinued in the early 1930s) of circulating verbatim reports of Central Committee meetings to local party organizations.

34. *Vtoroi plenum MK VKP(b), 31 ianvaria–2 fevralia 1928: Doklady i rezoliutsii* (Moscow, 1928), p. 43.

35. For a detailed discussion of this episode, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (London and New York, 1979), pp. 127–29.

36. The Central Committee’s resolution, “Ob uluchshenii podgotovki novykh spetsialistov” (July 1928), was based on a report by Molotov (see M. Savelev and A. Poskrebysh, *Direktivy VKP[b] po khoziaistvennym voprosam* [Moscow-Leningrad, 1931], p. 466). Its later resolution, “O kadrakh narodnogo khoziaistva” (November 1929), calling for further

The most important plank of the new policy—large-scale recruitment of adult workers and Communists into the engineering schools to “master technology”—was also, on the face of it, the most difficult. The Russian education commissariat was uncooperative, even with Vyshinskii (the presiding judge in the Shakhty trial), who was sent to strengthen its resolve.³⁷ It took more than a year to prod the trade-union leadership into real acceptance of the unions’ new role in selecting workers for higher education and putting them through preparatory courses.³⁸ The unions argued with industry about who should pay the worker-students while they were in college, and the industrial and educational authorities argued about who should run the engineering schools. In the colleges themselves, the professors were resentful, the new students had trouble adjusting to the classroom again, and work was repeatedly disrupted by administrative reorganizations and changes in curriculum. Local party organizations often misdirected their energies into purging “bourgeois” students who then simply transferred to another college.

Despite these difficulties, the party mobilized almost ten thousand Communists to engineering and other colleges in the years 1928–31, and an additional eight thousand Communists to higher military schools in 1931–32.³⁹ The trade unions mobilized another five–six thousand Communist workers and almost four thousand workers who were not party members.⁴⁰ These students—the “Thousanders”—were the most highly publicized of the First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhentsy*, but the success of Stalin’s policy did not depend on them alone. The real question was whether Communists and workers who were *not* selected as Thousanders would decide to answer the call to higher education. It promised, no doubt, advancement in the future, but, in the short term, it meant surviving on a student stipend, living in overcrowded dormitories away from one’s family, struggling with unfamiliar book work, and entering a strange and in some respects hostile environment. Sheer administrative pressure could not make the

expansion of higher and technical education and increased educational recruitment of Communists and workers, was based on a report by Kaganovich (see text of resolution in *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh*, vol. 4, pp. 334–45; identification of the rapporteur is found in *Eshenedel'nik Narodnogo komissariata prosveshchenia RSFSR*, no. 50 [1929], p. 3). For other statements by Molotov and Kaganovich, see notes 45–47 below.

37. Vyshinskii was appointed head of Narkompros’s administration of technical education in the summer or early fall of 1928 (see *Pravda*, September 25, 1928, p. 6).

38. In early 1929, the Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) responded quite skeptically to Vyshinskii’s report on recruitment of workers into higher education: speakers said the mobilization of the first trade-union “Thousand” had been a chaotic last-minute effort, and some feared massive dropouts of worker-students. By December 1930, the unionists’ attitude had changed completely. They now referred to the *vydvizhentsy* as the cream of the working class, abused Vesenkha for delaying college admission of some thousands of graduates of trade-union preparatory courses and other faults of educational administration, and in general expressed an officiously proprietorial attitude toward the higher technical schools (see Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii i sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva SSSR [TsGAOR], fond 5451, opis' 13, delo 14, pp. 188–92, and f. 5451, op. 13, d. 15, pp. 125–34, stenographic reports of meetings of VTsSPS, January 11, 1929 and December 8, 1930).

39. Data from S. Fediukin, *Sovetskaia vlast' i burzhuaznye spetsialisty* (Moscow, 1965), p. 243; and B. S. Telpukhovskii in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1976, no. 8, p. 93.

40. TsGAOR, f. 5451, op. 15, d. 785, p. 65, VTsSPS, Sector of Industrial Cadres.

policy succeed, if only because of the possibility of mass dropout by the new students. A spontaneous entry of Communists and working-class adults into college was necessary, with every ambitious twenty-five-year-old in the country wondering if he could afford to be left out.

The winter of 1929–30 seems to have been the turning point and the beginning of a mass influx into technical education. This was partly because new colleges opened and more places became available. But for adults—the majority of the new students—other factors were probably equally important: college may suddenly have seemed a more desirable option when the alternatives might be mobilization to the countryside for collectivization or pressure to transfer to a distant industrial construction site like Magnitogorsk. In any case, whatever the reasons for their choices, young Communists and working-class adults streamed into higher and secondary technical schools during the years 1930–32. By the beginning of 1933, two hundred thirty-three thousand Communists—the equivalent of almost a quarter of the party's total membership at the end of 1927—were full-time students in some type of educational institution. One hundred six thousand of the Communist students were in institutes of higher education (excluding higher party and military schools and industrial academies), and almost two-thirds of this group was studying engineering.⁴¹

The number of former workers among college students at the end of the First Five-Year Plan cannot be ascertained exactly because of deficiencies in the statistics: it was probably in the vicinity of ninety to one hundred thousand, somewhat over half of whom were Communists.⁴² This gives a total group of about one hundred fifty thousand Communist and worker *vydvizhentsy*. But perhaps a clearer sense of the *vydvizhenie* can emerge by considering a few individual biographies. The following examples—all men who later rose to very high positions in the party and government leadership—are from the cream of the group and tend to have a more solid precollege education than the average:

Brezhnev, Leonid Il'ich, born 1906 in family of Kamenskoe (Dneprodzerzhinsk) factory worker. Graduated from agricultural *tekhnikum* and worked as land surveyor in 1920s, rising to deputy head of Urals Department of Agriculture. Candidate member of party 1929, full member 1931. In 1930, entered Timiriazev Agricultural Academy in Moscow, but left in same year and returned with wife and child to his home town, taking job as worker at Dneprodzerzhinsk Metallurgical Plant and simultaneously enrolling as student in local metallurgical institute, from which he graduated in 1935.

Kosygin, Aleksei Nikolaevich, born 1904 in family of Petersburg worker. Fought in civil war, then graduated from *tekhnikum* and worked in Siberian consumer-cooperative network. Party member from 1927. Entered Leningrad Textile Institute in 1930.

Ustinov, Dmitrii Fedorovich, born 1908 in family of Samara worker. Trained and worked as fitter and machinist before entering Moscow Military-Mechanical Institute circa 1930. Party member from 1927.

41. Data from Iudin, *Sotsial'naiia baza rosta KPSS*, p. 180; *Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR: Statisticheskii ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 1934), p. 410; and Nicholas de Witt, *Education and Professional Employment in the USSR* (Washington, D.C., 1961), pp. 638–39.

42. For the calculation on which this estimate is based, see Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, p. 187.

Malyshev, Viacheslav Aleksandrovich, born 1902 in family of provincial teacher. Graduated from railroad *tekhnikum* and subsequently worked on railroads, rising to locomotive driver. Party member from 1926. Entered Bauman Mechanical-Mathematical Institute, Moscow, as Party Thousander in 1930.

