Having purged 'Trotskyists' from the leadership of foreign communist parties, Stalin now targeted Bukharin's sympathisers, eliminating the vestiges of the original communist leaderships and suppressing the final sparks of independence. 'Third period' extremism condemned the German Social Democrats as 'social fascists', so driving a wedge between the opponents of Nazism and facilitating Hitler's rise to power. Leading the largest party in the Reichstag, President Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor in January 1933 as a counterweight to the socialists and communists (who themselves were bitterly divided as a result of Stalin's policies).

Document 5.2 The Popular Front Policy

In the face of the rise of Nazi power in Germany, the Seventh (and last) Comintern Congress in August 1935 resolved to promote cooperation with liberal and socialist groups to establish 'Popular Fronts' against fascism. The transitional strategy was also rethought, including (in the short term at least) the use of parliamentary democracy. Revolution was to be deferred as the USSR advanced the policy of 'collective security' against the common threat. Popular Front governments came to power in Spain and France, the former overthrown by Franco's rebels supported by Italy and Germany.

In the face of the towering menace of fascism to the working class and all the gains it has made, to all toilers and their elementary rights, to the peace and liberty of the peoples, the Seventh Congress of the Communist International declares that at the present historical stage it is the main and immediate task of the international labour movement to establish the united fighting front of the working class. For a successful struggle against the offensive of capital, against the reactionary measures of the bourgeoisie, against fascism, the bitterest enemy of all the toilers, who, without distinction of political views, have been deprived of all rights and liberties, it is imperative that unity of action be established between all sections of the working class, irrespective of what organization they belong to, even before the majority of the working class unites on a common fighting platform for the overthrow of capitalism and the victory of the proletarian revolution. But it is precisely for this very reason that this task makes it the duty of the Communist Parties to take into consideration the changed circumstances and to apply the united front tactics in a new manner, by seeking to reach agreements with the organizations of the toilers of various political trends for joint action on a factory, local, district, national and international scale.

Source: Resolution on 'Fascism, Working Class Unity, and the Tasks of the Comintern', of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, 20 August 1935, in McDermott and Agnew, The Comintern, *p. 223.*

Collectivisation

Bukharin's warnings were ignored and Stalin launched a coercive campaign for the collectivisation of the peasantry. Tsarism's emancipation of the peasants had never been complete, and it was only during the NEP that their liberation had been achieved. This brief period of freedom now came to an end and a second enserfment, as the peasants called collectivisation, was imposed.

Document 5.3 Stalin on 'The Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class'

Lenin had envisaged collectivisation as a gradual and relatively non-coercive process; from mid-1929 Stalin transformed it into a brutally violent campaign. Resistance within the party was condemned as part of the 'Right Deviation', and in the countryside as counter-revolution. From December 1929 under the guise of 'the liquidation of the kulaks as a class' a war of the regime against the mass of the peasantry was launched in which over half the peasantry was 'collectivised', a euphemism for mass dispossession and deportation.

The so-called theory of 'equilibrium' between the sectors of our national economy is still current among Communists. This theory has, of course, nothing in common with Marxism. Nevertheless, this theory is advocated by a number of people in the camp of the right. This theory is based on the assumption that to begin with we have a socialist sector – which is, as it were, one compartment – and that in addition we have a non-socialist or, if you like, capitalist sector – which is another compartment. These two 'compartments' move on different rails and glide peacefully forward, without touching one another. Geometry teaches that parallel lines do not meet. But the authors of this remarkable theory believe that these parallel lines will meet eventually, and that when they meet we will have socialism. This theory overlooks the fact that behind these so-called 'compartments' there are classes, and that these compartments move as a result of a fierce class struggle, a life-and-death struggle, a struggle on the principle of 'who will win?' [*kto kogo*].

It is not difficult to see that this theory has nothing in common with Leninism. It is not difficult to see that, objectively, the purpose of this theory is to defend the position of individual peasant farming, to arm kulak elements with a 'new' theoretical weapon in their struggle against collective farms and to discredit them . . .

And so, the question stands as follows: either one way or the other, either *back* – to capitalism, or *forward* – to socialism. There is no third way, nor can there be. The 'equilibrium' theory is an attempt to indicate a third way. And precisely because it is based on a third (non-existent) way, it is Utopian and anti-Marxist . . .

The characteristic feature in our work during the past year is that we, as a party, as Soviet power: (a) have launched an offensive along the whole front against the capitalist elements in the countryside; (b) that this offensive, as you know, has brought about and is bringing about very palpable, *positive* results. What does this mean? It means that we have passed from the policy of *restricting* the exploitative tendencies of the kulaks to the policy of *liquidating* the kulaks as a class. This means that we have made, and are still making, one of the decisive turns in our whole policy . . .

