

Foreword

THE HOOVER INSTITUTION ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE rests on its two pillars of scholarship and archival collections. Hoover scholars address the major political, economic, and social issues of our new century, and Hoover archives offer unique information for scholars seeking to make sense of the past as well as of contemporary times. Our archives contain more than five thousand separate collections covering the entire range of twentieth-century world history and politics, and house the world's richest collection on the history of communism and, particularly, its Russian variant.

This book is a sampling of tales, written by Hoover fellow Paul Gregory, drawn from our collections of Soviet state and party archives. Hoover has played a pioneering role in sponsoring documentary publications (such as the prize-winning, seven-volume *History of Stalin's Gulag*) and in microfilming collections, such as the Communist Party on Trial, the archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and the Gulag administration, to name only three examples. Over the past decade, hundreds of researchers from around the globe (including from Russia) have studied Russia's political, social, and economic history through the prism of these archives.

Only in the past two decades are there more democracies than totalitarian regimes, but the balance is continually shifting. The existence of the Soviet state and party archives makes the Soviet Union, particularly in its most brutal form under Stalin, history's best-documented dictatorship. Stalin's Russia provided the model for China, Cuba, North Korea, and Eastern Europe after World War II. One of the most enthusiastic students of Stalin was none other than Saddam Hussein. To understand the inner workings of dictatorships, Soviet Russia represents a good case study.

Over the past seven years, Paul Gregory has headed our initiative

to bring together the two pillars of research and archives through his own research on Soviet history, including his “team” of economists, historians, and political scientists working in our Soviet archives. Their work has brought forth more than forty articles, six books, and two documentary collections, two of which have won international awards. Topics studied include the Gulag, high-level decision making, corruption, the role of the Communist Party, and repression and terror.

All valuable archives are full of stories that either go unnoticed or are buried in the specialized literature. Paul Gregory has selected fourteen tales, some horrific, some puzzling, and others simply entertaining to provide an inside look at how the Soviet dictatorship worked—how to go to war (Afghanistan), how and why to execute or imprison more than a million of its own citizens (the Great Terror), how to honor its saints (the story of Lenin’s brain), how to discourage disagreement (Bolshevik discourse), why intellectuals are dangerous (The Ship of Philosophers), and how to dehumanize enemies. It is satisfying to note that these fourteen short stories, taken together, produce a surprising deep understanding of totalitarianism.

A persistent theme of these tales is the relationship between dictatorship and repression, and the need for a special agency (called at various times the OGPU, NKVD, MVD, or KGB) to impose terror on citizens. The archives of these special “organs” were the closest-held secrets of the Soviet Union and they have achieved a new significance in understanding a modern Russian state headed by former officers of such “organs.” The reader will note that the “organs” play a role in virtually every story, reflecting their pervasive influence on Soviet life.

Finally, I would say it is only fitting that this book is dedicated to Hoover’s own Robert Conquest on his ninetieth birthday. It was Robert Conquest who first penetrated Stalin’s Terror, his secret police, and the great famine of the early 1930s using published sources and his remarkable scholarship and intuition. This book is a small but appropriate tribute to his voluminous contributions.

John Raisian

THE TAD AND DIANNE TAUBE DIRECTOR,
HOOVER INSTITUTION ON WAR, REVOLUTION AND PEACE