Patolichev, Nikolai Semenovich, born 1908 in peasant family (father, who had remained in tsarist army after conscription in 1902, died fighting with Red Army in civil war). Incomplete primary education in village school. From age sixteen, worked at Chernorech'e Chemical Plant and studied at its apprenticeship school. Became secretary of plant's Komsomol organization; mobilized for collectivization in 1930. Party member from 1928. In 1931, entered Mendeleev Chemical-Technological Institute in Moscow (this institute was quickly split into a number of separate schools, one of which was the Military-Chemical Academy from which Patolichev later graduated).

Chuianov, Aleksei Semenovich, born 1905, both parents laborers at grain collection point in southern Russia. Completed seven-year general school, then worked in Komsomol apparat. Joined party in 1925. After an unsuccessful effort to enter a *rabfak* in 1927, selected in 1929 as a Party Thousander and sent to Lomonosov Mechanical Institute in Moscow (this institute was also split up in the early 1930s: the school from which Chuianov later graduated was the Moscow Chemical-Technological Institute of the Meat Industry).⁴³

The one hundred fifty thousand Communist and worker *vydvizhentsy* into higher education—most of them due to graduate only in 1935–37—constituted a very large investment in future cadres. But there were also immediate needs, met to a large extent by direct promotion of persons without educational qualifications but untainted by “bourgeois” origins or service under the old regime. In 1928–33, some 140,638 workers from the bench were promoted to responsible administrative and specialist positions, the majority being trained on the job as plant technicians, engineers, and managers in industry. Over half of this group did not belong to the party.⁴⁴ A much larger group moved upward from manual to white-collar occupations of all types. According to one Soviet source, in 1930–33 alone, 666,000 Communist workers left the factory for white-collar employment and full-time study.⁴⁵ No similar figures are available for nonparty workers, but if we assume that Communists were at least as likely as non-Communists to

43. Biographical data from Borys Levytsky, *The Soviet Political Elite* (Munich, 1969) and *Ezhegodnik Bol'shoi sovetskoï entsiklopedii 1971* (Moscow, 1971). Additional data on Brezhnev from John Dornberg, *Brezhnev, The Masks of Power* (New York, 1974), pp. 54–55; and Leonid I. Brezhnev: *Pages From His Life* (New York, 1978), pp. 26–32; data on Malyshev from *Pravda*, November 22, 1937, p. 2; on Patolichev from N. S. Patolichev, *Ispytanie na zrelost'* (Moscow, 1977), passim; and on Chuianov from A. S. Chuianov, *Na stremnime veka: Zapiski sekretaria obkoma* (Moscow, 1976), passim.

44. *Sostav rukovodiashchikh rabotnikov i spetsialistov Soiuza SSR* (Moscow, 1936), pp. 8–11. The figures are based on a survey of leading cadres taken in November 1933. The group numbered over eight hundred thousand and constituted about one-tenth of all white-collar workers at that time. Cadres working in the military, security, and party apparats were excluded.

45. *Kommunisticheskaia partiia—Um, chest' i sovest' nashei epokhi* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 221–22.

be promoted into responsible positions (a classification covering about one-tenth of all white-collar jobs in 1933), 666,000 appears to be a minimum estimate for the direct promotion of nonparty workers. The total number of workers moving out of manual occupations and into white-collar and administrative positions and full-time study in this period was probably at least one and a half million.

However, neither direct promotion of new cadres nor the training of qualified cadres for the future solved the immediate problem which Stalin had noted in 1928: the existing Red cadres still lacked technical expertise. This fundamental point was sometimes overlooked in the enthusiastic reports of proletarian promotions characteristic of the First Five-Year Plan period. Yet the frequent announcements of new conspiracies and wrecking by the bourgeois specialists implied that the old cadres were still being hoodwinked by their subordinates. This theme dropped out of public view after Stalin's first commentaries on the Shakhty affair. Consequently, it is all the more striking to find it emphasized in leadership discussions conducted in camera.

Speaking to a closed party audience in 1929, Molotov warned that the Shakhty trial "was an enormous lesson for all of us, but especially for the Communists in the industrial leadership; yet to this day the lesson has been seriously pondered by far from all our comrades."⁴⁶ Kaganovich spoke more bluntly in his private meetings with trade-union leaders, whose obsession with the old struggle of labor and management, he thought, blinded them to real political dangers:

You reduce everything to the industrialists, but the fact is that it's not the industrialists who make the decisions. Take the director of some plant, say the Tomskii or Rykov plants in the Donbass—he's a pawn, he's powerless on his own, he runs around and rushes from place to place, but he himself can do nothing. The technical personnel makes the decisions.⁴⁷

And again, a few weeks later, Kaganovich warned:

You are wrong in thinking that it's the Presidium of Vesenkha that matters, that it controls the economy. It's not the Presidium of Vesenkha that will be doing that. When it comes to firing heads of departments, the majority of people who will be doing that are nonparty.⁴⁸

At the Sixteenth Party Congress in mid-1930, Ordzhonikidze—then head of the party's Central Control Commission—presented a report highly critical of Vesenkha's direction of industry. But the real sting was not in Ordzhonikidze's report (at least in its published form) but in the supporting materials circulated in numbered copies to Congress delegates. These contained extracts from the interrogations of experts formerly employed in the industrial and transport administrations and currently under arrest for wrecking. The experts said almost nothing in the extracts about the bizarre conspiracies to which some of them

46. V. Molotov report ("The Construction of Socialism and the Contradictions of Growth"), in *Pervaia moskovskaia oblastnaia konferentsiia Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov): Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1929), p. 42.

47. TsGAOR, f. 5451, op. 13, d. 14, p. 23, stenographic report of meeting of VTsSPS January 2, 1929.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 51, stenographic report of meeting of VTsSPS, January 25, 1929.

later confessed in show trials like that of the "Industrial Party" late in 1930. They mainly described how the apparatus really functioned and what they thought of their Communist bosses. One may, of course, doubt testimony given under duress (though one of the remarkable features of the confessions is the passion with which many experts defended their positions on old policy conflicts, often explaining that they had been "too timid" to engage in the blatant sabotage of those experts who had taken the opposing side). But the very fact that such materials were circulated at the Congress indicates that Ordzhonikidze, and presumably also Stalin, thought that the experts were saying something of value, and the message could hardly have brought joy to the industrialists.

Though often sympathetic to their Communist directors, the experts strongly emphasized their bosses' lack of technical expertise. According to S. A. Khrennikov (formerly a powerful figure in Vesenkha), "the man in charge of metallurgy [in 1925–26]—Comrade Berezin, a Communist—was completely unacquainted with the field, and any wrecking act could be got past him,"⁴⁹ and I. V. Kosior found it "hard to get a grasp of things" when he was transferred from the oil industry to Ukrainian steel.⁵⁰ The former chief engineer of Vesenkha's Rifle and Machine Gun Trust testified that G. I. Bruno, chairman of the trust, "could not understand technical matters at all (he was a railroad technician, never worked at defense plants, and did not know the field)" and that Mirza-khanov, another Communist leader of the trust, performed better but could still be fooled by the experts.⁵¹

I. N. Strizhev, formerly a senior official in Vesenkha's fuel administration and earlier a manager of Nobel's Dagestan oil fields, explained why the Communists were less effective than prerevolutionary managers:

The Communist industrialists mainly did not know how to do the work and were only learning. . . . When I was a manager of oil enterprises before the Revolution, I went round the works every day, . . . I knew each worker and each employee. . . . The present administrators of the oil fields do not penetrate so deeply. They were [*sic*] surrounded by papers and red-tape, bureaucratism, and millions of meetings. They had no time to do the work.⁵²