Now that we have the material base with which to beat the kulaks, to break their resistance, to eliminate them as a class and to *replace* their output with the output of the collective and state farms . . . Now, the kulaks are being expropriated by the masses of poor and middle peasants themselves, by the masses who are putting solid collectivisation into practice. Now, the expropriation of the kulaks in the regions of mass collectivisation is no longer just an administrative measure. Now, the expropriation of the kulaks is an integral part of the formation and development of the collective farms. Consequently it is now ridiculous and foolish to go on about the expropriation of the kulaks. You do not lament the loss of the hair of one who has been beheaded.

There is another question which seems no less ridiculous: whether the kulaks should be permitted to join the collective farms. Of course not, for they are sworn enemies of the collective-farm movement.

Source: Stalin, 'Problems of Agrarian Policy in the USSR', Speech at a Conference of Marxist Students of the Agrarian Question, 27 December 1929, Voprosy Leninizma, *3rd edn, pp. 547, 549, 563–4, 565, 566–7.*

The whole notion of 'kulak', it must be stressed, was largely a political one (anyone resisting Bolshevik policies, be they rich or poor peasants) rather than a social one. Most so-called kulaks were indistinguishable from the great mass of peasants except in their harder work and more successful farms. In 1928 Stalin unexpectedly announced that 5 per cent of all peasants were kulaks (1.2 million peasant households, 6.2 million of the rural population), while studies in 1927 had suggested that kulaks represented at most 3.5 per cent. Of the USSR's 125 million peasants on 25 million farms, no more than some 750,000 farms were owned by kulaks averaging 10 hectares of arable land with usually no more than 3 cows and 3 working animals.

Document 5.4 Horror in the Village

Victor Kravchenko, who at the time was an engineering student but who later became one of Stalin's industrial managers, was sent from his institute to assist with collectivisation in the villages of the Ukraine. He was one of the 'twenty-thousanders', industrial workers who helped in the collectivisation of agriculture. His account vividly illustrates the tragic implementation of 'Bolshevik firmness', and not least the traumatic effect it had on all the participants.

Comrade Hatayevich, a member of the Central Committee of the Party, made a speech. It only increased our nervousness. We had half expected to hear a technical discourse on agriculture and village economy. Instead we listened to a fiery summons to go forth and do battle in a do-or-die spirit.

'Comrades,' he said, 'you are going into the country for a month or six weeks. The Dniepropetrovsk Region has fallen behind. The Party and Comrade Stalin ordered us to complete collectivisation by spring, and here we are at the end of summer with the task unfinished. The local village authorities need an injection of Bolshevik iron. That's why we are sending you.

'You must assume your duties with a feeling of the strictest Party responsibility, without whimpering, without any rotten liberalism. Throw your bourgeois humanitarianism out of the window and act like Bolsheviks worthy of Comrade Stalin. Beat down the kulak agent wherever he raises his head. It's war – it's them or us! The last decayed remnant of capitalist farming must be wiped out at any cost!

'Secondly, comrades, it is absolutely necessary to fulfil the government's plan for grain delivery. The kulaks, and even some middle and "poor", peasants, are not giving up their grain. They are sabotaging the Party policy. And the local authorities sometimes waver and show weakness. Your job is to get the grain at any price. Pump it out of them, wherever it's hidden, in ovens, under beds, in cellars or buried away in back yards.

'Through you, the Party brigades, the villages must learn the meaning of Bolshevik firmness. You must find the grain and you will find it. It's a challenge to the last shred of your initiative. Don't be afraid of taking extreme measures. The Party stands four-square behind you. Comrade Stalin expects it of you. It's a life-and-death struggle; better to do too much than not enough.

'Your third important task is to complete the threshing of the grain, to repair the tools, ploughs, tractors, reapers and other equipment.

'The class struggle in the village has taken the sharpest forms. This is no time for squeamishness or sentimentality. Kulak agents are masking themselves and getting into the collective farms where they sabotage the work and kill the livestock. What's required from you is Bolshevik alertness, intransigence and courage. I am sure you will carry out the instructions of the Party and the directives of our beloved Leader.' The final words, conveying a threat, were drowned in obedient applause.

'Are there any questions? Is everything clear?'

There were no questions.

'Then wait right here. You will soon be called separately to see Comrade Brodsky.'

