

Excerpt from *The Gulag Archipelago*, Vol. 2, Part IV, by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

This is not the task of our book, but let us try to enumerate briefly those traits of free life which were determined by the closeness of the Archipelago or which were in the same style.

Servitude. If it had been easy to change your place of residence, to leave a place that had become dangerous for you and thus shake off fear and refresh yourself, people would have behaved more boldly, and they might have taken some risks. But for long decades we were shackled by that same system under which no worker could quit work of his own accord. And the passport regulations also fastened everyone to particular places. And the housing, which could not be sold, nor exchanged, nor rented. And because of this it was an insane piece of daring to protest in the place where you lived or worked....

Secrecy and Mistrust. These feelings replaced our former openhearted cordiality and hospitality (which had still not been destroyed in the twenties). These feelings were the natural defense of any family and every person, particularly because no one could ever quit work or leave, and every little detail was kept in sight and within earshot for years. The secretiveness of the Soviet person is by no means superfluous, but is absolutely necessary, even though to a foreigner it may at times seem superhuman. The former Tsarist officer K.U. survived and was never arrested only because when he got married he did not tell his wife about his past. His brother, N.U., was arrested—and the wife of the arrested man, taking advantage of the fact that they lived in different cities at the time of his arrest, hid his arrest from her own father and mother—so they would not blurt it out. She preferred telling them and everyone else that her husband had abandoned her, and then playing that role a long time! Now these were the secrets of one family which I was told thirty years later. And what urban family did not have such secrets?...

Universal Ignorance. Hiding things from each other and not trusting each other, we ourselves helped implement that absolute secrecy, absolute misinformation, among us which was the cause of causes of everything that took place—including both the millions of arrests and the mass approval of them also. Informing one another of nothing, neither shouting nor groaning and learning nothing from one another, we were completely in the hands of the newspapers and the official orators. Every day they pushed in our faces some new piece of incitement, like a photograph of a railroad wreck (sabotage) somewhere three thousand miles away. And what we really needed to learn about, which was what had happened on our apartment landing that day, we had no way of finding out.... How could you become a citizen, knowing nothing about life around you? Only when you yourself were caught in the trap would you find out—too late.

Squealing was developed to a mind-boggling extent. Hundreds of thousands of Security officers in their official offices, in the innocent rooms of official buildings, and in prearranged apartments, sparing neither paper nor their unoccupied time, tirelessly recruited and summoned stool pigeons to give reports, and this in such enormous numbers as they could never have found necessary for collecting information.... I will give my own superficial speculative estimate: Out of every four to five city dwellers there would most certainly be one who at least once in his life had

received a proposal to become an informer.... Beyond the purpose of weakening ties between people, there was another purpose as well. Any person who had let himself be recruited would, out of fear of public exposure, be very much interested in the continuing stability of the regime.... Secretiveness spread its cold tentacles throughout the whole people. It crept between colleagues at work, between old friends, students, soldiers, neighbors, children growing up—and even into the reception room of the NKVD, among the prisoners' wives bringing food parcels.

Betrayal as a Form of Existence. Given this constant fear over a period of many years—for oneself and one's family—a human being became a vassal of fear, subjected to it. And it turned out that the least dangerous form of existence was constant betrayal. The mildest and at the same time most widespread form of betrayal was not to do anything bad directly, but just not to notice the doomed person next to one, not to help him, to turn away one's face, to shrink back. They had arrested a neighbor, your comrade at work, or even your close friend. You kept silence. You acted as if you had not noticed. (For you could not afford to lose your current job!) And then it was announced at work, at the general meeting, that the person who had disappeared the day before was ... an inveterate enemy of the people. And you, who had bent your back beside him for twenty years at the same desk, now by your noble silence (or even by your condemning speech!), had to show how hostile you were to his crimes. (You had to make this sacrifice for the sake of your own dear family, for your own dear ones! What right had you not to think about them?) But the person arrested had left behind him wife, a mother, children, and perhaps they at least ought to be helped? No, no, that would be dangerous: after all, these were the wife of an enemy and the mother of an enemy, and they were the children of an enemy (and your own children had a long education ahead of them)!... And one who concealed an enemy was also an enemy! And one who abetted an enemy was also an enemy! And one who continued his friendship with an enemy was also an enemy. ... And that was precisely what Stalin needed! And he laughed in his mustaches, the shoeshine boy!...

The Lie as a Form of Existence.... But that was not all: Your children were growing up! If they weren't yet old enough, you and your wife had to avoid saying openly in front of them what you really thought; after all, they were being brought up to be Pavlik Morozovs, to betray their own parents, and they wouldn't hesitate to repeat his achievement. And if the children were still little, then you had to decide what was the best way to bring them up; whether to start them off on lies instead of the truth (so that it would be easier for them to live) and then to lie forevermore in front of them too or to tell them the truth, with the risk that they might make a slip, that they might let it out, which meant that you had to instill into them from the start that the truth was murderous, that beyond the threshold of the house you had to lie, only he, just like papa and mama. The choice was really such that you would rather not have any children....