But in some cases, according to the experts, Communists actually saw it as their function to cope with bureaucratic and political impediments, while the experts handled the business. According to the confession of V. A. Domenov, former technical director of the trust,⁵³ when G. I. Lomov—who had the misfortune to head the Donbass coal administration in 1928—was in charge of the Urals Platinum Trust in the early 1920s, he "was busy with the Urals soviet, and actually I had all the responsibility." This was confirmed by the trust's former chief mechanic, who added that Lomov "described himself as a battering ram, making a breach in the wall so that in the future the path would be smooth, without big obstructions."⁵⁴

49. *Materialy k otchetu TsKK VKP(b) XVI s'esdu VKP(b)* (Moscow, 1930), p. 50.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 44–45.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Many of the experts said that they had had a close relationship with their Communist bosses—so close that the bosses would not hesitate to defend them from outside criticism, and seemed to put institutional interest above their duty as party members to observe the confidentiality of communications from higher party and security organs. When Mikhailov, the Old Bolshevik chairman of the Leningrad Machine Building Trust, received a “completely secret memorandum” from the GPU criticizing the trust’s policy of cutting back defense production in certain Leningrad plants, he handed it over to a nonparty engineer, Dukelskii, who was one of the main targets of GPU criticism. On Mikhailov’s instructions, Dukelskii drafted the trust’s reply “in an obviously improper manner, dragging in facts which were meant to justify the Machine Trust’s actions and my own.”⁵⁵

An even more distressing report came from Khabarov, formerly chief engineer in one of the electrotechnical trusts and a strong supporter of the Erikson automatic telephone system which the trust had decided to install in several cities. On receiving a GPU objection to the choice of the Erikson system over the competing system of the German Siemens firm, the trust’s Communist chairman, I. P. Zhukov, handed it over to Khabarov and (using the familiar form of address) asked if he had enemies who might have taken a complaint to the GPU. Khabarov suggested a few experts in the field, evidently supporters of the Siemens system, but Zhukov quickly rejected one of them: “It can hardly be Vilner, because he’s getting a work-over himself.” Khabarov, of course, composed the trust’s answer to the GPU, but he still felt the need to consolidate the pro-Erikson position against attack from the Siemens supporters (both firms were foreign, but there was no apparent suggestion that they had been involved in a sinister way, or that there was more to the conflict than a difference of professional judgment). Therefore, he mentioned the problem to his friend V. A. Sergievskii, another future wrecker, who published the technical case for the Erikson system in the journal of the Commissariat of Posts and Telegraph, in the hope that this would dispose of the professional opposition, despite its aggressive tactics in enlisting GPU support.⁵⁶

The entire document must have caused quite a stir at the Sixteenth Party Congress, because some of the Communist names mentioned were highly respected, including those of two of Kuibyshev’s deputy commissars at Vesenkha, Mezhlaik and I. V. Kosior. It is not surprising that Kuibyshev, Vesenkha’s chairman and a Politburo member, returned from this session of the Congress in a state of deep shock.⁵⁷ A few months later, he was replaced as chairman of Vesenkha by Ordzhonikidze, who was to remain at the head of Soviet industry—first as chairman of Vesenkha, then from 1932 as commissar of heavy industry—until February 1937, when he committed suicide a few weeks after his deputy, Piatakov, was sentenced to death.

Ordzhonikidze entered Vesenkha in mid-November 1930 with a mandate to purge and raise the quality of the industrial cadres. With the trial of the “Industrial Party” experts in progress, among his first actions were the appointment of a commission “for liquidation of the consequences of wrecking” (headed

55. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

57. A. F. Khavin, *U rulia industrii* (Moscow, 1968), p. 82.

by an official who was probably seconded from the OGPU⁵⁸) and a thunderous denunciation of “traitors and enemies of Soviet power” formerly associated with Vesenkha and now implicated in the Industrial Party affair.⁵⁹ But punitive purging was not Ordzhonikidze’s style. Even as Central Control Commission chairman he had seemed skeptical of Molotov’s accusations against the bourgeois experts⁶⁰ and maintained cordial personal relations with party Oppositionists even at the height of the struggle against them.⁶¹ Within a few months of his arrival at Vesenkha, he was expressing confidence in the future loyalty of the experts⁶² and, according to one report, recommending the release of those who had been arrested.⁶³ His dealings with major party Oppositionists in the Vesenkha apparat were similarly conciliatory. Bukharin’s authority in the scientific-technical sector was reinforced, and the Left Oppositionist Piatakov was restored to his pre-1928 position as deputy commissar.⁶⁴

Stalin, in his famous “Six Conditions” speech of June 1931, announced major policy changes, including the rehabilitation of the bourgeois experts, which the industrialists had been advocating for the past six months.⁶⁵ His speech also foreshadowed the end of large-scale *vydvizhenie* of workers and Communists into full-time higher education, although it was not until the college reorganization of 1933 (in which Ordzhonikidze’s commissariat played a leading part) that

58. The official was G. E. Prokofiev, probably the same G. E. Prokofiev who attended the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934 as an OGPU delegate. He was appointed head of the temporary group for the liquidation of the consequences of wrecking in November 1930, moved to head of Vesenkha’s control (*proverka ispolneniia*) section in January, and released from the Vesenkha presidium in August 1931 (see *Tsentral’nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv narodnogo khoziaistva SSSR* [TsGANKh], f. 3429, op. 1, d. 5233, p. 150; and f. 3429, op. 1, d. 5251, p. 31; f. 3429, op. 1, d. 5259, p. 227, orders [*prikazy*] of Vesenkha USSR).

59. Order no. 6 (January 4, 1931), signed by Ordzhonikidze, expelling from Vesenkha A. M. Ginzburg, Kafengauz, Ramzin, Sokolovskii, Shein, and Khrennikov (TsGANKh, f. 3421, op. 1, d. 5251, p. 12).

60. Ordzhonikidze, making a late appearance at the conference at which Molotov had reported (see note 45 above), said that he considered the Gosplan “wrecker” Groman “a man who could not be bought,” although his ideology made him dangerous (*Pervaia moskovskaia oblastnaia konferentsiia*, p. 181).

61. At a mid-1927 meeting of the Central Control Commission, for example, the Oppositionist Muralov had difficulty getting a hearing in an extremely tense atmosphere. Muralov nevertheless made a friendly reference to Ordzhonikidze, who responded later with a bantering and distinctly nonhostile interjection (see *VI Plenum TsKK sostava XIV s’ezda VKP[b] 26–27 iulia 1927 g.* [stenographic report for limited circulation] [Moscow, 1927], pp. 99 and 102).

62. Speech to Conference of Industrialists, in *Za industrializatsiun*, February 2, 1931, p. 2.

63. Memoir by I. S. Peskin, in *Byli industrial’nye: Ocherki i vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1970), p. 183.

64. In May 1931, Ordzhonikidze gave warm approval to Bukharin’s proposal for a conference on scientific planning, which turned out to be a big step forward on Bukharin’s road to political rehabilitation. In October, he entrusted the reorganization of Vesenkha’s planning sector—an important task, which might well have been assigned to one of the trusted colleagues Ordzhonikidze had brought with him from TsKK—to Piatakov (see TsGANKh, f. 3429, op. 1, d. 5244, p. 243, file of the Ukrainian Vesenkha containing central instructions for 1931; and f. 3429, op. 1, d. 5262, p. 26, order of Vesenkha USSR, no. 705).