I asked myself: Can this be all the 'instructions' we will receive? Is it possible that a lot of students and industrial officials are expected to solve the tremendous economic and political problems of the agrarian village just by

applying more and more 'Bolshevik firmness'? How can a group like this, youngsters and most of us ignorant of farm problems, be entrusted to decide the fate of hundreds of thousands of peasants? . . .

Evening was falling when I drove into the village, with several companions. Immediately we realised that something was happening. Agitated groups stood around. Women were weeping. I hurried to the Soviet building.

'What's happening?' I asked the constable.

'Another round-up of kulaks,' he replied. 'Seems the dirty business will never end. The GPU and District Committee people came this morning.'

A large crowd was gathered outside the building. Policemen tried to scatter them, but they came back. Some were cursing. A number of women and children were weeping hysterically and calling the names of their husbands and fathers. It was all like a scene out of a nightmare.

Inside the Soviet building, Arshinov was talking to a GPU official. Both of them were smiling, apparently exchanging pleasantries of some sort. In the back yard, guarded by GPU soldiers with drawn revolvers, stood about twenty peasants, young and old, with bundles on their backs. A few of them were weeping. The others stood there sullen, resigned, hopeless.

So this was 'liquidation of the kulaks as a class'! A lot of simple peasants being torn from their native soil, stripped of all their worldly goods, and shipped to some distant lumber camps or irrigation works. For some reason, on this occasion, most of the families were being left behind. Their outcries filled the air. As I came out of the Soviet house again, I saw two militiamen leading a middle-aged peasant. It was obvious that he had been manhandled – his face was black and blue and his gait was painful; his clothes were ripped in a way indicating a struggle.

As I stood there, distressed, ashamed, helpless, I heard a woman shouting in an unearthly voice. Everyone looked in the direction of her cry and a couple of GPU men started running towards her. The woman, her hair streaming, held a flaming sheaf of grain in her hands. Before anyone could reach her, she had tossed the burning sheaf onto the thatched roof of the house, which burst into flame instantaneously.

'Infidels, murderers!' the distraught woman was shrieking. 'We worked all our lives for our house. You won't have it. The flames will have it!' Her cries turned suddenly into crazy laughter.

Peasants rushed into the burning house and began to drag out furniture. There was something macabre, unreal, about the whole scene – the fire, the wailing, the demented woman, the peasants being dragged through the mud and herded together for deportation. The most unreal touch of all, for me, was the sight of Arshinov and the GPU officer looking on calmly, as if this were all routine, as if the burning hut were a bonfire for their amusement.

I stood in the midst of it, trembling, bewildered, scarcely in control of my senses. I had an impulse to shoot – someone, anyone, to relieve the unbearable tension of my emotions. Never before or since have I been so close

to losing my mind. I reached under my coat for my revolver. Just then a strong hand gripped my arm. It was my host, Stupenko. Perhaps he had guessed my thoughts.

'You must not torment yourself, Victor Andreyevich,' he said. 'If you do anything foolish, you'll only hurt yourself without helping us. Believe me, I'm an old man and I know. Take a hold of yourself. You'll do more good if you avoid trouble, since this is beyond your control. Come, let's go home. You're as white as a sheet. As for me, I'm used to it. This is nothing. The big round-ups last year were worse.' . . .

In war, there is a palpable difference between those who have been in the front lines and the people at home. It is a difference that cannot be bridged by fuller information and a lively sympathy. It is a difference that resides in the nerves, not in the mind.

Those of the Communists who had been directly immersed in the horrors of collectivisation were thereafter marked men. We carried the scars. We had seen ghosts. We could almost be identified by our taciturnity, by the way we shrank from discussion of the 'peasant front'. We might consider the subject among ourselves, as Seryozha and I did after our return, but to talk of it to the uninitiated seemed futile. With them we had no common vocabulary of experience.

Source: Victor Kravchenko, I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official *(London, Robert Hale, 1947), pp. 91–2, 104–5, 107.*

Document 5.5 Stalin – 'Dizzy with Success'

Stalin's 'liquidation' speech encouraged ever greater violence in the countryside as officials feared lagging behind in the campaign. Volunteers from the cities who knew nothing of the countryside added to the mayhem. Hostility to the regime took ever more violent forms, leading Stalin himself in March 1930 to call a temporary retreat, blaming the over-enthusiasm of local officials for the excesses.

Everybody is now talking about the successes of Soviet power in the field of the collective farm movement. Even enemies have been forced to recognise major successes. And these successes are great indeed.

It is a fact that by 20 February of this year 50 per cent of peasant households in the USSR have been collectivised. This means that we *overfulfilled* the five-year plan by 20 February 1930 by double . . . What does this mean? It means that *the fundamental turn of the countryside towards socialism can be considered achieved* . . .