Early History of the Soviet Union

Socialist governments traditionally do make a financial mess. They always run out of other people's money.
—Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, 1979-1990

War Communism

The policy of War Communism lasted from 1918 through 1921. The policy's chief features were the expropriation of private business and the nationalization of industry throughout Soviet Russia, and the forced requisition of surplus grain and other food products from the peasantry by the state. These measures negatively affected both agricultural and industrial production. With no incentives to grow surplus grain (since it would just be confiscated), the peasants' production of it and other crops plummeted, with the result that starvation came to threaten many city dwellers. By 1921 industrial production had dropped to one-fifth of its prewar levels (i.e., in 1913), and the real wages of urban workers had declined by an estimated two-thirds in just three years.

By early 1921 public discontent with the state of the economy had spread from the countryside to the cities, resulting in numerous strikes and protests, that culminated that March, in the Kronstadt Rebellion. In this rebellion, a naval squadron at Kronstadt, a naval fortress in the Gulf of Finland, mutinied against the new Bolshevik rule in the USSR. They demanded new elections to the Soviets, freedom of the press, an end to requisitioning grain from the peasants, the elimination of Bolshevik control and guards over the military and workers, and free trade unions to be organized. The Bolsheviks did crush this rebellion, in which thousands were killed or executed afterwards, but in response, the Bolsheviks had to adopt the New Economic Policy and thus temporarily abandon War Communism.

New Economic Policy

Accordingly, the 10th Party Congress in March 1921 introduced the measures of the New Economic Policy. These measures included the return of most agriculture, retail trade, and small-scale light industry to private ownership and management while the state retained control of heavy industry, transport, banking, and foreign trade. The peasantry were allowed to own and cultivate their own land, while paying taxes to the state. The New Economic Policy reintroduced a measure of stability to the economy and allowed the Soviet people to recover from years of war, civil war, and governmental mismanagement.

Stalin and the Five-Year Plans

After taking over, Joseph Stalin implemented a series of Five-Year Plans, each plan an attempt to make the Soviet economy stronger and more communist. One project under the first Five-Year Plan was a continuation of the collectivization of farmlands, and placing them under control of the government. The result of Stalin's policies was the Great Famine of 1932–33—a man-made demographic catastrophe unprecedented in peacetime. Of the estimated six to eight million people who died in the Soviet Union, about four to five million were Ukrainians. The Ukrainian grain harvest of 1932 had resulted in below-average yields (in part because of the chaos wreaked by the collectivization campaign), but it was more than sufficient to sustain the population. Nevertheless, Soviet authorities set requisition quotas for Ukraine at an impossibly high level. Brigades of special agents were dispatched to Ukraine to assist in procurement, and homes were routinely searched and foodstuffs confiscated. The rural population was left with insufficient food to feed itself. The ensuing starvation grew to a massive scale by the spring of

1933, but Moscow refused to provide relief. In fact, the Soviet Union exported more than a million tons of grain to the West during this period.

Soviet livestock suffered the most precipitate decline. Between 1928 and 1933 the number of cattle fell by 44 per cent, of pigs by 55 per cent, and of sheep and goats by as much as 65 per cent. Equally harmful was the decline in the number of horses, the main work-force in agriculture apart from human labor; the number fell by 1933 to less than half the 1928 level.

Western Confusion about the Development of the USSR

A lot of people in the West were (and still are) confused about the USSR. This is partly due to positive myths about the USSR spread about in the press. The most notorious case of this is that of Walter Duranty, a Moscow-bureau journalist for the New York Times, and his reporting of conditions in the USSR left something to be desired. He won a Pulitzer Prize for his articles on Stalinism and the Five-Year Plans, and even though he was writing during the time of the Ukrainian famine, he denied its existence. He said that reports of this were “a big scare story in the American press....There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation.” Even though the Pulitzer Prize that he won for reporting on life in the USSR has not been revoked, the Pulitzer Committee in 2003 was forced to state that “in its review of the 13 articles, the Board determined that Mr. Duranty's 1931 work, measured by today's standards for foreign reporting, falls seriously short.”

Most Americans are not aware that much of the industrial might of the Soviet Union didn't come from the wonders of its collectivization programs, but were in fact directly imported from the West. Its four main plants for producing armored vehicles and tanks were either built or modernized by Western companies.

The writer Antony Sutton has documented extensively, the Soviet use of Western military technology. The Soviets would either license, steal, or purchase the plans for western weapons, and then build them in Soviet plants. For example, several tractor plants before WWII were established with US assistance. The plant at Stalingrad was built in the US, disassembled, and then re-assembled at Stalingrad. In 1938, three American-built plants were producing at the rate of 5500 tanks per year. By way of comparison, the Soviets had in total, some 25 thousand tanks when Germany invaded Russia in 1941. Even the Soviet's much-praised T-34 (arguably the best tank in WWII) used the suspension in the Christie tank (from American tank designer Walter Christie), and engines from the Christie or from BMW. Production of this tank was highest at American-built plants, and the first T-34s were assembled from several million tons of armor plate imported from the US.

In 1929, Ford Motor Company signed an agreement with the Soviet Union to supply \$13 million worth of automobile parts and supplies by 1933, and to provide technical assistance on an automobile plant later known as the Gorki plant. After the Ford advisers left in 1938, it was converted to a plant manufacturing military vehicles such as armored personnel carriers, jeeps, personnel carriers, anti-tank gun vehicles, and amphibious assault vehicles. By the late 1930s, annual production was in the 80,000-90,000 range. After World War II ended, the Gorki plant manufactured versions of the Ford Model A car, the first cars made in the Soviet Union.