65. Stalin, “Novaia obstanovka—novye zadachi,” pp. 51–80.

the policy came into full operation. It is possible that Stalin felt that he had suffered a defeat with these policy changes,⁶⁶ or at least that Ordzhonikidze had preempted the initiative. But the educational *vydvizhenie* had earlier been described as a short-term measure, and for practical reasons it could hardly have been otherwise. Stalin took full credit for the “Six Conditions”—in fact, the publicity surrounding them pushed the Stalin cult to new heights—and the new policies announced in his speech remained in force for the rest of the Stalin era. Ordzhonikidze was no less concerned about the quality of industrial cadres. Appointments and transfers came under Ordzhonikidze’s personal control at Vesenkha,⁶⁷ and the Central Committee Secretariat, whose confirmation was required for all appointments of Communists, apparently simply rubber-stamped Ordzhonikidze’s orders.⁶⁸

Ordzhonikidze’s cadres, as they emerged in the early 1930s, were essentially a different group from the Red directors of the 1920s.⁶⁹ Although many of the old Red directors were reduced to relatively minor positions (the former defense industry leader G. I. Bruno, for example, was appointed head of the Fifth Industrial Construction Trust in 1931⁷⁰), Ordzhonikidze vastly enhanced the authority of plant directors and appointed new cadres to these positions. Many of these cadres had previously held high positions in the central apparatus, and a few were recent graduates of the engineering schools, having entered higher education during NEP. But there was no single or predominant recruiting ground for Ordzhonikidze’s cadres. His strategy was bold promotion and lavish reward for anyone with a good performance record or, in the case of the young, signs of practical initiative and energy.

Most contemporaries admired Ordzhonikidze’s achievements with regard to the industrial cadres. But the problem of technical expertise remained, since, no matter how he juggled them, there were simply too few qualified cadres for the jobs that needed to be filled. The annual output of the engineering schools was increasing rapidly during the first half of the 1930s, but Ordzhonikidze did not

66. This is argued in Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin* (Princeton, 1978), chapter 7. A somewhat different view is presented in Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, chapter 10.

67. Virtually all orders on appointments and personnel matters in Vesenkha and later in the Commissariat of Heavy Industry were signed personally by Ordzhonikidze as well as by the head of his cadres sector, I. M. Moskvina (the majority of orders on other types of questions were signed by one of the deputy commissars). Breaking with the practice of his predecessor, Kuibyshev, on December 3, 1930 Ordzhonikidze ordered that the cadres sector be directly subordinated to the Vesenkha chairman (TsGANKh, f. 3429, op. 1, d. 5233, p. 250, order no. 2,373).

68. See Chuianov, *Na stremnii vekh*, p. 41. Soon after his appointment to the industrial section of the Central Committee department of leading party organs, Chuianov unintentionally caused confusion by flouting this unwritten rule.

69. On the various generations of *khosiaistvenniki*, see A. F. Khavin’s firsthand account in A. F. Khavin, “Kapitany sovetskoi industrii 1926–1940 gody,” *Voprosy istorii*, 1966, no. 5, pp. 3–14.

70. TsGANKh, f. 3429, op. 1, d. 5251, p. 15. Not all the industrialists named with Bruno in the document circulated at the Sixteenth Party Congress were demoted by Ordzhonikidze. Of those mentioned earlier in this article, Lomov was transferred to Gosplan in 1931, but I. P. Zhukov and Mirzakhonov prospered in their respective fields, and Ordzhonikidze restored Mezhlauk and I. V. Kosior to the status of deputy commissar shortly after his arrival at Vesenkha.

consider the majority of new graduates ready for immediate promotion to responsible positions.⁷¹ A few thousand cadres emerged each year from the industrial academies, and Ordzhonikidze sent quite large numbers of his industrialists on trips to the capitalist West, especially to America, to study modern technology in action. These measures, however, had relatively little impact on the lower level of cadres, whose training remained a preoccupation of the leading party organs.

In 1932, the Central Committee noted the poor results and “extraordinarily slow tempo” of the campaign to educate industrial cadres,⁷² and, in 1934, the Seventeenth Party Congress decreed that all industrial cadres should be required to pass a “technical minimum” examination.⁷³ In heavy industry, 2,386 cadres passed this examination the following year, and by mid-1935 a total of 6,320 were enrolled in the courses.⁷⁴ It is difficult to judge how much real effect this kind of training had. Many must have been in the position of the shop head, promoted from the bench in 1930, whose formal education had ended in primary school thirty-four years earlier. After taking the technical minimum course, they could follow technical discussions at the plant, but they were still far from the level of specialists or even technicians.⁷⁵

In the spring of 1935, Stalin indicated that he remained dissatisfied with the speed at which the cadres were mastering technology. The Soviet Union, he said, had acquired technology but lacked the trained personnel to make full use of it. The old slogan “Technology [*tekhnika*] decides everything” must be replaced by a new slogan—“Cadres decide everything”:

Technology, without the people who have mastered that technology, is dead. Technology, directed by people who have mastered that technology, can and must produce miracles. If there were enough cadres capable of installing that technology in our best plants and factories, in our state farms and collective farms, and in the Red Army, the country would get two or three times the benefit that it gets now. That is why we must put the stress on people, on cadres, on personnel with a mastery of technology.⁷⁶

This speech, addressed to graduates of the Red Army Academy, was clearly an appeal to the whole cohort of rising young specialists and First Five-Year Plan

71. In his speech to the Central Committee plenum of January 1933, Ordzhonikidze warned against overly rapid promotion for the more than twenty thousand engineers who had graduated from higher schools between 1929 and 1932: “At all costs, we must make sure that the engineer graduating from higher technical school does not immediately become a big boss [*bol'shim nachal'stvom*] at the plant. Let him go and work for the time being as an assistant foreman and he can begin to rise upwards from there . . .” (*Materialy ob'edinennogo plenuma TsK i TsKK VKP(b), 7–12 ianvaria 1933 goda [Doklady, rechi, rezoliutsii]* [Moscow, 1933], p. 127).

72. “O tekhnicheskome obuchenii khoziaistvennikov, professional'nykh i partiinykh kadrov” (January 17, 1932), in *Resheniia partii i pravitel'stva po khoziaistvennym voprosam*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1967), pp. 371–73.

73. Resolution of the Seventeenth Party Congress on organizational questions (February 1934) and resolution of TsK and Sovnarkom USSR, “Ob organizatsionnykh meropriiatiiakh v oblasti sovetskogo i khoziaistvennogo stroitel'stva” (March 15, 1934), in *ibid.*, pp. 466–67, 468.

74. S. Ia. Andelman, ed., *God ucheby khoziaistvennikov* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1935), pp. 9 and 14.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–42.

76. Stalin, “Rech' na vypuske akademikov Krasnoi Armii,” p. 61.

vydvizhentsy to challenge their elders and lead the country forward. But one young Stakhanovite worker, Ivan Gudov, believed that Stalin was talking about people like him—workers who challenged the plant managers and engineers by showing that the current production norms underestimated the real capacity of the plants.⁷⁷ This may not have been a correct analysis, but it was a good forecast. By the end of the year, Stalin was using the Stakhanovite movement to launch a new attack on the industrial cadres.

