removal of Ezhov and Stalin's temporary retreat at the Eighteenth Party Congress, is rejected with the comment that the files of the Smolensk Archives, on which Rittersporn's work is based, "often did not reflect, but rather falsified reality." The reality is presumably that the Party's influence on Stalin and its connections with the NKVD, and therefore its responsibility for events, were by this point virtually nil, thus making Medvedev's task as exorcist and surgeon less difficult. At the time of writing, Medvedev clearly believed that the leading role of the Party could still be saved, though "socialist society has a vital need not only for a ruling party but also for a legal opposition." One cannot help but wonder what his thoughts on the matter are at present.

This new edition, then, is of some interest in tracing the cautious evolution of the author's political thinking, and of very considerable value as a source of yet more evidence from informants from the Party and intelligentsia which cannot be found elsewhere.

Bruce Bennett


In January 1928, frustrated by the failure of the Siberian Provincial Communist Party Committee (Kraikom) to deliver the region's quota of grain to the center, Stalin himself traveled to the region to shake the officials out of their complacency. While there, Stalin first intimated that the further building of socialism would require more radical measures — mass collectivization and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class. James Hughes, a lecturer in Soviet politics at the University of Keele, has written a many-layered explication of this crucial journey.

Hughes's book sets out the economic, political and social context of this event. He treats the particularly Siberian manifestations of well-known phenomena associated with those years: the "peasant utopia" of the 1920s; the politicized attempts at a statistical definition of the kulak; the procurements crisis of winter 1927/28; the application of emergency methods (which he carefully distinguishes from the "Urals-Siberian method" of community pressure, used in 1929); and peasant resistance to them. Hughes tries to elucidate when and why Stalin decided to abandon NEP and to assess the truth of Stalin's allegations of "kulak sabotage" in that region.

Hughes relies primarily on the central and local Party press, on Soviet historians' accounts and on Kraikom conference reports. Throughout most of the book he judiciously criticizes these sources and weighs the plausibility of suspicious assertions. However, his characterization of Novosibirsk scholar N. Ia. Gushchin as "the most reliable modern Soviet historian of the period" (p. 181; cf. p. 169, 177) is surprising. As late as 1987 Gushchin was writing in the outmoded terms of kulak cabals and bourgeois distortions. Hughes' discussion of kulak sabotage appears to be a response to Gushchin's oversimplified views. One suspects that Hughes's personal
gratitude to Gushchin for helping him during a 1986 visit to Siberia may account for his favorable treatment of this Soviet scholar.

Like Orlando Figes in *Peasant Russia, Civil War* and Daniel Brower in *The Smolensk Scandal and the End of NEP*, Hughes attempts to understand complex events by examining them on a more manageable regional scale. At the same time, he vividly portrays, mostly through the eyes of Siberian officials, the particular Siberian experience.

Hughes evaluates the various explanations given for the grain procurements crisis of 1927/28, including Stalin's assertions of "kulak sabotage." He finds that, far from being anti-Soviet, well-off peasants withheld grain from the state primarily because of negative economic stimuli; only after the adoption of emergency measures in mid-January 1928 would "the well-off peasantry, those who were large-scale grain holders...become more politically hostile to the regime" (p. 122).

Against this background he describes the day-by-day events of Stalin's visit as Stalin and the provincial Party Committee thrashed out an ultimately successful policy of prosecuting selected "kulaks" for "speculation" while distributing part of their confiscated goods to the poor peasants. Probing further, Hughes tries to imagine what must have been going through Stalin's mind during that trip. He imagines Stalin's horror at complacent local procurators afraid to rile their prosperous neighbors; at local Party activists who echoed kulaks' pleas for higher grain prices; and at an alleged incident when "a kulak came up with a pipe in his mouth and said 'Do us a dance, lad, and then I will give you a pud or two'" (p. 145). It was under the influence of these impressions, Hughes suggests, that "Stalin first publicly disclosed the details of a plan for Soviet agriculture which evolved into an idée fixe that only a crash program of mass collectivization and the physical elimination of the kulaks as a class would solve the peasant question and secure the building of socialism in the USSR" (p. 148).

Hughes rejects the argument made by Robert Conquest and others that Stalin largely fabricated the war scare of 1927 and the grain procurements crisis of 1927/28. Rather, he argues that NEP was indeed objectively flawed, but that Stalin made the final decision to abandon it. Hughes carefully portrays objective developments in terms of the Party leaders' politically conditioned perceptions of current problems — perceptions which, as Alec Nove has argued, limited the number of acceptable alternatives. This book, then, draws a middle line between those who characterize the "revolution from above" of 1928-32 as Stalin's caprice, and those who say it was objectively necessary.

The book's last chapter, formerly published as an article in *Soviet Studies*, analyzes Stalin's actions in a related event, the "Irkutsk affair" of summer 1928. In that case, pro-NEP Kraikhom Secretary S. I. Svirtsov won Stalin's support against ideological criticism by secessionist Irkutsk District Party Secretary N. N. Zimin. This was a "clear instance when an orthodoxly pro-NEP (provincial) party leadership, headed by a secretary sympathetic to the policies of the Right, acted against (district) party committees which had eagerly acted upon Stalin's call for a radical, pseudo-Leftist hard-line policy in the countryside" (p. 197). Stalin's support of Svirtsov, says Hughes, reflects a patron-client relationship of the