But successes have their dark side, especially when they are achieved relatively 'easily', as it were, 'unexpectedly'. These successes sometimes lead to a spirit of self-importance and conceit: 'We can do anything!', 'Nothing can stop us!'. These successes sometimes make people drunk, people's heads

become dizzy with success, the sense of measure is lost, the ability to understand reality is lost, the tendency to overestimate one's abilities appears and with it the underestimation of the strength of the opponent, adventuristic attempts to resolve all questions of socialist construction 'in one step' appears. Here there is no room for concern about how to *consolidate* the successes achieved and to *use* them in a planned way for further movement ahead . . .

Thus the task of the party is to conduct a decisive struggle with these dangerous and harmful opinions and to expel them from the party . . .

A few facts: The success of our collective farm policy is explained among other things in that it is based on the *voluntary* nature of the collective farm movement and *taking into account the diversity of conditions* in various parts of the USSR. Collective farms should not be imposed by force . . .

The art of leadership is a serious matter. One must not lag behind the movement, for to lag means to separate from the masses. But one should not race ahead, for to race ahead means to lose contact with the masses. Whoever wants to lead the movement and to retain links with the masses of millions has to fight on two fronts – against those lagging behind and against those racing ahead.

Source: Stalin, 'Dizzy with Success', Pravda, *3 March 1930, in* Voprosy Leninizma, *pp. 574, 575, 580.*

Collectivisation proceeded thereafter at a more measured pace, with peasants being allowed to keep a small private plot. These private plots in effect became the mainstay of Soviet agriculture; although occupying only a very small proportion of the land, they came to produce a large proportion of market produce and allowed the peasants to survive and, later, earn something on the side when they took their vegetables, fruit, honey and milk to market.

Document 5.6 Declaration of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition

Defeated at home, the remnants of the Trotskyist left in exile subjected the Soviet power system to merciless critique, notably in the pages of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*. Christian Rakovsky, the Romanian-born former prime minister of Ukraine and Soviet ambassador to Britain, took up some of the themes of the opposition of the early 1920s, above all detailing the social degeneration of the workers' state, which in his view had come under the domination of a ruling bureaucracy that pursued its own class interests. This theme was later developed by Trotsky in his *The Revolution Betrayed* (Document 5.26), and by Milovan Djilas in *The New Class* (Document 8.14). Stalin's policies were criticised by the left as well as the right, and the following extracts from their theses in 1929 and declaration of April 1930 summarise their arguments.

The Party Leadership and the Party Regime

In 1923 the opposition foresaw that enormous damage to the dictatorship would derive from the distortion of the party regime. Events have fully justified this prognosis: the enemy has climbed in through the bureaucratic window.

Now more than ever it is necessary to say out loud that the correct democratic party regime *is the touchstone of a genuine left course* . . .

Centrism [as the left opposition called the Stalinist group] did not create bureaucracy. It inherited it, together with the other general social, cultural (etc.) conditions of our country. However, instead of fighting bureaucratism, centrism turned it into a system of government, transferred it from the Soviet apparatus into the party apparatus and gave the latter completely unprecedented forms and dimensions, completely unjustified by the role of *political* leadership that the party must play. Above all the centrist leadership has elevated into communist dogma ('the organised principles of leninism') methods of command and coercion, refining and polishing them to produce a bureaucratic virtuosity rarely attained in history. With the help of precisely these demoralizing methods, turning thinking communists into machines, killing off will, character and human dignity, the centrist leadership has succeeded in transforming itself into an inviolable oligarchy which cannot be removed from office, and has substituted itself for class and party.

'Declaration of April 1930', C. Rakovsky, V. Kossior, N. Muralov, V. Kasparova

In its declaration to the CC and the Central Control Commission of 4 October last year, the Bolshevik-leninist opposition warned against the extraordinary administrative measures being taken in the countryside, and of their inevitable political consequences. We also warned against the harmful theory that it is possible to build a socialist society in one country. This theory could only arise in the imagination of a bureaucracy and has been put forward since Lenin's death by Stalin and Bukharin . . .

The CC issued a directive which in itself was *the most flagrant deviation from socialism.* The slogan of *complete* collectivization – irrespective of whether this was to be accomplished in fifteen years, as at first, or in one year, as was later decided – is itself the greatest economic nonsense. We are marxists, and we know that new forms of property can be founded only on the basis of new productive relations. But these new productive relations *still do not exist.* There are 50,000 tractors in the whole of the Union and the bulk of them belong to state farms. Taken together they cannot plough even 5 per cent of the existing sown area. Yet without a high technical basis, even collective farms obtaining state credit and possessing a poor peasant class character are liable to collapse.