The Stakhanovites, Stalin told the first Stakhanovite meeting in November 1935,

are free from the conservatism and inertia of some engineers, technicians, and industrialists. They go boldly forward, breaking outmoded technical norms and creating new and higher ones. They introduce corrections into the projected capacity and economic plans composed by the leaders of our industry; they often supplement and correct the engineers and technicians; frequently they teach them and give them a push forward.⁷⁸

Stalin suspected that plant managers and engineers were intentionally keeping the norms low so that they could show high figures of plan fulfillment. From his standpoint, the merits of the Stakhanovites lay not only in their ability to break production records but also in their tendency to cause trouble at the plants and shake up the bosses' cozy mutual protection arrangements. (The early Stakhanovites were not quite the ideal Soviet citizens represented in the literature: those who risked the hostility of fellow workers as well as management by vastly over-fulfilling norms were often natural loners of quarrelsome disposition.)

When trouble broke out between plant managers and would-be Stakhanovites in 1936, local press and party organizations were encouraged to take the side of the Stakhanovites. In the spring of that year, a number of plant and mine directors were fired, and some were arrested for sabotage as a result of such conflicts.⁷⁹ Although Ordzhonikidze made every effort to demonstrate his commissariat's support for the Stakhanovites, the campaign for higher norms was politically damaging to him. After the summer of 1936, when Piatakov was arrested as a Trotskyite wrecker, it was clear that worse was to come.⁸⁰

For the Soviet public and the outside world, the unfolding of the Great Purge was closely linked with three dramatic show trials of Old Bolsheviks (the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial in the summer of 1936, the Piatakov-Radek trial in the beginning of 1937, and the Bukharin trial early in 1938). The Piatakov trial, involving no former party leader of the first rank, might at first glance seem the least interesting. Nevertheless, it was the Piatakov trial, together with Stalin's and Molotov's commentaries on it at the February–March 1937 plenum of the Central Committee, that gave the signal for mass demotions and arrests of the

77. Ivan Gudov, *Sud'ba rabochego*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1974), p. 60.

78. Stalin, "Rech' na pervom vsesoiuznom soveshchani stakhanovtsev" (November 17, 1935), *Sochineniia*, ed. Robert H. McNeal, 1(14):84–85.

79. *Sovet pri Narodnom komissare tiasheloi promyshlennosti SSSR 25–29 iunia 1936 g.*: *Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1936), pp. 38, 92–93, 390.

80. On the arrest and the reaction of industrialists, including Ordzhonikidze, see Gudov, *Sud'ba rabochego*, pp. 102–4.

Soviet political and managerial elite. The timing suggests that it was not merely one of the Great Purge trials, but the crucial one.

Piatakov and the group of Old Bolsheviks and industrialists on trial with him were described as saboteurs who had conspired both with the exiled Trotsky and with intelligence agents of foreign powers. The scenario was obviously quite similar to those used in the show trials of bourgeois experts during the First Five-Year Plan. But what is more interesting is that Stalin and Molotov insisted that there was a continuity in *policy* between the Shakhty trial of 1928 and the Piatakov trial of 1937. In 1928, they said, the state had been threatened by the sabotage of a group of technical experts who were not Communists, while in 1937 the threat came from Communists who were not technical experts (according to Stalin, Piatakov and his like were “simply loud-mouths and improvisers from the point of view of technical training”⁸¹). Stalin and Molotov reminded the Central Committee that the Shakhty wreckers had unwittingly provided the stimulus for a major cadres training program during the First Five-Year Plan. As a result, “during the time between the Shakhty period and the present we have produced tens of thousands of Bolshevik cadres who are genuinely tempered in a technical sense. . . . In technical respects, our people are better qualified than the Trotskyites, the present wreckers.”⁸²

Stalin made it clear that the reason for the continuity of this policy was the party leadership’s concern that Bolshevik cadres had not yet mastered technology. Ignoring the substantial personnel changes that had taken place under Ordzhonikidze, he equated the industrial cadres of 1937 with those who had been content with “the role of inept commissars under the bourgeois specialists” in 1928. He claimed that they had refused or been unable to acquire technical expertise:

You must remember how unwillingly our industrial cadres then recognized their mistakes, how unwillingly they acknowledged their technical backwardness, and how sluggishly they grasped the slogan “Master technology.” And what happened? The facts showed that the slogan “Master technology” had its effect and gave good results. Now we have tens and hundreds of thousands of marvelous industrial cadres who have already mastered technology and are moving our industry forward. But we would not have those cadres now if the party had yielded to the stubbornness of the industrialists who did not wish to confess their technical backwardness, if the party had not recognized their mistakes and corrected them in time.⁸³

Nobody could have doubted that this was an indictment of a whole group rather than of individual Trotskyite wreckers. This impression was reinforced by the press campaign of the first months of 1937 which criticized the industrialists for a series of faults that had nothing to do with Trotskyite conspiracy, including conservative resistance to innovation, unwillingness to promote promising young

81. Stalin, “O nedostatках partiinoi raboty i merakh likvidatsii trotskistskikh i inykh dvurushnikov” (speech to Central Committee plenum, March 3, 1937), *Sochineniia*, ed. Robert H. McNeal, 1 (14):203.

82. V. M. Molotov, “Uroki vreditel'stva, diversii i shpionazha iapononemetskotrotskistskikh agentov” (edited version of speech to Central Committee plenum), *Bol'shevik*, 1937, no. 8 (April 15, 1937), pp. 24–26.

83. Stalin, “O nedostatках partiinoi raboty,” p. 203.

engineers and workers, mutual protection arrangements, self-aggrandizement, and alienation from the masses.⁸⁴

Yet Stalin had referred to the “tens and hundreds of thousands of marvelous industrial cadres” at the nation’s disposal. Who were they? A group of prominent Donbass industrialists, undoubtedly hoping that an engineering degree would guarantee membership in the favored group, hastened to complete their part-time studies in mid-1937 and announced this to the press,⁸⁵ but, as it turned out, this did not save them from being purged. Others concluded that the prime characteristic of “marvelous industrial cadres” was youth. When Mirzakhanov, an Old Bolshevik director of a big defense industry plant, accompanied one of his junior engineers to Moscow (knowing that the younger man was to replace him as director), he broke his morose silence during the journey only once:

“How old are you?”

“I will soon be 33.”

“A good age,” he remarked.⁸⁶

But there were distinctions to be made even among the young and technically trained. In the spring of 1937, the industrial newspaper carried an article criticizing a group of young engineers, probably graduates of the late 1920s, who had been sent abroad to study American technology in the early 1930s and had held high positions in an important plant since their return. Despite their youth, the paper charged that these men had become conservative opponents of change: “Although in the past they boldly defended new technology, they have succumbed to slavish veneration of ten-year-old blueprints and tracings, for the sole reason that they come from abroad.”⁸⁷ The writer seemed to suggest that, in addition to the dubious American connection, they were disqualified by having already achieved the status of leading cadres. In the plant, they were holding back the promotion of real innovators—engineers of almost their own age, but who had graduated more recently, men who had “been around” and had good rapport with the workers, in short, *vydvizhentsy* sent to college during the First Five-Year Plan. The leader of the group challenging the “young graybeards” in charge of the plant was a former Party Thousander.

