

Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents, by Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, translators Thomas Hosington and Steven Shabad. *Annals of Communism*. New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2000. xvii, 448 pp. \$59.95 U.S. (cloth), \$35.00 U.S. (paper).

The title is most important. This volume reveals the patterns of daily life of Soviet citizens of the 1930s. Soviet citizens reflected the mad rush to build socialism. Some were trampled in the rush and others survived the stampede with deep psychic scars.

The documents in this volume of the Yale series from Soviet documents reflect the Stalin era of the period 1930 to 1941: from Stalin's "Great Turn" toward full-scale collectivization and industrialization to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. In this period the Soviet State system assumed the form it was to have till the late 1980s.

In the West, Sovietology viewed the Stalin era as totalitarian through massive "indoctrination." Social historians came to stress the social conservatism of the emergence of "promotees" in the 1930s and the weak state whose leaders threshed around and tried to explain its ineptitude.

Professor Sokolov compiled a documentary narrative covering the Soviet Union from 1918-1932 and Dr. Siegelbaum, a renowned Soviet social historian from Michigan, met Dr. Sokolov in Moscow and began to compile documents from 1930-1941. A Russian language edition was published in Russia in 1998. Praise must be given to the translation of documents into English by Thomas Hoisington and Steven Shabad from many of the letters written in substandard Russian reflecting a recent illiterate peasant background. Dr. Siegelbaum has prepared an incisive English language introduction to the documents for the volume — another fruitful contribution of Russian and American scholars based on Soviet archives.

This is a volume of social history whose peasant and workers, intellectuals and the uneducated, adults and children, women and men, Russians and others, the downtrodden and the élite tell their stories. Most proclaim their dedication to the building of socialism and their horror at some of the things done in its name.

The titles to the chapters are taken from contemporary expressions of stock propaganda phrases. The first chapter covers the socialist offensive of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The second chapter treats cadres or the tasks of party and state functionaries. The third chapter treats the Stalin Constitution of 1936, an almost national referendum on the Stalinist version of socialism — the comments of the Soviet public reveals popular mentalities. The fifth chapter covers Soviet life on the collective farms, treating what Soviet life meant to collectivized peasants and those on state farms. Rural life is shown as harsh and grim where the ablest and younger peasants sought to escape to the factories in the cities. The last and most fascinating chapter involves the younger generation or those born after the 1917 revolution.

Sources for the book came from the opening of Soviet archives including letters received by Soviet newspapers as well as party and state leaders and institutions.

We now know that in the not atypical month of July 1935 the peasants newspaper received approximately 26,000 letters. Mikhail Kalinin, as president of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, received an average of 77,000 letters a year between 1923 and 1935. These letters contained complaints, petitions, denunciations, confessions, and advice: each category is reflected in this book of documents. The first problem between these sources is the relation between what is described or alleged and what may have actually happened. Each case in the documents is unique and none represent a universal condition. We will never know what proportion of the letters to Moscow found their way into the archive. Letters sent to the peasant newspaper survive from 1924-28 and from 1938, but not for the years between. Most letters came from the Central Russian region, with few from the Caucasus, Central Asia, or Siberia. Errors of grammar and spelling have been maintained.

A major conclusion from recent Soviet archival research examination was that every form of state initiative was accompanied by some form of popular resistance. Peasant resistance was shown in lodging complaints and otherwise denouncing abusive officials, revisions to Soviet law, and by joining the white collar or blue collar work force with the *kolkhozy* and engaging in labour activism.

The discussions caused by the draft of the new Soviet Constitution of 1936 opened discussion of their role in the life of the state or the role of the state in people's lives. Many of these letters reflect the dreams of the ordinary people as related to those of the individuals directing the state.

Familiar metaphors were often used in letters. Letters sent to Mikhail Kalinin used "Dear comrade" and "grandfather." Several documents reflected the terror of the late 1930s and are in the form of denunciations.

This volume would be of interest to Soviet historians and historians of other tyrannies in the twentieth century. It offers a deeper understanding for the reader of life in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

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Dimitrov & Stalin, 1934-1943: Letters from the Soviet Archives, edited by Alexander Dallin and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, translated by Vadim A. Staklo. *Annals of Communism*. New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 2000. xxx, 278 pp. \$35.00 U.S. (cloth).

Dimitrov & Stalin is a collection of letters from Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian head of the Communist International or Comintern, to I. V. Stalin during the 1930s and early 1940s. There is no correspondence from Stalin; the Soviet General Secretary's replies are limited to a few marginal comments and notes. The documents published in this volume are found at the RTsKhIDNI (now RGASPI), the Comintern and Soviet communist party archives in Moscow. The correspondence covers a number of interesting topics ranging from the "united front" policy (1934-39), to the Spanish civil war, the period of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact (1939-41), and relations with the Chinese and Yugoslav Communist Parties.