The decree abolishing NEP and the kulaks as a class is another economic absurdity . . . Intensive collectivization was not necessary, just as the expansion

of NEP is not necessary . . . On this question the difference between the centrists and the rightists is one of tempo: the rightists are proposing a consistently rightist policy, the centrists a policy with ultra-left intervals . . .

The whole political wisdom of the centrist and right-centrist leadership has consisted in suppressing the masses' feelings of political independence, human dignity and pride, and in encouraging and organizing the autocracy of the apparatus. The exceptional ingenuity of the centrist leadership and especially of the general secretary has been entirely devoted – and still is – to establishing this autocracy. The strength of the party leadership is in the party apparatus, but it is also the source of its weakness.

Source: Christian Rakovsky, Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR *(London, Allison & Busby, 1980), pp. 162–3, 166, 168, 170, 173.*

While in certain respects accurate, above all in its characterisation of the new ruling elite, this analysis was also spectacularly misconceived: the so-called 'centrists' were pursuing far more than 'a policy with ultra-left intervals'. The damage inflicted on the rural economy contributed to the devastating famine of 1932–3 in Ukraine and the Kuban. Stalin continued to export grain, placed soldiers around the affected region, and refused to release strategic grain reserves until too late for the millions who died or who were reduced to cannibalism.

Industrialisation and the Creation of a New Intelligentsia

Collectivisation was justified on the grounds that grain could be exported to provide vital investment resources and to provide cheap food for the growing industrial working class, quite apart from its primary aim of eliminating the 'peasant contradiction', a workers' state dependent for supplies on a commodity-producing private peasantry. Grain collection in 1929 surpassed that of 1928 by 1.5 times, and in 1930 was double the 1928 level, most of which was exported to buy machines. The first five-year plan (FYP) was launched in 1928, yet its targets were soon doubled, tripled and accelerated to a fevered pace of industrial construction. This was not 'planning' in any serious sense but a command economy in the hands of leaders drugged by the power of steel. There was an enormous amount of waste and disruption that actually led to falls in output in some areas. Yet the first FYP was completed (officially) in four years and three months (January 1933), and the USSR joined the ranks of the industrial superpowers.

Document 5.7 Stalin on Industrialisation

Industrialisation was proceeding at a breakneck and equally wasteful pace. This was a period marked by huge achievements in terms of industrial objects built, but also by chaos and the wasteful use of resources. In the speech below Stalin outlined the need for traditional discipline and managerial authority, while at the same time stressing the security rationale for accelerated industrialisation.

A Bolshevik's word is his bond. Bolsheviks are in the habit of fulfilling their pledges. But what does the pledge to fulfil the control figures for 1931 mean? It means ensuring a general increase of industrial output by 45 per cent. And this is a very big task. More than that. Such a pledge means that you not only promise to fulfil our Five-Year Plan in four years – that is decided, and no more resolutions are needed on that score – *it means that you promise to fulfil it in three years in all the basic, decisive branches of industry* . . .

How is it that we Bolsheviks, who have made three revolutions, who emerged victorious from the bitter Civil War, who have swung the peasantry to the path of socialism – how is it that in the matter of directing production we bow to a slip of paper? The reason is that it is easier to sign papers than to direct production . . .

Life itself has more than once signalled that not all was well in this field. The Shakhty case showed that the Party organizations and the trade unions lacked revolutionary vigilance. It showed that our business executives were disgracefully backward in regard to the knowledge of technology; that some of the old engineers and technicians, working without supervision, were more prone to engage in wrecking activities, especially as they were constantly being besieged by 'offers' from our enemies abroad . . .

Hence, the task is for us to master technique ourselves, to become the masters of the job ourselves. This is the sole guarantee that our plans will be carried out in full, and that one-man management will be established.

This, of course, is no easy matter; but it can certainly be accomplished. Science, technical experience, knowledge, are all things that can be acquired. We may not have them today, but tomorrow we will. The main thing is to have the passionate Bolshevik desire to master technique, to master the science of production. Everything can be achieved, everything can be overcome, if there is a passionate desire to do so.

It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo somewhat, to put a check on the movement. No, comrades, it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities. This is dictated to us by our obligations to the workers and peasants of the USSR. This is dictated to us by our obligations to the working class of the whole world.

To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten! One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered because of her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords. She was beaten by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her – for her backwardness: for military backwardness, for cultural backwardness, for political backwardness, for industrial backwardness, for agricultural backwardness. She was beaten because to do so was