However, the conclusions of the article were unusual for the time in which it was written. The speeches of Stalin and Molotov at the February–March plenum had not been immediately published, and even when they appeared, the press seemed uncertain about what commentary to offer. For Central Committee members, the drama of the plenum lay in Stalin’s and Molotov’s attacks on ob-

84. See, for example, *Za industrializatsiinu*, March 9, 1937, p. 3, March 14, 1937, p. 3, and March 22, 1937, p. 2; and editorial in *Pravda*, February 14, 1937, p. 1.

85. *Za industrializatsiinu*, July 5, 1937, p. 4. Included in the group were Radin, director of the Il'ich plant at Mariupol, and Gugel, director of the Ordzhonikidze metallurgical combine (Azovstal').

86. Memoir by N. E. Nosovskii (Mirzakhanov's replacement) in *Byli industrial'nye*, p. 124.

87. S. Koff, “O tekhnicheskome progressie i chesti inzhenereskogo mundira,” *Za industrializatsiinu*, March 9, 1937, p. 3. Koff, an experienced industrial journalist with considerable technical expertise, may well have been flying his own trial balloon with this article. It would not have been read as an authoritative political statement, although it almost certainly led to trouble for the Moscow transformer plant, which was the butt of the article's criticism.

kom secretaries and the attempts by a few members of the leadership to forestall a thorough purge of party organizations.⁸⁸ These attempts had failed, the campaign to broaden the base of party democracy had been approved by the plenum, and all party committees and officers were up for reelection by secret ballot.⁸⁹ The elections were designed to bring new leaders “up from the ranks.” The rhetoric of this period was strongly antielitist and, in many instances, proworker.

Reinforcing this theme, in October Stalin appealed to the “humble people” to help get rid of the bosses as a group: “The people’s trust is a big thing, comrades. Leaders come and go, but the people [*narod*] remain. Only the people are eternal. All the rest is transient.”⁹⁰ Again, he referred specifically to the industrial cadres, but this time without touching on the issue of technical qualifications. The press concluded that, as far as industry was concerned, the right note to strike was that of good workers and corrupt management. There were many exhortations to promote Stakhanovite workers into managerial positions.⁹¹

But by the early months of 1938, the quasi-populist aspect of the Great Purge was already receding. Official spokesmen began to emphasize the need for *qualified* cadres and to call for a realization of the huge investment put into higher and secondary technical education since 1928. Even in the midst of the Bukharin trial, the allocation of the most recent group of graduates (12,520 students who received their degrees in the last quarter of 1937, 57 percent of whom were engineers) appeared on the front pages of newspapers: in an unprecedented act, the party Central Committee and government had chosen to decide this question at the highest level.⁹² Over 2,000 graduates, almost all engineers, were appointed directly to extremely responsible positions in the industrial, government, party, and educational apparatus.⁹³

The graduates in question had entered higher education in 1931 and 1932 and were thus part of the last large class of First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhentsy*. By the beginning of 1938, *vydvizhentsy* of earlier classes were already experiencing rapid promotion, in common with other qualified and unqualified persons in industry and the lower ranks of the apparatus. But it was not until the resolution of the Central Committee and government that this cohort became widely identified as a group peculiarly suited for leadership, or that large numbers of *vydvizhentsy*-engineers began to move out of the plants into purely adminis-

88. See Khrushchev’s secret speech to the Twentieth Party Congress, in N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, trans. Strobe Talbott (Boston and Toronto, 1970), p. 577.

89. See Central Committee resolution, “Podgotovka partiinykh organizatsii k vyboram v Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR po novoi izbiratel’noi sisteme i sootvetstvuiushchaia perestroika partiino-politicheskoi raboty,” in *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s’ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, vol. 5 (Moscow, 1977), pp. 286–89.

90. Stalin, “Rech’ na prieme rukovodiashchikh rabotnikov i stakhanovtsev metallurgicheskoi i ugol’noi promyshlennosti rukovoditeliam partii i pravitel’sтва” (October 29, 1937), *Sochineniia*, ed. Robert H. McNeal, 1(14):254.

91. See, for example, editorial in *Pravda*, June 9, 1937, p. 1.

92. Resolution of Sovnarkom USSR and the party Central Committee, “O raspredelenii okonchivshikh vysshie uchebnye zavedeniia v IV kvartale 1937 g.,” published in *Pravda*, March 6, 1938, p. 1; also in *Industria*, March 6, 1938, p. 1, and elsewhere.

93. Of the total, 482 graduates were to be appointed directors, chief engineers, and their deputies in industrial enterprises; 507 were to go to the central government commissariats as heads and deputy heads of departments and as inspectors; 116 were to become directors and deputy directors of educational institutions; and 131 were to be sent to leading work (that is, as chairmen, secretaries, or department heads) in the regional and republican soviets and party committees.

trative positions. Although Stalin had earlier said that *Bolsheviks*—not just Bolshevik industrialists—should master technology, his slogan had often been given a narrower definition. From the spring of 1938, however, a new theme appeared in the press coverage of the rebuilding of the apparats. Young engineering graduates, it turned out, were particularly successful in bringing a new style of practical leadership to party organizations.⁹⁴

This was a time of extraordinary opportunities for the First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhentsy*, and there is no shortage of success stories. Of the six whose precollege careers were outlined earlier in this article, Brezhnev's promotions were the least outstanding, though in any other context they would have been remarkable. Graduating in 1935, he worked briefly as an engineer and put in a year's military service before becoming deputy chairman of the Dneprodzerzhinsk soviet in 1937. Two years later, at the age of thirty-three, he was appointed second or third obkom secretary in Dnepropetrovsk, a major industrial center. Two other members of the group reached even higher positions in the party apparat. Patolichev, who graduated only in 1937, worked as an engineer for a few months, then moved to the Central Committee Secretariat as an instructor, and in August 1938 he was sent as party organizer for the Central Committee to the Iaroslavl' rubber combine, which had been completely disrupted by a succession of purges. He took the risk of protesting the continuation of the local purges, and it paid off. In 1939, not yet thirty-one years old, he was appointed first secretary of the Iaroslavl' obkom. Chuianov, a 1934 graduate, had time to do some research work on refrigeration problems before receiving an appointment to the Central Committee Secretariat. For him, as for Patolichev and many other younger Communists working there, this position was a stepping stone to higher things. In 1938, when he was thirty-three, he was appointed first secretary of the Stalingrad obkom, departing on the same day to a city he had never seen, in a new suit supplied by Party Secretary Andreev. (Two of his friends, colleagues, and fellow *vydvizhentsy* left the Secretariat about the same time—Ponomarenko as first secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party and Kaftanov as head of the all-Union administration of higher education.) In the space of a few years, Kosygin, Ustinov, and Malyshev all rose from plant engineers to government ministers (people's commissars). Two years after his graduation in 1935, Kosygin was made director of a major textile plant, and in 1939, at the age of thirty-five, he was appointed commissar of the textile industry of the USSR. Ustinov similarly headed a major plant in the defense industry before his appointment in 1941, when he was only thirty-three years old, as commissar of armaments of the USSR. Malyshev's rise, unlike that of the other five, was accompanied by a great deal of press publicity, many public speeches, and election to the Supreme Soviet. Chief engineer at the big Kolomna Machine Building Plant in 1937 and director of the plant in 1938, he became commissar of heavy machine building of the USSR in 1939, at the age of thirty-seven.⁹⁵

94. See, for example, *Industria*, April 8, 1938, p. 3, and April 21, 1938, p. 3 (about G. I. Khabarov's experience in a Stalingrad raikom), and *Pravda*, May 10, 1938, p. 3 (regarding A. Aksenov's work in the Stalinsk gorkom).

95. Biographical data from Levytsky, *The Soviet Political Elite*; *Ezhegodnik Bol'shoi sovet'skoi entsiklopedii*, 1971; *Leonid I. Brezhnev: Pages From His Life*; Chuianov, *Na stremnine veka*; Patolichev, *Isytanie na zrelost'*.

But these, of course, are the success stories. Not all the First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhentsy* were able to rise as fast or as far, and it might be assumed that the cohort provided its share of victims as well as beneficiaries of the Great Purge. This does not seem to have been the case, however. In January 1941, Gosplan made a survey of "leading cadres and specialists" in the Soviet Union which included data on the number of college graduates and their year of graduation. In 1928–32, 152,000 leading cadres had graduated and 266,000 had graduated in 1933–37.⁹⁶ Other sources (published before the 1941 survey, which was purely for internal government use) provide the total number of graduates from all higher educational institutions, except military ones, over the same periods. For 1928–32, the total number of graduates was 170,000, and for 1933–37, 370,000.⁹⁷ Thus, 89 percent of all First Five-Year Plan graduates were leading cadres in 1941, and, because the survey did not include the military, security, and party apparatus, one must assume that the percentage surviving and holding responsible jobs was actually much higher. Of the Second Five-Year Plan graduates, 72 percent were leading cadres in 1941. But this figure must reflect a substantial rate of army call-up and continuation in graduate school, as well as the simple fact that even in this generation not all graduates could expect jobs in the "leading cadres" category within four or five years of graduation.

Undoubtedly, there were Purge victims among the graduates of 1928–37, especially among the relatively small group in leading positions before the Purge, and there could have been any number of short-term arrests followed by release and promotion. But the conclusion that must be drawn from these data is that the great majority of the group survived the Purge and, in fact, benefited from it through rapid promotion.

At the Eighteenth Party Congress, held early in 1939, Zhdanov stated that the party's method of mass purging had produced "excesses" and would not be used in the future.⁹⁸ For many of those present, this was undoubtedly the most important statement made at the Congress, for it implied a repudiation of the mass arrests that took place in 1937–38 and of the mass purging of the party (through membership reviews and reregistration) in 1933–36. But Stalin, who scarcely mentioned the excesses, had a different notion of priorities. One of the great achievements of the past five years, he stated, was the creation of a new intelligentsia (that is, a new administrative and specialist elite):

96. The survey was first published (in abbreviated form) from the material in Soviet archives in *Industrializatsiia SSSR 1938–1941 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 1973), pp. 269–76 ("Iz dokladnoi zapiski TsSU SSSR v Prezidium Gosplana SSSR ob itogakh ucheta rukovodiashchikh kadrov i spetsialistov na 1 ianvaria 1941 g.," March 29, 1941). Conceivably it was inaccurate or incomplete, but there seems to be no other reason to question a document produced not for publication but for internal government use.

97. Data taken from the statistical handbook *Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo SSSR* (Moscow, 1940), p. 112. This is among the most professional of the compilations of educational statistics published in the prewar period: in some areas, the statisticians have checked and lowered exaggerated figures published in earlier handbooks, and they are unusually scrupulous in defining categories. Because the educational authorities had some interest in overstating them, it is still possible, however, that the graduation figures are too high. This would mean that a lower proportion of 1928–37 graduates were missing from the 1941 cadres survey.

98. *XVIII s'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (b): Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1939), pp. 519–24.

Hundreds of thousands of young people, offspring of the working class, the peasantry, and the toiling intelligentsia, went to higher schools and *tekhnikum*s and, returning from the schools, filled the depleted ranks of the intelligentsia. They poured new blood into the intelligentsia and revitalized it in a new Soviet way. They radically changed the contours of the intelligentsia, remaking it in their own image. The remnants of the old intelligentsia were dissolved in the body of a new, Soviet, people's [*narodnaia*] intelligentsia. Thus was created a new Soviet intelligentsia, firmly linked with the people and ready en masse to give it true and faithful service.⁹⁹

If the new intelligentsia or elite was, in Zhdanov's words, "yesterday's workers and peasants and sons of workers and peasants promoted to command positions,"¹⁰⁰ it was clearly inappropriate to continue past practices of discrimination against the intelligentsia and in favor of the working class. Many discriminatory policies had already been dropped, but the rules governing party admission still gave preference to workers by occupation over former workers promoted to white-collar jobs, causing "confusion and bitterness among comrades whose only 'fault' is that they rose upward."¹⁰¹ Henceforth, the party would not give preference to any one social group in Soviet society, but would try to recruit "the best people." This phrase may have been, as many scholars have suggested, a euphemism for "intelligentsia," but it does not seem that the old (formerly "bourgeois") intelligentsia was the group which the party most desired to attract. Judging by speeches at the Eighteenth Party Congress, the very best people were those who had recently risen from the lower classes into the elite.

The creation of a new Soviet intelligentsia, merging the separate administrative and specialist elites of the 1920s, had been described by Stalin as the chief aim of the First Five-Year Plan cadres policy. Once the result was achieved—as he clearly believed it had been by 1939—Stalin's attitude toward the working class changed. Workers (the majority of whom were in fact yesterday's peasants) were no longer the regime's main source of social support, and their anti-intellectual and antielite feelings were no longer politically useful. In his speech to the Congress, Stalin stated that the party would ultimately make all workers and peasants "cultured and educated." Until that time came, however, they should respect those who had already received culture and education. The new elite members had not betrayed their class origins (as some unenlightened working-class Communists believed), but had shown how to rise above them.¹⁰²

The second objective of Stalin's First Five-Year Plan cadres policy had been to educate the party and, in particular, the cadres. According to spokesmen at the Congress, dramatic gains had been made. Of the three hundred and thirty-three regional and republican party secretaries, ninety-six now had higher education. Almost all of this group had graduated from engineering and other higher schools between 1934 and 1938, and one-third of them had been appointed

99. Stalin, "Otchetnyi doklad na XVIII s'ezde partii" (March 10, 1939), *Sochineniia*, ed. Robert H. McNeal, 1(14):398.

100. Zhdanov first used the phrase in a speech to a Komsomol audience on October 29, 1938 (see *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 1938, no. 21 [November 1, 1938], p. 18). It was subsequently incorporated into the resolution of the Eighteenth Party Congress, "Izmeneniia v ustave VKP(b)" (March 20, 1939), based on Zhdanov's report (see *XVIII s'ezd*, p. 667).

101. Zhdanov, *XVIII s'ezd*, p. 515.

102. Stalin, "Otchetnyi doklad," p. 399.

to their positions directly after graduation. Almost six thousand Communists with higher education were working as secretaries in the party organization as a whole. Among voting delegates to the Congress—close to 40 percent of whom had risen to the status of leading cadres since the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934—26.5 percent (four hundred eighteen delegates) had completed higher education, as opposed to 10 percent of Seventeenth Party Congress delegates.¹⁰³

These figures certainly indicate a substantial increase in the number of party cadres with higher education, although they also suggest that the process of educating the cadres still had some way to go. Probably more significant in terms of Stalin's original objectives was the entry of the First Five-Year Plan cohort into the top political leadership. In the new Central Committee elected by the Eighteenth Party Congress in 1939, at least twenty of the one hundred thirty-eight full and candidate members were *vydvizhentsy*, sent to higher education as adults during the First Five-Year Plan.¹⁰⁴ In the next Central Committee, elected by the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952, the proportion of *vydvizhentsy* was substantially higher—36 percent of full members on whom educational data are available.¹⁰⁵

The First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhentsy* were even more prominent in the Soviet government of 1952, primarily because engineering graduates from this cohort tended to dominate the large number of industrial ministries represented in the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Of one hundred fifteen ministers and deputy ministers for whom educational data are available, 50 percent had entered institutes of higher education as adults during the First Five-Year Plan. Of this group (a total of fifty-seven), 65 percent were either of working-class origin or had at some time been workers by occupation, and 74 percent had been trained as engineers. About half had been workers by occupation immediately before entering higher education, and about a quarter had been employed in apparat jobs (these proportions were almost exactly reversed in the 1952 Central Committee membership). The majority of the engineering graduates had worked for a few years after graduation as plant engineers before being promoted to managerial or government positions in the late 1930s or the beginning of the 1940s.¹⁰⁶

103. Data from speeches of Andreev, Zhdanov, and Malenkov in *XVIII s'ezd*, pp. 106, 529, 148.

104. The twenty were full members Andrianov, Zverev, Khrushchev, Kosygin, Malyshev, Sedin, and Ponomarenko, and candidate members Samokhvalov, Gorkin, Zhavoronkov, Patolichev, Chuianov, Popkov, Popov, Pronin, Kaftanov, Khokhlov, Makarov, Maslennikov, and Sosnin. This list is based on biographical data on Central Committee members and candidates collected from a variety of biographical sources, memoirs, and contemporary press accounts, and supplemented by information provided by Professor Jerry F. Hough (Duke University) and Professor Seweryn Bialer (Columbia University). I have included those who were sent to industrial academies as well as regular higher educational institutions in the years 1928–32, but excluded those who were sent to trade-union higher school (Serdiuk) or Marxism-Leninism courses under the Central Committee (Korotchenko). Also excluded are those like Pegov and F. A. Merkulov who entered higher education during the Second Five-Year Plan.

105. I am indebted to Jerry F. Hough for the biographical card files on the party and government leadership of 1952 on which this analysis is based.

106. See note 105 above.

Both Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the two leaders who successively emerged in the post-Stalin period, were members of the First Five-Year Plan cohort, Khrushchev a 1931 graduate of the Stalin Industrial Academy in Moscow. In the present (1979) Soviet Politburo, exactly half of the full members (Brezhnev, Kosygin, Kirilenko, Ustinov, Gromyko, Kunaev, and Pelshe) entered higher education as adults during the First Five-Year Plan. All but Gromyko and Pelshe were trained as engineers, and all but Kunaev (a Kazakh from a white-collar family) came from working-class or peasant backgrounds.¹⁰⁷

This article could, no doubt, have been entitled "The Training of the Brezhnev Generation," since a particular interest attaches to the First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhentsy* who rose so abruptly into political prominence and have remained in power for so long. But for historians, now just beginning serious study of the Stalin period, the phenomenon of First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhenie* has other important implications as well. In the first place, it requires examination of the Great Purge from a rather unfamiliar angle. The Purge had beneficiaries, and among the foremost of these were men whom Stalin had sent to be trained as future leaders during the First Five-Year Plan. This does not mean that Stalin was inexorably carrying out a master plan conceived in 1928, since no politician can have total control over events or foresee the future. It might mean, however, that one of the possible contingencies envisaged by Stalin in 1928 was a future radical turnover of elite personnel.

Moreover, the successful implementation of Stalin's First Five-Year Plan policy of *vydvizhenie* had implications of its own. The fact that the *vydvizhentsy* were becoming available for cadre positions in the second half of the 1930s made mass purging of the elite a much more viable policy than it would have been, say, five years earlier. At the same time, the emergence of the *vydvizhentsy* from institutes of higher education created a potential problem: the *vydvizhentsy*, better qualified than the old cadres, were on the average only about ten years younger. In the natural course of things, they would probably have had to wait a very long time for the top jobs.

Judgment of competence and even qualifications tends to be subjective, and we need not necessarily accept Stalin's opinion on the relative merits of the pre-Purge cadres and their successors. However, the performance of the successors during World War II and the postwar reconstruction period does suggest a much higher degree of competence than many would have predicted in 1938. The First Five-Year Plan *vydvizhenie* supplied only a part of the post-Purge elite, but it may have provided a much larger portion of its competence.

The second important point that emerges is that Stalin made the decision to train future leading cadres *as engineers*. There were no precedents for such a decision, and it went against the traditional Bolshevik assumption that future leaders should be trained in Marxist social science. In terms of political recruitment, it pushed the Soviet Union in a direction quite different from most Western countries (and also from such developing nations as India), where the basic path into political life has been through training and practice in law. Stalin repre-

107. Biographical data from Levytsky, *The Soviet Political Elite; Ezhegodnik Bol'shoi sovetskoi entsiklopedii, 1971*; and *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR* (Moscow, 1966).

sented this as a decision flowing from Soviet commitment to modernization and rapid industrialization. Because Stalin's Russia is seen more often as a police state than as a modernizing one, this explanation may not be readily accepted. But it is certainly arguable that Soviet politics of the 1930s should be viewed as a conflict between policemen (those like Molotov whose primary concern was internal security and control) and industrializers (the Ordzhonikidze type), with Stalin normally standing above the conflict but combining the characteristics of both groups. If we accept this dual image of Stalin, we may see Stalin the industrializer training the First Five-Year Plan cadres and Stalin the policeman later solving the problem of their promotion.

Finally, the story of Stalin and the making of a new elite brings us back to an old problem—the relationship of the Bolsheviks' "proletarian dictatorship" to the proletariat. It was Stalin who, in 1936–39, abandoned the concept of proletarian dictatorship and revised the formal status of the intelligentsia (or elite). But it was also Stalin who, during the First Five-Year Plan period, seemed to be trying to give substance to the dictatorship of the proletariat through his policies of proletarian *vydvizhenie*. This is less contradictory than it seems. Stalin used Marxist language, but his real interest was in a process which is almost completely ignored in Marxist theory—social mobility. As he said in 1931, the Soviet regime did not need "just any kind" of elite, and he might have added that he was not interested in "just any kind" of worker. The elite that he wanted had to be created through upward mobility from the working class and peasantry, and the workers he was interested in were those with the potential for promotion.

The industrialization of the 1930s would inevitably have produced large-scale upward mobility, with or without Stalin's encouragement. But Stalin's *vydvizhenie* policies dramatized the phenomenon and, in effect, took credit for it in advance. It seems likely that in Stalin's Russia, as in the United States at an earlier period, large segments of the population linked upward mobility with their own particular form of government. And such a perception might well be a major factor in the legitimization of the regime. Among new elite members, the pride of self-made men must surely have been combined with a sense of indebtedness. It was the Revolution (or Stalin) that had given them the opportunity to rise.